

# PANDEMIC!

By Johnna Buysse

Caught in the clutches of our own pandemic, thoughts understandably extend to similar situations in the past. Although there have been several pandemics in the last century, the one that most captures our attention is the 1918 flu pandemic, the infamous, and misnamed, “Spanish Influenza.” Reports tell us terrifying, yet fascinating, facts about the 1918 pandemic: an estimated 500 million people—or a third of the world’s population—became infected with the virus; in Wisconsin, almost 103,000 residents were ill and over 8,400 people died; the 1918 flu came in three waves—spring 1918, fall 1918, and spring 1919, and that it was the fall wave that was the most severe; the pandemic disproportionately affected young healthy adults ages 25-40; and, at the time, there was little understanding of viruses and no cure, making the pandemic even more terrifying for those who experienced it first-hand.



Hearing about national and state perspectives prompted us to wonder how our communities in Southwestern Dane County were impacted by the 1918 flu pandemic. We had a couple of family stories in our archives, but little actual data compiled. We began by looking at documents in the Society’s archives, especially the *Mount Horeb Times (MHT)* newspaper, as well as online resources. Along with several family stories provided by members, we were able to begin piecing together a community’s story during a very traumatic time in its past.

## INFLUENZA

All persons are notified of the presence of this disease and on account of its communicable character are warned against visiting or coming in contact with those sick with it. All persons sick with this disease are prohibited from leaving the premises or coming in contact in any way with the general public. All persons are forbidden to remove, obscure or mutilate this card or to interfere in any way with these restrictions, under penalty of a fine or imprisonment as provided in section 4608 of the statutes.

### SETTING ASIDE TODAY FOR TOMORROW

Help the Mount Horeb Area Historical Society save the stories and stuff that will define this extraordinary and difficult chapter in our collective history. Set aside correspondence, mailings, posters and other documents, and save digital photos that capture the local impact and individual experience of this global pandemic. At some point -- and we hope it's soon! - this will all be a "remember when."

Toilet paper hoarding became an early hallmark of COVID-19. As these empty shelves in March 2020 illustrate, Mount Horeb's Miller & Sons Supermarket was not immune to this peculiar nationwide trend. Such informal snapshots of the everyday will be invaluable research tools for future historians.



To set the scene, life in 1918 rural Dane County was drastically different than our lives today. Movies were silent and telephones were rare; about 25% of Mount Horeb families, and far fewer in rural areas, had a telephone. Long distance communication was usually by telegraph, or letter or postcard. Most news traveled by newspapers and word of mouth; in rural communities, neighbors often crossed paths at their local community centers—schoolhouses, churches, and cheese factories. Only 1 in 8 families in the Village of Mount Horeb, and about half of farming families, had an automobile. While Mount Horeb had a hospital on the west side of town, most sick families were visited by doctors in their own homes.

As in other parts of Wisconsin, the local first wave of influenza in the spring of 1918 was almost hidden in the background of the seasonal flu, or “the grippe” as it was then known; the illnesses and few deaths reported in the newspapers were typical of other flu seasons. Over the summer of 1918, occasional letters sent home by sons fighting in the war in Europe mentioned influenza, but ... *continued on pg 7*

# LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR: FACING DOWN HISTORY

A few days before our March 11 Board of Directors meeting, we hastily added a final agenda item under “New Business”—how to approach a potential museum closure due to the novel coronavirus. It was an international story that was just starting to hit close to home.

Just two days later, amid constant media coverage of a pandemic that was now unquestionably global, I was drafting an email to the Board requesting support for an almost-immediate closure of the Driftless Historium. We temporarily shut the doors on March 16.

That was it. Big History was here. Not Somewhere Else. Here. Everywhere.

As history happens around us, it is very difficult—even as professional historians—to remain cognizant of the Historic Moment, of the importance of capturing today’s extraordinary experiences for tomorrow.

Because, no doubt about it, the COVID-19 Pandemic of 2020 will be in the history books.

We are just too busy enduring; changing health guidelines, stay-at-home and social distancing; all concepts that just six months ago were totally foreign to almost all of us.



Destinee (Director, Mom, Newly Instated Principal of Udelhoven Homeschool) on a morning walk with Max, Mia and Mabel - part of this spring's safer-at-home routine.

In the 87 days since, the Mount Horeb Area Historical Society has been doing our best to be here for our community. We are still answering research calls, monitoring the facility and watching over the collection, sticking our toes into virtual programming and spotlighting web resources that can help you feel connected while safer at home—all while planning for a still-hazy future.

At this month’s Board meeting, we will be discussing a phased re-opening plan for the Driftless Historium. It will prioritize the health and safety of our volunteers and staff, and focus on initiatives that will educate and engage without risk. We also recognize the importance of

continuing our work to better document and provide public access to the amazing resources entrusted to us.

This pandemic has impressed upon many the importance of home and community. When the world around you is uncertain in so many ways, hopefully, the anchoring presence of local history can help provide peace of mind.

Stay healthy, friends!

Until we meet again,

Director Destinee Udelhoven

## TELL US YOUR STORY: 1918 SPANISH FLU

Do you have a 1918 Spanish flu story or family history to share?

The Spanish flu descended quickly and forever changed the world. Few were left untouched in some way; children, parents, grandparents, cousins and neighbors fell victim to this ravaging virus. The impacts and aftereffects of this global pandemic were so massive in scale that the millions of real, personal, emotional tragedies and triumphs are often lost beneath facts, dates and statistics.

The Mount Horeb Area Historical Society would love to gather and save those personal stories that bring humanity to history.

If the story has a connection to our service area in Southwestern Wisconsin, we'll add it directly to our archives (with your permission, of course). If it doesn't quite fit our mission, we'll find the right home for it!

Don't let your story get lost to history!

You can download and print "MY 1918 SPANISH FLU STORY" at

[www.mthorebhistory.com/my-1918-spanish-flu-story.html](http://www.mthorebhistory.com/my-1918-spanish-flu-story.html) Easy directions for how to fill out the form, and where to submit the form are included.

Questions? Or want more information about why we want your story or how it might be used? Call (608) 437 - 6486 or email [mthorebhistory@mhtc.net](mailto:mthorebhistory@mhtc.net)



This unused coffin plate, ca. 1918, was from the Gesme Funeral Home, Mount Horeb, and can be seen in our permanent exhibit.

