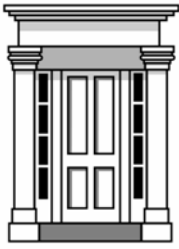


SHEBOYGAN COUNTY



HISTORICAL  
RESEARCH  
CENTER

At right—an excerpt from  
**Ploughs Among the Eskers** by  
Bernard Michaels



**St. Patrick's Church in  
Kiltormer, East Galway,  
Ireland, church of Catherine  
Burke Slattery before immigra-  
tion.**

PLOUGHS AMONG THE ESKERS  
A story of the settlement of  
the Kettle Moraine



By  
BERNARD L. MICHAELS  
A Life Long Resident

Reprinted by the Sheboygan County Historical Research Center

# The Researcher

**The Newsletter of the Sheboygan County  
Historical Research Center**

Volume XXVV Number 3 February 2020

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

## A TIPPERARY MAN AND AN EAST GALWAY LASS MEET IN AMERICA



Above is the old 11th century ruin in the Castletown Cemetery at Ballicarridogh, near Portroe on the Shannon River in County Tipperary, Ireland. John Slattery and his four siblings immigrated from this area during the 1840s.

John Slattery was a Tipperary man. Born in that Irish county in 1820, he worked as a boatman on the River Shannon before emigrating to America at the age of twenty-seven at the height of the Great Famine. He settled for a time in Vermont where he found work in the slate quarries. It was here that he came to know Catherine Burke, lately of County Galway, whom he married in 1850. Following the marriage, John

Continued on page 6

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 Saturday, April 11, 2020 for Easter**

Phone: 920-467-4667

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**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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#### **Spring 2020 Program Schedule**

##### *Second Saturdays— Journeys Into Local History*

Plymouth Arts Center, 520 East Mill Street, Plymouth  
9:30am to 11:30am

March 14, 2020 - Matthew Prigge - The Great Blizzard of 1947

April 11, 2020 - Jack Mitchell - Wisconsin on the Air, 100 years of public broadcasting

May 9, 2020 - Chad Lewis - UFOs of Wisconsin

##### *History on the Move - Plymouth Generations*

Wednesday, April 1, 2020 2:00pm

The Kettle Moraine, Mitchell and Greenbush

Wednesday, May 6, 2020 2:00pm

A Bit of the Old Sod, Irish History in the County

##### *History on the Move - Oostburg Public Library*

Tuesday, April 7, 2020 1:30pm

Lake Michigan's Western Shore

Tuesday, May 12, 2020 1:30pm

Camp Haven Anti-aircraft base

##### *Genealogy Classes*

Monday, April 13, 2020 1:00p

Newspapers.com and other newspaper resources

Monday May 11, 2020 1:00pm

Ancestry.com

#### **Welcome New Members**

Warren & Linda Brauer, Sheboygan (sponsored by James & Elizabeth Kuplic)

Elizabeth Hill, St. Louis Park, MN (sponsored by Jim & Deborah Baughman)

Alfred Hingiss, Jr., Auburn, TX

Michael Holden, Phoenix, AZ (sponsored by Jim & Deborah Baughman)

Alli Karrels, Sheboygan (sponsored by Robert Harker)

Harriet Hermann, Sheboygan (sponsored by Jane Klettke)

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Gene Schnelle, Cleveland

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Mary Trier, Madison

Janet Veleke, Plymouth

Susan Paider, Manitowoc

Kathy Ziegler, Plymouth

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



## “LET’S DEVELOP OUR CENTER”

Steven K. Rogstad  
Director of Development

Many look to the beginning of a new year as an opportunity to reflect on the past and as a time to look forward to the coming year. For the Sheboygan County Historical Research Center, reflecting on the past is a given.

