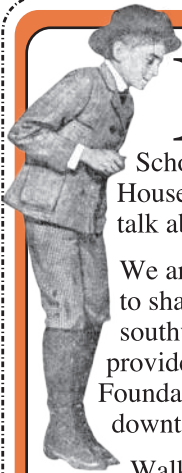


STRANGE & UNUSUAL

MHAHS TO DEBUT FIRST TROLLWAY TOUR



Have you heard of the Main Street exorcism of “Haunted Boy” Henry James Brophy? How about the High School basketball games held upstairs in the Opera House? You haven’t? Take a walk with me, and let’s talk about it...

We are always searching for new and engaging ways to share the unique history and culture of southwestern Dane County. With funding generously provided by a 2022 Mount Horeb Community Foundation project grant, MHAHS will debut downtown walking tours in time for warmer weather.

Walking Tours appeal to both locals and out of town guests looking for an interactive and memorable experience. They are a familiar and popular event in many towns across America and beyond.

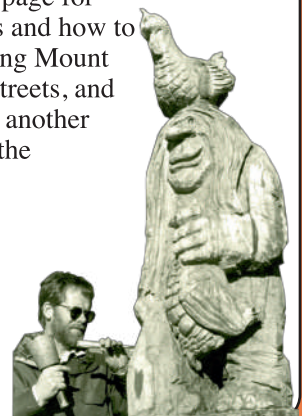
Our first tour will highlight Mount Horeb’s “strange and unusual.” Our own newsletter editor and historian Arlo Paust has been deep in the archives, uncovering intriguing, mysterious and notorious town characters,

happenings, and phenomena. **Do you have an unusual, outrageous, or otherworldly local tale to share? Let us know!** We were thrilled to secure the talents of well-known and prolific fantasy writer and Village resident Alex Bledsoe, who will weave it all into an entertaining and edifying walk-about-town.

MHAHS has committed to offering a slate of free guided tours for the 2022 season. Our planned timeline includes a June to October schedule, and we will work with the Mount Horeb Area Chamber of Commerce to plan and promote dates and times that will benefit local shopping and dining destinations.

Watch our website and Facebook page for more information about tour dates and how to join the fun. We are excited to bring Mount

Horeb’s history to the streets, and give visitors yet another reason to visit the Trollway!



WALKING TOUR PREVIEW **BEING TWO STORIES OF BIZARRE CIRCUMSTANCE** By Arlo Paust

The Mount Horeb area is home to many strange characters and happenings. Thanks to historic records, there are some that can be recalled with vivid detail.

This article shares two particularly compelling and rarely told tales uncovered during research for the walking tour. One is about a wild naked man of the woods and another is about an unsolved mysterious attempted murder in downtown Mount Horeb.

Wild Man in a "Nude Condition"

It was August 4, 1890 when the Mount Horeb area was alerted to Martin Oyhus’s debilitating insanity. His four children, all daughters ranging in age from six to ten, had run away to a neighbor’s through the woods to escape. Perhaps it may be most effective to quote the Wisconsin State Journal newspaper article directly. The startling headline read: “Caught a Wild Man: Martin Oyhus Runs the Woods in a Nude Condition.” ... continued on pg 2



CONTENTS

WISCONSIN GARDENS.... PG 4
HISTORIC PROPERTIES.... PG 5

DONATION SPOTLIGHT.... PG 6
WHAT’S IN A NAME?..... PG 9

MEMBERSHIP..... PG 10
SCANDIHOOVIAN..... PG 14

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT.. PG 14
EVENTS..... PG 16

Mount Horeb Area Historical Society

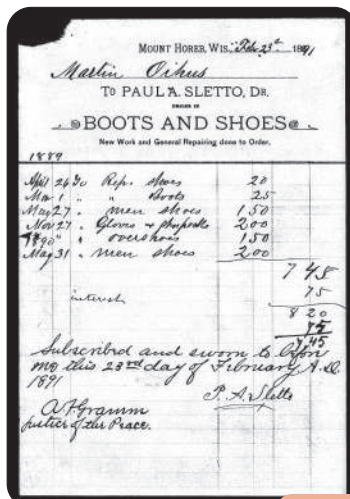
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"Oyhus has been running at large in the woods near Mt. Horeb, entirely nude. He has frightened the people into the belief that a wild man was at large, and this belief was well founded for Oyhus was as wild as a savage. He went into the door-yard of a neighbor and jumping over the fence into the cattle pen sat down in the straw and remained there. He was finally overpowered by a large number of men, summoned by the thoroughly alarmed neighbor, and was dressed.

"He is hopelessly insane and inherits a tendency to an unbalanced mental condition. His grandfather, father, and mother were insane. About three years ago he lost his wife and was left with five little children to provide for. With these he lived on a farm in the town of Blue Mounds and although he has showed signs of "queerness" since his wife's death he has been uniformly kind to the motherless little ones. Of late, however, he has become violent. The children were frightened at his conduct, Saturday, and took to the woods. He went after them, but could not catch them. All day Sunday and Saturday Oyhus wandered through the tangled brush, the briars tearing his flesh and goading him to frenzy. He was a wild appearing creature when captured and raved considerably." He was sent to the Mendota insane asylum where, according to records, he expressed his loneliness for a wife. His rage developed because he had been drinking alcohol to cope with the loss of his wife. Coincidentally, a medicine prescribed to keep his spirits up was brandy.

It is not known exactly which neighbor the Oyhus girls escaped to, but from details in his probate record, it may be presumed it was the Granum family that lived in the neighboring valley. The girls would have run up the hill from the east side of what is now JG and Malone Rd to the Granum farm on the west side of the same hill, on Sand Rock Rd. They were also relatives, sort of. Mrs. Granum had been the second wife of their mother's father. She may have actually been known to them as "Grandma." Mr. Granum was her third husband and, combined, they had five children already at their home.

The fifth Oyhus daughter, whose birth is likely what led to her mother's death, had already been adopted by a neighbor. It appears that the four older daughters were ultimately sent to



Above: The stories collide—an invoice of purchases made by Martin Oyhus (Oihus) from Paul Sletto's Boots & Shoes business
Above right: Paul Sletto's business in Old Town Mt Horeb ca. 1875. Notice the boot above the front door.

