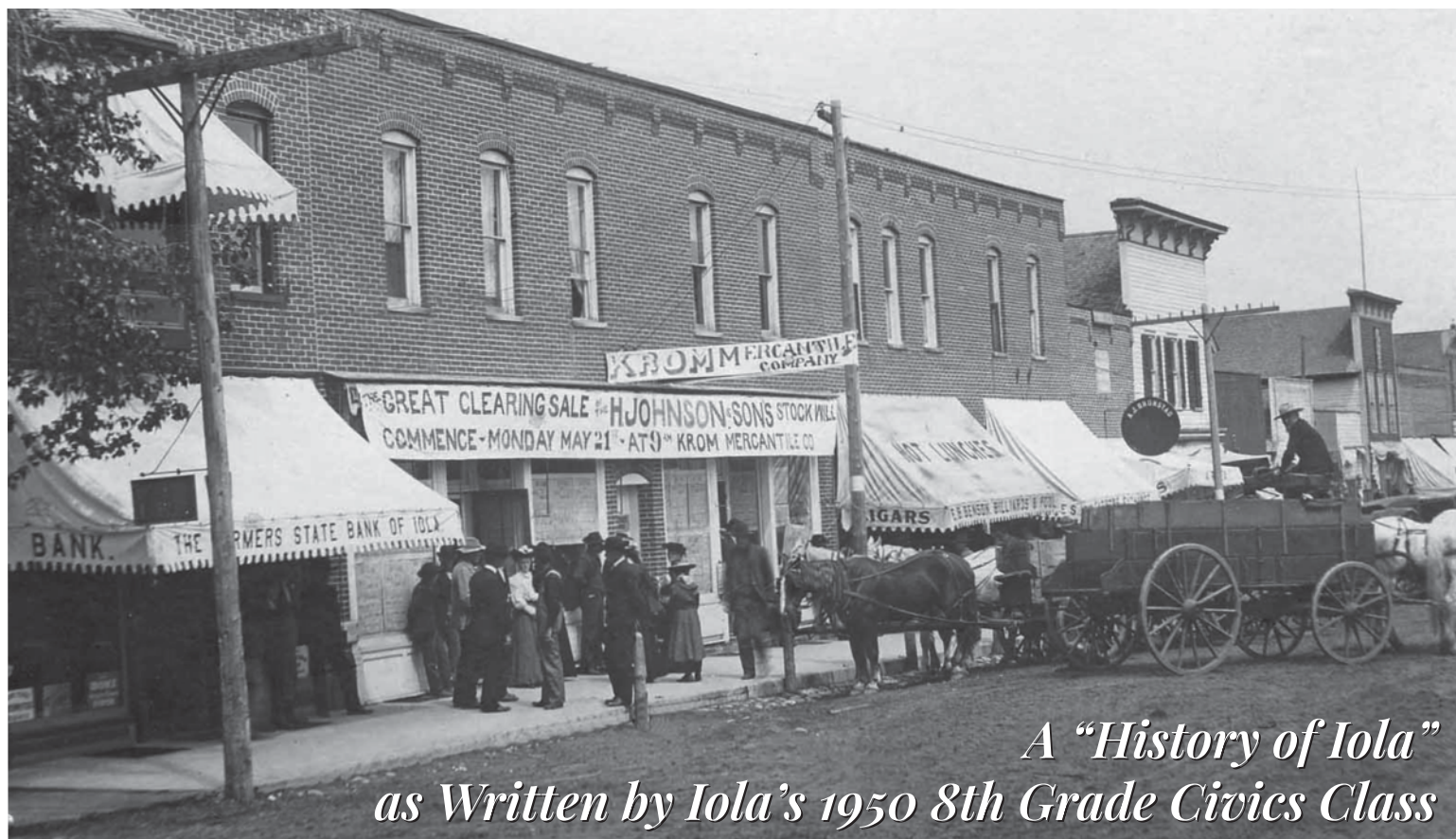


The Iola Historical Society's WINDOW



QUARTERLY MEMBER AND ACTIVITIES NEWSLETTER

VOL. 19, NO. 4 | Fall 2026



*A “History of Iola”
as Written by Iola’s 1950 8th Grade Civics Class*

The above early 20th century postcard view captured (December 24, 1906, postmark) the west side of the North Main Street business block from the Farmers State Bank of Iola business location northward. Note that the local populace was gathering next door for the imminent commencement of the “Great Clearance Sale” of the H. Johnson & Sons mercantile store inventory by the successor Krom Mercantile Company on a Monday, May 21, (1906), at nine o’clock.

