

The Iola Historical Society's

WINDOW



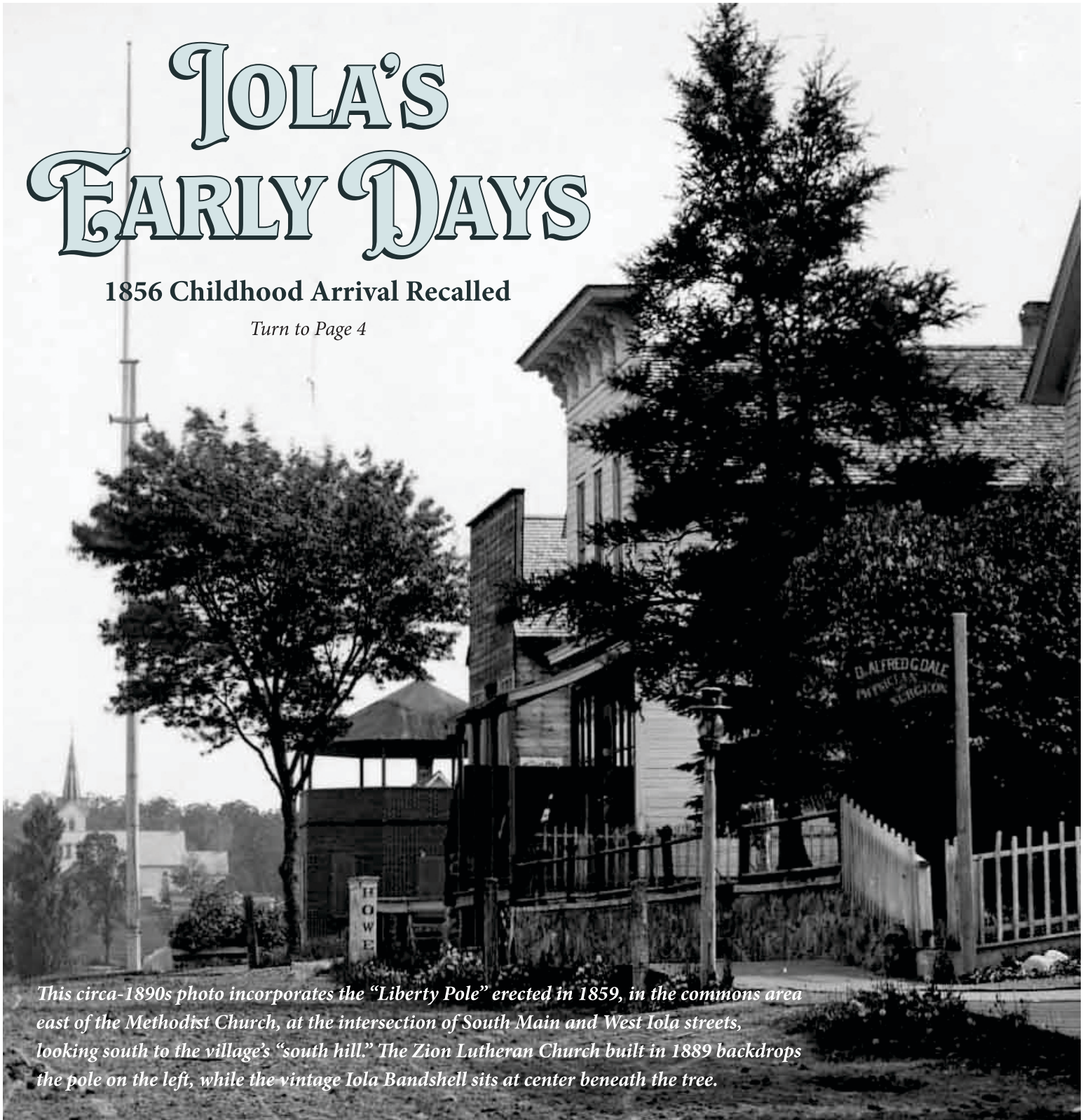
QUARTERLY MEMBER AND ACTIVITIES NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 18, NUMBER 1 | WINTER 2025

IOLA'S EARLY DAYS

1856 Childhood Arrival Recalled

Turn to Page 4



This circa-1890s photo incorporates the "Liberty Pole" erected in 1859, in the commons area east of the Methodist Church, at the intersection of South Main and West Iola streets, looking south to the village's "south hill." The Zion Lutheran Church built in 1889 backdrops the pole on the left, while the vintage Iola Bandshell sits at center beneath the tree.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

As with most historical societies, the Iola Historical Society's mission is focused on recapturing and recalling the record of a small slice of time. The truth of that reality was yet again impressed upon me as I was assembling the contents of this issue of the Window. Transportation and communications, particularly, have changed dramatically.

