



**Quarterly Membership Meeting of the Oconomowoc Area Historical Society**

**Program to be held at the Museum, 103 W. Jefferson Street**

**Saturday October 29, 2016**

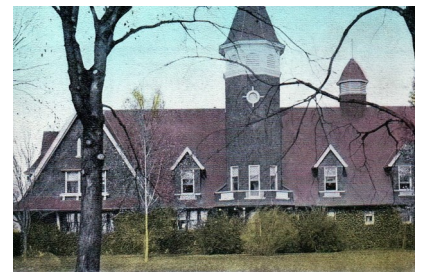
**9:30 am Coffee & Conversation; 10:00 am Membership Meeting**

**Program to Follow**

**By Tom Ellett**



**The Dupees and the Edgemoor Estate:  
Oconomowoc's forgotten famous family**



During Oconomowoc's time as the "Newport of the Midwest," John Dupee was so well known that a mention of his name in the New York Times or the San Francisco Chronicle required no explanation as to his identity. His "cottage," Edgemoor, was not only the grandest house in a plethora of grand houses, it was often called the finest house in the West (it was a time when everything west of the original thirteen colonies was called "the West"). Yet, today, even the residents of Oconomowoc have forgotten the man who was a founder of the local yacht club and country club and helped finance many city improvements. After Dupee left Oconomowoc for the last time in the summer of 1913, his palatial country manor never again hosted a wealthy family or had lasting purpose. Yet, there were a few, brief, fascinating episodes in the subsequent years. October 29th's talk will chart the rise and fall of the Dupee family and the ultimate destruction of Edgemoor.

**Santa Claus is coming to the museum!**

**Sunday December 11th from 12 pm—2:00 pm**

Parents and grandparents ... do plan to bring your young ones to the museum. Santa's elves are sure to have cocoa, cookies and things to do while waiting to talk with Santa.

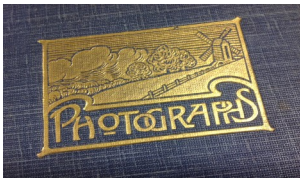


## ARCHIVAL COMMITTEE



Summer was quite busy with visitors and researchers. One of the most exciting research events was about the Clarus camera which was purchased and offered by LaBelle Industries in the 1950s. In this newsletter you will see information about this research project.

The Archival Committee and Local History Committee members have been working tirelessly to go through the library materials that were acquired last year. They would very much like to say that they were making great progress, but unfortunately, they have only scratched the surface! What has been fun and keeps them going is the fact that there are so many new articles and photographs in the collection. Many of the photographs are the original photographs we had been looking for when first discovered in news articles. Original photos are much more valued.



Photographs are more than just a picture! They take us back to the many things that occurred in the past, help us recall old memories, and easily bring together people from all over. If you have the ability to put Facebook on your computer or your phone, we encourage you to follow us. Members on our Facebook site have had many conversations and discussions about the photos of past events which we have posted there. Residents who have moved away from the area are thrilled to see many of the pictures and to listen to and be a part of the discourse on happenings in their past life. And people who visit the area are following us, too.



Facebook has also helped us with our research by verifying sites of homes and places and confirming past events and the dates that the events occurred. We are able to tie together the feelings and experiences that the community had at a particular time, allowing us, as well, to compare activities of today and how things have either changed or remained the same.

While collecting, accessioning, and archiving photos, we are compiling albums of the works of Francis Poe and Douglas Munger. These photographers were quite prolific in their individual careers, and each took excellent portraits, scenic pictures, and still life renderings. They had a vision for scenes of importance and knew how to capture the moment. Much of the history of the area would be lost, had it not been for their fine work.

A great thank you to Trich Kwitek for her volunteer work searching and filing hundreds of photos and to Abby Eigenberger for her typing the collection of obituaries. We now have searchable records of obituaries during the years pre-2000 through 2015. Sandie Carter continues her volunteer work sorting photos from articles, filing articles, and assisting in the research. Rebecca Eash spends little time in the museum office but is always available to us for research on topics.