Located on the south branch of the Little Wolf River in the western part of Waupaca County and surrounded by a productive agricultural and dairy country, the village of Iola represents one of the most prosperous communities of Waupaca County in the 1850’s.

Iola Is Named

There was a race of Indians that migrated from New York state through the Great Lakes landing at Green Bay. They named themselves the Pottowottomi Indian tribe after their Chief. This tribe moved west from Green Bay to the territory now known as Waupaca County.

The place where the village of Iola is now located was named after an Indian girl by the name of Iola. She was a niece of Chief Waupaca of the Pottowottomi Indian tribe. She was a daughter of old Red Bird, a brother of Chief Waupaca.

Iola (the child) was named in 1829.

The Settlement Founded

Iola was born as a settlement when Col. J. W. Chandler, S. S. Chander and S. Miller appeared upon the scene (c. 1853) and commenced to build a dam and otherwise develop the water

— Continued on Page 4

The **Iola Historical Society**

210 Depot Street - PO Box 412
Iola, WI 54945
iolahistoricalociety@gmail.com
www.iolahistoricalociety.org
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Leftovers!

Leftovers are always part of the game in publishing . . . unused residue . . . that as in moviemaking . . . hit the cutting-room floor.

Such leftovers are often held in reserve for future publication . . . which prospects are often never realized.

Take the early 20th century street scene reproduced below. It was selected as an option for inclusion with the “History of Iola” featured in this issue. Opting for the pair of images presented, this one was deemed redundant and unnecessary.



This picture captures the north quarter of the west side of the first business block of North Main Street. While the building facades and occupying businesses have changed dramatically, in some cases frequently, over the past century, look closely and you will discern that the basic structures of the original facades have survived, save for the 175 North Main location, that along the way forsook wood siding for a brick and glass display front.

Present occupancies of these structures are by (left to right): 175 North Main is a residential structure but for many years hosted bakery businesses, Too-Dars Diner, 185 North Main is presently inactive, Lessons from the Art, and 10LA Corner Bar and Grill.

As this issue of the *Window* was being closed out, I pondered, should I save it for future application, return it to the archive, or tuck it away in this issue . . . so here it is . . . for your enjoyment . . . and reflection.

Think of the merchandise and citizens that have passed through those doors . . . seeking to fill their daily needs . . . from hardware to soft goods . . . from groceries to household goods . . . along with meals and neighborly interactions on family, sports and politics.

Leftovers! . . . never to be shunted aside and forgotten as insignificant.

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the burg • the burg • the burg

VILLAGE – Continued from Page 1

power. A short distance east, on Section 36, two sturdy young Swiss, J. & C. Wipf had commenced to clear the quarter of land which their father Henry had secured from the government.

Village Platted and Post Office Established

Messrs. Chandler and Miller had their little sawmill in operation before 1854. The following year M. R. Baldwin became a resident and erected the first frame house. The village was platted in 1855 and Mr. Baldwin started a store.

The outlook was so bright that the post office of Iola was established by the government in 1856 and Mr. Baldwin, the storekeeper, was appointed postmaster. The post office was housed until 1941 in the building which is now the town hall. In 1941, it was moved to the building which it now occupies until 1964. It was a third class post office until 1945, when it became second class.

The Versatile First Minister

About a mile northeast of Iola, Rev. James J. Hatch settled on a farm and soon afterward in 1856 preached the first sermon ever preached in the village. Mr. Hatch was enough of a painter, glazier, carpenter, mason, carriage maker and an undertaker to turn a practicle [sp.] hand to any of these trades.

