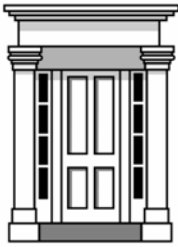


SHEBOYGAN COUNTY



HISTORICAL
RESEARCH
CENTER

The Researcher

The Newsletter of the Sheboygan County
Historical Research Center

Volume XXXI Number 2 December 2020

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



Christmas Memories



SCHRC has a large collection of Christmas cards in the exhibit files curated by Mary Meyer. You probably remember a couple of these from your childhood. People have been sending Christmas greetings to each other for hundreds of years. The first recorded use of 'Merry Christmas' was in a Christmas letter sent in 1534.

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ON TRACK AT KOHLER CO.



By Peter J. Feltner

Shop for the Holidays
schrc.org/shop



The Sheboygan County Historical Research Center is located at 518 Water Street in Sheboygan Falls.

Open Tuesday through Friday, 9:00am – 4:00pm.

Closed December 24, 2020 through January 4, 2021 – Christmas and New Year's

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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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Go Paperless. Receive *The Researcher* via email. Save paper. Save postage and receive a more colorful newsletter. Contact Katie at research@schrc.org to sign up.

Welcome New Members

Janet H. Johannes, Kiel

Darla Jean Kraus, Random Lake

Patrick Jung, Milwaukee (Sponsored by Steven Rogstad)

Orlan & Evelyn Ramaker, Kiel (Sponsored by Mary Ann Ramaker)

Paul Wagner, Sheboygan

Kelly M. Widder, Howards Grove

Second Saturdays - Journeys Into Local History 2020-2021 Schedule

All presentations begin at 9:30am and are held at the Plymouth Arts Center
They are free and open to the public.

July 10, 2021

History of Plymouth Hospital with Dan Buckman

The dream of Rev. Martin Schmidt of St. John Lutheran Church, the Plymouth Hospital opened in 1917 in a former cow pasture at the south end of Selma Street, three years after Rev. Schmidt began marshaling community support for the project. After additions in 1927 and 1956, continued growth and demand led to construction of an all-new hospital to the south, connected to the original hospital by an underground passage, which opened in 1970. The facility is no longer a hospital, but still serves as an acute care center and outpatient clinic. Dan Buckman, Plymouth Historical Society, will present a morning of memories.

Note the date change!

Christmas Cards Continued —

*Christmas Cards appeared in the United States of America in the late 1840s, but were very expensive and most people couldn't afford them. In 1875, Louis Prang, a printer who was originally from Germany but who had also worked on early cards in the UK, started mass producing cards so more people could afford to buy them. Mr Prang's first cards featured flowers, plants, and children. In 1915, John C. Hall and two of his brothers created Hallmark Cards, who are still one of the biggest card makers today!

*In the winter of 1836 there was extremely heavy snowfall followed by similarly white winters in the 1840s and 50s. As a result Christmas cards depicting snow scenes became fashionable in the late Victorian period.

*Father Christmas, or some version of him, friendly and creepy, has existed since the 3rd century. Until the 1930s, he was depicted in blue and green as well as red. It wasn't until an advertising campaign by a certain red themed drinks company that he became exclusively crimson suited.

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



“LET’S DEVELOP OUR CENTER”

Steven K. Rogstad
Director of Development

Without wanting to appear self-serving, but still wanting to call attention to another possible way of supporting the Center, please know that my new book, *Lincoln Among the Badgers: Rediscovering Sites Associated with Abraham and Mary Lincoln in Wisconsin*, is now for sale through the Center’s website. Revenue from sales of the book goes directly to the Research Center. If you are looking for holiday gifts, please consider giving the gift of a book. The book has received good reviews in the *Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel*, *Appleton Post-Crescent*, and *Green Bay Gazette*. It has also been selected for audio broadcast by Wisconsin Public Radio-Madison in early February. As a coffee table book, travel book, and history book combined, it would make a great gift for someone you know.

Little did anybody think that we would approach the holiday season this year with the COVID 19 threat still hovering over us and affecting how we conduct business at the Research Center. It has been a long time since we have all been able to safely work together, and due to the recent surge in COVID cases, it looks like it may be awhile before we are able to do so. While the masks, sanitizer, and safe work spaces are available at the Center, most of our volunteers are still feeling safer to remain at home. As are most researchers.

