

SHADES OF THE PAST

Williams Bay Historical Society
Established 2013

Volume 1 Issue 4

Fall 2014

QUARTERLY SOCIETY MEETINGS

Quarterly Program

Saturday, January 24, 2015 2 p.m.
Barret Memorial Library Community Room
65 W. Geneva Street
Williams Bay, Wisconsin

Antiques Appraisal at Barrett Memorial Library, Williams Bay, January 24, 2015 co-sponsored with Friends of Barrett Memorial Library. Details to follow.

CAN YOU GUESS????

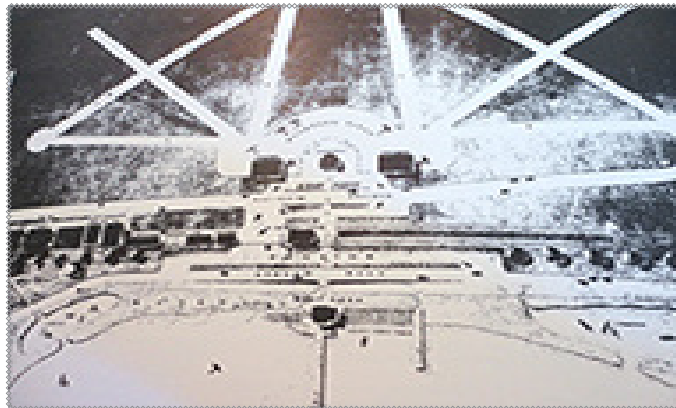
Elmer H. Hopkins and Frank W. Walker formed a partnership in 1923 to buy out the business of George Van Velzer.

Do you know what the business was?

Answer will be printed in the Winter 2015 issue of the newsletter or it can be found on the historical society website www.wmsbayhistory.ipage.com

Williams Bay - Come Fly the Friendly Skies

by Deb Soplanda



Airport Plan for Williams Bay, 1922

In 1922, Chicago civil engineer, Jacob Crane, Jr., at the behest of the Village of Williams Bay, developed a village plan that called for the area that is now Kishwaukee Nature Conservancy to be developed into an aviation field in anticipation of a day in the not-too-distant future when he believed tourists would arrive to this resort area not by train or car, but by airplane.

The plan of the airfield shows several large runways, new access roads, and other features that would have transformed the marsh area into a fairly large airport.

One has to wonder how Williams Bay history would have changed had such an airfield been successfully built and utilized. *(Continued on Page 2)*

Shades of the Past

Mission of the Historical Society:

The purpose of the Williams Bay Historical Society is to assist in the preservation and exhibition of items of historical interest that are within the boundaries of Williams Bay, and the immediate surrounding area. It will seek to provide the public with educational opportunities to learn about our unique local history. It will also seek to organize and assist in the commemoration of significant dates and events in village history.

SHADES OF THE PAST
is published quarterly
by the Williams Bay
Historical Society.



Affiliated Member of the
Wisconsin State Historical Society

For comments or questions about this publication or Williams Bay Historical Society contact:

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Williams Bay, WI 53191

Or visit:

<http://wmsbayhistory.ipage.com>

Armistice Day 1918 - Our Williams Bay Soldiers

Reprinted: "Bay Leaves" November 11, 1937 Vol 5 No. 39

Frank M. Van Epps, Editor

Bill Elbert was probably the farthest away, being inland several hundred miles from Archangle with the American North Russian Expeditionary Forces. The days were only about an hour and a half at the time. During the summer it never got dark.

Carl Bertelsen was with the 5th Division 15th Machine Gun Company in the Argonne Forest, near Sedan, France.

Peter Pappac was with the 56th Infantry Company F near Metz, France.

Walter Hansen was back at Officers Training Camp, Saumur, France.

Elmer Hopkins was a mechanic with the 2nd Regular Air Service, which was attached to the French



Soldiers celebrating the Armistice

Aviation Service. He was on leave in Paris on Armistice Day.

