Historic Springfield Corners Store and House

Around 1856, almost 150 years ago, Louis Martini built a store, north of Middleton, that anchored a community. In the mid-19th century, the intersection of Old Military and Madison-Sauk City roads — now known as Highway 12 and County P — marked the heart of Clark’s Corners. Clark’s Corners is now called Springfield Corners, a crossroads a few miles north of Middleton and west of Waunakee.

Onno Brouwer, a curious geographer, saved the house, and a piece of Dane County history, from demolition when he agreed to pay the $1 purchase price and move the structure to his property. There, Brouwer will repair and restore the house with the intent of keeping it open to the public, on a limited basis, as an example of Wisconsin’s past. The house portion of the structure was saved, but not the store addition on the front.

The building is important to Dane County history. Prospectors traded locally mined lead with French trappers there. Farmers brought bushels of wheat, milk, and cheese to barter for supplies. Martini also served his customers as postmaster and justice of the peace. The Martini family operated the store from approximately 1856 to 1920.

The building anchored the town of Springfield’s commercial district until World War I. It was an active gathering point for the community.

It passed through several short-term owners after 1920 until it was purchased in 1927 by Ferdinand Pape Sr., who took over and operated several businesses in the building. Known as “Ferdie,” he mended saws and shoes for loyal customers until 2001, when fading

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health forced him to abandon his business and his home. The building has been vacant since then. A convenience store will be built on the site, so the house needed to be destroyed or moved.

Brouwer, who is a geographer and director of the UW-Madison cartography lab, was able to save it. He dated the house using knowledge gained from a longtime interest in architectural history. He found square-headed nails, patterns left by a large, circular mill saw, and distinctive corner joints, indicating early-1850s construction. Its relatively rare Greek revival architecture qualifies the home for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places.

When Brouwer decided the $40,000 in fees, wanted by Madison Gas and Electric Co. to redirect utilities along the five-mile route to his town of Berry property was too much, he decided to dismantle the building, board by board, and rebuild it on his property.

He stripped off the wallpaper and plaster, and discovered much of the wallpaper and paint was original!

"It's (up to) 95 percent original," he said.

"Rehabilitation will be the fun stuff." Few internal modifications were done, nor even indoor plumbing. There were no water pipes in the basement and only one copper fuel line into the house. He will keep the structural integrity intact when it is rebuilt.

He also found that it was a palisaded wall construction house. Very few of this type of construction are found. It was brought to the U.S. by the French.

The entire house was made from vertical planks, all from salvaged lumber! They are 1 1/2" to 2 1/2" thick by 16' long and nailed to support beams. He was able to determine it was salvaged lumber because of the holes drilled in the planks. This was lumber floated down the Wisconsin River on rafts to Prairie du Sac and then hauled to the site by wagon. The holes came from the top two layers being pegged to hold the load of lumber together on the raft.

The house had siding that had warped over the years. This allowed bats access to those holes in the lumber under the siding. Brouwer said they must have removed a ton of bat dung from between the walls!

Brouwer and his wife, Stefanie, "plan to keep the building open to the public after the restoration," which they will do themselves.

No historic preservation organizations expressed any interest in saving the house. Brouwer says he was disappointed in both state and local organizations. Everyone he talked to knew about the house and it's plight, but there was no offer of help. He received the most help and assistance from Brian Standing and the people at Dane County Zoning, and greatly appreciated it.

Brouwer said, "I was committed to protecting a remnant of regional history almost as old as Wisconsin."

Story by Howard Sherpe from information collected in an interview with Mr. Brouwer and from a story by Lisa Nunez in the Wisconsin State Journal.
Records Center Highlights
“Pieces of the Past”
By Debbie Kmetz, Electronic Cataloging Project Coordinator

When referring to their work, historical researchers often liken it to putting together a puzzle - fitting many pieces together in different ways. Just as life today has simple and complex interconnections, so did life years, decades and centuries ago. Finding pieces and linking them together can be an exciting adventure - sometimes the very experience that elicits a joyful exclamation in the research room.

This installment of Records Center Highlights will look at four different items in the collection and see how they work together to convey specific information and a sense of time and place. Three of the pieces share a common donor; the fourth was acquired independently of the others.

The most visually striking of the four items is a beautiful sepia-toned photograph depicting perhaps two to three hundred youth posing for a group portrait in front of a large distinguished looking building. Some of the girls and boys seem young, others more mature. Many are holding rolls, each tied with a ribbon. Several hold signs bearing the names of Dane County towns - Springfield, Berry, Verona, Perry, Primrose - to note a few. The children appear to be dressed in their “best” clothing. There are also several adults mixed in among the youth; more adults stand to the back and to one side.

A closer look reveals posters in the windows of the building. The posters appear to be identical, each with an arrow and the numeral 32nd, possibly a reference to the Red Arrow Division of World War I. That was the name commonly used for the Army’s 32nd

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Graduates of the Rural District Schools posing in front of Madison High School, site of their commencement exercises, 1919.
(portion of the original photograph)
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Division, composed of Wisconsin and Michigan National Guard. In fact, writing near the bottom of the photo reads, “District School Graduates, Madison, W is 1919.” The photo was taken in the months following the end of World War I.