He was a “hoss” carriage maker and withal [sp.] well educated and an earnest preacher. Six weeks after coming to Waupaca County he was appointed town superintendent of schools, which he virtually held for nine years, or until the county superintendency was created. For many years he was also the justice of the peace.

Iola in 1856

The following is a description of the village in 1856, the year after it was platted: “Iola is a wideawake and promising little village, located in the western part of Waupaca County, twenty miles west of New London and eleven miles north of Waupaca village. It is about equal distance between that village and Stevens Point. Iola is in the midst of a beautiful prairie and opening country, and possesses good water power, and was settled by New Englanders mostly from Maine and Vermont.

“The prospects of Iola are flattering. The

Stevens Point State Road will pass through the place, which will tend to make it an inland village of growing importance. Iola is in an excellent wheat growing district. There is also good water-power in the vicinity.”

The Wipf Mills

In 1860, Henry Wipf with his sons, Jacob and Conrad, traded their farm east of Iola for two-thirds interest in the sawmill and later secured sole ownership. They rebuilt the mill both in 1862 and 1898. A shed for storing dry lumber was erected later.

– Continued on Page 7

An Iola View

The article presented adjoining is reprinted from the January 19, 1950, edition of the *Iola Herald*, with this notation; “It will probably be found lacking in some details and might not be 100 percent correct but should prove interesting none-the-less. It is good to know that the younger generation takes an interest in the history of their community.”

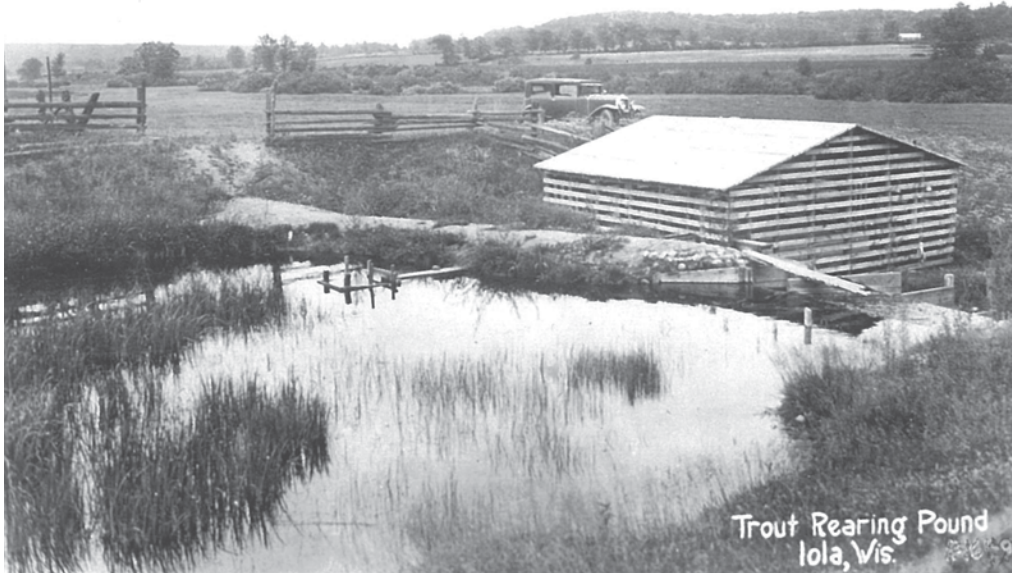


This view of the west side of the business block of North Main Street, from State Street to Depot Street, starts with the Graystone Building and dates from the 1940s.

The youngsters in reference were the 8th Grade Civics Class students at the Iola Grade School who compiled and wrote the text. Much of what they presented has been refined and corrected over the past three-quarters of a century, but the essence of the perspective they offered readers is as valid today as it was back then. Be mindful as you read it.

