

CHEERS TO 5 YEARS!

The Driftless Historium opened its doors on June 3, 2017 with a fanfare of ribbon cutting, live music and free ice cream for all. The Mount Horeb Area Historical Society and the history of southwestern Dane County had a custom-built new home, made possible by neighbors and supporters who believe in our mission of preservation, education, and community-building.

Since then, the Driftless Historium has debuted our award-winning Main Gallery exhibit, "Life and Change at the Edge of the Driftless," as well as four temporary installations in our Special Exhibits Gallery exploring folk and fine art, immigration and, now showing, "The Living Room: An Expression of Home."

Somewhat unexpectedly, the Kalscheur Family Foundation Community Room has evolved into a vibrant gallery space. Over the last five years, we have hosted twenty-four 2D, 3D and photography installations, many providing valuable exposure to new and emerging local and regional artists at no cost. During the pandemic, these displays (including "Driftless Strong," that garnered a wide variety of media coverage) shifted to the expansive storefront windows to safely engage outdoor audiences.



***Driftless Historium Groundbreaking, June 2016. Pictured L to R: James Leuzinger, Tim Bogenschneider, Peter Riphahn, Bruce Roth, Scott Zahler, Larry Kruckman, Karla Ott, Brian Bigler, Shirley Martin, Doug Nesheim, John Swartz, Bill Thousand, Johnna Buysse, Lee Underwood, Tony Zalucha and Destinee Udelhoven.**

We are still settling into our three-building facility, and figuring out the best strategies to meet the complimentary but dually-intense demands of being both a top-notch museum destination and an active repository and research center.

We look to our community of supporters from the greater Mount Horeb area, its hometown champions from near and far, for direction and guidance as we chart a course for the future.

Want to be part of our team? From our Board of Directors, to standing committees and special project work groups, to our front desk hospitality corps, there's always a place for you at the Driftless Historium. Call 608-437-6486 or email mthorebahs@gmail.com to learn more.

More numbers!

- 68 public programs held
- 24 virtual programs hosted (a COVID-prompted plunge into the computer age)
- 2,265 scoops of ice cream sold
- 43,000 visitors served

Of course, the everyday work of MHAHS has continued—and dramatically increased in volume, likely a result of the Driftless Historium's shiny new presence. We continue to respond to public inquiries, facilitate on-site research, and collect, catalog, and preserve artifacts, photos, and documents that capture local history.



CONTENTS

TALES OF SECOND STREET.. PG 2	WHAT'S IN A NAME?..... PG 9	2021 DONATIONS..... PG 11	MEET YOUR MAKERS..... PG 14
REFLECTIONS AT 5 YEARS.. PG 7	COLLECTIONS SPOTLIGHT.. PG 10	VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT..... PG 12	BOARD OF DIRECTORS..... PG 14

TALES OF SOUTH SECOND STREET by Arlo Paust



business entities. While here, Kittleson installed the village's first waterworks behind the building to provide water for construction of the Opera House next door, completed in 1895. After selling the Hardware Store, Mr. Kittleson married Cornelia Thompson in 1898 and lived along a strip of sophisticated homes at 122 North Second Street, then known as Park Avenue. They ultimately moved to Madison in 1907 when Isaac was elected as the Dane County Sheriff. He ran for this position a few times over the next 20 years, winning twice. He also worked in insurance.

The building's ownership changed hands with some frequency in its early years.

The beautiful five-year-old Driftless Historium, built for the Mount Horeb Area Historical Society in 2017 with generous donations from private sources, was quite an achievement for a small village. Spanning three village lots, the building's three distinct parts each have their own unique history. To commemorate their chapters in our story, we take a look at the past lives of 100, 102 and 106 South Second Street. From north to south these include the building best known as Gilbertson's Hardware; a newly designed entrance and gift shop with the name "Driftless Historium" prominently featured; and the archives building with a front porch. The gift shop/entrance portion was once the site of a bowling alley, and the archives building's design was directly inspired by the Mount Horeb House hotel that once stood in its place. In honor of the five-year anniversary, we celebrate the stories of the buildings once located on this site and some of the people who occupied them.

Gilbertson's Hardware

The Gilbertson's Hardware building was originally built in 1886 for Isaac Kittleson & Company. The "& Company" included Tom Syverud, and John Vilberg. Isaac Kittleson, born in the Town of Perry to Isaac and Kjestine Kittleson, opened the hardware store when he was only 22 years old. An older sister, Anna Marie, was married to one of the most prominent men in the Mount Horeb area, Herman Bjorn Dahle. Like members of the Dahle family, Isaac became involved in several different local

Top: Kittleson Hardware in its early days & Isaac Kittleson, 1898

Right: This wooden well bucket dates to the 1880s and was donated to the Society in 1977 by Gladys Martin. Gladys was the daughter of Henry Gier who operated the hardware store at 100 South Second Street.

When Gier sold the business to Otto Gilbertson in 1936, the old and long outdated stock from the store was stored in a garage at the Gier home located on Fourth Street. This bucket was intended for drawing water from an open-pit well by suspending it on a rope operated by a pulley system that then lowered it into the well. By the time this stock was owned by Gier Hardware Store it was already being replaced by the more practical hand pump. This bucket was among the first artifacts exhibited at the Society's new museum in the upper level of the Municipal Building.

Bottom: Gilbertson's Hardware, showing the front addition, the variety of departments, and rosealed diamonds stretching along the facade, ca. 1965



Owners included Samuel Thompson, another prominent Mount Horeb resident; John C. Ward; and Olaf Hanson. Ludwig England, a Norwegian from Primrose township, began the pattern of more lengthy tenures, owning the business for thirteen years beginning with a partnership in 1903. Henry C. Gier, the former postmaster, then ran the business for twenty years (1916-1936).