Below: Paul Sletto, ca. 1885



live in a Norwegian Lutheran orphanage, the Homme Children's Home, in Wittenburg, Wisconsin. Two of them later returned to Mount Horeb and eventually married two of the Granum boys... their step-uncles. None of the daughters had any children due to the commonly held belief that insanity was inherited.

Attempted Murder of Paul Sletto

Moving on, there is also the story of Paul Sletto, one of the most revered characters of Mount Horeb history. These two stories have little do with one another, aside from the fact that most everybody knew everybody in the area... and we do have a record of Martin Oyhus using Paul Sletto's services (see above left). Paul Sletto was a bachelor businessman and the Village's first librarian. Since he was so well-liked, it was a mystery to everybody when one Monday morning in April 1914, he was found nearly bludgeoned to death on the floor of his apartment.

Paul Sletto was just 10 years old when he emigrated from Norway with his parents, two sisters, brother, and older half-brother in 1846. They first settled in a newly formed Norwegian settlement near the Luther Valley church in Spring Valley township of Rock County, Wisconsin. Many from this area, including the Slettos, were from Hol, Buskerud, Norway, in the Hallingdal valley. For whatever reason, they eventually chose the locality of his father's father, "Sletto," as their surname. Around the age of 16, Paul moved to Dodgeville and began working in the boot and shoemaking business with his older half-brother, Arne Peterson. After four years at this endeavor, he came to Springdale township where he and his entire immediate family had resettled in 1853.

Mount Horeb Area Historical Society

Paul soon inherited the land that his parents had purchased in Springdale on what is now Hwy S, across from Town Hall Rd. However, Paul did not seem to be happy with his situation and, according to the draft registration log for the Civil War,

he had a "nervous debility." This likely meant that anxiety or depression prevented him from functioning "normally" and was thus not fit to be a soldier. Disenchanted with farming, the property was later sold to Paul's younger brother, Halvor. Their parents and Paul stayed at the farm with Halvor and his new wife, Ingeborg Hoff.

Turning a page, Paul, who was worth \$1000 in 1864, used his money to purchase property at "Old Town" Mount Horeb in 1871 or

1872. He built a store to continue in the boot and shoe making business. An 1880 biography on his

position of prominence stated that he was "a first-class businessman, and one that can be relied upon in every particular."

Paul Sletto was known for his love of reading and acquired a large number of books over the years. His collection, and his building, served as the beginning of Mount Horeb's first library in 1876. It was called The Mount Horeb Norwegian Circulating Library Association and there were several others who contributed their books also. Paul was the librarian by default. The formation of this library coincided with a Wisconsin law to encourage the establishment of libraries in the state.

When the train depot in Mount Horeb was built in 1881, Sletto, like several other business owners, had his building moved to be nearer this crucial landmark. His boot &

Above & Right: Paul Sletto along with a stack of books in the Historium archives that once belonged to his library. Notice his nice hats.

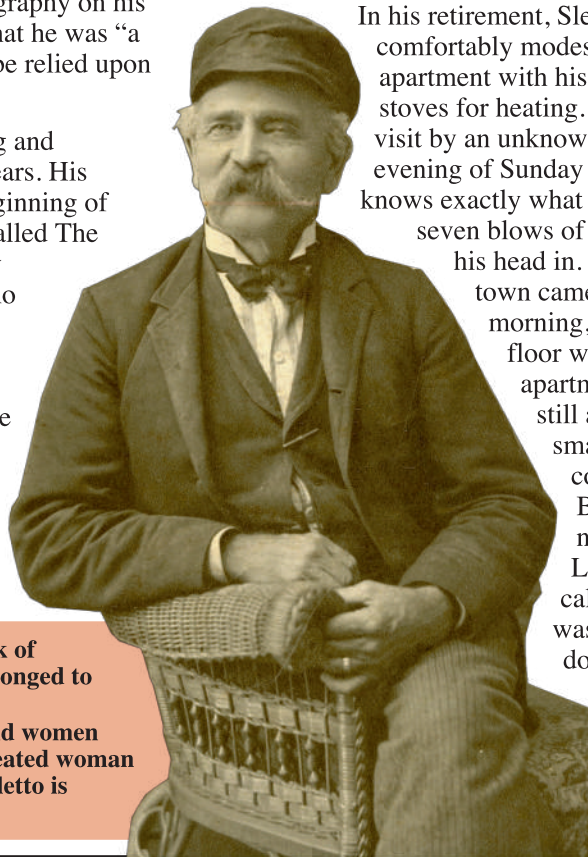
Above right: The surprisingly hatless girls and women who worked at the Peterson Hat Shop. The seated woman is the owner, Mrs. Christine Peterson. Paul Sletto is seated on the right.



shoe store was moved to First Street. It was remodeled and enlarged into a two-story structure where he lived in the upstairs quarters. As he was getting up in years, Paul decided to scale back, and a new business was sprouted here by Sletto's nephew's new wife, Mrs. Christine Loftsgordon Peterson. She began her millinery shop, Peterson Hat Shop, in 1900. Three years later, Sletto traded all his stock in exchange for real estate in South Dakota. Sletto remained in his living quarters on the second floor while Mrs. Peterson rented the entire storefront level. Paul endearingly called the multiple ladies that worked at the burgeoning business "My girls." By this point, Sletto was about 67 years old.

In his retirement, Sletto kept to himself in his comfortably modest two-room bachelor apartment with his collection of violins and two stoves for heating. All was peaceful until a tragic visit by an unknown party on or about the evening of Sunday March 22, 1914. Nobody knows exactly what happened, other than about seven blows of a hammer were used to bash his head in. When a friend from out of town came to visit him Monday morning, he found him lying on the floor with blood all over the apartment. Paul was, remarkably, still alive with a broken nose and smashed-in forehead, but all he could say was, "two men."

Before he could reveal their names, he fell unconscious. Local Dr. N. C. Evans was called immediately and Sletto was transported on a stretcher down Main Street to the St. Olaf hospital. The remains of the weapon used upon Sletto was found in one of the stoves.