As the feature presentation in this issue aptly illustrates, Iola was a dramatically different place 169-years ago, than what it is today. A family and its worldly possessions arrived in three wagons pulled through a day-long "drag through a trackless waste of snow" from Waupaca by teams of oxen. Today, that distance is covered in a matter of minutes, plus or minus, depending on weather conditions, in the family car.

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In August, a tour group of members and friends of the Iola Historical Society will be embarking on a visit to Gausdal, Norway, to participate in a bicentennial recognition of organized emigration from Norway to North America. It was on July 4, 1825, that 45 hardy Norwegian emigrants boarded the wooden ship Restauration at Stavanger, bound for New York with a crew of seven, enduring a three-month long voyage across the Atlantic; with an infant born in transit there were 53 upon arrival.

Our travel time by air to Norway will be but a few hours. And, certainly more accommodating. The Restauration was 39-ton wooden sailing ship, 54-feet long, with a beam of 15-feet. A replica has been built, with a scheduled sailing from Stavanger this July 4th, and scheduled arrival in New York planned for October 9, the calendar date on which the original Restauration arrived.

When it comes to communications . . . think back to those days . . . timely communication was measured in days or weeks depending on the destination. The telegraph was on the horizon. The telephone was not yet more than a dream. Over 100 years passed before direct dial access became

available in Iola and vicinity, a reality attested to by the switchboard operators spread presented elsewhere in this issue. Today, you can establish almost immediate contact with most places in the world while sitting in your living room's easy chair.

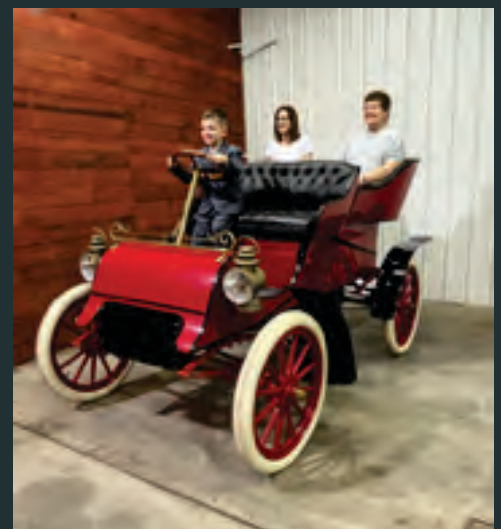
These transportation and communications advances have been realized within the small, focused, identified slice of time the Iola Historical Society is focused on capturing and sharing.

History is much deeper, of course, as emphasized by one of our featured exhibits – the Towne Family Native American Artifacts collection – that explores the history of Wisconsin's early cultures back to a 11,500 B.C. timeline. The authentic assortment of tool, implement and projectile artifacts displayed in this important and widely acclaimed presentation were reclaimed from the farm fields of Waupaca County and nearby.

Such are the ties between history and time as to be unconstrained, our focus notwithstanding.

Young Jackson "Henry Ford" Kiecker Lives History Behind Wheel of 1903 Ford Model A

When visiting the Iola Historical Society this past November, young Jackson Kiecker, age 5 and a kindergartener at St. John's Lutheran School in East Bloomfield, Wis., enjoyed the opportunity to climb behind the wheel of our 1903 Ford Model A Runabout. Inviting his mother Heidi (center) on board, along with grandmother Mary Beahman (right), he was prepared to treat them to a jaunty ride through the countryside. Note that Jackson was sportingly dressed for the occasion, in his "Henry Ford" suit, as he was out on a "Living History Night" outing. [Photo by Charles W. Thompson]



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IOLA'S EARLY DAYS

An Early Resident's 1915 Recall of Her 1856 Childhood Arrival From Waukegan by Oxen Team Drawn Wagon

[The article that follows is reprinted from the March 11, 1915, issue of the *Iola Herald*.]

Below we give another letter from an old time resident, written in response to the *Herald's* call for reminiscences [sic] of the olden days. We hope many more will drop in with like letters, for they are not only interesting to the elder people as a reminder of the olden time, but are interesting to our young in letting them see what grandfather, grandmother, father or mother had to meet up with in their day. We thank the writer for this letter and trust that she may see fit to favor us again.

Newburg, Ore., Jan 28, 1915.