The namesakes of the building, the Gilbertsons, purchased it in 1936 and continued to run the hardware store until 1979, by far

the longest run at 43 years. Gilbertson's Hardware was initially operated by brothers Otto and Palmer Gilbertson until 1938, when Palmer left and Otto and his wife Irene became sole proprietors. Otto and Irene were married in 1934, Otto being from Springdale township and Irene (Togstad) being from Madison. Otto had been interested in hardware since a teenager when working at his father's car dealership and then at their competitor, Mount Horeb Hardware, on Main Street.



Otto and Irene Gilbertson loved their store. As they had no children, they were able to devote much of their time to expansion, sales, and market research. Gilbertson Hardware was written about in several hardware-specific national publications and the business expanded beyond just hardware, having gift and repair departments also. A 1943 article of *Hardware World* reported on how Otto handled all the repair department work himself, "tackling just about anything that farmers bring in." Otto said that having a "versatile repair department during wartime helps to increase store traffic and also earns a profit." The repair department helped them maintain contact with locals as the manner of service had changed during World War II. Before wartime, Otto made house calls for repairs, but due to tire and gas rationing, the farmers had to come to him. "In a town of this size, people naturally look to the hardware dealer to repair almost anything... our soldering iron is very busy." Some items he regularly repaired included milking equipment for farmers, Maytag washing machines, guns, fishing reels, and kerosene and gasoline stoves that were popular for canning.

Irene, in turn, took care of the retail portion of the business. In an issue of *Hardware Age*, also from 1943, the Gilbertsons talked of the importance of expanding into "feminine" lines of products. Display space for appliances was replaced with pottery, glassware, china, gift items, and table lamps. According to Otto, most women who purchased dinnerware also bought a moderately priced gift item, largely as a result of the way in which the product was displayed. "We have found that new items must be added to the stock continually if the interest of the women of the community is to be maintained." They used promotions to keep stock moving and considered it pertinent to the department's success.

To keep with the times, in 1950 Otto and Irene sought a more modern display area. They hired an engineer to work with them to remove the center pillars of the store and replace them with steel girders. This made the displays more roomy and the aisles wider for the "gift department." The building was also expanded 25 feet in length and fluorescent lighting was installed for a basement display of farm goods and refrigerators. It was about this time that the hardware store was said to have two front doors — one in front and one in back. The door by the two vehicle garage in the back became a direct entrance to the basement farm store. Otto claimed the farmers preferred the back door so they could avoid the gift department.



Top: Otto & Irene Gilbertson at their marriage in 1934.
Center: Otto Gilbertson and a customer at the back entrance of the Gilbertson's Hardware
Below & Right: Gilbertson's Hardware billboards

Otto and Irene believed in the strength of personalized advertising and therefore emblazoned their faces on billboards



outside of town. As reported in *Hardware Retailer*, in 1958, "Personalized advertising works best in small towns and rural areas. This huge billboard [pictured at bottom] is a continuous, colorful reminder to residents of the area as well as an inviting welcome to tourists traveling in the area."

When Mount Horeb began to more fully embrace its Norwegian heritage for tourism in the 1960s, the Gilbertsons, who were both of Norwegian descent, openly took part. They remodeled the front of the store to feature rosemaling and even began to maintain a Norwegian gifts section. Perhaps foretelling the building's future, during the run of the Song of Norway productions in the 1970s, Norwegian crafts displays and hardanger crocheting demonstrations were featured in the store.



The Gilbertsons were extremely active in the community. Otto was treasurer for the Song of Norway production for many years and Irene was the manager of admittance. They were both involved in fraternal organizations and were founding members of the Mount Horeb Area Historical Society in 1975. Additionally, Otto was treasurer for the Chamber of Commerce and Irene was a charter member of the Mound Vue Garden Club. After the store was sold in 1979, the Gilbertsons dedicated much of their



Top: Otto & Irene Gilbertson in their Scandinavian gift department.

Center: The hardware store building during the restoration process, ca. 2010

Bottom: Vernon Hermann (right) behind the bar at Mt Horeb Bowling Alleys

of the building's former residents, Irene Gilbertson of Gilbertson's Hardware. The front was restored to more closely

resemble the building's original facade and has remained this way through the present day as part of the Mount Horeb Area Historical Society's history complex.

Corella's Alleys

At the location of the main entrance and gift shop of the Driftless Historium, there once stood a bowling alley and bar. In a report on downtown Mount Horeb architecture, it was described as an astylistic building that had no real architectural significance. Its very lack of design was indicative of being built during the Great Depression.

The bowling alley was constructed for Vernon and Corella (Peterson) Hermann in 1930. Corella was the daughter of a Norwegian father and a German mother on North Second Street, or Park Avenue, as it was then called. Her grandfather, Ole Peterson, donated some of his land for the railroad and once owned some of the farmland that became Mount Horeb.

The property belonged to Margaret Brannan's hotel to the south until it was sold to the Hermanns in 1930. Margaret's brother Joseph Brannan had been in a sheet metal business with Corella Hermann's father, Olaus Peterson, so the two families were well acquainted. The new building was equipped with a bar, four bowling lanes, and was planned to have an upper level apartment that never came to fruition. It appears to have been the only bowling alley in town

at the time and the village residents were ready for it. Two months after its opening, the Madison papers reported that Mount Horeb, "the small Dane county hamlet," organized the second largest bowling league in the Madison Bowling Association. There were sixteen bowling teams participating in the "Mt Horeb Business Men's League." Verne Hermann was active in the organization

of these leagues, each team representing a different Mount Horeb business. In an interview with one of the Hermanns' daughters, she noted, "bowling brought a lot of people together." The establishment was first referred to as "Mt Horeb Bowling Alleys."

In 1933 Corella became sole owner of the bowling alley and she purchased a home two blocks away that same year. This house at 108 S.

time to the Historical Society, donating some of their unsold goods to displays and the archives. Otto spent hours and days constructing storage shelves for the museum on the third floor of the municipal building that opened in 1977.