Being dedicated to the study of history - reflecting on history - is what we do. And we do it very well. The staff and volunteers come to the Center every day and immerse themselves in Sheboygan County’s past. Our great volunteers diligently work on collections to ensure that they will be available and easily accessible to researchers. Dedicated to the mission of the organization, staff members work on programs and activities in an effort to share stories, make others familiar with the Center, and find new ways to make studying the past a fun and exciting thing.

It is the new ways in which the Center will be exploring to reach others that I am looking forward to in 2020. Last year we introduced an updated website. We also began utilizing mass media with a weekly radio segment, “History and You,” that airs every Monday morning around 8:10 am on WKLN. [You can also listen to these stories on the Center’s website at [www.schrc.org](http://www.schrc.org)]. This year we will begin using the website, videos, social media, and other technologies to spread the word about the Center to larger audiences. As we engage new audiences, we grasp opportunities for more financial support that allows the Center to provide more programs, schedule new events, manage collections, and provide additional research services.

Another exciting development has been a series of scanning projects that are bringing valuable revenue to the Center. Government agencies, private organizations, and even other nonprofits are hiring the Center to scan paper records into digital format in order to preserve them from decay and eliminate limited storage space. It is yet another way in which the Center is taking advantage of opportunities to sustain itself through unconventional methods and strategies as we enter the digital age of recordkeeping.

One other exciting advancement has been the growth of our membership! Existing members have rallied around the idea of sponsoring friends and family for new memberships. The invitations for our followers on Facebook to join has attracted several new members. Then there are the people who have joined because the Center has helped them with research inquiries. Combined together, the Center added nearly 75 new members in 2019! It is remarkable growth!

Finally, the Center introduced a few new programs last year that proved so successful, they will be returning in 2020. The three sessions of “Tap Room History” drew 159 individuals. Attendees at the “Black Hawk War Symposium” packed the Plymouth Arts Center and heard three noted scholars present their research on a conflict that still has the power to captivate students of history. Three more sessions of Taproom History will be offered this year, as well as another annual Symposium. Dates and subject matter for these events will be announced soon. Thanks to those who attended last year and helped make the events successful!

Please feel free to contact me with your ideas, suggestions, and recommendations for enhancing our development efforts. You can contact me at 920-467-4667, or email me at [steverogstad@schrc.org](mailto:steverogstad@schrc.org).

Thank you for all you do to support and help develop our Research Center!

I look forward to seeing you at our events this year!

Sincerely,  
Steven K. Rogstad  
Director of Development

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**IF ONE COULD ONLY TEACH THE ENGLISH HOW TO TALK, AND THE IRISH HOW TO LISTEN, SOCIETY HERE WOULD BE QUITE CIVILIZED.**

Oscar Wilde

**WE HAVE ALWAYS FOUND THE IRISH A BIT ODD. THEY REFUSE TO BE ENGLISH.**

Winston Churchill

**BEING IRISH, HE HAD AN ABIDING SENSE OF TRAGEDY, WHICH SUSTAINED HIM THROUGH TEMPORARY PERIODS OF JOY.**

William Butler Yeats





Above we see an image of the main turreted entrance to the Sheboygan County Hospital for the Insane. When the facility opened in 1882, A. J. Whiffen and wife worked as superintendent and matron, respectively, at a salary of \$700 per year, and B. M. Evans was appointed as assistant, at \$30 per month. Dr. Almon Clarke was employed as attending physician at a salary of \$100 per year. Only two other persons were employed the first year, two servant girls at \$2.50 per week each.

### **SHEBOYGAN'S INSANE ASYLUM**

The Sheboygan County Hospital for the Insane had its origins in the tiny Yankee settlement of Winooski. The Sheboygan County Herald reported that Mr. Glanville Jewett received a contract and \$3,000 was allotted from the county board of supervisors to care for inmates at his hospital beginning in 1876. Jewett usually had about 22 people under his care. He was paid \$4 per week for each from the county's coffers. Just a short time later, on February 20, 1878, a fire broke out in the building, causing 4 of the 17 inmates to burn to death, ruining the lives of the others. The old wooden building was completely destroyed. Mr. Jewett was engaged in putting up a new facility to fulfill his unexpired contract when he died in April that year due to injuries sustained in the fire.