If you are looking for a way to help the Research Center, there are several ways you can make a difference:

- 1) Shop for the holiday at SCHRC. Great books can be found online at schrc.org/shop
- 2) Renew your membership. We are currently in the midst of the annual Membership Drive, and your renewal is vital. When renewing, consider increasing your level of membership.
- 3) Donate to the Annual Campaign. Your annual support allows the Center to continue providing the very best care and management of its collections, which continue to grow! Your gift also allows the organization to produce virtual events and videos that are currently being used to substitute in-person events and activities.
- 4) Continue to watch and keep informed. As we respond to the temporary cancellation of in-person programming, it becomes necessary to offer events, activities, and some information virtually. We will be doing this through the website (www.schrc.com) and the Center’s Facebook page.

The start of 2021 will have a very different look from the beginning of 2020, or even 2019. According to a survey conducted by the American Alliance of Museums, one-third of museums and historical may not reopen after the pandemic. This is also true of historical societies and other historical nonprofits. Yet, our staff are focused and ready to re-imagine how the Research Center can continue to bring resources, research services, and outreach programs to our community.

With your continued support we can help researchers and scholars continue to have the resources during this difficult time, and be ready for a world that is changing and evolving faster than ever imagined. We strive to deepen our impact in the region, to inspire and celebrate our history, and establish sustainability. All of us need to be receptive to innovation, flexibility, and creativity to support the Center and help it achieve greater visibility and relevance in the post-pandemic world.

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

As always, please remain safe, healthy, prudent, and vigilant!

Sincerely,
Steven K. Rogstad
Director of Development

Memories of the Ashby Bridge



The Sam Ashby farm once sat on Lower Falls Road alongside the Sheboygan River. Groh Collection image.

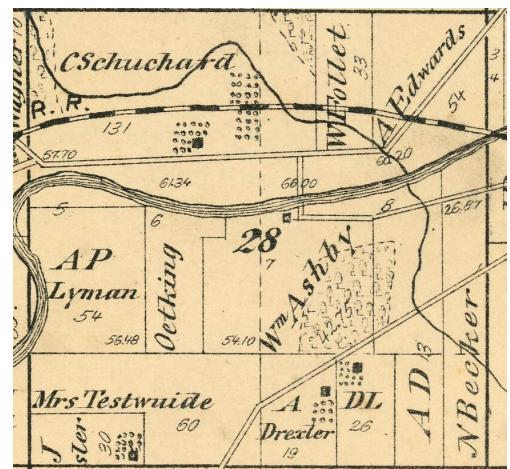
For many years there was a scenic bridge over the Sheboygan River in the town of Sheboygan commonly called the Ashby bridge. It was constructed on land owned by William or Sam Ashby. (No one knows why he was called Sam) The Ashby bridge was located along Lower Falls Road, crossing the river, just about the location of Esslingen Park.

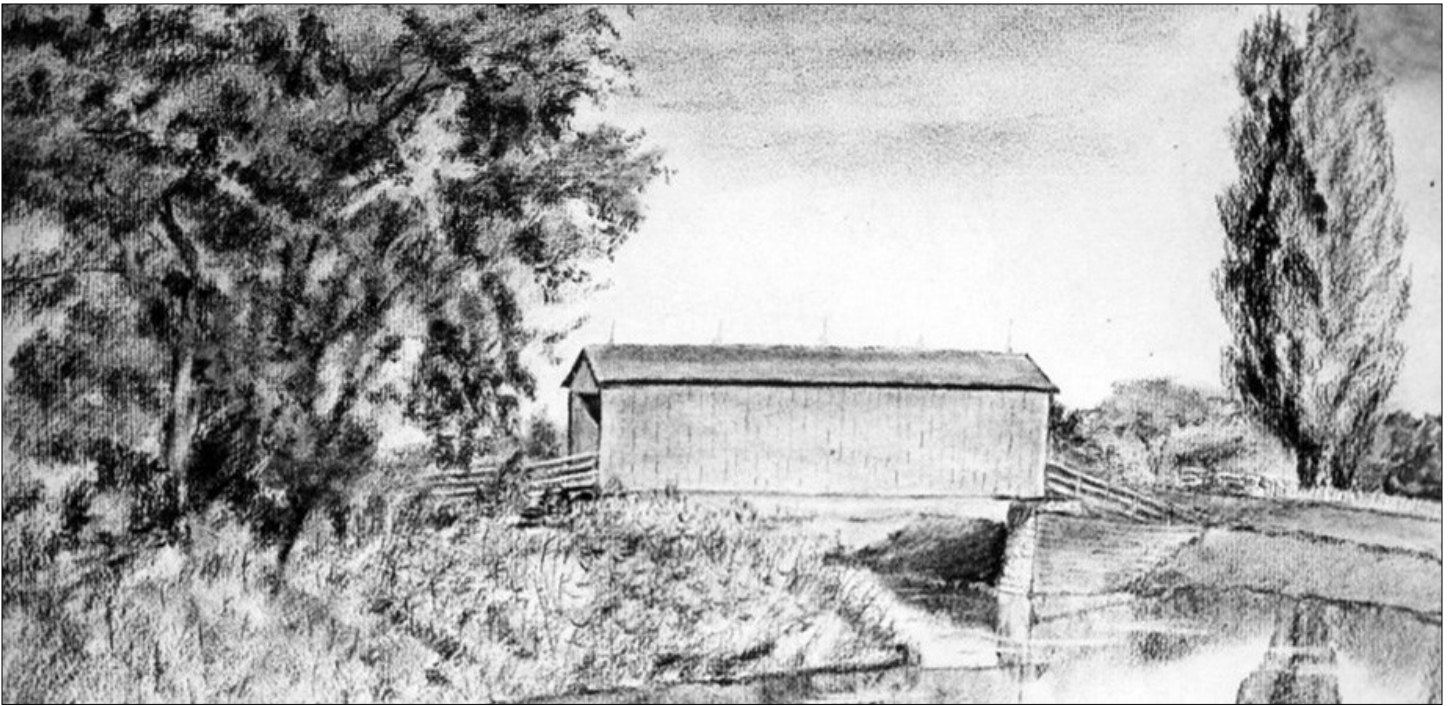
The Ashby Bridge (1874-1895) was the last covered bridge in Sheboygan County. It may have been the only covered bridge in the county. Contrary to popular belief, covered bridges were not built to give protection from the elements; they were covered to prevent horses and oxen from being frightened while crossing the bridge.