“From a study of history as a whole (readers) can learn much that will be of value to them as they go through life,” the editor’s preface to the presentation concluded. That’s as true today as it was then. The process of refinement is a never-ending process. History today is the ever-evolving refinement of the past that we endeavor to preserve!

We Know the What? What About the Who, Where & When?



This vintage snapshot photo, likely from the 1930s, recently came into the Iola Historical Society's possession. Hopefully, there is an old-timer sportsman out there, who has first-hand or passed-down recall of where the *Trout Rearing Pond* was located, who was the person who was responsible for its operation, and how long it operated?

Let us know any pertinent information you can share with fellow readers? Direct your responses by e-mail: iolahistoricalsociety@gmail.com, by postal mail: IHS, P.O. Box 412, Iola, WI 54945; by phone message: 715-445-IOLA (4652); or stop by my office: 105 North Main Street.

IOOF Structure Dominated Downtown Iola

This imposing mystery structure pictured in the Summer 2026 issue of the *Window*, dominated downtown Iola at the corner of North Main and Water streets from 1889 into early 1961.

Built in 1889 to serve the Independent Order of Odd Fellows (IOOF) – Iola Lodge #282 was chartered on March 13, 1878, with the Noble Grand being Dr. George Dale, and A.H. Dufur, Ole Sether, Horace Cleaves, Eli Earl and John Murat as fellow signatories,

holding forth on the upper level – the lower level of which served as the Opera House or Iola Theater, as the building was often identified.



“The building for a time served as the local theater,” member Lee Halverson recalls. “As a kid growing up in the 1950s, I remember going to several Western movies there with my neighbor, Oscar Loberg. Oscar, as an aside, was a retired Norwegian farmer who seemed to be able to talk without moving his lips.

“I can still hear him saying; ‘Well, Lee, there’s a western in Iola on Saturday, want to go?’ Actors and actresses I still readily recall from the movies we attended, include Roy Rogers, Dale Evans, Gene Autry, John Wayne, Walter Brennan, Maureen O’Hara, and Gregory Peck.”

Recalling the 1950s . . . the building’s Iola Theater days.

– Continued on Page 7

IOLA HISTORICAL SOCIETY BUSINESS PARTNER DIRECTORY

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VILLAGE – Continued from Page 4

The flour mill was built in 1862. In 1874, Henry disposed of his interest in the mills to his sons, J. and C. Wipf who conducted them until the time of their death. Conrad died in 1889 and his sons Frederick C. and Henry C. succeeded him in business. When Frederick C. died Frederic J. took over the business and is still running it. The Wipf Mills therefore embody the history of Iola.

Church and Societies

The Methodist and Lutherans have organizations in Iola. The first religious organization was the Methodist Episcopal Church, founded in 1858, Reverend Alcott being the first settled pastor. Their church was erected in 1880, the Lutheran Church in 1901. The village also supports a number of lodges, the Odd Fellows being the most active. The Odd Fellows lodge was organized in 1878, and erected a new hall in 1891.

The School

One of the first schools in Iola was a white frame building which was used as a grade school. The center part of the brick building was built in 1856. In 1912 the west part of the brick building was built and used for a grade school. In 1928 the Gym and Assembly were added. Now in 1949 a Home Ec. and an Agriculture classroom was added.

Newspaper

J. M. Hatch started the *Iola Messenger* wk. [sp.: weekly?] in 1883. It was discontinued after two years.

The *Iola Herald* was established in 1891, and is still our weekly paper. It's [sp.] building is said to be the oldest building in Iola. It was a supply station for loggers.

Banks

The Bank of Iola was organized as a private institution in 1893 and incorporated as a state bank in 1903.

The Farmers State Bank was organized in 1900 and in 1901 incorporated as a state bank, the first to be organized under the state law in Waupaca County. It was closed in 1933 during the depression.

Other Details

During the history of Iola, it has had three kinds of lights. Iola's Main Street was paved in 1927 by the Bosserts of Stevens Point.

At one time there was a clothes reel factory where Cliftons Mill is now and a starch factory where the pickle factory now stands. The first fire department was started in 1901.