Last and certainly not least is Barbara #3, our employee! She has been with us over a year now, and what a delight it is to have her happy and inviting self to greet visitors and volunteers! Barb has learned many tasks and has been a great asset to the operations of the museum. Eager to learn, she attended several museum related classes and a class on developing awareness of our museum through Facebook. Immediately, she put these studies into action, and the conversations have grown to daily activity and compounded exponentially. The archival records and artifacts are now recorded on a more consistent basis and are improved as she plows through the massive material.

## LOCAL HISTORY

As one of many volunteers at our museum, I so enjoy it when someone walks into the office to inquire about a long lost relative from Oconomowoc. This summer, a gentleman traveled here from California to find his relative who was buried in the La Belle Cemetery. His name was James Jones, and he was a Civil War veteran. Needless to say, I was elated to discover several articles about him in our files. After reading the articles, I thought you might be interested in who this famous Oconomowoc resident was. Here is an article from the *Milwaukee Journal* from August 8, 1942, written shortly after he died:

*James F. Jones, 96, a Civil War veteran who entered the soldiers' home here on January 15 from Oconomowoc, Wis., died Friday at the home. He was the state commander of the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR). Jones enlisted in Company B, 39th Wisconsin infantry, in 1863, when he was 16, against the wishes of his parents, and served with the army of Tennessee. His brother, William, his elder by two years, was shot while on sentry duty in a surprise raid by the Confederates at Memphis, Tenn. William died in his brother's arms.*



*After he was mustered out of the army in 1864, Jones returned to Oconomowoc, where he took up the trade of carpenter, which in a small community adds up to general handyman for everybody. He worked in Chicago and in Peshtigo, Wis., repairing the damage done by disastrous fires in 1871.*

*Adventure beckoned during the gold rush to the Black Hills in 1876, and Jones set out in a horse and wagon with another man. They found no gold and the Indians stole their horse and wagon. Jones walked all the way back from South Dakota to his home in Oconomowoc. His boots wore out on the long trek, and he came home barefooted.*

*Jones was born in 1846 at Batavia, N. Y., and in the same year his parents moved to Oconomowoc, two years before Wisconsin became a state. The father, Henry G. Jones, a tailor, served for many years as a city treasurer of Oconomowoc. The son was one of the founders of the La Belle Masonic lodge at Oconomowoc, one of the oldest Masonic lodges in the state.*

*Jones, always active in GAR affairs, boasted that he had not missed a single state or national convention of the organization. He was one of a handful of veterans who attended the seventy-fifth annual GAR convention at Gettysburg in 1940.*

*The death of Jones left the soldiers' home again without a Civil War veteran. William P. Bryant died there September 30 and the home was then for the first time without a Civil War veteran until Mr. Jones took up residence. At one time several thousand Civil War veterans lived at the home. About a score remain in the state.*

*He remained as active as his age permitted to the last. Last Memorial Day he rode in two parades, in the morning in Waukesha, where he had joined his company to march off to the Civil War, and in the afternoon on Wisconsin Ave. in Milwaukee. He was the only Civil War veteran in the Milwaukee parade.*

*Before he entered the soldiers' home, Jones lived with his niece, May Erredge, at Oconomowoc. Funeral services have been set for 2 p.m. Sunday at the Lyke funeral home in Oconomowoc.*

### EXHIBITS COMMITTEE

Since the Exhibits Committee does not meet during the summer months, there is no "new news" for *THE O CHRONICLES* to publish in this issue. Members of the committee, nonetheless, sincerely hope all of you who have visited the museum this 2016 Season have enjoyed viewing our new exhibits and checking out the enhancements made to some older displays, as well. We are also hoping that you have urged your friends, relatives, and neighbors to visit us and to see what our city and those of us serving on its Historical Society take such great pride in. There is still time to "come on down" any Thursday, Friday, or Sunday afternoon or by appointment, if you prefer, of course. And too, who knows what brand new exhibits will be in store for visitors to admire during the 2017 Season? Touring our building on the corner of Jefferson and South Main more than a time or two may be full of surprises. So, see you at the museum!