Built in 1874 on the lower plank road or the Lower Falls Road that ran from Sheboygan to Sheboygan Falls, the wooden bridge crossed the Sheboygan River at a 90 degree angle to the road on the south side. This made for many interesting and some very tragic accidents.

The *Sheboygan Press* reported in July of 1895 that the old Ashby covered bridge had been torn down. It reports later that very same year in October that a new iron bridge similar to other bridges in the community had been completed.

1875





Today, all that remains of Ashby's covered bridge, are a few foundation stones clinging to the bank along the Sheboygan River. Photos for this unusual landmark are few and far between, so this charcoal drawing of the bridge (above), done in 1891 by Emma Mahlendorf Meyer when she was taking art lessons as a child, is quite special.

This covered bridge was replaced by a steel truss bridge, seen below, in 1924. The steel bridge (1895-1924), supposedly an improvement, was always a hazard because, it too, was built on a terrible curve, known as death curve. This nearly 90 degree curve meant those drivers entering the bridge from the west had to slow to a crawl, and since most didn't, the bridge was the site of many horrible accidents.

The bridge, though easy and inexpensive to build, wasn't particularly long lasting. It seems the numerous accidents also weakened the bridge structure to the point where the structure was dangerous.

A new concrete bridge, built in 1924 was situated east of the previous Ashby bridges. In the approach design, the curve was lessened, and lengthened which helped the accident issue a bit. It wasn't until the next bridge was built in 1974, that the road was completely straightened. Today, the area where the covered bridge once spanned the river is a public park.





The first concrete bridge spanning the Sheboygan River at Ashby's was built in 1924 (seen above) just east of the site of both the covered and iron bridges. A new four-lane concrete span, replacing the two-lane was built in 1970. The project totaled about \$300,000.

COUPLE DUCKED IN RIVER AS CAR TAKES A PLUNGE

It was a somewhat unusual and miraculous escape for Jacob Rupnick, 904 Kentucky avenue, when his motorcycle and side car, in which there was a young lady, plunged down the embankment at the Ashby bridge on the Lower Falls road about 8 o'clock last night. Both were ducked in the cool water of Sheboygan river but escaped injury.

Mr. Rupnick was driving toward Sheboygan and was on the bridge at the time he met a Chevrolet sedan going in the opposite direction. He turned to the right to avoid a collision and his fender caught on the end of the bridge. The machine swung around to the right and headed straight for the water about twenty feet below.

The water is several feet deep at this point and both occupants of the motorcycle and side car received an unpleasant and very thorough ducking. A number of cars gathered around quickly and the Chevrolet stopped on the other side of the bridge. It was soon learned that no one was hurt and a deputy sheriff who happened along at the time, got the traffic moving again.

28 July 1924

Motorcycle Crashes Into Ashby Bridge; Frank Weiss Injured

Yesterday proved to be another big day for automobile and motorcycle accidents in the vicinity of this city, five being reported, two of which were on the Lower Falls road, two on Calumet Drive and one on Indiana avenue.