Where Pauline Thulien now has her dress shop, Dr. Dale once had a drugstore. He lived upstairs and if you wanted him you went out in back and rang the door bell.

There also was a fire bell out in back!??? One day a man went into the drugstore and was asking for Doctor Dale. He was told to go out in back and ring the bell. He did and the whole bucket brigade was ready for action. Fortunately, no fire occurred.

IOOF STRUCTURE – Continued from Page 5



Horse and Buggy Days view of the IOOF Hall structure.

The unoccupied “fire hazard” IOOF hall/theater structure was razed and disposed of in the winter of 1962 – Jan. 7 to April 1 – following its “long sought” acquisition by trading that was approved by village board action on Nov. 7, 1961, with the resulting vacant lot being designated for off-street parking for the vehicles of downtown business owners and employees. Community volunteers built an illuminated “Ice Palace” on the lot facing Main Street for the 1962 Christmas season and the 1963 “Winter Carnival,” with the area a few years later becoming the location for building a new facility for the First State Bank of Iola.

At this point . . . we’d still like to hear from more of our members and friends . . . sharing their recollections from Iola Theater days?

2026/2027 EVENTS SCHEDULE

Monday, October 26, 2026

5:30 IHS Board Meeting
6:30 IHS Membership Meeting
Last 2026 Business Meetings
2027 Board/Officer Elections
Discuss, Approve 2027 Budget
7:00 Program

Saturday, December 5, 2026

4:30 Post-Christmas Parade
Children Visit Santa Program
Hosted at IHS Machine Shed

Monday, December 14, 2026

2026 Annual IHS Christmas
Potluck Banquet & Program
Hosted at the Iola Mills Café

Monday, January 25, 2027

5:30 IHS Board Meeting
6:30 IHS Membership Meeting
First 2027 Business Meetings
7:00 Program

Monday, February 22, 2027

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

Monday, March 29, 2027

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

Monday, April 26, 2027

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

Monday, May 31, 2027

Noon – 2:00 pm Memorial Day
2027 Annual Pork Roast
Salute to Military Veterans

Tuesday, June 1, 2027

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

Sunday, June 27, 2027

11:00 am – 2:00 pm
2026 Annual Strawberry Fest
Fundraiser & Collectibles Fair

Monday, June 28, 2027

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

Monday, July 26, 2027

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

Monday, August 30, 2027

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

Monday, September 27, 2027

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

Saturday, October 2, 2027

10:00 am – 2:00 pm
2027 Annual Taste of Norway
& Lost Arts Fair; Including
Community Gift & Craft Show

Monday, October 25, 2027

5:30 IHS Board Meeting
6:30 IHS Membership Meeting
Last 2027 Business Meetings
2028 Board/Officer Elections
Discuss, Approve 2028 Budget
7:00 Program

Saturday, December 4, 2027

4:30 Post-Christmas Parade
Children Visit Santa Program
Hosted at IHS Machine Shed

Monday, December 13, 2027

2027 Annual IHS Christmas
Potluck Banquet & Program
Hosted at the Iola Mills Café

**All Members and General Public Welcome to
Attend All Meetings and Programs
(All IHS activities held at Depot Street
complex unless otherwise indicated.)**

Donors & Loaners

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

July – August – September

Archival Donations of Historic Relics:

Jon Beyer (1914 Helvetia voter poll list), Richard & Tom Sroda (selection of framed Iola Rock Fest photos).

Donations of Cash and In-Kind Services:

Jana L Jones (for Machine Shed epoxy floor and endowment replenishment), Clifford & Sally Mishler (sponsor donation for Taste of Norway), Ride for Heroes (potato chip package excess from 2026 event).

2026 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, Mark & Ann Forseth, Mary & Charles Gipp, Donna Hooker, Iola & Rural Fire Service, Ruth C. Johnson, Jana L. Jones, Lanna & Don Langdok, Dale & Robbie Louison, Thomas & Linda Martin, Too-Dars Diner.