# LOCAL HISTORIC PROPERTIES

By Jackie Sale, Mount Horeb Landmarks Foundation

**R**eflecting the mission of the Mount Horeb Landmarks Foundation, President Jackie Sale will contribute to this newsletter a series of articles about local properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Since its inception, the main focus of the Landmarks Foundation, an all volunteer 501c3 non profit, has been the restoration and maintenance of the District #1 Old Schoolhouse (110 N 2nd St, Mt Horeb). But part of the organization's mission is to promote historic preservation. What better place to start than downtown Mount Horeb? This first article is about the Village's centerpiece, the Opera House. In future editions, there will be articles about the four other properties individually listed on the Register: the Hoff Mall, the Sarah Dahle home, the Herman and Anne Dahle home, and the Academy Street school. Stay tuned!

**W**hat an ambitious undertaking it was to build such a grand building in 1894 in a village with a population of 600 people. The Opera House, standing on the corner of Main and 2nd Streets in downtown Mount Horeb, is a striking local landmark. It dominates Main Street with its eye-catching corner tower. It's the centerpiece. It's Mount Horeb.

The three story Queen Anne style building was named to the National Register of Historic Places in 1989, one of five buildings in the village and thirteen in the local area to have the honor. It was selected not only for its architecture, with its decorative brick panels and brick arches, but because of its cultural and commercial importance.

In October 1894 an Opera House Building stock company was formed with capital stock of \$12,000 at \$100 per share with the purpose to build a community center with additional space for businesses and offices. The plans drawn up by architects Gordon and Paunack had an event hall on the second floor with dressing rooms on the west side and offices on the east side. The street level had space for businesses. As soon as Sam Thompson's wagon shop was moved from the site, the basement was dug with pick axes, hand shovels and horse drawn graders. It was slow work but the venue opened on March 7, 1896 with a production by the Andrews Opera Company.

The president and guiding light of the Mount Horeb Opera Block Company was Thomas Lingard. Lingard was also co-founder and long-time cashier of the Mount Horeb Bank and a co-founder of the Mount Horeb Telephone Company. The officers of the Opera Block Company turned over the operation of the center to a manager and the Opera House served many functions including performances by theatrical troupes, dances, political rallies, home talent shows, minstrel



The Opera House in its early days (above) and today (below)

shows, high school commencements and basketball games. There were a wide variety of activities including lectures, school plays, speeches by members of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, concerts and parties. After the local high school burned in 1917 some of the classes met at the Opera House while the new school was being built. Beginning in 1907 silent movies were shown with the last movie in 1922 when the Opera House Company disbanded because of competition from other venues in the village. The space served the community well during the previous two decades even though there is no mention in any history account of more Opera Companies performing there.

In 1922 the second floor was remodeled for a Masonic Lodge hall with lounge and kitchen and the Masons continued their activities there until 1984. The American Legion and Auxiliary had its club rooms on the third floor until 1960. From the beginning to about 1961 there was a drugstore on the street level corner and the center business space has had, for the most part, a series of eating places. A list of the restaurateurs, perhaps incomplete, includes: Severson, Levitian, Scott, Johnson, Statz, Haig, Post, Goble, Venden, Swingen. Some can be remembered for their penny candies, the soda fountain or brandy old fashioned and Friday night fish. Other spaces have been occupied by dentists, optometrists, jewelry stores, and various businesses.

The building is now home to Rust and Lace, Board and Brush Creative Studio, Artisan Woods Gallery and the Village Barber.



Information taken from *Mount Horeb Presettlement to 1986*, Mount Horeb Historic Preservation Handbook, *Mount Horeb Centennial, 1861 – 1961*, and National Register for Historic Places documentation.

## VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT: MEET MEREL BLACK



**H**ave you ever met a whirlwind in the shape of a small-ish human being? That is how I think of friend and volunteer, Merel Black. Merel is a multi-functional, we-can't-do-without-her volunteer. Among a plethora of other volunteer projects and contributions, she maintains our gift shop inventory records, creates web resources that help us better share our collection—and weaves beautiful wool rugs that sell like hot cakes! (For which, of course, she will not take one thin dime of profits.)

Besides her computer skills, Merel is also a long time environment and conservation advocate. In fact, for over forty years she has been diligently coaxing back native plants, grasses and wildlife to the Blue Mounds area farm she calls home.

Her computer skills and plant passion converged in her work for the Wisconsin State Herbarium's comprehensive and definitive guide book, "Wildflowers of Wisconsin and the Great Lakes Region." Just recently she compiled a companion volume, "Historical Uses of Wildflowers," that we are proud to

exclusively offer in the Driftless Historium museum store.

Besides asking Merel to fill out the volunteer questionnaire (which, in typical Merel fashion, she completed and returned approximately 3.5 minutes after I hit "send" on the email request), we asked MHAHS co-founder and longtime volunteer Brian Bigler to share some more personal Merel Memories.

Thanks for all you do, Merel!

### **Write your own "job description" of what you do here at the Society.**

Merel: I manage the website and the store database.

### **How long have you volunteered for the Society?**

Merel: Since maybe 2012.

### **What is your favorite part of volunteering?**

Merel: It keeps my mind from turning to mush as I age. I also enjoy the interaction with all the different people and challenges of the "job".

### **Who or what got you interested?**

Merel: I had recently retired and was looking for something interesting. I had known Brian since he was a kid and liked his involvement in local history. I thought my computer skills could be an asset for the Society.

Brian: I would visit with Merel often when I had time off from farm chores at her store in a house on Springdale Street called Cheese Kettle Antiques—across from what was known as Yapps antique corner—red brick building on corner. When the Historical Society was in its formative years (1975-1976) there was no museum. The library where we held temporary exhibits was celebrating its centennial year and Gladys Martin, the librarian wanted to create a "pioneer style" exhibit- basically a room filled with early stuff. As Merel was also fond of wool and spinning, I talked her into doing a spinning demonstration in addition to furnishing props for the exhibit.

When the museum opened in the upper level of the Municipal building in 1977 she donated the cook stove for an exhibit and we literally carried that up all those flights of stairs. Also at this time she had found, or knew of, an old and very large Norwegian weaving loom on a rural farm and after it was donated to the Society she was determined to get it working. She convinced me to help with tying more than four hundred string heddles using a form that she created—basically a board with nails. She got the loom working and created a Norwegian style bed coverlet that was raffled as a fundraiser. She then started another coverlet on the loom and that is still with it in the museums collections.