After the hardware store closed, the building was used by the Woodcutters firm of Blue Mounds to pack and ship pillows and cushions made for their Scandinavian designed furniture. A business called Denmarc Sports, selling sporting goods including guns, bows, athletic clothing, and converse and tiger shoes, was here for a year and a half beginning July 1984.

Otto died in 1985 and Irene sold the building the following year. It was purchased by the Folklore Village for the Wisconsin Folklife Center. The building then officially became a museum for the first time as the Wisconsin Folk Museum, (a 501(c)3 organization separate from Folklore Village), operated by the husband and wife team of Phil Martin and Jean Johnson. The opening featured an exhibit of the paintings of Laverne Kammerude of rural Blanchardville, but the collection had a wide range of artifacts from across the state, with a particular appreciation for rosemaling. They published books, cds, and curated traveling exhibits. Due to financial difficulties, they closed in 1995, leaving an opportunity for The Mount Horeb Area Historical Society to purchase the building in 1996. One of the first curators in the space happened to be one





Right: This wall mounted cash box was used by Curt Chilson who owned Viking Bowl. It was used to receive the quarter needed to rent a pair of bowling shoes. The box was manufactured by Gremlin Industries, Inc. of San Diego, California. It was salvaged from the building when it was acquired by the Historical Society in 2015. Notice the addition of Atari stickers.



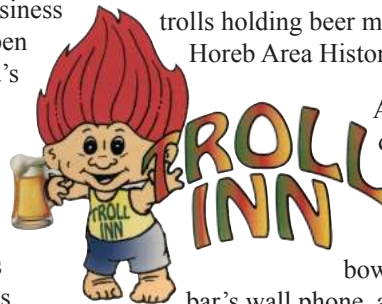
In 1948, Corella, aged 43, married James Comiskey, a WWII veteran from Prairie Du Chien 18 years her junior. After Corella's son took over the bowling alley, he and Hazel stayed in the South Fourth Street home, so Corella, her husband, and her youngest daughter then moved to the large brick house at 209 West Main Street. She eventually opened an antique shop in this home as, possibly, the first antique business in Mount Horeb. She was hot on a trend as antique shops became a prominent feature of downtown Mount Horeb in the late 20th century. Several properties in the village were owned by Corella, but her entrepreneurial spirit was cut short when she developed heart disease. Corella went to the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, MN for treatment, but died there in 1970, aged 65.

Fourth Street was (and still is) a grand Victorian home constructed by the Kleven Brothers for one of the Kleven brothers themselves, Knut Kleven. The bowling alley also became a tavern as one of eight businesses in the village to immediately apply for a liquor license. For a time the business was managed by Raphael "Bubby" Vasen, who left to open his own alleys on East Main St in the late 1930s. Corella's business soon became known as Corella's Alleys (or "Corella's Bowling Alleys" or "Corella's Lanes"). After having their fourth child, Corella divorced Vernon in 1939. Like Gilbertson's Hardware next door, there were consistent updates and improvements at Corella's Alleys. A circular bar was installed in the 1930s that was then sold in the early 1940s for further interior alterations.

Unfortunately, many of the mentions of the establishment in Madison newspapers during the 1940s involve fights caused by rowdy teenagers (including Corella's dad being hospitalized after getting hit over the head with a board by a drunken 16-year-old). As bowling continued to grow in popularity, there were two other alleys in Mount Horeb. In the following decades, newspaper mentions proliferated with the numerous tournaments among bowling leagues and the excitement of the sport.

Corella was able to operate the booming business well, likely because of her strength as a businesswoman. Corella loved having a space where young people could recreate and was remembered as kind, generous, and a good listener. Predictably, her business strength could make her intimidating to others. The bowling alleys were a family venture and her three oldest children all had the job of setting pins manually. They seemed to love the sport, particularly her son, Vance "Bud." He and his new wife Hazel (Aavang), took over the business around 1954 and continued to operate it as Corella's Alleys. Automatic pin setters were installed in 1960. Bud was considered a pro and his team won a state bowling tournament in 1961.

Bud Hermann sold the business and building in 1972 to Joseph (aka "Dan" or "Booner") and Mae Piquette who renamed it Viking Bowl. The couple had been in Mount Horeb only four years at the time, but remained the rest of their lives. Curtis Chilson, an avid Mount Horeb bowler for at least two decades prior, purchased the business from them by 1979. The final owner was Linda McCullick who renamed it "Tom & Linda's Troll Inn" in 1996. Linda embraced Mount Horeb's Trollway identity, using pictures of cute trolls holding beer mugs on Troll Inn's signage. The Mount Horeb Area Historical Society purchased this lot in 2015.



After close inspection and internal discussion, the structure was razed to accommodate the Historium visitor's center. To capture some of its history, the Society retained a piece of the bowling alley floor, a bowling ball, the bar's wall phone, a leather dice cup, menus, and more.

Mount Horeb House

With the coming of the railroad in 1881, local entrepreneurs jumped at the opportunity to erect businesses near the new depot. While several buildings were moved from "Old Town" even more were newly built. Hotels were in high demand and the Mount Horeb House hotel was built on South Second Street for Lewis E. Larson in 1882. Mr. Larson was from the larger Norwegian Blue Mounds settlement, and with Mount Horeb now being the closest railroad stop to his home in the Town of York, Green County, he purchased the parcel and had the hotel building erected. A large barn to house horses, a livery, was built behind around the same time. It is unclear exactly who owned and who ran the hotel but Lewis Larson's younger brother Frank ran the hotel for at least the first two years; after Lewis and his wife divorced, his wife's father, Andreas A. Strommen, owned it for two years. It appears that Lewis went west, leaving his wife and two children behind. Lewis J. Berg was then hired to look after the business.