Col. J. A. Atkins was with the 1st Division as unofficial Chaplain and was near Sedan, France on Armistice Day.

Charles Wittig was with 311th Eng. 86th Division near Le Mans, France.

Les Sawyer was at Orleans, France with a Supply Depot.

Victor Hansen was attending a County Supervisors dinner at the Walworth County Farms.

Williams Bay *(continued from page 1)*

In his 28-page document, Crane noted that the land across from the beach was "flat and conveniently located to the railway [which was located very close to the beach], the steamer piers and the village center." By providing Williams Bay with all major modes of transportation at the time, the village fathers surmised that the financial gains of increased tourist trade would be beneficial to the village and local residents.

Jacob Crane offered to draw up a master plan for the village for \$450. His offer was accepted in April of 1922 and he finished the plan in September of that year. However, the Stock Market Crash in October of 1929 and the difficulty of building anything on marshland impeded Crane's vision from becoming reality.

Williams Bay Firsts

As with everything there is always a first, and Williams Bay is no exception. A few notable firsts in the history of village:

- *Camp Collie established by Rev. Joseph Collie of Delavan, Wisconsin in 1873.
- *Mormon Church founded 1880 (would later be known as the Belfry Theater).
- *First library in the home of Mrs. Edward Williams in 1902
- *Doors open at first Williams Bay high school in 1915 (corner of Congress and Collie Streets).
- *Dance Hall opened at Bay Shore Hotel in 1918.
- *Women's Organization: Tuesday Evening Study Club established in 1920.
- *Fire Department organized in 1928.

A Look Back in Time: Where Williams Bay Folks Spent Thanksgiving Day 1937

Reprinted "Bay Leaves" November 24, 1937 Vol 5 No. 4



The First Thanksgiving at Plymouth by Jennie A. Brownscombe

Mr. and Mrs. George Blakeslee, Parkhurst Place, will have as guests for Thanksgiving dinner Mr. and Mrs. Gordon Wares.

Rev. and Mrs. Victor Keizer and family will spend Thanksgiving in Libertyville, Illinois the guests of Mr. and Mrs. Lincoln Lusk.

Mrs. Z. Sawyer will entertain her son, Mr. Levi Sawyer and Mrs. Sawyer and daughter Patricia; Mr. Charles Sawyer of Chicago; and Mr. and Mrs. Leslie Sawyer for the day.

Mrs. Amy Jorgenson has closed the Rose Lane Hotel for the season and will go to Chicago on Wednesday to spend the holidays with her sister, Mrs. Peter Corson.

Mr. and Mrs. Van Biesbroeck will have their daughter Simone, of Chicago, at home for Thanksgiving and will also have as guests for dinner Mr. McCarthy, Mr. Hetzler and Mr. Ebbighausen of Yerkes Observatory.

Miss Martha Tulane, Chicago, will spend Thanksgiving weekend with her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Axel Tulane.

**Williams Bay:
Melting-Pot of Nationalities**
By Deb Soplanda

Captain Israel Williams founder of Williams Bay, a staunch and upright Yankee of Scottish descent, probably had little notion that the land he claimed as his in 1836 would come to mean so much to so many over the next 178 years.

People of many different nationalities, from all over the world would settle on the shores of the bay named for Captain Williams, hoping to make their dreams come true in this "promised land" that is America.

So where did they come?
EVERYWHERE!!!

This is a break-down of the ancestry of the residents of Williams Bay according to the website epodunk.com.

