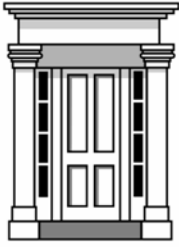


SHEBOYGAN COUNTY



HISTORICAL  
RESEARCH  
CENTER



**You Are Invited!**

**SCHRC Annual Meeting  
and 35th  
Anniversary Celebration**

**Friday, October 12, 2018  
11:00am - 1:00pm**

**Amore  
18 West Mill Street  
Plymouth, WI**

**Italian Buffet Lunch  
\$16 per person**

**Call 920.467.4667 to register**

# The Researcher

**The Newsletter of the Sheboygan County  
Historical Research Center**  
Volume XXIV Number 1 October 2018

*The Researcher is sponsored by Jay Christopher of Christopher Farm & Gardens.*

## Vollrath Park Zoo



Today, zoos top the list for field trips and vacation destinations. They are a favorite for every family, bringing a summer of fun, exploration and education to kids and parents alike.

The first zoos were really private collections created by the wealthy to broadcast their affluence and importance. Called menageries, they were found as early as 2500 B.C. in Mesopotamia. Amassed via expeditions to distant and remote places, the first specimens were the exotics like giraffes, elephants, bears and dolphins. Barbary lions from the wilds of North Africa, now basically extinct, were housed in London's tower by 1210, during the reign of King John.

Vienna, Austria, 1752 and Paris, France, 1793, were Europe's first public zoos.

Central Park Zoo, the first public zoo in the United States, opened in New York in 1860, followed by Philadelphia's in 1874.

Continued on page 4

The Sheboygan County Historical Research Center is located at 518 Water Street in Sheboygan Falls.  
Open Tuesday through Friday, 9:00am – 4:00pm and Saturdays from 9:00am to 12:00 noon.  
Closed Friday, October 12, 2018 for Annual Meeting and Thursday, November 22, 2018 for Thanksgiving.  
Phone: 920-467-4667 E-mail: [research@schrc.org](mailto:research@schrc.org) Website: [schrc.org](http://schrc.org)

*The Researcher* is the official newsletter of the Sheboygan County Historical Research Center, 518 Water Street, Sheboygan Falls, Wisconsin 53085.

It is published six times per year in August, October, December, February, April and June.

The Research Center is the local history archive for Sheboygan County and areas surrounding the county. It is a repository for paper records of all kinds.

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**DON'T MISS SHEBOYGAN COUNTY HISTORY COLUMN IN THE  
SATURDAY SHEBOYGAN PRESS OR ONLINE FRIDAY THROUGH SUNDAY EACH WEEK.**

#### PLAYBIRD/SPIELVOGEL

HERE'S A FUN FACEBOOK QUESTION WE RECEIVED FROM TOM -- I'm curious about the origin of the name of Playbird Road. It's so unusual, so I'm wondering if there's a story behind it? I haven't been able to find anything.

ANSWER: Playbird is actually from the name Spielvogel. German settlers in the area. Playbird Road was once Spielvogel Road. From Sue Dempster. "I know the answer to this one, because my family's excavating company (Spielvogel Excavating) got the naming honors. When the county decided to make the road, they contracted with Spielvogel Excavating to do the site work for the entire thing, and basically gave them the naming rights along with it. Spielvogel is kind of a long and hard to pronounce name for a road, so instead, they (my dad, uncles, grandfather) decided that the name should be translated into English instead of their German name.

Spiel = Play  
Vogel = Bird

Hence the name of the road: PLAYBIRD, built by Spielvogel Excavating of Sheboygan (which is still in business, btw). I believe Claude Spielvogel owned the land at that time."

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#### Membership Renewal & Sponsor or Recruit a New Member

Don't forget to renew your membership. Memberships pay for everything from soup to nuts: programs, genealogy classes, History on the Move, archival supplies, office supplies, the electric bill and building upkeep.

Be a member, invite a member, recruit a member. Support SCHRC.

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## **Plymouth Hospital**

The dream of Rev. Martin Schmidt of St. John Lutheran Church, the Plymouth Hospital and Training Center opened in 1917. It was a 24 bed unit built, as all the old newspapers like to say, in a former cow pasture at the south end of Selma Street at Reed Street.