The photo is broken into four pieces, with some long tears in the larger sections. This is sobering, but more information later reveals that even these tears have meaning. Despite its broken state, the photo is in very good condition and almost all of the faces are easily discernible.

Winnie Lacy of Fitchburg donated this photograph to the Dane County Historical Society in 1998. Her mother, Leita Farrell, is one of the girls pictured. This was her mother’s graduation day. Leita had successfully completed the eighth grade in a rural one-room Dane County school.

Several years later, Winnie added to her donation. She wrote a short article discussing what rural education and this photo meant to her mother. These are some of Winnie’s words:

The young lady seated just to the right of center with a hat in her lap is my mother, Leita Farrell. She was born September 21, 1905 on a small farm near the little cross roads settlement of Pine Bluff, Wisconsin. Her best friend Eleanor Kalscheur is seated just to her right, also holding a hat in her lap. Leita was the youngest of the ten children of John M. Farrell and Frances Wallraff Farrell.

This photo was taken outside of Madison High School ... the site of the commencement ceremony for pupils who had finished eighth grade in the rural one-room schools of Dane County. ... For years Leita kept the photo rolled up in a paper towel tube. She was very proud to have been able to attend school for eight years.

Leita desperately wanted to attend high school but that privilege was not available to her. Her father had died when she was twelve and her help was needed on the farm. After her commencement, on days when the farm work was slack, she would go back to the schoolhouse and sit in on grade school classes in hopes of learning more. The teachers were always willing to find something for her to learn. If nothing else she read the dictionary and poured over maps of the world.

Now as we look at the photo we can see one girl for whom the day must have been a mixture of happiness and sadness. We also understand better why the photo is torn. The pressure of being kept in a tube eventually cracked the photo’s emulsion and paper. But the same “keepsake” impulse that put the treasured photo into the tube helped insure its existence for decades, as a personal memento and also as an important historical record.

When Winnie brought her article to the Records Center, she also brought several pages photocopied from her mother’s scrapbook. On the pages are test questions, divided into several categories: History; Grammar; Civil Government; Arithmetic; Agriculture; Spelling; Geography; Physiology and Reading. A title, apparently added later, identifies them as “Examination Questions School District #2.” Winnie writes that her mother didn’t tell her which year she took the test, but it might be presumed to have been the test she took for her diploma.

The questions are interesting and revealing of the education at the time. Question #8 under History asks:

Who or what are the following:
Joan of Arc; Burbank; Booker Washington; Clara Barton; Alaska; Alsace Lorraine; 32nd Division; The Marines

Questions #3 & #4 under Grammar instruct students to:

Write a composition of 150 words on “A Day in a Country Store,” using each of the following paragraphs:
1. Description of the store building
2. What is in the store
3. Description of the store keeper
4. Descriptions of customers and what they talk about
5. What is bought

Question #4 under Civil Government asks students to write 25 words or more on the Peace Conference. Students were expected to supply details about the Paris meeting that produced the Versailles Peace Treaty, which would be signed on June 28, 1919.

By piecing together the photo, Winnie’s article and the examination questions, researchers can begin to see a portrait of a young girl, coming of age during the war years of the early twentieth century. Winnie’s memories and the actions of her mother in what she chose to save convey a young woman’s love of and desire for education, coupled with the reality of an era when children often contributed critical, and sometimes irreplaceable, work on the family farm.

A fourth item, acquired by the society many years earlier, serves as a wonderful companion to the group, adding yet another “piece of the past.” It is a four-page program titled “Dane County Common School... Continued on page 5
Records Center Highlights (Continued from page 4)

Commencement.” The cover page gives the specific date of the graduation exercises – June 7, 1919. It also records the day’s program of activities for the graduates: morning field meet and basket dinner at Vilas Park; then a procession and graduation exercises at Madison High School Auditorium. Earl Cooper led the Community Singing after the invocation and again at the close of the program.

The next two pages list the names of the graduates by town. Thirty-four Dane County towns are represented, only Roxbury is missing. Interestingly, the signs in the graduation photo bore only the names of towns from the western portion of Dane County. Perhaps, the students in the eastern half posed for another photo.

Under the heading for Cross Plains, listed along with twenty-four others, are the names of Leita Farrell and her best friend Eleanor Kalscheur. For that year, the towns of Windsor, Mazomanie and Berry had the least number of graduates – only two each. Cross Plains and Cottage Grove had the most, followed by Dane.

The words to seven songs fill the final page of the program. Not surprisingly, “America,” “On Wisconsin,” and “Keep the Home Fires Burning” appear. There is also a variation of “On Wisconsin” called “On, Dane County!” Note the addition of an exclamation point to the Dane County song title. Here is a sampling of lines from verse two of this song of county pride:

On, Dane County! On, Dane County!
March right on to fame;
Country boys and girls are learning
How to do the same;

Any one of these pieces provides valuable information and sometimes poignant insights into rural education in Dane County during the first quarter of the twentieth century. Taken together, they help present a fuller picture – from one girl’s perspective to the sheer number of students graduating from one-room schools in every corner of the county. These are all students who spent the last several years of their

Dane County Common School Commencement Program, June 7, 1919.
Perhaps the most dramatic and fascinating legacy left us by the Woodland People and their successors is the assemblage of mounds that are still to be found throughout the county.