A neighbor of the Strommens and Larsons in the Town of York, Thomas Ayen (also Norwegian) purchased the property in

Mount Horeb Area Historical Society

1886/1887. He made an extensive renovation to the building, making it almost unrecognizable by removing windows, changing the roofline, and expanding it to both the north and west. Ayen was a man of many ambitions and talents, including construction, and found himself more interested in other aspects of the village, so the hotel was sold to Thomas Locke around 1891.



until purchased by Margaret Brannan, an Irishwoman who ran the hotel with her sister Bridget. They were known as “the Brannan Sisters.” Their brother James helped Margaret after Bridget moved on. Margaret died in 1938, but her estate owned it until 1945 when William Thousand bought the property. Sever Martinson is believed to have turned it into apartments by 1961. After 1977 it was owned by construction companies and finally Sharon McGann



It appears that Thomas and Kari (Ness) Locke may already have been operating the hotel since 1888. They were from the Town of Primrose and an example of an uncommon mingling of ethnicities at that time and place. He was Swiss/English and she was Norwegian. They had six children (two of whom were born while living here) and were quite well known in Mount Horeb. As was written in a family history, “the hotel-livery stable operation must have been both a joy and a sorrow. For Kari and her every increasing brood of children, the tasks of cooking, cleaning, and serving both transient guests and family, was surely a taxing endeavor.” Their oldest daughter, Lillie, went to Decorah, Iowa and married one of the traveling salesmen (this one a doctor) who



Top: The Mount Horeb House hotel about 1886 when it was purchased by Ole Ayen.

Center: The building after renovation and expansion. Notice the livery barn in back. The Brattlie family is on the porch, ca. 1902.

Left: The Thomas & Kari Locke family posed for a portrait when they lived in and operated the hotel.

Top right: Manufactured by Wheeling Corrugating Company of Wheeling West Virginia around 1889, this space heater was operated by three kerosene lamps that produced heat that was reflected off the interior corrugated copper panel behind them. This heater was used as supplemental heat in the drafty rooms of the Mount Horeb House Hotel. It was likely purchased for the hotel during the tenure of the Locke family. The heater was donated to the Historical Society by Helen Martinson in 1997

who sold it to the Mount Horeb Area Historical Society in 2008. Restoration was planned, but unfortunately the building was not salvageable. It was ultimately decided to demolish it and build a new structure to resemble the old one.

As an illustration of the interwoven links between families of early Mount Horeb, Mr.

came through town and stayed at the hotel. It was described as a “tragic affair and later marriage” that ended with her death from tuberculosis. After their daughter’s elopement, the Locke family sold the hotel and had a fine house built on Park Avenue (now 206 N. Second St). Lillie died the following winter; her one-year-old son was then mostly raised by her parents. The next oldest Locke daughter completed college in Humboldt, Iowa, and then married Otto Dahle, becoming part of the most prominent family in town. Her parents sold them their home and moved to a farm in the Town of Vermont and began breeding ferrets.

The hotel was purchased by Tollef and Elizabeth Brattlie, who owned it until 1908. It exchanged hands and proprietors several times

Vilberg of the hardware store was married to one of Corella Peterson Hermann Comiskey’s aunts. And Otto Gilbertson of the hardware store had a sister who was married to Corella’s brother.

Housing, hospitality, and hardware: the Driftless Historium is nestled in the heart of downtown Mount Horeb on a strip of commercial landscape that has served residents for over a century. The many rebirths of these properties represent the gamut of local history, and we are dedicated to preserving all of it. Because that’s what we do—with your help, of course.*

REFLECTIONS AT FIVE YEARS

We asked for reflections on the Driftless Historium's five-year milestone and the responses we received were humbling and heartening. They mean even more because they came from dedicated supporters, generous donors, and the local-est of locals!

Here's to the next chapter, friends!

"Congratulations on the 5th anniversary of the museum! At a time when it is increasingly important to explore our past and celebrate the diversity of cultures living in the Driftless area, the Madison Community Foundation is proud to have played a small part in the creating of this wonderful space. From growing collections, to bringing together the curious, to providing information and artifacts that reflect the rich history of the area, the Historium plays a key role in the Mount Horeb area. I learn something new each time I'm there and love the vision and energy that make this such a central part of the community. Bravo!" -**Tom Linfield, Vice President of Community Impact, Madison Community Foundation**

"MHAHS's Driftless Historium has woven its way into the fabric of our town and all that makes it special by interlocking the past, present and future. A new building, exhibits, programs and ideas all spark interest in our local history for the people of the area and beyond.

My association, interest and involvement likewise has given me the opportunity to have a thread to weave into this institution's cloth. Proud to be a member and volunteer for 40 years." -**Marietta Gribb, Volunteer Textile Curator, MHAHS**

"The Mount Horeb Community Foundation is extremely proud to have contributed financially to the establishment of the Driftless Historium, and to have provided ongoing financial support for its displays and programming. We knew this would be a cultural treasure and would make a big impact on Mount Horeb as an added area attraction. Another bonus was that it would provide resources to



area researchers and display the many artifacts donated by area residents. The trove of relics and papers that were stored in the upper levels of the Municipal Building were already attracting visitors but couldn't be displayed or



Top: Main Gallery exhibit, "Life and Change at the Edge of the Driftless," debuts, May 2018.

Center: New wall case is framed in Community Room-to be, Aug 2016.

Below left: Curator Buysse, a trained archaeologist, excavates a privy found along the Troll Inn foundation, July 2016.