... continued on pg 12

THE TANGLED ROOTS OF WI GARDENS & FLORICULTURE



Above: Zoe Amalie Larsen among the Muscari, rural Mt Horeb, Spring 2012, contributed by Carol Larsen of Sunborn Gardens for the community photo installation, "Gardens & Green Spaces."

Right: Zinnia border in the vegetable garden, 2nd St Mt Horeb, August 2020, contributed by Maggie Milcarek.

NOW SHOWING:

Think Spring! A new exhibit in the Driftless Historium's Kalscheur Family Community Room explores the evolution of gardening and the uses of plants and flowers by 19th and 20th century Wisconsinites. A companion photography installation features photographs of local gardens and green spaces submitted by area residents.

Artifacts and images from the MHAHS collection, many never before exhibited, tell the story of the plants that sustained and enhanced the lives of settlers and residents—many transplants from afar themselves.

You will learn how Yankees and Europeans arrived in southwestern Wisconsin with more than personal belongings and keepsakes packed in their trunks. Vegetable seeds, cuttings, roots, and tubers were carefully stored for the long trip. Favorite roses and flowers, native vegetable varieties, and potato sets from "back home" lent familiarity and sustenance to the Driftless landscape and kitchen garden.

Follow the transition of traditional seed-saving towards commercial production when garden seeds, plants, and a plethora of factory-produced tools and equipment became available. See the post-Civil War embrace of growing garden flowers for funerals and everyday enjoyment—sparking the opening of Mount Horeb's first



flower shop in 1939. The exhibit then delves into the sweeping influence of World Wars I and II, when "Victory Gardens" became a patriotic enterprise. Visitors end their exhibit journey with a brief examination of the rise of genetically modified and commercially patented seeds that often raised yields and profits—but also made growers subservient to mega-corporations.

This combination exhibit and photo installation celebrating horticulture of yesterday and today is free and viewable during the museum's open hours through early July 2022. Call us at 608-437-6486 or email mthorebahs@gmail.com for more information.

Can't make it on-site? A companion virtual gallery, "Gardens & Green Spaces of the Mount Horeb Area," shares community-contributed photos. Visit www.mthorebhistory.org/gardenpix.html.

LOCAL HISTORIC PROPERTIES: THE GESME BUILDING

By Jackie Sale, Mount Horeb Landmarks Foundation

Reflecting the mission of the Mount Horeb Landmarks Foundation, President Jackie Sale is contributing 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.

Mount Horeb's Main Street Historic District

While the Gesme Funeral Home building at 215 E. Main Street is not individually eligible for designation on the National Register, it is a contributing element in Mount Horeb's Main Street Historic District. Mount Horeb's Historic District National Register designation was approved in 2019 and provides access to certain benefits, including qualification for grants and for rehabilitation income tax credits; it does not restrict private property owners in the use of their property.

The Main Street Historic District of 29 buildings has the largest concentration of architecturally-significant commercial buildings in Mount Horeb, including Queen Anne, Classical Revival, and Boomtown Front commercial and institutional buildings all built between 1867 and 1948.

Preparation of the nomination was paid for by the Fuldner Heritage Fund. This endowed fund, created through a generous donation by the Jeffris Family Foundation and administered by the Wisconsin Historical Society, supports the nomination of historically and architecturally significant rural and small-town properties.

The National Register is the official national list of historic properties in America deemed worthy of preservation and is maintained by the National Park Service. The Wisconsin Historical Society administers the program within Wisconsin. It includes sites, buildings, structures, objects, and districts that are considered significant in relation to national, state or local history, architecture, archaeology, engineering or culture.

In 1882 the present Mount Horeb downtown could only boast a few buildings, one of them being Andrew Thompson's furniture and undertaking business in the location of the present Bargain Nook at 132 East Main Street. Thompson, a young Norwegian, had built a wagon shop and



Above: The Gesme building: 215 E. Main St
Below: An ad for the Gesme funeral home housed here from 1922-1941

GESME FUNERAL HOME
Isaac Gesme, Director
215 East Main Street
Phone 34
Residence Address—120 Grove St.

(7)

residence at Old Town when he came to Mount Horeb in 1874 and a few years later the shop carried furniture and coffins making him the first undertaker in Mount Horeb. Thompson moved his business to the "new town" when other businesses sprang up there with the coming of the railroad. A 1901 history of the downtown listed James Gesme and Chris Field as operating a furniture store in Thompson's location; it noted Gesme had also established an undertaking business.

It was common in those days for furniture stores to also carry coffins. An undertaker was anyone in the trades, like a woodworker who could make a coffin and other furniture. Funeral services were held in homes in the front parlor and the only outside help called in was the cabinet maker who made the coffin. When the home parlor was replaced by the funeral parlor, the undertaker then became a funeral director.

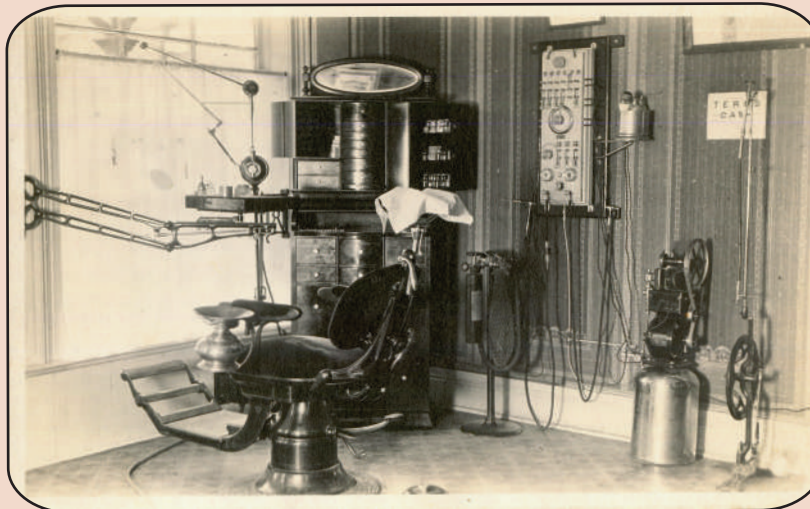
As Mount Horeb's first funeral director, James Gesme constructed the building at 215 East Main Street in 1922 for that purpose. This building is part of Mount Horeb's recently designated Main Street Historic District (see side note). The modern broad-front commercial building features decorative brick work with a panel inscribed "Gesme 1922." This style of architecture became popular in the 1920's when new construction materials, technologies, and building techniques became readily available. This style called for rational use of materials with elimination of unnecessary decoration or historical reference. Styles of this period were eclectic, taking elements of both modern design and classical design to form

