

SHADES OF THE PAST

Williams Bay Historical Society
Established 2013

Volume 1 Issue 1
Winter 2014

QUARTERLY MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS

A NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM

Thursday, April 17 at 6 p.m.

Geneva Lake Museum

255 Mill St. Lake Geneva, WI

Tour of the Museum and Meeting

GENERAL MEETING*

Thursday, July 17, 2014 at 7 p.m.

*Location to be announced ASAP

ANNUAL DINNER/MEETING*

Thursday, October 16

5 p.m. Social Hour/6 p.m. Dinner

7 p.m. Annual Meeting

George Williams Aurora University

Williams Bay, WI

*Reservations Required

UPCOMING EVENTS

Members Only!*

BEHIND THE SCENES TOUR

YERKES OBSERVATORY

Saturday, July 19, 2014 from 2 - 4 p.m.

Yerkes Observatory

Williams Bay, WI

*Reservations Required

All Aboard! The Great Adventure Begins!

By Deb Soplanda, President

Just as the tourists from Chicago eagerly boarded the morning Chicago & Northwestern train to Williams Bay for an exciting vacation more than a hundred years ago, so too are the members of the newly established Williams Bay Historical Society eager to experience what awaits us as we explore and preserve the past that is Williams Bay.

Every day, new historical information appears on the Williams Bay Historical Society's Facebook page "The History of Williams Bay Exhibit". Join the 600+ Williams Bay History Buffs as they share photos, stories and historical insights about Williams Bay. Stay updated on events and upcoming activities of the Williams Bay Historical Society. Encourage others to join the Williams Bay Historical Society, participate in the various committees, contribute articles for the quarterly newsletter, and more!

As the very first Williams Bay Historical Society, the future, as well as the past, is open

for us to explore. With an exceptional group of Williams Bay historians like YOU leading the way, we can be certain that it will be "full steam ahead"!

Welcome, and enjoy the ride!



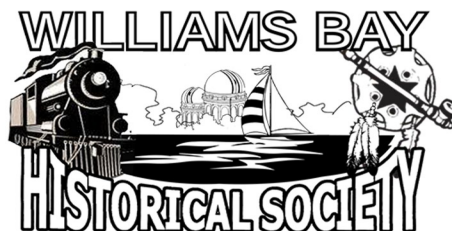
(Photo courtesy of Curt Carlson)

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.



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

Williams Bay Historical Society
PO Box 678
Williams Bay, WI 53191

Or visit: www.wmsbayhistory.org

Committee Meetings

By Deb Soplanda

“Many hands make light work” as the saying goes, and that is true with the committees of the Williams Bay Historical Society. Meeting between the general meetings, these committees are the steam to our engine! Join one and see what new adventures await you!

Publication Committee

Chaired by Williams Bay resident Cindy Rademaker, the Publication Committee is very busy preparing the new Williams Bay Historical Society website on IPAGE. Set to be up and running by the first of February, it is hoped that this site will be used by members and non-members alike. Williams Bay Historical Society Intern, Michelle Love, is busy designing our newsletter, “Shades of the Past” for its first printing in February. Exclusive to Williams Bay History Club Members, the newsletter will be printed quarterly.

Membership Committee

Williams Bay resident Phyllis Janda, chair of the Membership Committee is pleased to report that the Williams Bay Historical Society has 47 members as of

January 15, 2014. A letter of introduction is planned to be sent to local Williams Bay businesses and organizations. The Membership Committee will also be present at local events with membership information ready for the public.

Program Committee

John Grove, Program Committee chairman, is pleased to announce the themes for each of the quarterly membership meetings for 2014.

January 2014: “ICE, ICE, BABY!” Guest Speakers:

Ice boating Champions
Jane & Bob Pegel

April 2014: “A NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM” Members

Only tour of the Geneva Lake History Museum Meeting to follow.

July 2014: Location to be Announced

October 2014: ANNUAL MEETING & DINNER

George Williams College
Aurora University
Williams Bay

Chief Big Foot (Continued from page 3)

he was buried in a Catholic Cemetery.

Although not a powerful influence in history, his name is recorded on three treaties. The Treaty of Green Bay, August 25, 1828, set the boundaries between the Indians and lead mines of southwestern Wisconsin. Chief Big Foot signed this treaty as Maun-gee-zik, or big foot. The Treaty of Prairie du Chien, July 29, 1829, which involved huge land successions, records his signature as Maw-geh-set. Finally, the Chicago Treaty of September, 26, 1833,

which ceded all Potawatomi lands east of the Mississippi River, Chief Big Foot becomes Mang-e-sett.

Chief Maunk-sauk, or Chief Big Foot, is not found in many history books nor did he play a major role in American history. But, his legacy, demeanor, love for nature, character and integrity remain firmly embedded in the mystique of the area. Although physically gone, the spirit of Chief Big Foot remains.