Shirley Hinds, Chair

## MEMBERSHIP

Greetings to all our members! Please note that membership fees for the society's new fiscal year, which runs from November 1st to October 31st, are due on November 1, 2016, which will be here before you know it! Some of you have already sent in dues or maybe paid twice for last year, but if you see a colorful membership renewal form tucked inside this newsletter, you'll know that your "dues are due", and, if not, you are good for another year. The membership form is also on the back of this newsletter, so if you don't need it, pass it on to a friend who might be a prospective new member for us.

Since our last newsletter in July, Janet Gibeau and Dick and Pat Mueller have joined as Historical Society members...welcome!! We look forward to working with you in our society's activities. We are always in need of new people willing to invest time and energy in our organization, so don't hesitate to talk up our organization to friends and family.

Our membership role as of September, 2016 shows a total of 252 memberships with a breakdown of 110 single memberships, and 67 (134) couples' memberships, along with 8 student memberships. There are also 8 organization, 6 business, and 1 municipality memberships, for a total of 15 in this category. Lastly, we maintain 34 free memberships with a division of 10 historical societies or museums, 1 library, 13 local political memberships and 10 donations of \$500 or more.

Barb Elwood-Goetsch, Chair

### Birthdays – Special Days

#### Christmas Gifts



Have you thought of giving an Historical Society membership or purchasing one of our historical books or DVDs for that special day of celebration? Any of these would make a great gift that will last the entire year and give hours of entertainment.



**Always we need volunteers.** Young and young at heart are all welcomed. Please consider helping us out a few hours at the museum, or choose a project that can be done at home. Our volunteers leave us due to a move to a warmer place or simply retire after having served us for many years. Think about joining us, for we are sure we can find something you would like to do during the cold winter days. Stop in on a Tuesday or Thursday to see what we are up to, or call Nancy or Barb #3 at (262) 569-0740. We can't keep this fine museum going without your help

## MUSEUM HOURS

**Visiting hours will continue until December 2<sup>nd</sup>; 1 pm – 4 pm on Thursday, Friday and Sunday.**

Group tours are available through appointment. Please request well in advance so that volunteers can plan. We will re-open our regular visiting season May 4, 2017.

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**FALL SHOWERS** – We have not had an *April Shower* for several years because of the generous donations previously given. Thank you for helping keep our budget down. Now we ask for a "Fall Shower" of paper towels and napkins needed for our meetings and special events. A basket will be in the hall to accept donations.



## CLARUS CAMERA – LABELLE INDUSTRIES

We have been corresponding with a Michael Parker in Australia who, on his initial inquiry, asked about the Clarus camera as a LaBelle Industries product. His information was that LaBelle Industries had purchased the camera's manufacturing information from another maker.. Mr. Parker wondered if it were known from whom or what company had sold those rights, when it occurred, and how it was distributed after acquiring the rights.



We were on it immediately! Who knew that LaBelle Industries made a camera? We went through the records we have and, yes, this local business did, indeed, purchase the Clarus inventory from a manufacturer (who is still a mystery) and made a Pal camera from the former Bosley camera line in 1953. There was a Wescon camera made, too, which may have been the Clarus re-named. But Michael had information on the Clarus having been purchased from someone else. How did he have information we didn't have? The e-mails continued to various people we thought might know, and we inquired on Facebook and other sources to acquire more information. No one knew about it. Then, finally, we found a few paragraphs in a booklet from Ron Froemming. The camera was supposed to be ready in 1954, but too many production problems prevented a new product. At the same time, Japanese cameras with more features became quite popular ... and they were cheaper, too! So ended a short time of the camera's production at LaBelle Industries.