## Mount Horeb Area Historical Society

### Tell us about your family.

Merel: I've been married to Joel for 55 years. We have a son Peter who lives in Madison. Our other son Ivan lives with his wife Taeko and his son Taiji in Maryland.

### Tell us about your education and vocational background.

Merel: I have a BS in mathematics from UW-Madison. I have worked as a computer programmer since 1963. That was before there were disk drives and monitors. We used punch cards, tapes and a typewriter-type machine to communicate with the computer.

Brian: When Merel commits herself to something, she does not easily give up—before coming to the Society she spent hours at the University of Wisconsin herbarium doing countless hours of data entry for the thousands of plant specimens stored there. Her growing love of all things nature led her to establishing a prairie on her rural Mount Horeb farm.

I saw Merel transform from antiques into selling wool and opening a store that sold those supplies in Madison. She also created her own knit sweaters and gloves and created sweater patterns on the computer. She was on the computer long before it was popular with the general public. She had her two sons on the computer at the store when they were very young.

### Why is the Mount Horeb area the best place on earth?

Merel: It's home.

## A LIFE SO VERY WELL LIVED: MHAHS REMEMBERS MARLYN GRINDE, MARCH 17, 1924 - MAY 26, 2020

**W**e mourn the passing of Marlyn Grinde who dedicated her life to the organizations she cherished. This commitment is especially evident in her four decades as an integral, warm and witty presence with the Mount Horeb Area Historical Society. Since the Society's early years in the 1970s, Marlyn shared her talents as a Board member, as Treasurer, as Secretary, as a program presenter, as a donor (of time, money and baker of Norwegian treats) and as a curator of collections. Marlyn reported faithfully to her "job" as volunteer curator right up to mid-March of this year—and that is only because of the museum's pandemic-forced closure.

Everything Marlyn took on was accomplished with a fastidious zeal; she had the energy of several people. As longtime friend and MHAHS co-founder Brian Bigler recalls: "when she was serving as Treasurer, we were called in to the State Bank of Mount Horeb during the Millennium change over to ensure that the Society's financial records were 'computer' safe. She shocked the local banker when she pulled from her cloth Sons of Norway bag an oversized antique ledger that held her diligent penciled-in entries. I will never forget the look on the banker's face. I simply explained it away with, 'well, after all it is the Historical Society.'"

Marlyn was a Driftless Historium super fan. The building's construction was an organizational accomplishment that she hoped to see realized. On several occasions she relayed her marvel to Brian at what had been accomplished; she still had to pinch herself with the reality of its existence.

Whenever there was a question regarding local history or the need for a lived historical experience, Marlyn was one of the



MHAHS members posing for a promotional photograph at the museum, c. 1978; left to right, Otto Gilbertson, Marlyn Grinde, Vergeane Martin, Dorothy Kelleher, Irene Gilbertson, and Joan Pekowsky

go-to people that could be relied on for the perfect answer. Hers was an amazing tenure, and the absence of her smiling face (and vanilla milkshake) will leave a hole that will be felt by all.

Marlyn's favorite parting line was "we'll take it on from here." Well, Marlyn, the Mount Horeb Area Historical Society will look to your legacy of dedication and generosity—and we'll do our best to take it on from here.

Our heartfelt sympathy is with Marlyn's family and all who held her dear.

# A WHOLE NEW WORLD: CONNECTING TO OUR COMMUNITY IN THE AGE OF SOCIAL DISTANCING

Since the Driftless Historium’s unexpected and abrupt March 16 closure, the Mount Horeb Area Historical Society has worked to lift up our community, membership and supporters from afar.

These efforts have included cobbling together our very first ever virtual event, a timely presentation by UW-River Falls Professor Emeritus Dr. Kurt Leichtle entitled “Pandemic: The 1918 Spanish Flu in Wisconsin,” (pictured above). We were floored when over 140 people from across Wisconsin and beyond registered for the free event. It was a bit nerve-racking (especially given we had just opened our Google Meet account not two weeks before), but we received much positive feedback –despite a somewhat rocky technical start. We thank Dr. Leichtle and the patient folks who joined us for this gallant experiment.



included in this newsletter, and print your own Eddie by visiting the MHAHS website ([mthorebhistory.org](http://mthorebhistory.org)) and searching for “Hidden History.”

Finally, we produced a short Oscar-worthy short video\* and slideshow for Mount Horeb’s 4th graders. Because we could not welcome the Class of 2028 for a museum tour, we contributed to their weekly virtual

lessons. We chose the topic of southwestern Dane County’s earliest inhabitants, American Indians, followed by the first settlers intent on lead mining. We were happy for the opportunity to be a part of their “Celebrate Wisconsin” week—but much prefer to meet kiddos in person! (\*Clarification: Did I say Oscar-worthy? I meant well-intentioned and inclusive of some very good information.)

We also collaborated with the *Mount Horeb Mail* to publish a two-part “Hidden History” scavenger hunt. These curated walks lead History Hunters around the village, with hints to help discover points and objects related to local histories along the way. Participants were encouraged to include the Driftless Historium’s intrepid friend to the curious-minded, Flat Eddie the Explorer, in their adventures (pictured at right with Mia Udelhoven). With fresh-air outings often the only travelling possible for many of our neighbors, these scavenger hunts were a great way to add variety to a routine excursion. Try it out yourself! Find both “Hidden History” editions

Watch for details on the launch of a Driftless Historium “walk up” gallery, as well as additional virtual events and outreach projects. We are committed to finding safe and healthy ways to connect and serve our community.



## COME WITH US TO NORWAY!



We are teaming up with Kathleen Ernst, author of the popular Chloe Ellefson mystery series, to offer a 2021 trip to Southern Norway. Next May, “Folk Art, Fjords and Fiddles” travelers will explore the dramatic landscapes, foodways and folk traditions of the Hardanger region.

If you're already a fan of Ernst's unique blend of history, mystery and romance, you'll recognize this destination as the setting for her latest Chloe Ellefson Mystery, "Fiddling with Fate."

It is the adventure of a lifetime- and each person who registers will simultaneously be supporting the Mount Horeb Area Historical Society, and the many artifacts and histories of southwestern Dane County's Norwegian ancestry that we protect and preserve!