Bottom: Walls of Research Center rise up, Oct 2016.



for the past, an involvement in the present, and a commitment to the future. Truly a Living Museum." -**Connie Jo Zwettler, Past MHAHS Board Member and Volunteer**

preserved properly. We believe this facility has made a very positive impact on our community along with enhancing Mount Horeb's reputation as a tourist destination. The staff are very friendly and knowledgeable, and the museum changes its exhibits frequently enough to merit multiple visits." -**Mary Klopotic, Director, Mount Horeb Community Foundation**

"We are so fortunate to have such a quality museum in our community. The Driftless Historium not only provides a wonderful experience for individuals and families of all ages, but it is also an invaluable resource of historical knowledge for our community and beyond. When I recently needed help learning about some key people and events in our organization's past, their staff dug through the archives and wrote up a detailed summary that was exactly what I needed. We value the

Historium both as an attraction for our visitors and as a resource for our community members." -**Rachel LaCasse-Ford, Director, Mount Horeb Area Chamber of Commerce**

"In just 5 years the Historium has become an important Mount Horeb downtown institution providing lectures, workshops, an archival research center, rotating displays, including art, and a new award-winning permanent exhibit. This

first class museum and research center is a treasure." -**Larry Kruckman, MHAHS Past Vice President and Museum Expansion Project Team Member, and Carolyn White, MHAHS Volunteer**

"The Driftless Historium is a great asset to Mount Horeb and a wonderful attraction in our downtown. The Historium is one of

the many great destinations that enhances our sense of community and it also preserves our valuable history. The Village of Mount Horeb congratulates you on 5 years and wishes you many more years of success!" -**Nic Owen, Administrator, Village of Mount Horeb**

"The Driftless has a reverence

“I have been a front desk volunteer at the Historium for most of the 15 years since I retired. When I greet people who come to visit I always ask them where they are from. Believe me, they come from far and wide. Many intentionally come to visit Mount Horeb, the Troll Capital of the World! Of course, others are native Mount Horeb folks who are returning to celebrate a family event or to visit family. Those that visit the museum are amazed at what a community our size has been able to do to preserve the wider history that we are part of. While I’m not from Mount Horeb, I’m proud to represent this community that I now call home. This wonderful place has become a center for many cultural and social gatherings. It took a village to build the Historium, as it so often does.” **-John Pare, Past MHAHS Board Member and Volunteer**

“When the plans began for what is now the Historium, we had to ask ourselves as a board and Society what it was we needed and what would it take to get the community to support it. The answer was in that word: community. Yes, we needed an archives we could call our own as a historical society but even more, the community needed a place it could call its own. There just weren’t enough community spaces and the planning of the Historium project presented us with a unique opportunity to help.

And we succeeded. We, the Mount Horeb Area Historical Society and we, the community. Two distinct moments tell me that. One was the time I was proofreader for a Society newsletter that listed everyone who donated to the project over the years. Gosh, I wish I remembered how many names were there but it was hundreds. All those names showed that the community came through for us and believed in the project.

The second time was simply when I asked about booking a time for an event. And there wasn’t an opening. For months. The Historium was booked solid for months with community events, but I grinned like crazy because a full calendar meant we had met our mission and the community, again, responded.

My great wish at the beginning of this project was for people to see the Society holdings and appreciate the community’s history. That’s still true, but now I just want everyone to go to events there, to host events there, to continue to see this as a gathering place and a community resource. As far as I’m concerned, mission accomplished.” **-Jane Burns, Past MHAHS Board Member and Volunteer**

“The Mount Horeb Area Historical Society has created something amazing. The Driftless Historium provides a wonderful view of the social and natural history of the Mt. Horeb area. The displays are extremely well done, with great photographs and clear narratives. It is remarkable that a small community is able to create and develop such an engaging view into its past. I am proud to be counted among its many supporters. **-Larry Sromovsky, MHAHS Life Member**



Top: Nov 2016: Research Center and Visitor’s Center take shape.

Center: Feb 2017: “Driftless Sanctuary” sculpture installed in Visitor’s Center.

Below: Kitty corner neighbor Duluth Trading Company is reflected in the window of the Historium Research Center. Just a few years after we opened our doors, lead donor Steve Schlecht became a welcome neighbor with the opening of his 2nd St headquarters.



“The Driftless Historium is an absolute gem in our Mount Horeb community! This unique facility offers residents and visitors varied and fascinating opportunities to look into the history of the people and landscape of our region. The high-quality exhibits, programming, and research delivers entertaining and informative insights not to be found anywhere else. Visitors of every age will find it captivating. The Historium offers a deeper understanding of our community and those who live, and have lived, in it. I’m always especially proud to share it with guests who are experiencing it for the first time. Congratulations on your first five years and best wishes as you continue to grow!” **-Rep. Sody Pope, MHAHS Member**

“My Riphahn ancestors settled in this area in the 1850s. Martin Riphahn (my great grandfather) immigrated with his brother and sister. The family purchased land from the first postmaster of Mount Horeb, and they donated the land for the Catholic cemetery. In a full circle moment, my donating my time on this project will preserve the Mount Horeb history they were a part of.

I am proud to be here at the right time to be able to assist the Historium with such a wonderful project that will serve future generations. I am amazed at the increased interest in the saving of past history. A GOOD JOB AND WELL DONE to staff and, let’s not forget, past and present Board Members and Volunteers.” **-Peter Riphahn, MHAHS Board Member**

“In my wildest dreams I never expected the Driftless Historium to be the wonderful place that it has become. Although I have never lived in Mount Horeb myself, four generations of my ancestors on both sides of my family come from the Mount Horeb Area. I have been a member of the Mount Horeb Historical Society and Historium for as long as I can remember. Years ago I persuaded my father’s parents and many of my mother’s cousins and other relatives to contribute both financially and with materials to the nascent organization. I’m so glad I did. The Driftless