... continued on pg 13

DONATION SPOTLIGHT: DENTISTRY IN THE EARLY ELECTRIC DAYS

By Brian Bigler

In 1980, local antiques dealer (and creator of fantastical beasts made from scrap metal) Wally Keller donated to the Historical Society a rather ominous looking dental switchboard. Keller, who had purchased the item locally, intended to turn it into one of his creations, but instead, was persuaded to donate it to the Society when a volunteer discovered it was used in a Mount Horeb dental office. The imposing piece of equipment made from mahogany, marble, metal and glass, which looked more suited for Frankenstein's laboratory, was actually used by Dr. Edward J. Mithus, a prominent local dentist.



1905. He occupied the main floor, and his father Jul operated his shoe shop out of the basement. Mithus later moved his dental office to the second floor of the Mount Horeb Bank (later the Municipal Building). Edward practiced dentistry until his death in 1952.

Edward started out like many dentists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, using a foot operated dental drill

Above: Interior of the original Mithus dental office located at 200 East Main Street, Mount Horeb; note the pedal operated drill to the right that was replaced by the electric wall-mounted and free-standing apparatus. Our collections hold a floor model dental switchboard, circa 1915-1920, that was used by Dr. Edward Mithus for 47 years. (Below left)

Left: Exterior of Mithus's dental office located at 200 East Main. There is a wooden boot shop sign indicating the location of Jul Mithus's Boots and Shoes in the lower level of this building (barely visible). This sign is on display in the permanent exhibit at the Driftless Historium.

Below: Edward Mithus in his 200 East Main St office

(visible at the right in the photo of the interior of his office). With the advent of electricity, more modern equipment was marketed including the switchboard donated by Keller. The Mithus switchboard was manufactured by the Pelton and Crane Company of Detroit Michigan; the motor that operated the drills was manufactured by Flossy Dental of Vanston, Illinois. The wall-mounted switchboard visible in the photo of the Mithus office is a similar unit, minus the fancy cabinet.

It is believed that the all-in-one unit in the Society's collection was acquired at the same time (or just before) Mithus moved into his more modern office on the second floor of the 1924 Mount Horeb Bank building. Unlike the wall-mounted unit, the scissor-action apparatus that holds the drills could easily be pushed back inside the cabinet at the end of the day and the doors closed to keep them protected. •



Edward J. Mithus was born in Mount Horeb on November 21, 1883, the son of early settlers Jul and Eli Mithus. Edward graduated from Platteville Normal School where he was involved in Glee Club and directed the Platteville College Band. He later graduated from the Chicago College of Dental Surgery. After graduation he opened a dental office at 200 East Main Street (site of the Mount Horeb Telephone Company) in



The Driftless Historium's

Downtown Scavenger Hunt

Mount Horeb, Wisconsin

General walking directions are provided, and all clues are in the order they will be encountered on the walk. This is a circular, clockwise route—so you should end up where you started—and everything can be seen from the sidewalks. **Remember to be careful crossing the streets!**

****If you're starting at the Chamber of Commerce, you can begin the hunt at the clue with the double asterisk below.**

1. Businesses used to paint advertising signs directly on the side of their buildings; do you see a very large sign identifying a store that once sold farm equipment? You can see it best by standing on the sidewalks along South Second Street. What colors were used to paint the sign? _____

(Walk north toward the traffic light; without crossing the street, turn *left* onto West Main Street)

2. Look for wooden beams sticking straight out from a building. These once held business signs; at one time, almost every store in Mount Horeb had signs hanging over the sidewalk. How many wooden beams do you see sticking out of this one building?

3. Continuing west along Main Street, look for a building entryway that welcomes people with a word in the sidewalk; this is the name of the store that used to occupy this building. What is that name? _____

(walk to the end of the block, cross Main Street at the cross walk and turn *right*)

4. Look for a door with the number "124". When the buildings along this section of Main Street were built over 100 years ago, the shop owners lived above their stores; this is one of the doors that led to the living quarters above. What color is this door?

5. Look for a building that has three separate doors in its large entryway. At one time, this was the entrance to Mount Horeb's popular Strand Movie Theater; today the building houses businesses below and apartments above. How many mailboxes are there in this entrance? _____

6. As you head toward the intersection with North Second Street (and eventually cross to the other side of Second Street), keep your eyes open for a Viking helmet. Many of the people that moved to this area a long time ago were from Norway; Mount Horeb is still very proud of its Viking heritage. Name one of the two other Viking-related images on this building.
- _____

(continue east along Main Street)

7. Can you find an accordion—a type of instrument played with your hands. Who is playing it?
- _____

8. Look for a small building with an overhanging roof; this used to be Mount Horeb's tourist information building. What color is this building? _____

9. **Look for a lion-like creature. He was made by a local sculptor and weights about 2,000 pounds! What is he made from? _____

(cross Main Street at the crosswalk; if needed, grab a flag to get drivers' attention. After crossing the street, turn right to head west on Main Street.)

10. One of the buildings along the section of road has a round window; can you find it? What is the name of this business? _____

11. As you near the end of this block, do you see a turret—a type of tower often seen on castles? This building used to be the Opera House where people would go to see plays, musicals and movies. How many windows are in the turret (just the turret, not the rest of the building)?
- _____

(without crossing the street, turn left at South Second Street)

12. Look for a wall with blocks of glass in place of windows; these let light in, but not direct sunlight. This building was built almost 100 years ago as a place to make cheese. What do they sell in this shop today? _____



Mount Horeb Area Historical Society
100 S 2nd St, Mount Horeb, WI
(608) 437-6786
www.mthorebhistory.org
FIND US ON FACEBOOK

Flip upside down to read the answers!