We'll be sending more information out to our Members soon; in the meantime, peruse this website, dedicated to the trip and crafted by Volunteer Extraordinaire (and the mastermind behind this idea!) Ruth Paulson: <https://siants.wixsite.com/website>.

Dream with us about brighter days ahead!

# Mount Horeb “Hidden History” Walk

## PART 1 OF 2

This route follows Main Street. (Note: this route is approximately 1.5 miles round-trip. We suggest you consider starting downtown, end at Premier Co-op and come back along Military Ridge Trail.)

- ❑ The Dahle Brothers, Herman and Ted, built their general store at the corner of Main and Second Streets in 1887 to supply the residents of Mount Horeb with a wide range of goods. To find Herman and Ted’s building, look for all that remains of a painted sign on the side of their store that once said “DAHLE BROS. MERCHANDISE”.
- ❑ Can you find Mount Horeb’s first bank building? It’s located between First and Second Streets and, if you keep your eyes up high, you’ll find a clue that will tell you which building it is. Hint: it’s definitely not the tallest building in the Village.
- ❑ Mount Horeb used to have two theaters! One of them, the Parkway Theater, was at the corner of Main and Grove streets. The very long building allowed room inside for movies, theater performances, and a dance hall. To find it, look for the diamond-shaped designs on the side of the building.
- ❑ The first gas station in the village of Mount Horeb was along West Main Street. In the 1930s, this was replaced with a larger gas station that had two bay doors. The building was later used by the Mount Horeb Fire Department to store old fire engines. Can you find an old lamp post from the time of the gas station—it’s bright red!
- ❑ The bell from the old Blue Mounds Methodist Church (now a private home in Blue Mounds) is in the care of the Immanuel Lutheran Church at 310 West Main Street. If you stand on the sidewalk in front of ILC, can you see the bell?
- ❑ The Military Ridge State Trail that many of us walk and bike on was once the line of tracks for the Chicago & Northwestern Railway, part of a rail system that linked eight states in the Midwest and Great Plains. Some relics of the railroad are still around; look for a railroad switch stand near Premier Co-Op. This device, with red and green signs, was used by the conductor to move railroad cars onto a side track for deliveries.

**Good luck! Share photos of your “Hidden History” adventures by emailing them to [mthorebhistory@mhtc.net](mailto:mthorebhistory@mhtc.net), or share them on social media. Use hashtag #FindYourselfinHistory**



# Mount Horeb “Hidden History” Walk

## PART 2 OF 2

This route begins in downtown Mount Horeb. Walk south on Second Street, then turn east onto the Military Ridge State Trail. This circular walk is approximately 1.8 miles. To help keep you on track, italicized route directions are included. Follow them after you locate each checkpoint.



- ❑ Can you find one of the oldest trees in Mount Horeb? Look for this mammoth tree nearby at the point where you’re walking the Trail and you encounter a sidewalk. How old do you think this tree is? Nobody knows for sure, but just think—this guy’s watched Mount Horeb grow up! *Now walk south on Fourth Street.*
- ❑ There was once an old village postal box at a corner of Fourth Street and another street. The box itself is gone, but the concrete post that once supported the post is still stands. Can you find it? It blends in to the shadows of the trees, so look close! *Now go back to the trail and continue to walk east along the trail.*
- ❑ Liberty Park contains an object even older than the Civil War, though it may have been used during the war. Hint: it was made in 1846 and it’s probably very heavy! Can you find it? *Now walk to Springdale Street and turn left; head toward the roundabout.*
- ❑ The oldest part of Mount Horeb, today called “Old Town,” was near the Kwik Trip roundabout. Even back then, Baby Mount Horeb had several stores, a blacksmith shop, churches and a school, all standing within a couple blocks of this much-travelled (even back then!) intersection. And the cemetery was here even before all that! The first person buried there was Jonathan T. Dryden; Dryden died in 1850 at the age of 19. Can you find his gravestone? Hint: Mr. Dryden has as great view of the roundabout. *Now walk north on Eighth Street.*
- ❑ One of Mount Horeb’s first churches once stood along North Eighth Street. The church is long gone, but the two imposing stone gate posts are still visible from the sidewalk. *Now walk south on Eighth Street, through the roundabout; turn right on East Main Street.*
- ❑ The current St. Ignatius Catholic Church was built in 1959, replacing an older, wooden church.) St. Ignatius still cares for the old church’s bell. Can you find it in their gardens? *Just walk east on Main Street to get back downtown.*

**DRIFTLESS.**  
**Historium**

Mount Horeb Area Historical Society

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**That’s it! You’re a Master History Explorer!**



## A Closer Look

*continued from cover...* contagious diseases, however unfortunate, were not unusual in military settings.

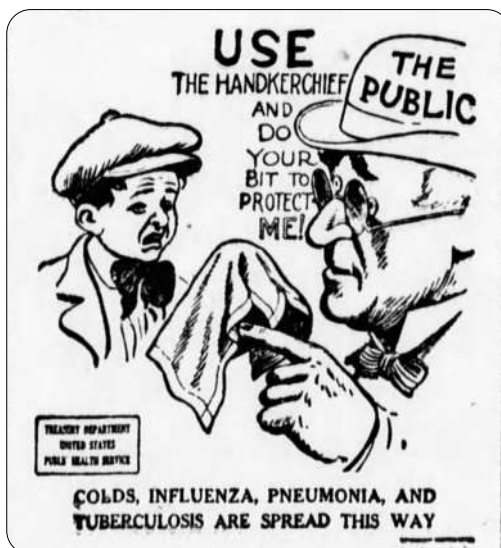
But the fall of 1918 was different. The strain of influenza that swept the United States, first reported in Boston on September 14, had a rapid onset (one to four-day incubation period), was highly contagious, and was often associated with severe complications, most often pneumonia. Reports spoke of the flu in the fall of 1918 incapacitating its victims almost without warning. Within a week of its appearance on the East Coast, over 4,500 cases were reported at the Great Lakes Naval Training Station near Chicago, and another 400 cases at Camp Grant in Rockford, Illinois—two camps where many young men from the state of Wisconsin, including the Mount Horeb area, were sent to train.