Historium Museum and Research Library are so welcoming. From a distance I have watched as the Historium has become a pillar of the community. The Driftless Historium Museum and Research Library are so welcoming. It is filled with wonderful things to discover, remnants from the history of its community, including old pictures, old documents and lots of old things documenting the people and events in our past. The staff and volunteers are completely professional and perfectly suited for the tasks they perform. They are always friendly and extremely helpful even with the most mundane requests. I’ve been particularly impressed with how clever the staff has been over the years getting the local public involved with the Historium, including lectures, exhibits, events, articles in the local newspaper, a newsletter and even the new walking tour. The last five years of the Historium have been exciting, I can’t wait for the next five years and what will come after that. Oh! The places you will go ... and the things you will discover.” **-Kevin Tvedt, MHAHS Member**

WHAT'S IN A NAME?: OBSERVATORY ROAD by Jackie Sale

Among the rolling hills and farmland in the Town of Cross Plains, a road extends west from County Highway P just north of Pine Bluff to a high spot in the landscape. It then travels along the ridge and dips down again to join up with Barlow and Garfoot Roads on the west. The undulation of this road is not unusual in the Driftless Area, but it has an unusual name among the other local roads that are typically named after landowners, leaders, or natural features of the landscape. Observatory Road is named for a unique structure among the woodland and farmland—the Pine Bluff Observatory that sits high on the hill, 1,100 feet above sea level. This astronomical observatory is owned and operated by the University of Wisconsin-Madison.



Top: The Observatory, ca. 1960.

Bottom: An aerial shot ca. 1999.

Early in 1956, the UW Board of Regents bought 53 acres in the Town of Cross Plains with funds donated by the Wisconsin Alumni Research Foundation (WARF). The purpose was to build an observatory to replace the Washburn Observatory on Observatory Drive on the UW campus. The Washburn Observatory was built in 1881 and was a major research facility for its time, having a telescope larger than the 15-inch refractor at Harvard, but city expansion interfered with the work at that site. The location on the hill near Pine Bluff allowed for an unobstructed view of the skies, far from the city lights. The construction of the new observatory was made possible by a \$200,000 gift from WARF; work began on the project in April of 1957 and the facility opened in October 1958.

With its updated 36-inch reflecting telescope, the Pine Bluff Observatory has been home to a plethora of key research developments and has housed equipment for both the UW astronomy and physics departments. It is primarily used by students and faculty of UW-Madison for instruction and research, and provides a facility for testing new instruments.

Around 1965, a small computer-controlled telescope was put into operation at the facility and is credited for being the first robotic telescope, in the modern sense of the word. A Half-wave Spectropolarimeter (HPOL), an instrument used to determine the shapes of objects that are too far away to photograph, was designed by a UW astronomer and used at the Pine Bluff Observatory for 15 years. Worldwide, astronomers used the data from HPOL to study the gas and dust surrounding planets, stars, and supernovae. Unfortunately, it ceased operation at Pine Bluff in 2004 after several equipment failures and was later moved to the University of Toledo and refurbished.

The acreage around the observatory is known as the New Observatory Woods; it was designated as a State Natural Area in 1956. The vegetation in New

Observatory Woods shows the transition from prairie to red oak woods, with a small prairie at one of its corners containing over 30 prairie species. This small property was one of about 30 Wisconsin locations that an obscure group at UW-Madison, the State Board for the Preservation of Scientific Areas, set aside during the mid-1900s as a conservation area containing unique flora and fauna. Over time, many of these designated locations have been acquired by various conservation entities or individuals, but New Observatory Woods is still owned by the UW Board of Regents. This property is not open to the public without permission, which is obtained by contacting the University of Wisconsin Arboretum.

While searching for a location for the new observatory in the 1950s, the Board of Regents had to have been looking for a high spot, so they looked west of Madison. The spot for the observatory was found just a few miles west of the Johnstown terminal moraine, where the glacier ground to a halt, and the Driftless Area begins as the hills rise to allow access to the night skies. *

COLLECTIONS SPOTLIGHT

PRAIRIE SHIP SAILED THE ALFALFA SEAS 40 YEARS AGO

By Brian Bigler

Like Professor Harold Hill in the Music Man, little known Lake Placid, New York, artist Naj Wikoff's ambitious plan to erect a massive kinetic sculpture in the middle of a rural hayfield required a willing and sizable contingent of townsfolk to bring his dream to life. Some locals were skeptical while others gladly participated in the artistic scheme.

In the summer of 1982, Wikoff had been a Mount Horeb resident for a short while when he set about crafting a small model that would help him realize his dream—creating an environmental art form resembling a frigate. The model, he hoped, would also make his vision more understandable to locals he sought for involvement in his endeavor. An alfalfa field on the Richard Losenegger farm on Bergum Road was the chosen spot for the ship to sail. In all, approximately 200 local volunteers and business places were convinced to participate in crafting the 95 foot tall structure that consisted of telephone poles, gigantic colorful fabric sails, and wooden and metal riggings.

Area women spent hours crafting the yards and yards of colorful nylon material into sails on sewing machines provided by Walcott Sewing and G&K Electrics of Madison. Others designed and fabricated the metal and wood riggings, took on publicity, organized opening ceremonies, and assisted with other needed details. Much of the work was under the auspices of a local arts group and the Mount Horeb Chamber of Commerce.

An additional group, using the same colorful nylon fabric stitched in geometric patterns, created banners for downtown's streetlamps, the first ever to be installed along Main Street.

Mr. Wikoff said of his vision at the time that he was inspired by the local landscape envisioning the land as a "big green ocean" that changed from day to day. He thought about how the early pioneers saw the land as they traveled by prairie schooner.

Music was provided by the Mount Horeb High School band, and various speeches were given by local dignitaries such as the governor's wife, Julia Dreyfus. Then Alice in Dairyland did a



ceremonious christening by breaking a bottle of champagne on one of the sculpture's masts. The \$35,000 creation, an arrangement of blue, yellow and red fabric sails flowing brightly against the light blue sky officially set sail in late September of 1982. The spectacle, visible from a distance, drew thousands of visitors and plenty of media attention, but was short lived. That fall, atmospheric conditions consisting of strong winds played havoc with the tall structure on the hill. Some of the sails blew loose and reconstruction was not advisable.