Three years after Rev. Schmidt began marshalling community support for the project building began. Mrs. Frank Hinze was the first patient. She was admitted with a ruptured appendix. Twelve doctors had privileges at the hospital.

An interesting fact, far different from today's public hospitals was that the organization was governed by a board of directors, the 11 members came from churches of 11 different denominations in the city.

The hospital underwent a number of major renovations. One large addition in 1927 12 more beds. The year 1956 involved a huge addition and renovation.

Because of continued growth and demand, it was decided to build an all-new hospital to the south and west of the old hospital. The two were connected to by an underground passage.

The new facility opened in 1970. The old hospital became an extended care nursing home facility. In 1981, Valley Manor and South Horizon Apartments were built to add levels of care to the community.

In 1984, the facility was renamed Valley View Medical Center. Inpatient treatment at Valley View was discontinued in 2004.

In 1992, the hospital joined Aurora Healthcare. The old Plymouth hospital is now used for a medical/surgical center.





In 1887, William Temple Hornaday, chief taxidermist at the Smithsonian was troubled by the loss of large herds of American bison so he formed a small collection of North American animals, bison among them, which would later form the nucleus of the animals at Washington's National Zoological Park. That first collection was housed on the Mall until 1891, when Frederick Law Olmsted, designed the present-day National Zoo.

The Milwaukee County Zoo began in 1892 as a miniature mammal and bird display in Milwaukee's Washington Park. By the turn of the last century, it grew to over 800 animals on 23 acres of land. The zoo was moved to a new 200-acre wooded site in 1958, now home to over 3,300 animals and 377 species.

Above: The bison exhibit at National Zoo on the mall in Washington DC. The Smithsonian Castle is in the background.

Sheboygan had its own small zoo, located in Vollrath Park, for more than four decades.

The park, twenty-six acres in size, was once part of the Vollrath estate, in fact, the location of their country home. Jacob Vollrath's heirs donated the land to the city in 1917 with the proviso that the mound on the north side toward the lake be left as a memorial to the family patriarch as it was a favorite meditation spot, and it was there that the zoo would be built.

The city began improvements to the site in 1927 when the lagoon was constructed and flagstone steps were built. Flower beds were added in 1928. During 1929 and 1930 the amphitheater was completed, and a playground was added. It was during this period that construction of the zoo began; a pair of white swans were the zoo's first permanent residents.

Formal dedication of Vollrath Bowl and the park took place on August 23, 1931. An impressive ceremony, more than 20,000 people attended. That early zoo curiously also had a small number of Rocky Mountain elk. But, very quickly the elk became a problem. The gang (scientific name) of elk had to be moved to Evergreen Park because they had

Below: The dedication of Vollrath Park, Bowl and Zoo on August 23, 1931. More than 20,00 people attended the event.



“developed a wild disposition during the winter.” Perhaps size and difficulty of management for the enormous creatures was overlooked!

June of 1934 saw two fawns being born at the zoo. The zoo had four buck and two doe. The oldest buck came from Columbus, WI and the youngest buck came from Sturgeon Bay.

The zoo looked to acquire a number of other animals at that time;



Earliest images of the Vollrath Zoo, seen here in 1931, soon after its opening. Located near the lake in Vollrath Park at North 3rd Street and Park Avenue in Sheboygan, it was in operation from 1931 to 1976.

They were looking for one male badger, one male opossum, one female red fox, one pair of porcupines, one female wolf, one female wood duck, one female pin-tail duck, one female mutant pheasant and one male canvas-back duck.

The Kiddie Ranch was started in 1949. This was a miniature corral filled with sheep, guinea pigs, rabbits and goats. The resident goats were walked through the park on leashes each day for all to see.