The first Wisconsin cases of influenza were identified in Milwaukee on September 26th. Madison had its first case on October 6th, and its first death three days later. Undoubtedly, local residents watched as news of the spreading epidemic edged closer to Southwestern Dane County.

**“Spanish flu is said to be beginning a visit to this county...” —MHT, September 27, 1918**

On October 6th, the U.S. Surgeon General sent a telegram to all state health officials suggesting a series of measures to control local outbreaks. On October 10th, Wisconsin’s State Health Officer issued an order instructing local boards of health “to immediately close all schools, theaters, moving picture houses, other places of amusement and public gatherings for an indefinite period of time.” The Town of Blue Mounds, anticipating the state declaration, was the first area municipality to act, issuing a local ban on public gatherings, church services and schools on October 8th.

The first local deaths from influenza in the fall of 1918 came soon after. Late in the morning of October 9th—the same day as the first flu death recorded in Madison—33-year-old George Thompson died at his home in Mount Horeb after becoming sick with pneumonia only the day before. He left a wife and three young children, ages 11, 7 and 4. Because state health officials cautioned against public funeral services, a private family service was held inside the Thompson home, followed by a short public service conducted from the veranda to a large gathering in the yard. The casket was placed in the lawn, and visitors showed their sympathy for the family from a distance. Private family funerals, with friends and neighbors mourning from a distance, would become a common



This public service announcement was published in papers across the nation, including the *Mount Horeb Times*, in early December, 1918 (above).

George Thompson, Mt. Horeb's first "Spanish Influenza" death, in his wedding portrait 12 years earlier (below).



[14]) the following week. In addition, 23-year-old Floyd Bonner, the middle child of Robert and Louisa Bonner, died at the Bonner homestead between Blue Mounds and Mount Horeb; his older brother, Melvin, would die three weeks later.

The local newspapers began running obituaries of young men from the Mount Horeb area who had died from influenza while at military training camps. The list of young men who were brought back to their families for burial in the fall of 1918 included Erwin Swenson (21),

Bennie Helmer Lokken (22), and Arthur Edward Erickson (26) of Perry; Frederick Shephard (21) of Springdale who died at Camp Grant in Rockford; and Fred Theobald (21) who died at a camp in Mississippi.

**“In these days we are surely living history.”  
—MHT, Oct. 25, 1918**

By the end of October and early November, it looked as though the flu epidemic had run its course in the area. The November 8th edition of the *MHT* stated, “the influenza epidemic seems to have subsided...” and reported that churches and schools would be opened the week of November 11th.

Residents were surely feeling hopeful. Not only did the flu epidemic appear to have passed, but word had spread that the war was finally over. In Mount Horeb, “a celebration was held, the band gave patriotic music ... *continued on pg 8*

occurrence throughout the area in the coming months.

The following day, on October 10th, the Village of Mount Horeb issued a ban on public gatherings, followed by the Village of Blue Mounds and the surrounding towns. Southwestern Dane County schools were closed and their Play Days cancelled, churches cancelled their services, organizations postponed events and meetings, and Mount Horeb High School’s first football game of the season was cancelled.

The following week saw three more deaths, Ingaborg Thompson [65] of Perry, Martin Mickelson [33] of Vermont, and a child in Mount

Horeb—12-year-old George Lingard, oldest son of the villages’ president, Thomas Lingard and his wife, Jennie. This was followed by three more deaths in Mount Horeb (Raymond Rinde [13], Bertha Swiggum [31], and Valta Genzer [31]) and another in Perry (Anton Keller

## A Closer Look



Citizens parade down Mount Horeb's Main Street during the village's celebration of the end of the war, November 11, 1918.

*continued from pg 7...* and several speeches were made. A big bonfire was kindled and enthusiasm ran high" (*MHT*, Nov. 8, 1918). "The Second Jubilee," the area's official celebration to mark the end of the war, was held in the village on Monday, November 11th; the surrounding countryside was notified and "our village had the largest crowd in its history; the procession was immense, both in point of numbers marching as well as enthusiasm." (*MHT*, Nov. 15, 1918)

But things would get worse in late November and early December. There had already been one death that hadn't been reported in the papers until weeks later. Gullik Engen, age 61, died of pneumonia due to influenza on November 3rd. Gullik and his brother, Sever, had neighboring farms on property adjacent to New Glarus Road (now Highway G) and managed the Engen (later Skudt) Cheese Factory in the Town of Primrose. Gullik left behind five children under the age of 13. A month later, on December 2nd, Sever Engen also died from pneumonia, leaving his wife with two small children. Both brothers were buried at West Primrose Cemetery.

By looking at the location of family farms on early plat maps, one can imagine how the flu spread through area communities. Neighbors of the Engens, the families of brothers Burnett and Gaylord Skudt both fell ill in late November. Upon hearing that her younger brothers' families were ill, Mrs. Gyda (Skudt) Witte and her family traveled from Green Bay to help care for them. According to the *MHT*, they arrived on November 27th, "just as Mr. [Burnett] Skudt was breathing his last." Burnett (28) left his wife and two young children, including his 3-month-old son. Gyda's sister-in-law, Hattie (Ottum) Skudt (21), Gaylord's wife, had died two days before. After the death of his mother, Hattie and Gaylord's 3-year-old son, Kenneth, went to live with his paternal grandparents, K.B. and Clara Skudt at their home on N. 2nd Street in Mount Horeb; his mother, Hattie, was laid to rest at Union Cemetery, "in sight of her parents' [Henry and Rachel Ottum] home."

By the end of the month, word was spreading of the increase in flu cases. Some area churches cancelled services, but others decided to move forward with Thanksgiving Day Services in accordance with Woodrow Wilson's Presidential Thanksgiving Proclamation. A letter in the MHAHS archives written on Thanksgiving Day by 14-year-old Nora Colby to her brother, Selmer, mentions the family's concern about getting the flu, as well as the aforementioned Skudt family's losses. In reference to the nearby Kittleson family being sick, Nora tells Selmer, Mrs. Kittleson "has to do all the work out side" and "they are in a bad fix."

In Forward, to the west in the Town of Perry, the Melland family was also dealing with devastation from influenza and pneumonia. Walter Melland (25) died on November 7th and two days later his younger sister, Lydia, a junior at Mount Horeb High School, died at the age of 19. The following week their father, Michael, passed away. Susan Melland buried husband, son and daughter at Hauge Lutheran Cemetery near their two infant sons who had died at birth several years before.