Shortly thereafter, a plan was formed by the county board to move the asylum closer to the city of Sheboygan. The large site chosen was located just west of today's Vollrath Company grounds bordered on the north by Superior Avenue and the south by Erie. On June 7, 1882, the new county hospital or insane asylum as it was known, was completed and the inmates moved to that place. The facility also functioned as the city poorhouse with its farmland surrounding the facility.

In 1903, according to a *Sheboygan Press* clipping, there was already talk of expanding the busy hospital. At the time the asylum was considered full with 118 patients. With talk of returning patients from Oshkosh's Northern Hospital the building would be way over capacity, but it seems no expansion project took place. With Dr. Gutsch, the lead administrator and physician, the cost to run the facility for 1904 was estimated to be \$13,000.

The building and grounds of the asylum were again a big news item in 1925. Dr. Darms of Mission House College in the town of Herman proposed an exciting new project which would bring the college to town with a land swap. He suggested to the county board that a new College Heights neighborhood be built on the old Taylor Farm.

Darms' proposal suggested that the county trade the Mission House property with the asylum and poorhouse. He said that it was advisable to make the move to have the asylum and poorhouse more centrally located. Moving the Mission House to the City of Sheboygan also would make the city a college town and far more progressive. Further, he claimed the swap would not cost the county a single dollar.

During the 1920s, the county contemplated moving the county asylum and city poorhouse out of the city of Sheboygan. The large amount of acreage was thought to impede the westward growth of the city. Proposals were referred to a committee on the subject but lost momentum presumably because of money, but at the same time, there were hints of trouble when a former resident said the food was simply insufficient at the asylum. Those accusations were refuted and reportedly were proven false. The county asylum, however, eventually



Another view of the Sheboygan County insane asylum. In 1910, lightning struck the north end of the building tearing away ten feet of the roof, shingles and roof boards. The Arpke family held a great Christmas celebration in 1914 for patients and their families. The Arpkes ran the hospital for decades, at this location and later at Five Corners.

closed in 1940 to patients. A new facility had been built at Five Corners in the town of Lima.

During World War II the county asylum grounds were taken over by the Army and were used as a POW camp. Its inmates worked the field in the summer of 1945 to harvest vegetable crops for canning factories.

The backstory tells us that during the spring of 1942, when things looked especially grim for the Allies, it was rumored that Adolph Hitler planned an airdrop of weapons to his soldiers held prisoner at detention camps in England. That very real fear led to the United States agreeing to take charge of prisoners captured by the Brits after 1942.

Thousands of prisoners of war, German and Italian, were brought to the United States and housed for the duration of WWII. The first Germans arrived in January 1944.

By 1945, there were also disastrous labor shortages in the United States, and because of its tremendous agricultural needs, Wisconsin would have suffered greatly had it not been for the POW labor program. Camps were located close to farm fields that needed working or factories in need of a labor force.

The prisoners at the Sheboygan Camp (located at the insane asylum) worked at Lakeside Packing Company in Sheboygan, Cleveland Canning Company, Calumet-Dutch Packing Company in Cedar Grove, Oostburg Canning Company, Geidel Canning Company in Adell and the Waldo Canning Company. Camp Sheboygan was open from June through December of 1945.

The POWs were not required to work, but boredom and the ability to earn money or coupons for the canteen motivated them to volunteer for almost any job available. Prisoners were paid an equivalent of 80 cents per day – not in cash, but in canteen coupons, which they could spend for cigarettes, candy and beer. A cigarette was worth several chocolate items and a tin of diced carrots was worth almost nothing.

Although they expected to go home immediately after the end of the war in 1945, the majority of German prisoners continued working in the United States until 1946.