1) The Farm Utility sign is black and white.
2) Three beams, or sign supports, remain on this building. 3) This store was called Hoff's.
4) It's a white door. 5) There are five mail-boxes. 6) A Viking ship and a crest or shield.
7) a troll, of course! 8) Blue. 9) Brutus the Temple Lion is made from metal.
10) Sjolinds Chocolate House has a round window. 11) There are six windows in the turret. 12) Trail This sells bicycles.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?: SUGAR RIVER

By Jackie Sale

Along County Road PD northwest of Verona is a sign that announces a gently flowing stream, the Sugar River. At that point it looks like any other little creek in our area, meandering gently as it goes through pastures and fields. But that point is not the source of the river and certainly not the end. According to maps created by both the US Geological Survey and the Upper Sugar River Watershed Association, the origin of the Sugar River is closer to Mount Horeb at the end of Getz Road, off County Road S, in the Town of Blue Mounds. From there it flows southeast through Dane County. The West Branch of the Sugar River, which drains from the Towns of Blue Mounds, Springdale, Perry, and Primrose, joins the Sugar River just north of Belleville. From there it flows southeast through Green County, and then south to Illinois as a tributary of the Pecatonica River.

After its humble beginnings, the river meanders through rolling countryside for 90 miles southward, being fed by a series of small spring-fed brooks. Among these are locally familiar creeks: Schlappbach, on the east side of Mount Horeb; Milum, in Primrose; and Flynn, east of Mount Vernon. The interconnected nature of these drainages is illustrated by the course of Deer Creek. Beginning in Mount Horeb, it flows along State Highway 92 where it is joined by Frye's Feeder, and continues to Mount Vernon Creek where fishermen can find brook and brown trout. All these streams are mostly shallow and narrow but still support a diverse community of fishes, wildlife habitat, and native plant communities.

As the terminus of the last North American glacier, much of the land west of the Sugar River is elevated from lack of glaciation—our beloved Driftless Area. Therefore, the vast Sugar River Watershed (a watershed is the area that channels rain and snowmelt to a specific waterbody) flows generally southeast and covers nearly a half million acres (760 square miles) in south-central Wisconsin and northern Illinois, ending near Shirland, Illinois, where it flows into the Pecatonica River. Although the watershed is largely rural, with over 80% of the land used for agriculture, it also includes the population centers of Verona, New Glarus, Belleville, Evansville, Monticello, Albany, Brodhead and portions of Madison, Fitchburg, and Mount Horeb.

The archives at MHAHS are riddled with references to the Sugar River. John Stewart's 1857 handwritten letter to a friend mentions 80 acres he purchased from the government 13 years earlier at the head of the Sugar River. And Melchior Koch's narrative, *The*



Above: Cows wading in the Sugar River. This pastoral image was actually taken as an example of bad conservation practices in the 1960s.

Below: This 1840s Wisconsin map shows the route of the "Sugar C." Notice all the strange locality names.



Saga of the Sugar River Valley, dramatically describes life along the valley from Pine Bluff to Riley. With the Sugar River and its watershed so vast and important to our area, the staff at MHAHS began wondering how it could have gotten its name?

Does the water taste like sugar? That was the speculation, and possibly hope, by at least some of the early pioneers, according to the 1948 Town of Springdale history book. In 1853 William Sweet bought land in the Town of Springdale and spent two years planning his move from New York. Sweet, his wife and seven children came by boat to Milwaukee and then by wagon to Springdale. As their oxen team pulled up along the Sugar River the two little girls, Sarah

and Ellen, piled out of the wagon and ran to the stream with their cups. They dipped their cups into the stream, lifted them to their eager lips and drank the most bitter water they had ever tasted. It was a harsh disappointment that, after all, it was only ordinary creek water.

We know that the name Sugar River was established at least by the 1830s, as the survey notes from the Public Land Survey of south-central Wisconsin refers to the river by name. According to an online history of Brodhead, "Toon-a-Sook-ra," or the "Sugar River," was named by Indians and French coureur des bois (French Canadian traders) because of the beauty of the glistening sandstone riverbed that so closely resembled sugar. Another possible answer is proposed in several other historical accounts—that, like many place names containing the word "Sugar", the river was named because of the sugar maple trees in the area. Indigenous people collected maple sap to make maple syrup long before Europeans settled in

America, building "sugar bushes" where they boiled sap over an open fire to condense the syrup. This same process was also an established tradition of immigrants from New England who settled in the area. Maple syrup was a primary sweetener in pioneer homes and maple products were one of the state's earliest agricultural products. Even now, Wisconsin ranks third among states producing the most maple syrup.

The Sugar River has been an important asset to all peoples in our area for centuries and much is being done to protect it. The Upper Sugar River Watershed Association has its office in Mount Horeb and is active in promoting and preserving the 115 stream miles and the 170 square miles in this area's watershed. While we may not know the precise origin of its name, we certainly understand the importance of this remarkable resource, not just for past generations, but for future generations as well. ●

2021 Dues Paying Members



A TIP OF THE TOP HAT TO YOU!

Thank you, History Family!

Thank you for your financial support; thank you for visiting your museum, the Driftless Historium, and sending your friends and family our way; and thank you for sharing the stuff and stories that document your part of the southwestern Dane County experience!

The support and camaraderie of our 2021 Membership carried us forward, through another year of uncertainty and challenges.

WE APPRECIATE YOU.