By the middle of December, local communities were seeing more cases of the flu. One of two Mount Horeb High School teachers who had been sick died of pneumonia; teacher Miss Agnes Skindrud at Mount Vernon School was ill, as was Agnes Sanders who taught at Daleyville. In Mount Horeb, bank cashier Jacob Lingard (younger brother of village president, Thomas Lingard), Emma Gramm (daughter of photographer A.F. Gramm), and the linograph operator for the *MHT* (name unknown) were all sick with the flu. "Bear with us during these trouble some days," remarked the *MHT* (Dec. 13, 1918).

Mount Horeb, Primrose, Springdale and Blue Mounds reinstated the school closures and the ban on public gatherings the second week of December. Official rules for the control of influenza were printed in the local paper, and included reporting cases of the flu, quarantining ill families inside their homes, and not allowing a member of a quarantined family to leave the home ("unless they are gainfully employed") until the entire family was cleared of the illness. Mount Horeb's rules specifically included appointing a special police officer to prevent crowds and loitering in the village. Interestingly, throughout the area, and for the duration of the flu epidemic, businesses stayed open and people continued to travel to and from the area for business and pleasure. Although there were bans on public gatherings, there were no stay-at-home orders in place locally.

Newspapers reported deaths in Daleyville (Agnes Sanders [22]), Springdale (Alma Kobbervig [31] and Andrew Lund [40]), Perry (John Martinson [30]), Vermont (Mrs. George Mulligan [27]), and Mount Horeb (Andrew Edward Osmundson [39], Dora Fjelstad [36], Allert Brager [30], and

## A Closer Look

Louis Zimmerman [36]). All were 40 years old or younger, and most left spouses and young children behind.

There were undoubtedly many families suffering from the flu whose stories didn't make it into the local newspapers. The Tvedt family—Edward and Annie Tvedt and their 13 children—came down with the flu and were quarantined in their home just south of Mount Horeb. Annie, probably helped by her daughter Clara who was a nurse, cared for the entire family. Although local doctors made house calls to sick families, often with a handkerchief over their nose and mouth, most day-to-day care was provided by family members.

In a 1999 *Mount Horeb Mail* article, Enoch Sherven, the second youngest of seven children at the time of the 1918 flu pandemic, recounted his family's experience. While the Sherven house was quarantined, concerned neighbors brought food and left it outside for the family. He remembered how frightening it was as a six-year-old child to look out their Perry farmhouse window and see horse-drawn funeral processions on their way to the Hauge Church for burial. Enoch also mentioned the young family next door who lost their father, Gerhard Syftestad (36), and hearing of other neighbors who were sick (the Shervens were also neighbors to the Melland family, mentioned above).

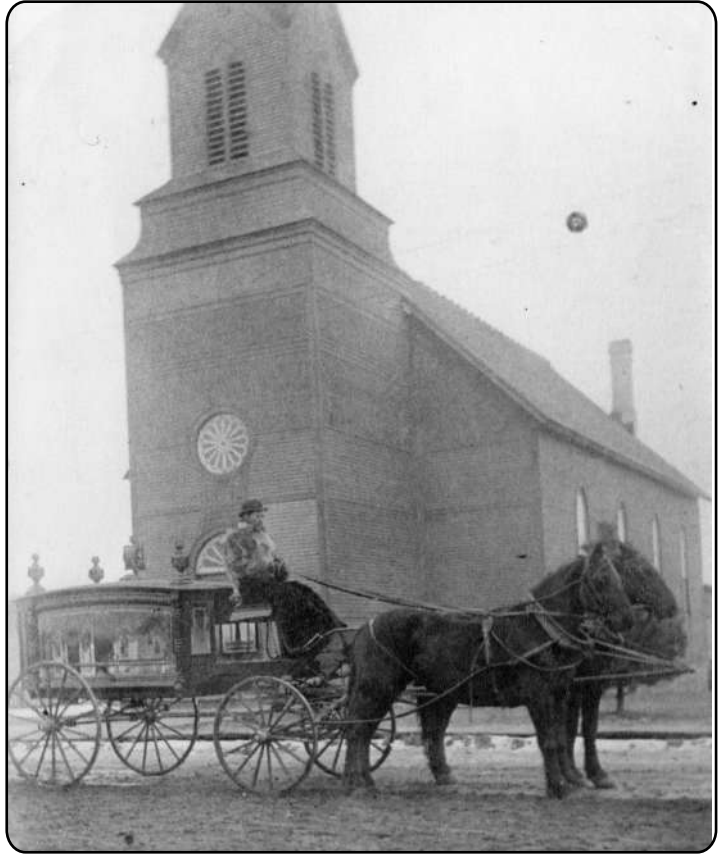
**“In those years, the funeral wagon was glass, and you could see the coffin inside.” — Enoch Sherven, 1999**

In a memoir shared with the Society by Judy (Klassy) Sokolow, Doris (Sherven) Klassy, younger sister of Enoch, also remembered the family's severe illness. Everyone in the house had recovered, but their mother, Helga was still very ill. Their father, Albert, took Helga by horse and wagon to Mount Horeb, and then by train to the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, to receive treatment. Amazingly, the entire Sherven family survived.

The December 17th edition of the *MHT* reported several illnesses, but no deaths. The flu was “dying out in Madison” and “nearly cured up” in Springdale and Cross Plains. The previous Monday, “the streets of Mount Horeb were crowded and the stores were all busy.” There was every indication for optimism that the worst was over.

**“The Flu Has Flown ... By all indications the influenza has spent its force, no new cases are reported the past week and those afflicted are getting along nicely...”**  
— *MHT*, January 3, 1919

The new year saw schools opening and the lifting of the ban on public gatherings, although the Town of Blue Mounds kept their ban in place a couple weeks longer than the other communities. Fred Hanneman announced in the newspaper that the community band would begin practicing again, and church services were expected to be held the first week of January. The biggest news in the area, discussed in several newspaper announcements throughout the month of January, was the opening of the new Academy Street school building for all students, “little tots of the



James Gesme, area undertaker for over 40 years, in front of the original Evangelical Lutheran Church in Mount Horeb, ca. 1900

first grade up to the dignified seniors of the high school.” All residents were invited to the public “housewarming” at the high school and were encouraged to buy tickets to the first basketball game in the new gym.