Back to our discussion with Mike we went with our new information. He then clarified some things for us. The Pal camera was entirely different from the Clarus, and the Wescon was the Clarus with a new name. Mike continued in an e-mail:

*This is gold! Thank you so much for persisting. Are you able to send me the book details to enhance the reference? So La Belle was not just a pretty face selling only projectors. They made gas masks, kitchen ware, outboard motor parts and, as we now know, cameras!*

*What has puzzled me is that later cameras often had a mixture of old and new parts. This is to some extent explained by La Belle buying the parts inventory from Clarus and having their own staff trained to assemble the cameras. I suspect that La Belle made no further parts but used the Clarus stock to put together cameras with whatever parts were available.*

*But the mystery is still not yet fully resolved. The short-lived successor to the Clarus was the Wescon camera. Most of these were identical with the Clarus in all but name although a few had quite different shutter and lens assemblies. The information you've provided indicates that La Belle had the intention of developing a new camera for 1954 but this stalled because of competition. So where did the Wescon cameras come from and who made them? In a previous email to you, I mentioned the Wescon Products Company at 5995 Hiawatha Dr., Winneconne, WI. Is there a possibility that La Belle worked with or owned this company? Finally, there's no indication in the information you sent as to what happened to any remaining stock of Clarus cameras after La Belle decided to get out of the camera business. Some of the later alterations for Wescon cameras are very close to work done by the International Camera Corporation in Chicago. But I've written to these guys and they claim to have no records or memory. Perhaps they just don't have a persistent researcher!*

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(continued from page 5)

This is where our research has taken us today. Mike is a retired individual who likes to write articles on various topics which interest him. Currently he is working on cameras and came across the Clarus. He hopes to publish an article on cameras, and when he does, he has promised to send us the article.

We had a delightful time corresponding with him through e-mail. Then one day he e-mailed us to tell us that, through his inquiries and research, he had a person in California, Jason McDonald, who would like to donate an actual Clarus camera to our museum! It had belonged to his grandfather. Since we did not have one in our collection, they would like to see it preserved in our collection!

A week later we had the camera! What a treasure and a beauty it is -- complete with a leather cover and case. How wonderful that it has found its way "back home" to Oconomowoc! We will have it on exhibit soon.

This is just one story of how we assist researchers. It is time-consuming and a tedious task, but so worth the results! If anyone can add to this camera story both Michael Parker and our Local History Committee would welcome the information.

### EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Here are your clues - What's constantly moving, always curious, and has an overpowering need to touch things. If you guessed "a typical 4-year old child," you'd be right. On Monday, September 12, nineteen 4-years old kindergarten children from St. Matthew's Evangelical Lutheran School came to visit our Oconomowoc Museum. Focusing on the concepts of OLD and NEW, volunteers shared eleven artifacts and encouraged the boys and girls to observe, think and make comparisons which we then talked about. Children were divided into small groups so there would be more opportunity to talk and touch. OLD objects used were a toaster, 1977 television, camera, typewriter, ice skates, bathing suit, sled, handkerchief, 1/4 pint glass milk bottle with paper cap, crank telephone, and a Victrola. At each of the eleven stations, the NEW artifact was covered up so children had to do some thinking and see what clues could be used to figure out what the object might be.



Following this activity, children had a chance to visit the train exhibit (always a hit!) and play an old game, *Drop the Handkerchief*, outside. Around 10:30 our young guests returned to St. Matthew's hopefully learning some new things and enjoying their visit - and maybe a bit tired and hungry. Special thanks to volunteers Barb Elwood-Goetsch, Jolayne Lindberg, and Debbie Michalak for their help. Appreciation, too, to teacher Andrea Neumann for seeing the value in bringing these young learners to our Oconomowoc Museum for their first ever field trip. Thanks also to the ten parents/grandparents who accompanied the boys and girls.