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Children's Center
Mount Horeb
Elaine Hankel & David Jeglum
Mount Horeb
Donald & Barbara Hartman
Verona
Stanley & Patsy Hook
Fitchburg
Jay Huemmer
Verona
Dr. Tom Hunt & Nancy Nye Hunt
Ridgeway
Jill Jonas & Susan Huntentburg
Mount Horeb
Ken & Sara Kittleson
Mount Horeb

Michael Losenegger &
Rayne Arneson
Mount Horeb
Vernon & Sylvia Lowell
Mount Horeb
Gerhard & Sonja Luetschwager
Mount Horeb
Shirley Martin
Mount Horeb
Mathew Marty & Katherine Wiggins
Madison
Mary McMurray
Blue Mounds
Lori Midthun & Stuart Mitchell
Mount Horeb
Sarah & Kristopher Murphy
Mount Horeb
Doug & Janet Nesheim
Mount Horeb
Lucy & Charles Ramshaw
Mount Horeb
John & Karen Ranum
Mount Horeb
John & Vicky Rosenbaum
Mount Horeb
Roger Schlessner &
Cheryl Wille-Schlessner
Mount Horeb
Donald & Carol Schwarz
New Berlin
David Sherlock &
Jennifer Gottwald
Mount Horeb
JoAnn Peterson Six
Highlands Ranch, CO
David Stenseth
Verona
Marjorie Sutter
Mount Horeb
Paul Sutter &
Mary McDonough Sutter
Mount Horeb
John & Judith Temby
Mount Horeb
Russell & Joann Thronson
Middleton
Robert Tollund
Bloomington, MN
Paul Vassalotti
Cross Plains
Peter Walton
Mount Horeb
David & Joyce Williams
Mount Horeb
Larry & Pam Williamson
Madison
Jon & Nancy Wolfgram
Blue Mounds

HOUSEHOLD
Aimee Arrigoni
Mount Horeb
Russell & Sandra Ayers
Oak Park, MI
Barbara Bartz
Mount Horeb

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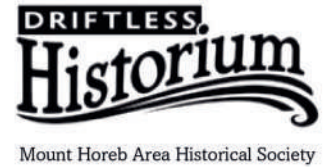
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Mount Horeb
Bonnie Bollig
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Christi & Josh Breunig
Mount Horeb
James & Dixie Burns
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Raymond & Carol Clinton
Mount Horeb
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Eddie & Cheryle Goplin
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Emily Rose Haga
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Mount Horeb
Dolores Kahl
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LaVonne (Bonny) Kellogg
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Mount Horeb
Allen Knudson
Blue Mounds
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and recognized accurately!**

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Call 608-437-6486 or email
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**NOTE: This listing does not include Life
Members, an opportunity available until
2011 that provided a permanent spot on
our Membership roster in exchange for a
one-time contribution—simply because
we have lost touch with so many, and
hesitate to publish something that is
incomplete and outdated.
Know that we still honor and value our
Life Members, many of whom retain an
active presence yet today.**

Mount Horeb Area Historical Society

continued from pg 3... Sletto held onto his life, but could not—or would not—reveal who the assailant was. The state's newspapers published multiple stories about the “Mt Horeb aged recluse” as the case became more confusing and dramatic. Before the end of the week a local 25-year-old Swiss cement contractor, named Otto Vogel, was accused of the crime and arrested. It was known that Vogel was suffering from “violent spells of insanity” attributed to some head trauma the previous summer and he seemed to be the logical perpetrator. When interviewed, he denied any involvement and, further, his wife and brother-in-law were witness to his whereabouts. Residents believed it could only be an insane person but the newspaper reported that “In the last few weeks not a single patient has escaped from Mendota asylum.”



Meanwhile, Sletto was trying to find his voice. One can imagine he was not too chatty. When asked if he knew who assaulted him he would nod his head “yes” but the words could not be articulated. There were no clues available. Paul Sletto was well liked and had no enemies and an attempted robbery seemed unlikely because there was still money in his pockets. The village

made it known that they would give \$500 to anybody with information of the guilty perpetrator. His nephew, Arnold Sletto was at his bedside and asked his uncle who committed the crime. The only response was a mysterious, “You know.”

Not long after, this same nephew, 35-year-old Arnold Sletto himself, was accused of the crime. Apparently Paul had mumbled his name. Arnold was arrested and held for several days before it was realized he was likely not guilty.

After about a month, Sletto revealed Andrew Sanderson as the guilty party, and he was arrested. There were witnesses that claimed to see him going up the stairs to Sletto's apartment that evening, but ultimately Sanderson was also found not guilty. Sanderson was an “invalid” elderly man who needed a cane to walk and was reported to be a very “honorable and peaceable citizen.” Paul Sletto had mumbled other names too, but the investigators became convinced that, due to the brain injury, Sletto's words were not reliable.

By July, Paul Sletto was walking about as usual, but since one of his wounds was not healing quickly, he remained at St. Olaf hospital under the care of Miss Annie Swiggum for an entire year. He was able to tell stories, but he still did



Above: Christine Loftsgordon Peterson, the owner of Peterson's Hat Shop, and Paul Sletto's nephew's wife; ca. 1900

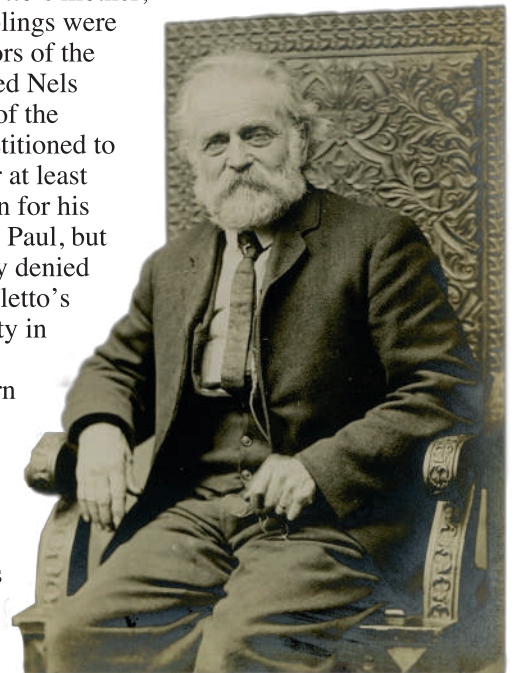
Left & Below: Paul Sletto in his later years.

not—or could not—reveal the perpetrator. Paul Sletto's speech had been altered and he never fully recovered. He was transferred to the Mendota asylum as a voluntary patient in March 1915 where he died a year later, aged 79, on February 24, 1916.