There were several area deaths between March and May of 1919 attributed to the third and final wave of the flu epidemic, but the threat never rose to the need for bans on public gatherings or school closures. As families and friends of those who had died attempted to reclaim their lives in the spring of 1919, there were moments of hope. In remembrance, Josephine Thompson named her daughter, born that April, Georgia, after her husband George Thompson who was the area's first death in the fall. And Lena Bonner, wife of Melvin Bonner who died on November 4th, named her daughter, born that May, Melvina, after her late husband.

Based on the data I was able to collect, the Mount Horeb area lost 29 residents to influenza between October 9th and December 20th, 1918, while an untold number of families were debilitated by the illness. For many, those few months were a time of darkness and loss; a time that instilled memories not soon forgotten.

Please consider sharing your family stories of the 1918 flu with the Society's archives. Help us better understand not only our community's losses, but its resilience and strength. ●

# 2019 Gifts

## Memorials & Honorariums

### **Donated in memory of Ralph Buechner**

Shirley Martin  
Carol & Peter Riphahn  
Paul & Joan Skalet  
Ron Wirth

### **Donated in memory of Larry Dangerfield**

Mary Spaay  
Ron Wirth  
Gary & Connie Jo Zwettler

### **Donated in memory of Neal Fargo**

Ron Wirth

### **Donated in memory of Kendall Gladem**

Sandra Roth  
Ron Wirth

### **Donated in memory of Gertie Henderson**

Jeanne Bakken  
Gladys Behnke  
Laurie & Dave Boyden  
Ron & Mary Jo Brinkman  
Fran & Ed Chancellor  
Maynard & Diann Chapman  
Mark & Kristen Clark  
Phillip & Ann Dettwiler  
Roger Disrud  
Gary Garfoot & Ann Zwettler  
John Erb & Kathie Zwettler  
Daniel & Catherine Furseth  
Marlyn Grinde  
Kathy Hunt  
Wayne, Bonnie, Jessica & Brad Jones  
LaVonne Kadmas  
Jerry & Julie Landmark  
Pete & Ellen Lesar  
Joan Lloyd  
Carol Losenegger  
Verda McFarlane  
Russ Martin Family  
Shirley Martin  
Ron & Jo Miller  
Duane & Laura Miller  
Colleen Mize  
Tony & Darlene Nowak  
John & Rosalie Richardson  
Carol & Peter Riphahn  
Max & Betty Rosenbaum  
John & Vicki Rosenbaum  
Jack & Gaye Scheidegger  
Anna Marie Schmit  
Charles & Joan Sholdt  
Gene Smith  
Mary Spaay  
Ron & Jennifer Spielman  
Kathryn Starkey

Bill & Julie Stebbins  
Irvin & Judith Steinhauer  
Mary & Wayne Sutter  
Mary Jane Topper  
Julie Vasen  
Marie Wittwer  
Jon & Nancy Wolfgram  
Gary & Connie Jo Zwettler  
Paul Zwettler  
Don & Michelle Zwettler

### **Donated in memory of Don & Gertie Henderson**

Conrad & Vicki Anderson  
Family of Wilfrid & Mary Hellenbrand  
Lisa Wachholz

### **Donated in memory of Steve Hopkins**

MHHS Class of 1947  
Shirley Martin

### **Donated in memory of Bradford K. Hustad**

Ron Wirth

### **Donated in memory of Betty Kalbacken**

Sandra Roth

### **Donated in memory of Betty Schlimgen Brunker Kluesner**

Ron Wirth

### **Donated in memory of Vergeane Collins Martin**

Mark & Kristen Clark  
E LeRoy Collins  
Christina Knecht & Cal Compact  
Sarah & Jay Furseth Family  
Marlyn Grinde  
Duane & Nancy Kittleson  
Tina Krause  
Shirley Martin  
Guy & Martha Martin  
Gregory & Patricia Martin  
Sue Martinson-Zyhowski  
CeCe Owen Stuller & Jay Owen  
Melva Phillips  
John & Karen Ranum  
Sons of Norway Vennelag 513  
Bill & Julie Stebbins  
TRC  
Jack Erb & Kathie Zwettler  
Gary & Connie Jo Zwettler  
Gary Garfoot, Connie & Ann Zwettler  
Paul Zwettler

### **Donated in memory of Kenneth Miller**

Mary Lou Riphahn

### **Donated in memory of Patricia Murphy**

Shirley Martin  
Gary & Connie Jo Zwettler  
Ron Wirth

### **Donated in memory of Sybilla Opsal**

Linda Gerke  
Gary & Connie Jo Zwettler

### **Donated in memory of Ronald Stenseth**

Kathy, Matt & Dan

### **Donated in memory of Mary Jean Wittwer**

Thomas & Andrea Flickinger  
Lauryn Durtschi-Jones and Reed Jones  
Ronald Kellogg  
Mary Lou Riphahn  
James Srommen  
Daniel & Vicky Urban

### **Donated in honor of Gary Einerson's 80th Birthday**

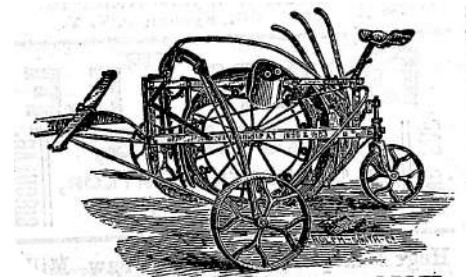
Sandra Roth

### **Donated in recognition of MHAHS-Post 113 Commemoration of 100th Anniversary of American Legion**

Mt Horeb American Legion  
Frank E Malone Post 113

### **Donated in recognition of MHAHS as monthly meeting host**

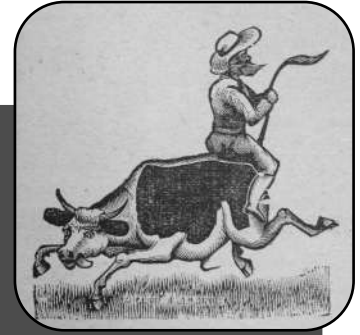
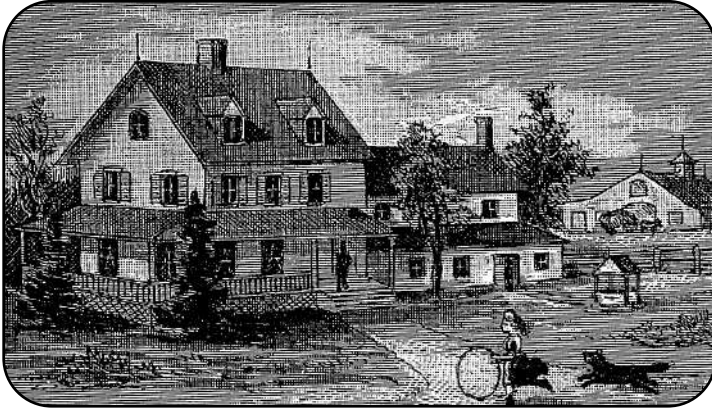
Mt Horeb Mental Health & Wellness  
Coalition