In 1941, Sadie a female African lion, came from the Sterling Brothers' indoor circus. She consumed about twelve pounds of meat per day during the winter. It is rumored she was buried in Dr. Eigenberger's backyard on Greendale Road. In 1948, a mother bear with her four cubs were the big attractions at the zoo. By 1953, 5000 to 6000 people visited the park each summer. The zoo boasted two western burros, four green monkeys, two capuchin monkeys and two badgers as residents. The oldest resident of the zoo was a 23-year old bear who did the occasional trick. A kinkajou, normally native to Central and South America, was donated in 1971 after it showed up on someone's front porch. Though outside the North American purview of the zoo, it was taken in and cared for. The zoo also took in abandoned animals. It was a predecessor of the Humane Society in the city.

By 1972, the zoo had fallen on hard times. Expensive and labor intensive to manage, it was described as having leaky pipes, over-crowded and out-of-date. Because of its advanced stage of deterioration, the 45-year-old zoo was closed by the city council in 1976.

All animals in Sheboygan's first, and only zoo were sold, or in the case of farm animals, returned to the original donors, or given to other zoos in the Midwest. Some of the recipient zoos gave Sheboygan authorities an assurance of "animal credit." This meant if Sheboygan opened a new zoo, the city would get help in obtaining another collection of animals.

Though, gone for forty years, thousands of children, now grown, have fond memories of the little zoo on the shore of Lake Michigan.



# Local Phone Numbers Will Have A Prefix Added

All Sheboygan, Kohler and Sheboygan Falls telephone numbers will acquire a "new look" early in 1956, according to Edward F. Klotzsky, local manager for the Wisconsin Telephone Co.

The "new look" will consist of a central office prefix name plus five numerals. The names which have been assigned are "GLencourt" for Sheboygan and Kohler and "HOward" for Sheboygan Falls. The Village of Kohler is part of the Sheboygan exchange.

The names are part of a new standard nationwide telephone numbering system, already in use in many Wisconsin cities which is designed to speed and simplify long distance telephone service.

Sheboygan exchange numbers now have either four or five numerals. All five-figure numbers will simply acquire the prefix name "GLencourt." Thus, telephone number 2,6399 will become GLencourt 2-6399.

Four-figure numbers also will acquire the prefix "7." For instance, 5499 will become GLencourt 7-5499.

## Numbers Remain Same

At Sheboygan Falls, where all telephone numbers now have five numerals, the name HOward will precede present numbers. Thus, telephone number 6-3499 will become HOward 6-3499.

All present telephone numbers at both exchanges will remain the same under the new system, Klotzsky said.

The new number plan will mean a slight change in the method of dialing local calls, Klotzsky said. Persons calling telephones which now have four numerals will need to dial either

the "GL" of GLencourt and the five numerals, or simply the five numerals. In any case, they will no longer be able to reach those telephones by dialing only the four figures.

When calling telephones with present five-figure numbers, subscribers may dial "GL" plus the five figures, or continue the present method of dialing the full five numerals.

At Sheboygan Falls, telephone users may continue to dial only the five numerals, or dial the "HO" of HOward plus the five figures.

The method of dialing calls between Sheboygan and Sheboygan Falls also will be changed. At present, Sheboygan subscribers calling Sheboygan Falls simply dial the listed five-figure number. Sheboygan Falls telephone users calling Sheboygan dial "5" plus the desired Sheboygan number.

## Aids Long Distance

Under the new system, subscribers in either exchange will dial the full listed number, including the "GL" of GLencourt or the "HO" of HOward. It will be necessary to dial all seven digits.

Klotzsky emphasized that the new numbers and dialing methods will not become effective until 1956. Present numbers will remain in use until that time.

The new number plan is primarily for long distance calling purposes. The combination of a central office name and five figures conforms to a nationwide numbering system which aids a telephone operator in dialing long distance calls directly to called telephones in distant communities.

# Changes to Sheboygan's telephone system in 1956

## First phone numbers

Known as the 2L-5N, or "two letter and 5 number" system, phone numbers were assigned to residents based on location. The two letters signified the closest telephone exchange, and the five numbers were the assigned phone number. There are two famous examples you might be familiar with: Pennsylvania 6-5000 or Murray Hill 5-9975 (Lucy and Ricky's phone number).

## No Operator Needed

Automatic dialing was possible with a rotary dial telephone set. Prior telephone models were directly connected to the operator or had a magneto (a rotating handle on the right hand side spinning which you also connected to the telephone girl).