Top: The 1982 model of the Prairie Ship.

Right: Alice in Dairyland breaks champagne on a mast; artist Naj Wikoff cheers her on at right.

Opposite: The Prairie Ship as seen from a distance, 1982.

Those who did visit the sculpture during its short tenure still recall lying on the lush green hayfield and staring up at the brightly colored sails flapping loudly in the wind.

In 1983 a group of local citizens met for a short period to consider resurrecting the popular sculpture, but these plans did not come to fruition. The Prairie Ship model and its associated papers,

2021 COLLECTIONS DONATIONS

Thank you to the many individuals and families who donated archives and/or objects to the collections of the Mount Horeb Area Historical Society during the 2021 calendar year. As in previous years, if you don't see your name on this list and feel it should be, please let us know. We value every donation made to the Society's collections and appreciate the community's dedication to the preservation of area history.

– Curator Johanna Buysse

Steve Allbaugh	Richard and Marjorie Evenson Estate	Joy Martinson	Ellen Smithback
Ann Evans Anderson	Patricia Flom	Bruce Meister	Mary Spaay
Carl Arneson	Susan French	Donna Miller	Gabi Sparacio
Alfred Aslakson	Barbara Gentz	Mount Horeb Family Pharmacy	Ron Spielman
Barb Bartz	Bryan Greve	Mount Horeb Fire Department	Jerry Stamm
Royle Bieri	Marietta Gribb	Mount Horeb Police Department	Charlie Steinhauer
Brian Bigler and Ken Scott	Mike Hanna	Mount Horeb Public Library	Ruth Steinhauer Estate
Merel Black	Wayne Hefty	Arlo Paust	Anne Swiggum
The Family of Ralph and Beverly Buechner	Mike Herfel	Marggi Porcari	Jane Topper
Dixie Burns	Kate Hook	Susan Powers	Town of Perry
The Family of LuAnn Huseth Call	Nancy Nye Hunt	John and Karen Ranum	Kevin Tvedt
Dr. Doug Cox	Ron Johnson	Donna Read	Wade and Destinee Udelhoven
Barb Crawford	Dolores Kahl	Rebecca Rehl	Tim and Karen White
Nancy Davis	Drew Lawrence	Terese Hemesath Robinson	Scott and Jennifer Winner
Gib Docken	Faye Lorenz	Jerry and Kathleen Schubert	Pauline Schlapbach Wyss
Art and Beth Elver	Greg Martin	Janet Sherven	Connie Jo Zwettler
Paulette Emberson	Shirley Martin	Bob Skibbe	Kathy Zwettler

newspaper clippings, bumper stickers, and buttons all became part of our Historical Society's collections. The sculpture is still a vivid memory for many, some of whom talk of it to this day.

In late 1985, Mr. Wikoff announced that he would be giving the Prairie Ship to France to celebrate that country's gift of the Statue of Liberty to the United States in 1886. He renamed it "Prairie Ship Liberty."

Before its journey to France, Wikoff had the ship erected at several locations across the United States starting with Portland, Oregon. Stops along the way included St. Louis (where it was erected beneath the arch); Temple, Texas; Denver, Colorado; Salt Lake City, Utah; Tampa, Florida; New York City; and near the Washington Monument in Washington DC.

Much like its debut in Mount Horeb, the trip across the United States included locals making the sails. Each stop involved creating a new sail to be added to the sculpture. The colors chosen reflected the spirit of the location. In newspaper interviews, Wikoff stated "on the West Coast the colors dark purple and red, for Denver, Colorado the sails have warm colors – big reds and yellows – which represent the wide open



space of the central part of the country. The East Coast's vitality is seen in the 'hot' colors – vibrant lavenders and pinks."

Wikoff estimated the trip across the country at \$700,000 and noted there were financial woes as the sculpture left Washington DC for New York stating "we need help. We've had rough sailing weather and our sails are down – we need contributions." The installation was to arrive in Paris, France and was to be erected alongside the Eiffel Tower in October of 1986. However, research has found no record of the sculpture ever arriving in Paris. *

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

BRIAN BIGLER

“Can I speak to Brian Bigler? Does he still own the Historical Society?”

Imagine this spoken in a no-nonsense, business-like fashion, the speaker quite certain they will soon be connected with Mr. Bigler.

Because where else would he possibly be than at the Historium, among the historical remnants and archival echoes of the greater Mount Horeb area?

Despite the fact that Brian stepped back from his MHAHS leadership role over seven years ago, this is a near-weekly occurrence at the Driftless Historium History Center.

And it’s no wonder! Brian was a co-founder of the Mount Horeb Area Historical Society in 1975 at just nineteen years old, and he remained a constant and visible face for nearly four decades afterwards. He has always been one of a dedicated many, but there can be little doubt that his consistent presence has provided organizational stability and a walking, breathing institutional memory.

From cultivating relationships with community members and elders who then entrusted their life stories and ephemera with the Society, to curating countless exhibits that drew upon his inherent talent for period aesthetic, to developing a gift shop as a much-needed income stream, and much more—Brian dutifully and capably has worn many MHAHS hats.



Fortunately, this relationship has proven mutually beneficial. Brian translated his MHAHS experiences as the foundation for a multifaceted career in antique sales, exhibit design, and public history consulting.

Brian has offered top-notch heirlooms and treasures for sale at various venues, including a long-running and successful space at Odana Antiques and his new booths (go take a look!) at Isaac’s Antiques on Mount Horeb’s Trollway and Atomic Antiques in Madison. He also launched useMEum, a museum



consulting service that offers his formidable skill sets as exhibit designer and historical interpreter. One of his favorite and more well-known projects: set designer for the 1999 docudrama film “Wisconsin Death Trip,” based on the 1973 cult classic book of the same name.