Editor *Iola Herald*; "The Home Paper" usually reaches us on Monday after the date of print, and is always welcome, doubly so this week on account of the letter from S. S. Chandler, an old schoolmate and friend, which brings to mind the good old happy days when we were young, and only saw the rosy side of life, Happy Childhood.

I well remember the first glimpse I ever got of little Iola. It was about 9 p.m. on Dec. 4, 1856. All tired, cold and hungry, not in good condition to look favorably upon unfavorable conditions, as I see it now, then it was open mouthed wonder, "what next."

My parents, Mr. & Mrs. J. J. Hatch with their six children had made the journey from Waukegan, Ill., with three wagons loaded with household goods and provisions, drawn by oxen. The last two nights heavy snow fell to the depth of two feet, so the last day we dragged through a trackless waste of snow from Waupaca to Iola, stopped by the roadside to "dine" and feed and rest our faithful steeds.

The novelty of the journey was all gone when we got to Scandinavia (three or four buildings there) and were told Iola was farther on. When we saw the light at the "Old Woman's Grocery" our hopes revived, but no, it was just a little farther on. (Father and mother had been there in the summer before.)

Well, when we rounded up over the south hill, and looked down the long road, woods on all sides, before and behind, and only a few twinkling lights from the tallow dips in the few shacks scattered around, I felt as tho [sic] we were going down into a swamp lighted by fire-flies. The impression never left me.

But the long winter was full of wonderful things for us newcomers. School in a little rough board house about where the M.E. church [Methodist Episcopal Church] stands. I believe, Joseph Osborn was the teacher. Desks were built against the wall, bench along the front. We had to swing our feet over to face our desk and back again to face the teacher.

A good many of us had never seen a "live" Indian. One day the cry came, "Indians down town," we all rushed down to Blandin's store for a peep, did not stop long. Then the coasting down the long school hill where the boys built up thank 'e ma'ams [sic] to give impetus so we could go away down to Dr. Noyce's.

- Continued on Page 7



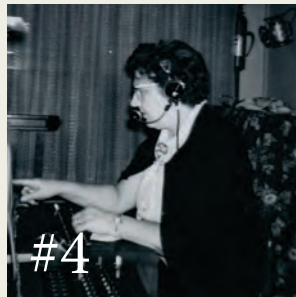
No pictures are known to exist of Iola's first "little rough board" schoolhouse, as described in the accompanying reminiscence, that greeted the children of the early pioneer settlers. This photo of an impressive new structure, that replaced it a few years later, was apparently taken at its completion. The student body had grown substantially, numbering upwards of 40, with the staff likely numbering five, according to a head count of those individuals captured in the picture.

Switchboard Operators Were Once Central to Iola's Telephone System

In the days before dial telephone service came to Iola – December 20, 1962 – a team of operators were engaged to connect the community's residents and businesses with the outside world. The switchboard exchange equipment was situated in the brick-faced building that stands between present day 125 and 135 (130?) South Main Street. Captured in these pictures from the late-1950s, 1960-62 era, drawn from the archive in our Strand Resource Center, are six of those lady operators.

We actually possess the identifications of these ladies, who were staffing the switchboard at the time of the switchover from operator assisted calling to direct dial service, so this time our "mystery photo" is putting a challenge to the depth of reader memories as to who those operators were. Do you know the identities of some or all of these ladies. After testing your memory, turn to the box on page 7 for confirmation of the validity of your identifications. As a bonus identify the "Chief Operator."

An article in the Dec. 20, 1962, issue of the Iola Herald detailed; "There had been nine switchboard operators and three relief women at Scandinavia and Iola prior to the (1962) switchover." At that time the Scandinavia Telephone Company was serving nearly 1,000 subscribers over 180 miles of line. Ray Voigt was the general manager, Mrs. Robert Smith handled accounting, Lee Nelson was responsible for the central office equipment, and Ray Helmkamp for the outside plant.



Threshing Crew . . . Plus Two!



The nostalgic Threshing Crew mystery photo reproduced in the Fall 2024 issue turned out to be a real puzzler. No crew member names, or speculation on the location at which the image was captured were advanced. Not a single person even stepped forward with so much as speculative thoughts on the identity of the threshing machine or the steam engine sitting at either end of the drive belt, as captured in the photo. We encourage readers to step back and take a second look at the image, putting their knowledge bank or imagination to work. Direct your responses by phone: 715-445-5050; by e-mail: IolaHistoricalSociety@gmail.com; or by postal mail; IHS, P. O. Box 412, Iola, WI 54945. Any identifications received will be shared with readers in the Spring 2025 issue of the *Window* and archived in our Strand Resource Center historical database following publication.