**CORRECTION:** The listing on pages 8 to 10 in the February 2020 issue of Past Times was dues-paying Members in calendar year 2019; NOT 2020 as the heading erroneously indicated. We apologize for any related confusion. (If you haven't paid your 2020 dues yet- there's still time!)

As always, we ask that you please inform us promptly of any omissions or errors. Call 608-437-6486 or email [mthorebhistory@mhtc.net](mailto:mthorebhistory@mhtc.net).

# 2019 Gifts



This whimsical illustration has been attributed to local artist, Byron Jorns. It was printed in 1895 issues of the *Mount Horeb Times* as an advertisement for newspaper subscriptions.

The house, and the ditching machine on the facing page, were printed in an 1884 issue of *The Agriculturalist*.

## Major Gifts

Charles & Joan Sholdt	\$40,000
Kenneth Miller Estate	\$67,300
Anonymous	\$100,000

## General Donations

### \$15 - \$100

Ray & Sherry Einerson  
 Samuel Fleming  
 Cheryle Goplin  
 Eileen Hanneman  
 Ken & Sara Kittleson  
 Allen Knudson  
 Donna Tvedt Lavold  
 Shoshannah Marohn  
 Doug & Janet Nesheim  
 Tony & Darlene Nowak  
 Ruth Paulson  
 Georgia Post  
 William Sonzogni  
 Paul & Mary McDonough Sutter  
 Donna Thomas  
 Jon & Nancy Wolfgram  
 James & Marly Van Camp  
 Janice von Stein  
 Hyuk Yu  
 Kathie Zwertler

Anonymous  
 Aetna Foundation  
 Hands All Around Quilters  
 Career Women's Association  
 Prairie du Chein Historical Society

### \$101 - \$500

Tom Broman & Lynn Nyhart  
 Jim & Dixie Burns  
 Thomas & Ruth Dobson  
 Wayne Hefty  
 Teri Vierima & Dave Hoffman  
 Rose Klir  
 Donald & Sherry Krantz  
 Lora Lee  
 Richard Lust  
 Paul Vassalotti  
 Hands All Around Quilters  
 MHASD 4th Grade  
 Scandihoovian Winter Festival

### \$501 - \$1,000

John & Mary Buechner  
 Shirley Martin  
 McNall Family Trust  
 Kevin Tvedt  
 Anonymous

### \$2,500

Cathy Scott

### \$5,000

Estate of Ralph Buechner,  
 Gift of Ralph and Beverly  
 Thrivent Community – Glaciers Edge  
 Mt Horeb American Legion  
 Frank E Malone Post 113

## In-Kind & Dedicated Gifts

Brunsell Lumber & Millwork donated trusses for garbage enclosure roof	David Schmidt for volunteer recognition celebration
Jeanne Gurda, Mary Gurda, Robert Gurda & Eileen Hanneman in support of "Fred & Hazel Hanneman Oral History Project"	David Schmidt donated supplies for Driftless Historium garbage enclosure roof
Wayne Hefty donated custom restroom storage cabinets	Sons of Norway Lodge No. 513 for Norwegian collection preservation
Mt Horeb Community Foundation in support of "Immigrants of Wisconsin" program series & exhibit	John Swartz for printing of Driftless Historium museum maps
Rotary Club of Mount Horeb in support of "Decoding the Driftless" documentary partner event	Robert & Nancy Woodburn for preservation of the Donald/Woodburn Correspondence Collection
	Anonymous in support of preservation efforts



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### Driftless Historium Museum & Research Center

Check website for latest  
information on events and  
hours of operation.

100 South Second Street  
Mount Horeb, WI 53572

(608) 437-6486

[mthorebhistory.org](http://mthorebhistory.org)

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## FOCUS ON COLLECTIONS

During the early years of the Cold War, when Americans feared nuclear bombings from the communists and the USSR, the Office of Civil Defense established "Nuclear Fallout Shelters" across the nation. In 1961, as President Kennedy told the nation that the possibility of nuclear war was a "fact of life," a national survey identified public buildings with "fallout shelter potential." Strategic basements in Mount Horeb were allocated this title and given black and yellow signs indicating their status.

The Mount Horeb Area Historical Society collections include one SK IV Sanitation Kit, pictured at right, that was once stored in the Immanuel Lutheran Church on Mount Horeb's Main Street. Inside the church basement, it was intended that separate food, water, sanitation, medical, and radiation detection kits be provided and routinely inspected by the government. However, many shelters were only partially stocked with supplies. The collection record for this kit indicates that there was a similar kit from the same location donated to the State Historical Society, suggesting that there were provisions for 100 people to stay in the church basement for two weeks.



This sanitation kit dates to 1962 and contains toilet paper, can opener, commode liner, sanitary napkins, polyethylene gloves, syphon, tie wire, commode seat, cups and lids, instructions, and commode chemical. Once emptied of its contents, the 22" high, 16" diameter, cardboard barrel could be used as a temporary toilet. The kit no longer contains its listed hand cleaner because they were found to leak and were removed upon official inspection.

Often misrepresented as bomb shelters, the public fallout shelters were not meant to protect from explosions, but were to help survive fallout radiation in the environment. After the Cuban Missile Crisis, the United States felt more secure thanks to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and more direct communication between Moscow and Washington. The community shelter program gradually faded away through the 1970s and federal funding for fallout shelter supplies had ended around 1965. Civil Defense budgets declined and supply kits became the responsibility of building owners. We are glad this one found its way to our collections.