His *Mount Horeb Times* obituary introduced him as “our venerable friend Paul Sletto.” It went on to state that “Mr. Sletto was among the very few who could truly say he had no enemy. It was always a pleasure to call on Paul in his place of business, always pleasant and friendly.... He left a number of nieces and nephews all of whom thought much of their uncle Paul.” His body was put on view in Mrs. Peterson's Hat Shop and the funeral was held at her home she shared with her

husband, Paul's nephew, Nels Peterson.

It took another two years before Paul Sletto's estate was able to be settled. It was reported to be of a large value at \$11,000. In his probate record, it was revealed that one of his half-nephews, Charles Peterson, had been a daily visitor to him, bringing him firewood and/or coal in the winter, mowing the lawn in the summer, and bringing water up the stairs to his apartment. Charles even stayed at his bedside for weeks after the assault. However, according to inheritance laws of the time, since Charles' father's father was never officially married to Paul Sletto's mother, Charles and his siblings were not natural inheritors of the estate. This included Nels Peterson, the host of the funeral. Charles petitioned to obtain his share, or at least some compensation for his daily attendance to Paul, but the court ultimately denied his petition. Paul Sletto's estate, with property in South Dakota, Minnesota, northern Wisconsin, and Mount Horeb, was then distributed between his sister and his eleven “legitimate” nieces and nephews. ●



Mount Horeb Area Historical Society



It's been five years since we celebrated the Grand Opening of the Driftless Historium on June 3, 2017. With thousands of visitors hosted, a variety of full-scale history exhibits and art installations produced, dozens of educational and entertaining programs and events executed, and a pandemic confronted... what is the most important lesson we've learned? That we can't do any of it without friends behind us that deeply believe in the value of community and history. THANK YOU for doing just that!

In the next issue of Past Times, we'll take a look back at the winding road that led here, to Wisconsin's very best big-time, small-town museum. In the meantime, commemorate this auspicious anniversary by adding a Driftless Historium visit (or three or four!) to your 2022 plans.

continued from pg 5...

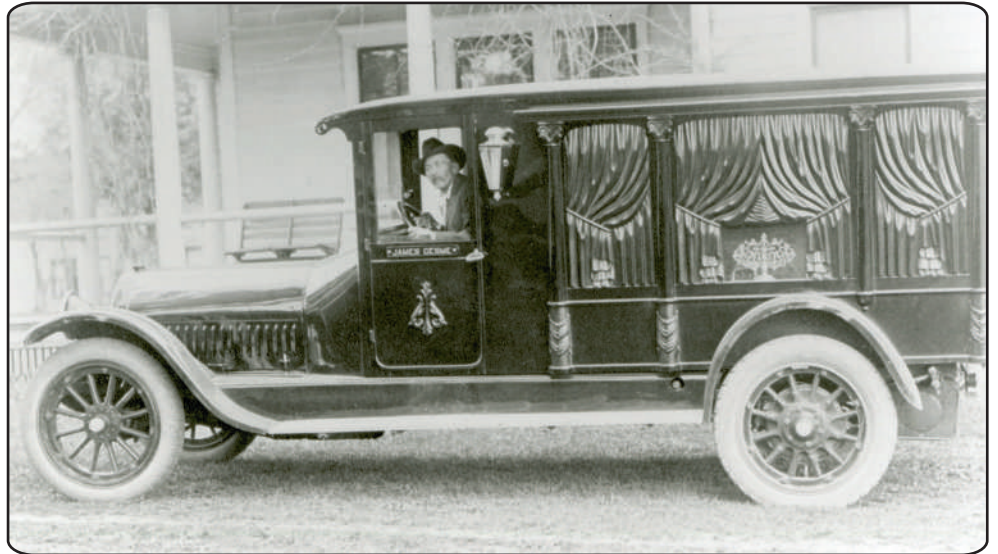
new and interesting facades, breaking from the traditions that dominated architecture before World War I.

Gesme had sold his portion of the furniture business in 1905, and he built the building at 215 East Main for the display of caskets and to prepare for visitations, some of which were still held in the home of the deceased. James, the first licensed funeral director in Mount Horeb, was an undertaker in Mount Horeb for more than 40 years, with James' son Isaac joining the business in 1926.

In 1941, the funeral home business was moved to Thomas Lingard's grand house on Academy Street where Isaac Gesme and his family lived on the second floor. The main floor was the funeral home business. However strange it may seem today, this was a common arrangement and visitations were held in the front parlor of the home. As a youngster, I remember what a strange feeling it was to enter a home in a residential neighborhood and see a casket with people quietly milling around at the visitation.

John Ellestad was hired as a "resident assistant" in the early 1960s; he and his wife lived in the apartment above the funeral home while the Gesmes moved to another part of Mount Horeb. Isaac retired in 1964, passing the business on to John Ellestad. Diego Camacho joined Ellestad in 1976; a couple years later, Ellestad built the funeral home at 500 N. 8th Street. In 1997, Camacho bought the business and served the community until he retired and sold the practice to Gunderson Funeral Homes in 2019.

The Gesme family owned the building at 215 E. Main Street until 1945 when it was sold to Elويد Gonstead (brother of Dr. Clarence



Above: Isaac Gesme in his hearse at his house just a couple doors down the street.

Right: A 1962 ad for the Mount Horeb Laundromat that was once in the building.


Gonstead). From 1959 until at least 1964, the building housed Grant Hustad's Mount Horeb Laundromat, and later a dentist's office when Dr. John Hymer opened his practice in 1977. In recent news, Artemis Provisions & Cheese, a local online retailer since early 2020, has plans to open a brick-and-mortar location here, bringing locally produced meats and cheese to 213-215 E. Main Street.●

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SCANDIHOOVIAN REVIEW

On February 11-13, MHAHS joined a gaggle of good-hearted Mount Horeb businesses and civic organizations in providing distractions from the winter blahs for an army of red-hatted fun seekers. 2022's Scandihoovian Winter Festival included a Community Spelling Bee, snow sculptures on the lawn of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, frozen turkey bowling on Garfield Park's Ice Skating Rink, and more. Here at the Driftless Historium, we provided a family-friendly Downtown Scavenger Hunt with free stuffed gnomes for those who returned a completed answer sheet, and offered a free Hot Chocolate Buffet-to-Go on Saturday. We sent 125 gnomes to new homes and distributed nearly

250 cups of rich, soul-warming cocoa. Didn't get a chance to join the fun? We're tucking a copy of the Scavenger Hunt in this newsletter; test your Main Street knowledge!