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IOLA'S EARLY DAYS – Continued from Page 4

And then the “pitch pine gum” warranted never to wear out or fade. Quids [sic] of it sticking all over shacks and fences, resting. Then toward spring when “sap run” we learned to eat hot maple sugar waxed on snow. The more one ate the more he wanted; the sicker he got the sooner he could eat more.

Our first residence was a long narrow shack built by Abel Dufur directly behind another just like it built and occupied by his brother, Jackson Dufur, both headed to the west, built “tandem.” Some style in those days. They always reminded me of an old hen trying to hover a brood of grown-up chicks, the roof boards came so near the ground on both sides of the house.

I am quite sure the first wedding solemnized in Iola was that of my older sister Emma F. Hatch, and Augustus Chandler on August 24, 1857. Elder Burnham of Waupaca officiating.

Mr. Willard Baily was the first hotel proprietor in what is now the Anson House. Mr. McKenzie operated the first furniture “factory.” Mr. Beckwith, the first wagon shop. Mr. Blandin, the first store.

Dr. Noyce was the only doctor for several years. Mr. Mort. Earl was our first real fiddler. Tho’ Ed. Crosier sometimes played, “The Girl I Left Behind Me” and “Pop Goes the Weasel” for the dance of the “Fairies.” He was also the first “photographer” or tintypist [sic].

My father was carpenter and builder of “ancient Iola.” Good old deacon Burnham conducted religious services, teaching us “line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little,” until the people were able to make a donation for the support of a preacher. He had the misfortune to lose one eye, which seemed to enhance the size of the other, so when he knelt before his congregation with the good eye wide open looking at them, they all looked sorry and solemn.

In the early summer of 1859, the patriotic mothers and daughters made by hand Iola’s first “Star Spangled Banner,” 24 feet by 12 in size, and the good fathers and sons erected a fine liberty pole in the commons east of the M.E. church, and on the morning of the 4th of July the flag was run up and unfurled to the breeze o’er the heads of a proud, loyal, happy people. There were many splendid singers gathered there (whose wealth of tone, power and sweetness had not been “cultivated” out of their voices) who rolled the strains of “The Star Spangled Banner” to the skies, and is echoing yet o’er the hills of time.

As my letter is mostly of “firstlys” [sic] I will mention Iola’s first tragedy (that I ever knew of). A man living all alone in a little shack out north of town returned home one evening from a day’s labor somewhere, and without “turning on” the lights crawled into his bunk and went to sleep. When he awoke in the morning there was a man hanging by the neck over his bed, dead. He was given a Christian burial, but it was never known who he was or where he came from. That was in the summer of 1857.

The first settlers of Iola, some thirty or forty families, were nearly, if not all, New Englanders, the brain and brawn of the earth. Iola was born of splendid “parentage” to whom its spirit of enterprise of today is due. Of the Vermonters (my native state) there were the families of Jackson Dufur, Abel Dufur, Ormel Howe, Orville Flint, J.J. Hatch, Mr. Beckwith, Enoch Burnham, his son, Joe Burnham, son-in-law, Ed. Northey.

The privations and hardships of those days I must leave for others to relate who took that view of those experiences, for I was busy getting acquainted with the new order of things, and every thing was immediately novel and funny to me then, and comes trooping back to me now.

This letter coming across the continent may not find a place in your paper, but let me hope that the old timers are not all dead, nor walking the earth in sleep, but will at least sit up and say “hello.”

Yours for 1856, Dec. 4th,

E. A. S.

Where? Who? What? When? Answers



Switchboard Operators Key to Identifications:

#1 / Pamela Olson
#2 / Margaret Wilhelm
#3 / Vera Austin
#4 / Julia Tackman

#5 / Evelyn Swenson, Chief Operator
Margaret Wilhelm in background
#6 / Ruth Trinrud

Gone, But Fondly Recalled

Lest we forget, recalled below are valued friends and members who passed recently. Please remember them with appreciation, as you reflect on their valued contributions to preserving the heritage of our community and area.