Thousands of linear, effigy and conical mounds were created, often in groups. These were constructed on sites apparently chosen for their vistas, overlooking rivers, streams, lakes, and marshes.

Early investigators believed that the modern Ho-Chunk had been the mound builders, in part because the historic people had many of the same animal totems integrated in their spiritual beliefs as those represented by many of the effigy mounds. While not all of the mound images correlated with the clan names and totems of the Ho-Chunk, the overlap was significant enough to suggest connections between the prehistoric people of the Woodland Tradition and the historic Ho-Chunk nation. More sophisticated dating techniques and increased archaeological knowledge show that the mounds predated Ho-Chunk habitation of the region.

The evidence indicates that they were built by the inhabitants of small villages throughout the region, using baskets to scoop soil, and other simple tools. Birmingham and Rankin provide interesting details regarding construction and interment:

Mound building increased during the subsequent Middle Woodland stage (100 B.C. or 100 A.D. to about 500 A.D.). Mounds built early in this stage were round or conical shaped and were sometimes constructed to a great size and in fairly large clusters or groups. One mound from a group located near the outlet of Lake Monona measured 60 feet in diameter and seven feet high. Such mounds often contained central burial pits. They also sometimes contained rock clusters and enclosures, layers or concentrations of ash, puddled clays and special soils, and other materials that are known to have symbolized protection and rebirth of the soul in the beliefs of many later Native Americans.

Sometimes individuals were interred in these mounds in great numbers. Occasionally the same mound was used repeatedly for interments. Burials were made “in the flesh,” as portions of skeletons, or in the form of bone bundles and cremations. Some people were buried in mounds a long time after they had died. This suggests that mounds were not being built continuously but rather at appointed times in conjunction with special ceremonials—a practice that appears to characterize all the periods of mound building in Wisconsin.

Many of the mounds were molded in the shapes of animals central to people’s lives, including bear, canines, panthers, waterfowl, hawks, other wildlife, and in one instance, a human effigy. These animal mounds which may represent sacred totems, suggest a spiritual connection between their builders and the land. Other mounds are conical in shape, or have linear shapes whose meaning has yet to be ascertained. Some of the conical mounds are burial mounds, in some cases containing pieces of pottery and personal effects interred with the deceased.
Mazomanie Sesquicentennial

Planning and research have begun on a major exhibit to open in 2005 when the Village of Mazomanie will celebrate the sesquicentennial of the original platting of the village on July 5, 1855.

For this event, the Mazomanie Historical Society is planning to publish a book containing biographies, stories, and histories of local people, past and present.

The books will be $20.00 each and should be published before July 5, 2005. All biographies and/or histories must be submitted by the end of March, 2005.

If you are currently a resident of Mazomanie, or your family once lived in Mazomanie, write a biography of yourself, your family, your great-grandmother, great-great-great-grandfather – anybody, and have it published in the book.

If you have any questions or would like more information on this sesquicentennial project, contact Andy Szudy at mazohistory@yahoo.com.

All proceeds from this book will go to the preservation of Mazomanie history. For further details and for sample biographies, please visit the Mazomanie Historical Society’s website at www.rootsweb.com/~wimhs.

DANE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY PRESENTS
FORWARD! A HISTORY OF DANE: THE CAPITAL COUNTY

FORWARD traces the history of Dane County through the twentieth century. As home to state government, Dane County history provides background and insight into the development of Wisconsin throughout this period. The book was researched and written by Allan Ruff and Tracy Will. Tracy Will is well known to many Wisconsinites as one of the hosts of the popular television series, Wisconsin Stories, developed cooperatively by Wisconsin Public Television and the Wisconsin Historical Society. The first published history of Dane County in nearly 100 years is replete with fascinating details and rich graphics. It has over 400 pages of text, hundreds of pictures, complete index, maps, photos, and graphics enliven the text.

I would like to order _____ number of copies:

Historical Society Members Copies @ $26.95 each $ ____________

OR Non-Members Copies @ $29.95 each $ ____________

Shipping and Handling: Add $3.00 per copy $ ____________

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If you wish to pick up the book in person to save shipping and handling charge, please call Anne Short (274-1960)
A new Dane County Historical Society marker telling about “Carp Seining in the Yahara Lakes” now greets you at the entrance to this 99-acre site. It’s located on the northwest shore of Lake Kegonsa at the inlet of the Yahara River. This exceptional boat launch site offers a protected launching area that features new launch piers, bathrooms, fish cleaning facility, and parking area. A picnic area along the lakeshore provides a pleasant area for family outings and shoreline fishing with fully accessible fishing piers. A new canoe launch has also been installed on the Yahara River. This site is located at the end of Fish Camp Road off CTH AB, approximately one mile northeast of the intersection of USH 51 and CTH AB.

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