Volunteers continue to update resource material used by museum docents. This is a continually evolving project since our museum is not a static institution, but constantly changing. Since displays and exhibits change or new background material is discovered, information provided to our docents needs to be updated and as accurate as possible.

The "Historic Walking Tour Around Beautiful Fowler Lake" pamphlet is being edited to bring some of the information up-to-date, e.g. homes may either have been torn down or remodeled. Thank you to Fran Durkin and the late Rae Kinn for compiling the original tour guide.

Barb Hirsch, Museum Volunteer

## NOMINATIONS AND ELECTION



The Historical Society fiscal year ends on October 31<sup>st</sup>. The new year, therefore, begins on November 1<sup>st</sup>. The Nominations Committee will announce candidates for election to the Board of Directors for 2016-2017. All currently serving Directors whose terms are up this year will be contacted to determine if they will commit to another term. However, there is one directorial position currently open. If you are interested or know of someone interested in serving on the Board of Directors for the Oconomowoc Area Historical Society, please contact Nancy or Barb #3 at the office, (262) 569-0740. The slate of nominees will be presented for approval at the October 29th Membership Meeting.



## A SUCCESSFUL 2016 GEOCACHE

The Geocache 2016 kickoff was very successful. Five articles were written about the event, two by *The Enterprise*, two by *The Focus* and one by *30 West*. More than \$1,000 in prizes, donated from area businesses, were awarded to people who stayed the entire day. On what was reported as the second hottest day of the year, at 97 degrees and 100% humidity, geocachers from all over Wisconsin and a few from out of state came to enjoy the adventure! Thanks to Laurie Muffler, Curt and Barbara Eigenberger, Eric Nelson, Valerie St. George, and their children, the day went very well.

Laurie will need more volunteers to help with monitoring the cache sites all year and setting up a new event for next year. Please contact the museum office if you are interested, (262) 569-0740. The opportunity to earn a coin for this year's and last year's event is still available. When all caches are found and recorded, please mail or bring in your filled booklet, and your coin will be mailed to you.

Holding this event creates no cost for the Historical Society but brings in great awareness to our mission to promote and distribute history. When community sponsors partner with the Geocache by donating to the event, it not only brings identification of their businesses to the participants but possible new customers, as well! Donations may come in monetary form or in items for prizes. It is a win/win for all involved.



Do join us and the neighbors for another night at the museum to celebrate Halloween. As usual there will be treats and many things of interest on this haunting eve.

**Time is 6 pm—8 pm wear your finest costume  
on October 29th!**



**Were looking for you.....**



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OCONOMOWOC HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.

103 W Jefferson Street

P.O. BOX 245, OCONOMOWOC, WI 53066

Museum Visiting Hours

May - December 2nd

Thursday, Friday & Sunday 1 pm - 4 pm

(262)569-0740 / oahsm@att.net

Office/Research Open Tues. & Thurs 10 - 4 pm.

Call for other hours & Tours by appointment

Web: [oconomowochistoricalsociety.org](http://oconomowochistoricalsociety.org)

Follow us on Facebook

## MEMBERSHIP FORM

(New/ Renewal-Due November 1st )

### OCONOMOWOC HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.

Please make check payable to: OAHS&M C/O Membership P.O. Box 969 Oconomowoc, WI 53066

#### REGULAR

#### SENIOR (65+)

#### ORGANIZATIONAL

#### STUDENT

#### DONATIONS

\_\_\_ \$ 15 Individual

\_\_\_ \$ 12 Individual

\_\_\_ \$ 50

\_\_\_ \$ 2 each

\_\_\_ \$ 30 Couple

\_\_\_ \$ 24 Couple

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I would like to help

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\_\_\_ Newsletter/Publishing

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\_\_\_ Archival Committee

\_\_\_ Publicity

\_\_\_ Fundraising

\_\_\_ Refreshments

\_\_\_ Other

Form also on website