- German - 26%
- Irish - 18%
- English - 8%
- Norwegian - 7%
- Swedish - 6%
- Polish - 6%
- Italian - 4%
- Czech - 3%
- Mexican - 3%
- Scottish - 3%
- French (except Basque) - 2%
- African American - 1%
- Austrian - 1%
- British - 1%
- Danish - 1%
- Dutch - 1%
- Finnish - 1%
- Greek - 1%
- Russian - 1%
- Scotch-Irish - 1%
- Swiss - 1%
- Welsh - 1%
- Other 3%

Miss Anna Peterson: Williams Bay Postmistress

Article and photo from: History of Walworth County, Wisconsin, by Albert Clayton Beckwith, 1912,

Too few of us it is given to come within sight of the gracious castle of our dreams, but there can be no measure of doubt that too many earnest high-minded seekers after the truth, such as Miss Anna Peterson, the able and popular postmistress at Williams Bay, Walworth county, has been granted a tangible realization of many of the ideals of early youth,--the time of air-castle building,--which have been crystallized into worthy accomplishment in connection with the affairs of this work-a-day world.

A woman of gracious presence and intellectual attainments, she is eminently qualified for the responsible position of which she is incumbent. Her commendable qualities are no doubt inherited from a long line of sterling ancestors, men and women who have been leaders in progressive movements in their day. They were Norwegians of the best type--person characterized by strength of mind, breadth of view, high-minded patriotism.

Miss Peterson was born in Leland, Illinois, and is one of a family of seven children born to Peter O. and Bertha (Thompson) Peterson, the others having been named Tillie, Otto, Peter, Nathaniel, Rebecca, and Michael T. The subject was the third in order of birth.



The Peterson family emigrated to the United States in May, 1886, and they located at Earlville, Illinois, after spending two weeks in Philadelphia. They lived in Earlville a year and at Leland near that place, then went to Chicago, where they remained ten or eleven years. Eventually they came to Walworth county, Wisconsin, and located at Williams Bay and there established a comfortable home, in which they remained until March 1911, a period of twenty-five years, then moved to Madison, Wisconsin.

Of the children mentioned above, Tillie married Fred Rahn and they live at Lake Geneva; Nathaniel lives in Fresno, California; and Rebecca lives with her parents in Madison, Wisconsin,

and is attending the State University; Michael T. is in business at Williams Bay.

Miss Peterson received a good education and has long manifested an abiding interest in public affairs. She was appointed postmistress at Williams Bay in October, 1907, and has discharged the duties of the same to the present time in a manner that reflects much credit upon herself and to the eminent satisfaction of the people and department.

Prior to her appointment to the position had, for a period of six years, been a clerk in the local post office. When she was appointed she was one of the youngest postmasters in the state of Wisconsin.

Notable People in Williams Bay History

Dr. Paul Burrill Jenkins 1872 - 1936

- * Born in Joliet, Illinois in 1872.
- * Attended Princeton University.
- * Pastor, author, historian, archaeologist, nationally known firearms expert.
- * Williams Bay Village President 1925.
- * Chaplain in France during World War I.
- * Chaplain at Northwestern Military Academy.
- * Known as the "Spark Plug" because he got things going!
- * Author of The Book of Lake Geneva, published in 1922.
- * Died August 4, 1936 in Williams Bay, Wisconsin.



On This Date in Williams Bay History

- *December 9, 1893 - Williams Bay selected to be site for new observatory.
- *November 24, 1919 - Williams Bay Village Board meets for the first time.
- *September 29, 1922 - Old Williams Bay School house burned.
- *October 3, 1927 - Fritzzi, a Shepard dog, owned by Mrs. C. J. Balke of Williams Bay was found in Denver after becoming lost at Mammoth Hot Springs in Yellowstone.
- *November 11, 1937 - William H Southwick died suddenly at his farm home north of the village where he was born on April 17, 1852 and had lived there all of his life. Burial was in East Delavan Cemetery on November 15.
- *January 26, 1939 - Wisconsin Governor commends Williams Bay on its "Civic planning and pride".
- *December 17, 1939 - The Harlem Globetrotters play Williams Bay town team.
- *January 16, 1956 - Street lights turned on in Williams Bay for the first time.
- *November 10, 1957- New Lion's Field House dedicated.
- *November 8, 1958 - The new Williams Bay skating rink nears completion.



Name
Address
City, State, Zip

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