Frank Weiss, 20, 1516 Sibley court, is lying in the St. Nicholas hospital with a fractured leg, bruised face and fractured left thumb and sprained hand, as the result of the most serious of the accidents, when the motorcycle which he was driving crashed into the abutment at the Ashby bridge, about which point more accidents have occurred than at any other point in this county.

"I was going out for a spin with my friend, John Korehn, who was on another motorcycle," said Mr. Weiss when seen at the hospital this morning, "and we were approaching the turn going from this city to Ashby bridge at a fast clip of about 25 miles an hour and I did not succeed in making it.

"My machine struck the concrete wall nearest the bridge just north of the opening which is provided

for the road leading from the south approach to the bridge to the farm at the west, and I was thrown twenty feet into the air, coming down in such a manner as to light on my face and head. My left hand broke my fall and was severely sprained and the thumb fractured.

"I was not rendered unconscious, though I was thrown a great distance and as I got up on my feet and started to walk I discovered the fracture of the right leg between the knee and the ankle. An automobile came along, we hailed it and I was taken to the hospital."

Mr. Weiss did not know how his leg was fractured but believes that it came in contact with the stone wall as the machine struck it. The motorcycle was but slightly damaged.

Mr. Weiss is employed as a butcher for Anton Suscha on Indiana avenue.

When asked whether he would try the motorcycle again upon his release from the hospital he smiled. "I guess I will," he replied, "but I do not care for any more of those bumps. While I was in the air I thought I would never come down."

26 July 1920

WILLIAM WILKE IS INJURED EARLY SUNDAY IN AUTOMOBILE MISHAP

William Wilke, employed on the farm of Martin Denn, near Pigeon River, is lying in the City Hotel at Sheboygan Falls with a badly injured shoulder, received in an auto accident at the Ashby bridge early Sunday morning.

Saturday evening, Wilke took the light Ford truck of Denn's to Sheboygan to get a haircut. In the city he picked up an acquaintance by the name of Murphy, and the two later added three girls to the party.

After attending a dance at Schumann's, at Kohler, the party rode to the Falls and then proceeded back to Sheboygan. At the Ashby bridge, the car was going at such a high rate of speed, it is alleged, that Wilke could not make the sharp turn in the road.

The truck went through the fence, turning completely over. This is said to have occurred about 2 a. m. Sunday morning, and because of the gasolineless ruling, no autos were on the road then. Wilke was severely injured. A truck belonging to Louis Hildebrand of the Falls happened to come by, on its way to Sheboygan Falls, after conveying parties to a dance, and took Wilke along. The others in the party walked back to Sheboygan.

Wilke was taken to the City Hotel in the Falls, where Dr. A. G. Pfeiler attended to his injured shoulder. He was sufficiently improved today to warrant his removal to his home in Sheboygan.

When questioned, Wilke said that the others in the party were not hurt beyond a few scratches.

1918

The list of accidents at the Ashby bridge would fill pages. Most of the articles seen here are humorous. There's a great one that was skipped, but it dealt with an outhouse and the Ashby bridge.

But, so many were horrific.

In October of 1959 two brothers, Richard and James Reimer of Sheboygan were killed. Betty Jean Reimer, wife of James, also died later from injuries suffered in the accident.

In June of 1959, Otto Albrecht was killed in a crash at the Ashby bridge.

Bernard Sabrowski of Sheboygan died in an October 1953 accident.

Perhaps the worst was the December 5, 1960 accident which killed three young men and severely injured a fourth. John Prinsen, Gerald Ward and Paul Held, all South High students died. Alvin Makrevis was sent to St. Nicholas Hospital in critical condition.

It would still take years before the Ashby bridge curve was removed and driving made safer. This is certainly why Ashby bridge stories abound.

1916

AUTO TURNS TURTLE ON THE FALLS ROAD

The six-passenger Overland automobile owned and driven by Anton Borsse, proprietor of the Vienna Garden, Pennsylvania avenue, overturned at 1 o'clock Sunday morning on the Lower Falls road. Mr. Borsse and five companions were thrown out of the machine but all miraculously escaped injury. The car was slightly damaged, according to Mr. Borsse. The party was on its way to Sheboygan Falls and the accident occurred at the Ashby bridge, only a short distance outside of the city. This morning a warrant was issued by Justice Frank Zimmermann for Borsse's arrest for reckless driving.

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All that remains of Ashby's covered bridge are a few stones which are located along the Sheboygan River near Esslingen Park.