Above left: The Hot Chocolate Buffet-to-Go kept MHAHS staff and volunteers busy on Saturday refilling carafes of cocoa and replenishing a variety of sweet mix-ins.



Above right: A trio of sisters tackled the Downtown Scavenger Hunt, then each chose a plush gnome friend to help them remember their Scandihoovian adventures.

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT: MEET SHIRLEY MARTIN

We sometimes call her Miss Mount Horeb. And we call her A LOT!

Whenever we need a quick answer about past Village happenings or previous businesses or town characters, it's easiest to just "call Shirley. She'll know."

Shirley is about as local as they get. (Though she did flutter away for a few years in there with husband Sam; but we'll forgive her.) Her dad, first a bank cashier, later ran nearby Cave of the Mounds as its very first co-manager with another prominent Mount Horebian, Fred Hanneman. A young Shirley was even featured in early promotional photos, and later worked as a Cave Guide. She



Above: A devastatingly adorable Little Miss Curly Shirley

lives just a few blocks from the museum, in the same house she grew up in—where her neighbor was once the internationally known chiropractor Dr. Clarence Gonstead. (She remembers her mom telling her to be quiet when Dr. Gonstead was home between shifts so he could nap.)

One could go on and on about her Village roots, and her entertaining (sometimes slightly scandalous) stories could keep you engrossed for days!

Shirley has been a fixture here at the Mount Horeb Area Historical Society for literally decades. In fact, when we finally allowed her to step down from the Board last fall and wanted to recognize her years of service, no one could quite recall when she started! Though, let me clarify: she still hasn't managed to fully escape; Shirley serves on the Collection Committee that meets monthly and is also currently working on an archives project at home.

Thank you, Shirley! (And do you think you'll be around later? We have just ONE little question for you...)



Mount Horeb Area Historical Society

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

The past years I have handled all of the photos in the archives, trying to identify places or people—you would never believe how many early 1900s photos of "baby in white dress" there are. Now I am working on old scrapbooks.

How long have you volunteered for the Society?

I believe about 20 years.

What is your favorite part of volunteering?

The people first—those who work as volunteers or are employees—they are the back bones of the society. All the people who come to enjoy our museum. Second are the things you learn as you work in the archives. I so enjoyed my time on the Board.

Who or what got you interested?

I think it was Mary Lou Underwood. The first thing I worked on was cataloging pencils and pens.

Tell us about your family.

I was born in Mount Horeb to Carl and Lucille Brechler. I have one brother and one sister, and one sister deceased. I married Sam Martin on 2 Jan 1955. We had 60 amazing years before he died. I have three children: Vernon, Keith, and Jill and their spouses; six grandchildren; and eight great-grandchildren. Of course they all are perfect.



Above: An early brush with fame: Shirley as a Cave of the Mounds promotional model.

Above right: MHHS Graduation, 1947

Right: Sam & Shirley's wedding, 1955

Below: Proud Husband Sam and Shirley, surrounded by their doting crew of kids and grandkids.

Below right: Shirley's final MHAHS Board meeting, Oct 2021, following a potentially incalculable number of years honorably served.



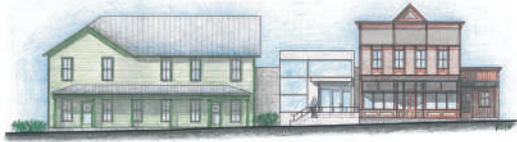
Tell us about your education and vocational background.

I attended grades 5-12 in Mt Horeb, graduating in the Great Class of 1947. I attended Stevens Point College and acquired a two year degree, and later took classes at California State University at Northridge.

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

All you have to do is live someplace else to realize how much you enjoy Mt. Horeb. We have a small town feeling (which I hope we never lose), a close knit feel, neighborhoods of different style houses, good schools, recreations available, clubs, great library, and the best museum in Wisconsin.





Mount Horeb Area Historical Society

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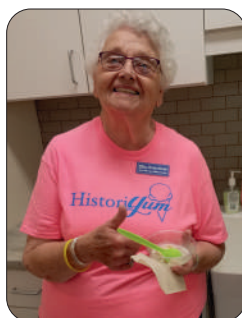
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EVENTS COMING SOON!

2022 FLAVOR OF THE YEAR

Community Ice Cream
Tasting Commission to be formed.

The Driftless Historium is partnering with UW-Platteville's Dr. Tera Montgomery and her Ice Cream Making students to produce a museum-exclusive flavor, to be featured in the gift shop through 2022. Community feedback will be gathered via a very official Tasting Commission that will be composed of thirty individuals and teams. MHAHS will put out a call for Tasters in late March, all of whom will agree to undertake a rigorous and uncompromising review of six ice creams vying for the 2022 Flavor of the Year title. This is serious business, friends.



4TH ANNUAL NATIVE ART MARKETPLACE

Saturday, June 4 & Sunday, June 5

After a pandemic-pivoted 2021 edition that saw this creative showcase of indigenous art temporarily relocated online and offsite, the Native Art Marketplace returns to downtown Mount Horeb's Driftless Historium this summer. Meet artists representing tribes across Wisconsin and the Midwest; They will offer a range of traditional, modern, and unique artistry and crafts for sale, from quill and beadwork and basketry to paintings and jewelry. This year's Marketplace again aligns with the Mount Horeb Area Arts Association Spring Art Tour—a perfect pairing!

More information on these and other events and programs is coming soon. Watch our website, or call 608-437-6486.



Above: Shirley Martin, this issue's Spotlights Volunteer, gave our first-ever Flavor of the Year a big thumbs-up in 2017.

Left: Artwork by NAM featured artist Christopher Sweet (Ho-Chunk), 2019.