## Area Codes

Conceived in the late Forties, area codes were not established until the introduction of New Jersey's 201 area code in 1951. The area codes we use today are an evolution of the original "North American Numbering Plan." Initially there were under 90 codes. Codes were dished out based on population. The areas with the largest populations received codes that were quick to dial on a rotary phone. New York was given 212, Los Angeles 213 and Chicago 312 while more rural areas like Texas and Kansas got 915 and 913.

# New House Numbering Gets Under Way Here

Sheboygan's outmoded and confused system of house numbering was taken in tow today for a major overhaul as city crews began the laborious task of placing new numbers on every home and business building in the city.

Home-owners in the area bounded by S Twenty-third and S Twenty-fourth streets between Indiana avenue and Georgia avenue were the first to get the new numbers. Next on the schedule are the areas in the bends of the Sheboygan river, one from Pennsylvania avenue south to the river between S Water and S Franklin streets, the other from Pennsylvania avenue north to the river between N Commerce and N Fifteenth streets.

Acting City Engineer Ray Ottensman declined to estimate the time that will be necessary to renumber all buildings in the city but gave assurance that the work would be completed before Christmas.

Neat and easily read, the new numbers will give Sheboygan a uniform style of numbering. The

numerals are black on a white ceramic base and are supported in a metal bracket.

Less than 40 per cent of homes and business places will have the same numbers they had previously, Mr. Ottensman stated, but most of the changes will be slight except in those sections lying between Pennsylvania avenue and the Sheboygan river.

Dissatisfaction with Sheboygan's numbering system has existed for many years, and almost annually since 1932 corrective measures have been considered by the common council.

East and west the numbering was reasonably uniform, since the easternmost point of the Lake Michigan shoreline was used as the base line, and all blocks were numbered west from there.

On the north-south streets however, the winding Sheboygan river had been used as the base line and no proposal for renumbering those streets found favor with the common council until Ot

Stielow, circulation manager

(Continued on page 10, column 1)

## House Numbering 1880

Leberman

In August, plans were made for house numbering, and the following rules for same established: starting point for numbers running east and west was to be Lake Michigan; north and south the Sheboygan River.

The amount of frontage allotted for a number was 20 feet, even numbers to be on the north and west sides of streets, and odd numbers on the south and east sides.

The first street signs, 280 in all, were ordered placed. This system was adopted 60 years ago, and was in force until this year, May, 1945, when a new system was passed by the Common Council, which makes Penn. Avenue the dividing line for the north and south instead of the River.

# New House Numbering Gets Under Way Here

(Continued from page 1)

The Sheboygan Press, outlined a plan to make Pennsylvania avenue the dividing line and to start the numbering both north and south from there at 500, thus eliminating entirely the 100, 200, 300, and 400-blocks.

With minor changes the common council accepted this plan and on May 7, 1945, passed an ordinance creating the new numbering system. Under the plan only 41 blocks would suffer any radical change in numbering.

Putting the new system into effect was delayed until now because manufacturers were unable to supply the necessary house numbers.

A total of 40,000 individual ceramic blocks were ordered, and the blocks, which bear numbers from 0 to 9, are now being assembled in the metal brackets at the city tool house. The Cincinnati firm which manufactures the blocks has promised delivery of 5,000 weekly until the order is filled. At present the city has 500 of each digit on hand.

Numbers now displayed on houses will not be removed by the city crews but will be left in place for some time to avoid the confusion created by correcting the house number to agree with the new system.

New numbers will be placed over the doorway of each house in

most cases or in another location easily visible from the street. The city, not the home-owner, decides where the numbers will be placed, according to Arthur A. Schultz, president of the board of public works.

Although changes in house numbers may mean a temporary headache for some home-owners and businessmen, for the postal department, and for others immediately concerned, the permanent advantages of a uniform numbering system far outweigh the temporary inconvenience, Mr. Schultz said.

Emphasizing the importance of a uniform system, he quoted remarks from the publication, Civil Engineering, as follows:

"The use of house numbers by the postal, police, and fire departments, by public utilities, merchants, taxicab companies, and by the people themselves, plays such a vital part in everyday life that the importance of a uniform system of numbering cannot be over-emphasized.