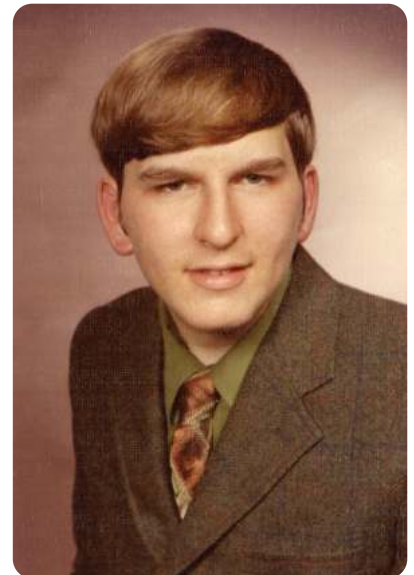
For many, Brian Bigler is and shall remain the walking embodiment of MHAHS and its dedication to preserving and sharing southwestern Dane County’s deep histories.

And make no mistake—he’s still around! Enjoying a less official role, Brian shares his time with us when he can. He continues to be an invaluable resource for public history networking, the particulars of local history (which, of course, he’s both lived and studied) and the MHAHS collection (a significant portion of which he personally scouted and gathered).

Fittingly, Brian’s legacy is now a chapter of the very history he’s spent his life corralling, saving and re-telling. And that’s a beautiful kind of thing.

Mr. Bigler, we tip our hats to you! Here’s to another 40 years.

Job description: I work mostly with the three-dimensional collections (artifacts) cleaning, cataloging, updating computer records and filing. I volunteer on the Collections Committee that meets once a month and oversees acquisitions. When new exhibits are planned I enjoy working with the committee on eventual design and installation that is required. This may also include work on text suggestions that are reworked and edited by other volunteers. In between these duties I help sort newly acquired collections of photos, personal papers and artifacts. I also answer lots of questions about the age of things, locations of various buildings in the area and the like.



How long have I volunteered for the Society: I have been a volunteer for 47 years. I have discovered in my life that I like to finish what I started and did not realize in 1975 that the collecting of local history has no end.

What is your favorite part of volunteering?: I like the discovery of new facts and things that tell the stories of the



Opposite left: Baby Brian, son of John and Leona Bigler.

Opposite top: A cheerful (and still adorable) young Brian

Opposite right: Brian's graduation photo, MHHS Class of 1973.

Top: The first Board of Directors of the new Mount Horeb Area Historical Society, 1975. Standing: Jan Ludwig, Forest Johnson, Olive Skindrud, Gladys Martin; Seated: Brian Bigler, Irene Gilbertson, Otto Gilbertson, Richard Horn; missing from photo: Bob Pekowsky

Top right: Brian Bigler with partner Ken Scott at their July 22, 1995 Holy Union ceremony.

Below: Brian with an MHAHS assemblage of railroad art and artifacts.

Below right: Brian adding some finishing touches to the current exhibit in the Driftless Historium, 2008.



My father and mother moved to the Martin and Anna (Skrindsrud) Bang farm on Town Hall Road, Springdale Township in 1945 and I was the second of two surviving children. My mother lost a son at birth and then my sister came along in 1952 and I in 1955. My sister and her two sons also live in Mount Horeb.

Education and vocational: I attended grade school at Ridgeview for seven years and these were the most memorable. I attended the eighth grade at the old red brick building on Academy Street and then Mount Horeb High School where I graduated in 1973. I later enrolled at Edgewood College, Madison, graduating with a degree in history.

Who or what got me interested: I became interested in all things history at age six when I visited the attic of Anna Bang who lived on Eighth Street in Mount Horeb. It was at the time of Mount Horeb's Centennial in 1961. Anna showed me artifacts that her mother had brought from Norway and I was hooked. I also attended the big Centennial parade with my father and still remember seeing all the neat old farm tractors and other "old-time" entries. Later, grade school teacher Collette Ryan, who had an interest in antiques, encouraged her students to bring in old things for show and tell. Also, class trips to museums were memorable including a major trip to the Milwaukee Public Museum when I was in eighth grade which to this day I have never forgotten. *

area which can often be like piecing together a detective story. Also, over the years I have met some pretty interesting people who you might call local characters, or who also share their passion for discovery and regional history.

Tell us about your family: I was born to first generation American Swiss (father's side) and German (mother's side) parents and so had an early exposure to what it was like to retain "old world" traits through my grandparents. Especially on my father's side where his parents often talked in Swiss if they did not want us to know what they were saying.





Mount Horeb Area Historical Society

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**Driftless Historium
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Fri-Mon 10-4
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EXHIBIT CELEBRATES AREA MAKERS

The Driftless Historium is proud to host “Meet Your Makers,” a photography exhibit celebrating makers and producers of the greater Mount Horeb area.

“Meet Your Makers” features snapshots shared by thirteen area agricultural entrepreneurs. From orchard keepers and hemp farmers, to garlic and grape growers, to apiarists and caretakers of heritage stock breeds, their photos are a window into the meaningful work they do to cultivate the landscape and nurture the plants and animals that sustain our community

This photo exhibit, showing now through Tuesday, September 6, is free and viewable in the Kalscheur Family Foundation Community Room during the museum’s open hours (Sun, Mon, Tues, Fri and Sat; 10am - 4pm).

A virtual gallery by the same name makes an even wider collection of images accessible. To explore this online exhibition, visit www.mthorebhistory.org/meet-your-makers-2022.html.

Call (608) 437-6486 or email us for more information.

Top right: Gentle Breeze Honey, Owners Tim & Cathy Woller and Eugene & Donna Woller

Bottom left: Prairie Bluff Farm, Owners Steve and Beth Albert

Bottom right: Squashington Farm Co-owner Sarah Leong