**The end of an era came when the dilapidated structures were torn down in 1960s. Over time the land was developed and today houses the Sheboygan Clinic campus and Pick ‘n Save grocery store.**





The John and Catherine Burke Slattery family— From left, back row, Margaret Slattery Michaels, William Edward Slattery, Daniel Slattery, Michael Slattery, Patrick Slattery and Elizabeth Slattery Gahagan. From left, front row, Mary Slattery Gahagan, John Slattery, Catherine Burke Slattery and John Slattery Jr. Not pictured, Thomas Slattery. Photo taken in September of 1900 on the occasion of John and Kitty's 50th wedding anniversary.

took work laying track for the railroad, and for the next ten years the couple lived at rail construction sites from Canada to Indiana. During this time, they became the parents of four children. By 1862, John and Catherine, (now better known as Kitty) had tired of the constant movement of railroad life, and decided to take land and settle. Becoming aware of an Irish gathering place in eastern Wisconsin, the family moved north, settling on the northeast quarter of section eighteen in the town of Mitchell. Here in the shadow of Garrity Hill, they built their first home.

Kitty was young and strong and helped her husband fell the tamarack in the lowlands, then guided the oxen as they dragged the logs uphill to the building site. When the last hand-split shake was placed on the cabin roof, the couple turned to cleaning the land for potatoes and corn. Week upon week was spent in felling the hardwoods and dragging them into piles for burning. When John grew discouraged and spoke of returning to work for the railroad, it was his wife's unswerving optimism and encouragement that convinced him to stay on the land.

In the spring of 1873, John became seriously ill with lung fever. His recovery progressed slowly and the Dundee physician's remedy of drawing blood and injecting salt water into his veins caused a severe infection which incapacitated him for months. Despite having delivered a baby in late March, Kitty swung the scythe and the wheat cradle in the fields that summer.

The number of Slattery offspring soon grew to ten, and as they became able, each assumed a share in the farm work. Eight-year old Margaret, who someday would become my grandmother, was given the task of rousting the hogs each morning, driving them from their evening's nest near the buildings into the woods

where they fed on nuts and roots during the day. The animals of the 1870s bore little resemblance to the docile hogs of today, and the young Slatтерys soon learned to stay out of the path of the long-nosed "prairie racers". While two older sons remained to work on the farm, a third lad became apprenticed to Greenbush blacksmith, Thomas Franey. After learning the crafts of horse shoeing and iron working, he traveled north to the mines of Michigan. It was here that the husky young smith gained the reputation of being "the strongest man on the Gogebic Range".

Some nearby families had tired of trying to raise crops on the gravelly knolls and wetlands of the Kettles and were attracted by the lands opening for settlement on the plains. John and Kitty, however, had seen enough traveling and decided to stay where they were. They watched as their neighbors, the Bowens and the Calveys, covered their wagons with canvas and loaded them with belongings. Kitty fed their departing friends a farewell supper on the evening before they left. Early the next morning, the small caravan filed past the Slatтерy farm on its way to Nebraska seven hundred miles away.

The gradual disappearance of the surrounding wilderness brought changes in the family's farming methods. As the task of land clearing and breaking came to an end, so did the need for the patiently, slow oxen. They were replaced by a high-stepping team, purchased from Farmington horse dealer, Martin Enwright. In the eighties a cheese factory opened nearby, and finally the farmers had a convenient market for their produce. Cheesemaking created a demand for more cattle, greater feed supplies and barns capable of housing both. In 1894, the Slatтерys built a new barn to replace the now overcrowded lot stable. The building's timber frame was raised on May ninth. Even before the siding enclosed its forty by eighty foot girth, the structure was an imposing site. On June 22nd a barn dance was held to celebrate its completion. Area residents came from miles around just to view the spaciousness of its interior. By mid-September, the building was bulging with the season's harvest and on the twenty-first the Slatтерys threshed the last forty bushel of wheat under rain-threatening skies. When the storm struck that night the barn was hit almost immediately by a lightning bolt. Although most of the animals were saved, the building was reduced to smoking ruins within a few hours. As news of the disaster spread, the community responded with an outpouring of help in the form of labor and materials. In a few days' time a neighborhood bee had delivered enough logs for a new barn to the Heraty sawmill. By early November the foundation was ready and the framework sections were being assembled on the ground next to it.