"It has been truly said that much time and money are wasted annually by the American people as a result of the unsystematic naming of streets and complicated numbering of buildings.

"It is also true that a good system of numbering, easy to comprehend, is a large factor in a city's social and commercial life."

## Sheboygan Press, May 8, 1945 House Numbering

In an age before literacy became widespread, houses, shops and businesses were identified, like pubs, by signs — the Golden Cross, the White Hart, the Lamb and Flag.

A few political factors changed everything: taxes, postal services and conscription. Over the course of the 18th century, states began calling on citizens to do their duty in the army and to tax them to pay for increasingly expensive wars. Together with the explosion in the size of cities, it necessitated a record of who lived where.

Another common question is why housing numbers are even on one side of the street and odd on the other? The rationale for the layout is that if all the houses on one side of the street were numbered in order, then no numbers could be given to the houses on the other side. Thus, one side of street gets ascending even numbers, and the other ascending odd numbers.

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The famous  
Vollrath Zoo  
peacock, 1969.



## 2018 Program Schedule

### **(History on the Move) Generations**

1500 Douglas Drive, Plymouth, WI

1:30pm to 3:00pm

Wednesday, November 7, 2018 - H.C. Prange, A Holiday Favorite

### **(Genealogy Classes) SCHRC**

518 Water Street, Sheboygan Falls

1:00pm to 3:00pm \$15 members, \$20 non-members

Monday, October 8, 2018 - Orphanages, Industrial Schools, Asylums and Other Such Resources

Monday, November 12, 2018 - Genealogy Essentials

Monday, December 10, 2018 - Who Lived in a House Like This? How to Research The History of Different Types of Homes

### **Second Saturdays — Plymouth Arts Center**

520 E. Mill Street, Plymouth

9:30am to 11:30am

October 13, 2018 - Michael Jacobs, UW– Sauk Center/Baraboo - The 1918 Influenza Epidemic - The toll of history's worst epidemic surpasses all the military deaths in World War I and World War II combined. And it may have begun in the United States. Commonly known as the Spanish Flu, the pandemic lasted just 15 months but was the deadliest disease outbreak in human history, killing between 50 million and 100 million people worldwide.

November 10, 2018 - Jerry Apps, author, historian - One Room Schools - Jerry will do a tribute to one of our national icons. Be prepared to bring your memories and relive your days as students.

December 8, 2018 - Dennis McCann - This Storied River, A Tour of the Upper Mississippi  
Long-time journalist Dennis McCann takes us on an intimate tour of the Upper Mississippi River.

January 12, 2019 - John Eastberg, Exec. Dir. Pabst Mansion - Victorians Going Over The Top: the Excesses of the American Gilded Age and Lost and Found: The Best of Milwaukee's Victorian Architectural Past

February 9, 2019 - Sheboygan Symphony, 100th Anniversary - The Sheboygan Symphony Orchestra is the oldest continually active orchestra in the State of Wisconsin, performing concerts since 1918. The Stefanie H. Weill Center for the Performing Arts is home to our Symphony.

March 9, 2019 - James Kieselberg, Director - Grohmann Museum, the home to the world's most comprehensive art collection dedicated to the evolution of human work. The museum opened in 2007 and is located on the campus of MSOE in downtown Milwaukee.

April 13, 2019 — Joel Greenberg, author - Hope is the Things With Feathers: Americans and Three Birds - which gives the history and contrasts the fate of three species, with a focus on the demise of passenger pigeons.

May 11, 2019 — Dave Desimone - Director - Black Point Estate and Gardens, WHS - Black Point Estate & Gardens overlooking Geneva Lake, was the summer home for Chicago business mogul Conrad Seipp and four generations of his descendants. It is the Wisconsin Historical Society's newest site.

### **The Lincoln Seminar with Steven Rogstad - Traveling With Lincoln** - A four-part series.

Tuesdays- October 2, 9, 16, 23, 2018

6:30pm-8:30pm at the Sheboygan County Historical Museum, 3110 Erie Avenue, Sheboygan.