Reprinted with the permission of John V. & Mary Jane Waters.

Pioneer Stove-Wood House

By Phyllis Janda

Early Wisconsin pioneer, David Williams, came up with a unique construction material for his new home between East Delavan (Theatre Road and Highway 50) and Williams Bay in 1848. According to The Wisconsin Magazine of History: Volume 7, Number 2, December 1923, Page 188-195, “few of his neighbors had ever seen and indeed as fewer people today have ever even heard of the house was built in 1848 and 1849. It was not large, only twenty-four by thirty feet—a tiny house according to our modern ideas, but most comfortable for frontier Wisconsin with its almost universal log cabins. It is constructed entirely of stove-wood, that is to say instead of brick or stone, David Williams prepared with infinite labor an immense amount of wood cut sawed and split into sticks fourteen inches in length exactly. Such sticks as are used for all kitchen cook-stove fires where wood is burned today.



This wood—it is solid oak every stick of it—was all prepared from the trunks and limbs of trees felled for the purpose in the surrounding woods, cut to the required length and split to usable size. There must have been twenty thousand of these sticks in the pile that Williams prepared for the building, as a little study of their number per cubic foot of the walls and of the dimensions of the walls themselves will demonstrate they were used as nearly like so many bricks as possible laid close together packed tightly and solidly

mortared in. The work of preparing the wood must have been great and prolonged and to this day Williams descendants repeat the family tradition that every stick was sawed to the required fourteen inches with a common bucksaw. In the longer side walls of the house the wood was laid parallel with the wall line in the front and rear walls it was laid in the same direction as in the side walls making the walls fourteen inches thick — the length of the sticks the windows are accordingly set in casements fourteen inches deep as are the doors.



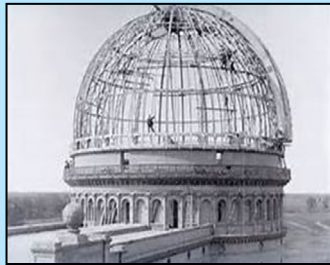
While it is not definitely known, it would seem certain that forms must have been used to hold the successive layers of wood and mortar in place while the mortar set—at least otherwise it would hardly have been possible to hold such materials in place and in the excellent wall alignment which Williams succeeded in giving them. The floor of the second story was laid on beams set in the fourteen-inch-thick walls, while through the floors from the front to the rear walls ran iron rods fastened with iron plates on the outside of each wall to hold the whole more strongly together.”

The house would stand for 102 years, being dismantled in 1950. Remains of the building are today preserved at the Walworth County Historical Society.

(Photo: Wisconsin State Historical Society)

1897-2013: Yerkes Observatory Celebrates 116 Years of Stargazing The Birthplace of Modern Astrophysics

Yerkes Observatory is a facility of the Department of Astronomy and Astrophysics of the University of Chicago. It was established in 1897 on Geneva Lake in Williams Bay, Wisconsin. Construction of the observatory building was begun in 1895 at Williams Bay, Wisconsin, distant enough from the smoke, haze and dust of Chicago (76 miles) to assure dark skies, and yet close enough to the city to be readily accessible to the faculty and students of the University of Chicago.



The first astronomical observations with the completed telescope were made by Hale and his associates in the summer of 1897. The excellent optical qualities of the new telescope were immediately proven when astronomer Edward Emerson



Barnard soon discovered a faint third companion to the star Vega, which had gone undetected even by the skilled astronomer Sherburne W. Burnham using the 36 inch Lick telescope. Until the mid 1960s, Yerkes Observatory housed all of the Department's activities. Today the 77 acre, park-like site in southeast Wisconsin provides laboratory space and access to telescopes for research and instruction.

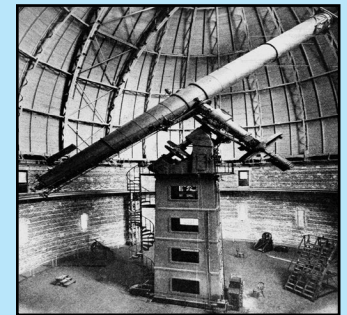
Yerkes Observatory occupies a unique niche for the educational and the scientific community. It bridges several important perspectives in formal and informal education. The history of astronomy and astrophysics of the observatory is a solid foundation for introducing all the

important topics in current research as well as the practice of observational astronomy. There is a huge range of opportunities



for learning. Because of Yerkes' historical context, the world of professional and student astronomers and astronomy educators is drawn to the observatory. These communities learn from one another, build relationships, and create programs, which result in enriched experiences and learning opportunities for young and diverse members of our society.

Yerkes Observatory's 102 cm (40 inch) refracting telescope was built by the master optician Alvan Clark. It is the largest refracting telescope used for scientific research. The 40 inch telescope was exhibited at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago before being installed in the observatory.