The weather had turned colder, however, and the Slatтерy's apprehension grew when on the seventh, the scheduled raising had to be called off because of an early snowstorm. The next day dawned bright and clear and the sun soon melted the snow, allowing the sixty-man crew to hoist and pin the huge sections together. By nightfall the last rafters had been spiked in place. Divine providence continued to smile on the family for the next few weeks as the weather remained mild and dry. Before the next snows came, the completed barn was filled with winter feed, gathered from the farms of generous neighbors.

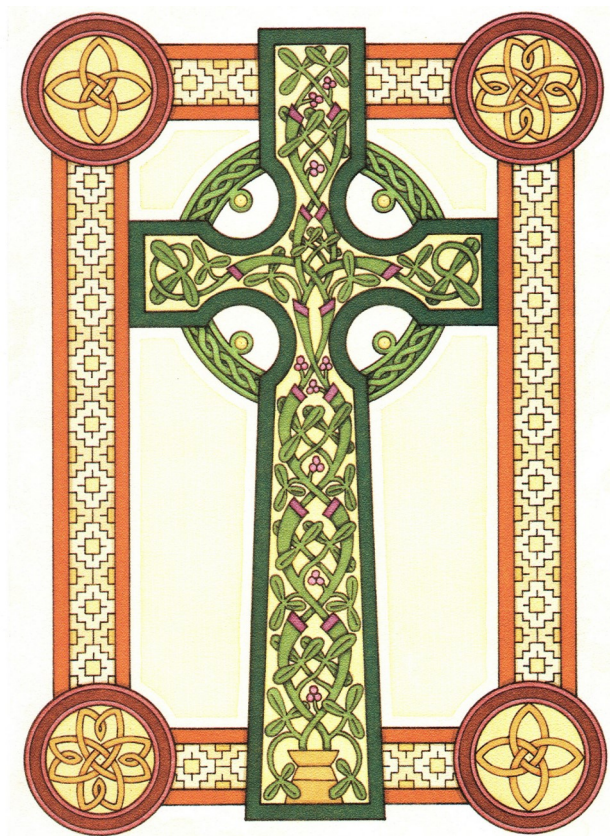
Catherine and John lived to see some of the wonders of the new century. In time they turned the farm over to an older son and watched as the remaining sons and daughters began careers and families of their own. During the forty years since the old couple had come to this wild and lonesome land, they had seen it change to a place of cow pastures and telephone poles. There were times, though, when the way had not been easy.

The Irish community in the central Kettles remained intact into the early part of this century. Then, advances in communication and transportation, improved economic conditions and most importantly, the lure of the city began to draw many of the old families from the area. **There was once a popular adage in the community that stated; "If you kick an Irishman in Lima (central Sheboygan County) the hollering won't stop til it gets to Fond du Lac". The saying was meant to emphasize the then significant Irish-American population of the area. Currently, ninety years later, one would be hard-pressed locally, to line up enough descendants of Ireland to start a four-handed game of euchre.**

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Trivia

### **Cold Weather Helped Saint Patrick's Legend**

In Irish lore, Saint Patrick gets credit for driving all the snakes out of Ireland. Modern scientists suggest that the job might not have been too hard – according to the fossil record, Ireland has never been home to any snakes. Through the Ice Age, Ireland was too cold to host any reptiles, and the surrounding seas have staved off serpentine invaders ever since. Modern scholars think the “snakes” Saint Patrick drove away were likely metaphorical.