Wayne H. Towne

Passing away on January 10, 2025, at Keshena surrounded by his loving family, 86-year-old Wayne H. Towne was born in Waupaca on May 1, 1938, the son of the late Hazen and Annie (Jenson) Towne. He was a Class of 1956 graduate of Waupaca High School, following which he earned an Industrial Education bachelor's degree at Stout State College. Thereafter, Wayne enjoyed a teaching career, with successful extended tenures in the Milwaukee Public School system, earning the "Lake Stewardship Man of the Year" recognition in 1975, and at the College of the Menominee Nation. A life member of the Iola Historical Society, he conveyed the Towne Family Native American Culture Artifacts Collection to the Society, now on prominent display in our museum as a family memorial. With few exceptions, the collected artifacts displayed were unearthed by family members while tending the fields of their Waupaca County potato farm and nearby locations.

Donors & Loaners

The Iola Historical Society expresses its appreciation to the following individuals and organizations for contributing donations to our archive of historical relics, and/or cash gifts, or in-kind services support benefitting its operations, during the past quarter:

October – November – December

Archival Donations of Historic Relics:

Aaron Erdman (Scandinavia Academy catalogs and related), Sharon Rustad ("Ghost Towns of Waupaca County" and "Early History of Waupaca" historic book reprints by Krause Publications), Sue Voie (two Krause Publications glass dishes).

Donations of Cash and In-Kind Services:

Sarah Abramson (cash, Log Cabin maintenance), Louis & Louise Adams, cash, Iola Depot renovations), Marie App (cash, 1903 Ford or 1894 Depot funds), Mary Jane Bennett (cash, Chet Krause display), Kathy Bestul (cash, Log Cabin maintenance), Trey & Mary Foerster (cash, Iola Depot renovations), Susan Freistedt (microfiche viewer and Wisconsin birth films), Linda George (cash, 1903 Ford endowment replenishment), Cindy Glapinski (cash, unrestricted memorial for Julian Wesley), Edward K Heyes (cash, endowment), I-S Chamber of Commerce (cash, use of Machine Shed for "Kids Visit Santa Claus" event), Ruth Johnson (cash, Log Cabin maintenance), Greg Loescher (sign boards for building exteriors, cash for 1903 Ford Model A fund replenishment, Iola Depot renovations, Log Cabin maintenance fund, Chet Krause display completion), Chris Mortenson (cash, endowment), Murnell Olson (cash, endowment), Charles W. & Nola Thompson (ash, use of Machine Shed for family event), Julian Wesley (cash, 1903 Ford endowment replenishment), Faith Wolberg (cash, Iola Depot and associated renovations).

2025 Supporting Members

The Iola Historical Society wishes to express special thanks and recognition to the following individuals and organizations for their dedicated Supporting Member financial contributor status for the ongoing operational activities of the Society:

Louis & Louise Adams, Scott & Karri Bestul, LeRoy & Carolyn Borth, Central Wisconsin Electric Cooperative, Donna Hooker, Iola & Rural Fire Service, Ruth C. Johnson, Lanna & Don Langdok, Thomas & Linda Martin.

2025 EVENTS SCHEDULE

Monday, February 24, 2025

5:30 IHS Board Meeting
6:30 IHS Membership Meeting
7:00 Program

Monday, March 31, 2025

5:30 IHS Board Meeting
6:30 IHS Membership Meeting
7:00 Program

Monday, April 28, 2025

5:30 IHS Board Meeting
6:30 IHS Membership Meeting
7:00 Program

Monday, May 26, 2025

Noon – 2:00 pm Memorial Day
2025 Annual Pork Roast
Salute to Military Veterans

Tuesday, May 27, 2025

5:30 IHS Board Meeting
6:30 IHS Membership Meeting
7:00 Program

Sunday, June 22, 2025

11:00 am – 2:00 pm
2025 Annual Strawberry Fest
Fundraiser & Collectibles Fair

Monday, June 30, 2025

5:30 IHS Board Meeting
6:30 IHS Membership Meeting
7:00 Program

Monday, July 28, 2025

5:30 IHS Board Meeting
6:30 IHS Membership Meeting
7:00 Program

Tuesday, September 2, 2025

**Postponed August Meeting –
This Change Accommodates
Member Travels to Gausdal**

5:30 IHS Board Meeting
6:30 IHS Membership Meeting
7:00 Program

Monday, September 29, 2025

5:30 IHS Board Meeting
6:30 IHS Membership Meeting
7:00 Program

Saturday, October 4, 2025

10:00 am – 2:00 pm
2025 Annual Taste of Norway
& Lost Arts Fair
Includes Fall Gift & Craft Show

Monday, October 27, 2025

5:30 IHS Board Meeting
6:30 IHS Membership Meeting
Last 2025 Business Meeting
2026 Board/Officer Elections
Discuss, Approve 2026 Budget
7:00 Program

**All Members and General Public Welcome to
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