The observatory also houses 102 cm (40 inch) and 61 cm (24 inch) reflecting telescopes. Several smaller telescopes are used for educational purposes.

*Reprinted from the Yerkes
Observatory University of Chicago
website: <http://astro.uchicago.edu/yerkes>
(Photos Courtesy of University of Chicago)*

Chief Big Foot: A Proud Heritage, Legacy, and Region

Nestled in south-central Walworth County, running along the pristine waters of Geneva Lake, lays the present-day village of Fontana, Wisconsin. Once home to a Potawatomi tribe under the leadership of Chief Maunk-suck or Big Foot. This area is rich in century old Native American roots and heritage.

The Potawatomi tribe was part of the Nishinabe triad or "The first man lowered to Earth by the Great Spirit." Comprised of the Ojibwa, or Chippewa, the Ottawa, and the Potawatomi, each played a vital role in the Nishinabe nation

for they were known as the nation of the Three Fires. The Ojibwa, "Keepers of the Faith," were responsible for the sacred scrolls and the Waterdrum of the Midewiwin of Grand Medicine Lodge. The Ottawa, "Trader People," were food gatherers and hunters. The Potawatomi were "Keepers of the Sacred Fire," or Manido ish-ko-day. It was their responsibility to keep the coals burning even when in migration. They believed, "The flames of the Sacred Fire should never be allowed to die."

During the late 1820s and early 1830s, the westward expansion began moving into the

area now known as Wisconsin. A thriving Potawatomi village, under the leadership of Chief Big Foot was quickly discovered by Mrs. Juliette Kinzie and her husband, John. They recorded in 1831: "We descended a long, sloping knoll, and by a sudden turn, came in full view of a beautiful sheet of water denominated Gros-pied by the French, Maunk-suck by the natives, and by ourselves, Big-foot from the chief whose village overlooked its waters." Mrs. Kinzie also described Chief Big Foot as: "The chief was a large, raw-boned, ugly Indian with a countenance bloated by intemperance, with a sinister,

unpleasant expression. He had a gray-colored handkerchief upon his head, and was otherwise in his best, in compliment to the strangers."

Garbed in the traditional brightly colored turban and buckskin clothing, Chief Big Foot and his band of 500 strong, respected and loved the area but due to the 1833 Chicago Treaty, they were compelled to migrate to southwestern Iowa in 1836. Here, they settled on the Nishnabotna River. A decade later, the band was again transplanted to Kansas. Although his death was not recorded, it is believed

(Continued on page 2)

Historical Society Logo—Design Winner Announced

By Pete Oehmen

The winning design for the Williams Bay Historical Society was created by Pete Oehmen. The design incorporates the many historical icons that make Williams Bay unique. For submitting the winning design, Mr. Oehmen receives a free year membership in the Williams Bay Historical Society.

Mr. Oehmen has always had a love of history. As with so many of us, it is the special people in our lives that help us fulfill our destiny.

“As a child, my grandmother, Nanny, as we lovingly called her, would read to me all the time. I think she must have dreamt about visiting all the exotic places around the world because those were the words

that set both our imaginations on fire. I particularly loved the stories she read about Egypt, the amazing pyramids, and mummies. I knew I was going to be a history buff. After a day with her at the Chicago Museum of Science and Industry, that’s when I decided that I was going to be an archaeologist. Nanny had started the fire imagination and learning.”

“When I moved to Williams Bay, one of the first people that befriended me was a character named Dick Kraft and his sidekick Roger Peterson. During one of our conversations, at the old Keg Room, I mentioned that I loved Egyptology. I told Dick that I really wanted to be an archaeologist and dig up treasures. I wanted to be the first to touch

something that hadn’t seen light for thousands of years. This dream of being an Egyptologist had also eluded Dick, as our conversation continued, he said that we might not be able to go to Egypt, but we can find ancient treasures right in our own backyard! You should have seen my face as I stood in the middle of a plowed farm field and picked up my first arrow head dating back two thousand years! I was hooked! I learned everything I could on the prehistoric natives. Since there wasn’t much written on the subject, Roger, Dick, five other Bay residents, and myself went to Beloit College to learn archeology from Dr. Bob Zelser. While building a local collection of artifacts and cataloging them, it dawned on me that there must

be lake area residents with the same yearning to know more about local prehistoric history. I began yet another adventure—writing a book. This time consuming project is now in its eleventh year of research & revisions, but when it’s finished, it will be called “The Prehistoric Indians of Lake Geneva.”

“The logo that I designed depicts a small gathering of icons that represent a small fraction of our lakes area’s charm and diversity. I am truly honored that I am able to contribute to the community that I lovingly call home.”



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Name
Address
City, State, Zip Code

