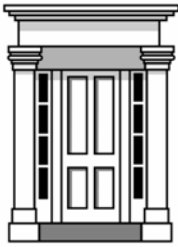
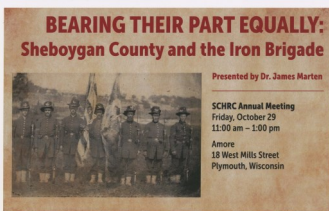


SHEBOYGAN COUNTY



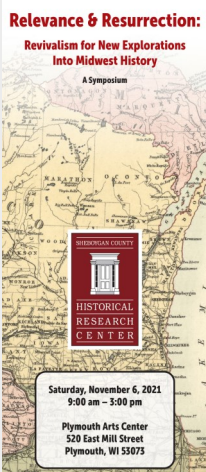
HISTORICAL
RESEARCH
CENTER

2021 SCHRC Annual Meeting



Friday, October 29, 2021
Amore, 11:00am - 1:00pm

Don't Forget to Register
920.467.4667



2021
History
Symposium
Saturday,
November 6,
2021

Register
Now!

schrc.org

The Researcher

The Newsletter of the Sheboygan County
Historical Research Center
Volume XXXII Number 1 October 2021

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

Rock Ledge, A Local Wonder



Looking north up the Sheboygan River, it drops over the natural falls that gives Sheboygan Falls its name. At right is the site of the old Stedman Mill and warehouse from Brickner's Woolen Mills (shown here in 1880s). It was later the site of Rock Ledge.

In 1952, the southwest corner of Monroe and Water Streets in Sheboygan Falls was a rocky, weedy mess, long abandoned. Once the site of the old Rochester Co. sawmill and the Brickner Woolen Mills warehouse, it lay dormant for more than 50 years.

Our earliest Yankee settlers, Silas Stedman and David Giddings, circa 1836, built the first sawmills and factories on the rocky site in Rochester, later renamed Sheboygan Falls.

Hidden beneath the morass, lay natural beauty not seen in decades, and it took Helen Stroub to dream and then transform the scenic spot. Helen wanted to own and operate a small gift shop. She and her husband Frank had operated a drug store on Broadway Street in Sheboygan Falls for many years, and when it came time for a change after retirement, the couple hired L.C. Senescall to survey the land and design something special.

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.

Closed Thursday, November 25, 2021 for Thanksgiving.

Phone: 920-467-4667

E-mail: research@schrc.org

Website: 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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**Check out
schrc.org**

**And SCHRC
on Facebook**

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

Ann Jarvis Eads, Maplewood, MN

Jim & Barb Hill, Oregon

Mike Hurley, Green Bay

Jim Powers, Adell

Kenneth Richter, Kiel

James Schnettler, Sheboygan Falls

Bill Weisnicht, Pensacola, FL

History on the Move

Generations, 1500 Douglas Drive, Plymouth

2:00pm to 3:30pm

Wednesday, Oct. 6, 2021 - Everything Plymouth, Bits and Pieces of Plymouth History

Wednesday, Nov. 3, 2021 - Stories of the Sheboygan County Marsh

Second Saturdays

Plymouth Arts Center, 520 East Mill Street, Plymouth

9:30am to 11:30am

Saturday, October 9, 2021 - The Sunken Treasure of Poverty Island, Richard Bennett.

Saturday, November 13, 2021 - Helen Perry Curtis and the European Trip of a Lifetime with Laura Gellott.

History Symposium - Relevance & Resurrection: Revivalism of New Explorations Into Midwest History

Saturday, November 6, 2021 9:00am to 3:00pm

Plymouth Arts Center

The Lincoln Lectures - John Wilkes Booth, Presidential Assassin

Tuesdays, October 5, 12, 19, 26, 2021

Sheboygan County Historical Museum

3110 Erie Avenue, Sheboygan, Wisconsin

6:30pm to 8:30pm

SCHRC Annual Meeting - Amore, 18 West Mill Street, Plymouth, Wisconsin Friday, October 29, 2021

11:00am to 1:00pm, Lunch included. No charge, Registration required.

Guest Speaker - Dr. James Marten of Marquette University, "Bearing Their Part Equally: Sheboygan County and the Iron Brigade."

Genealogy Classes

Research Center, 518 Water Street, Sheboygan Falls

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

Monday, October 11, 2021 - Bringing Your Family Tree to Life

Monday, November 8, 2021 - Birth, Marriage and Death: The Vital Record Trifecta

Monday, December 13, 2021 - Genealogy Detective Series

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



“LET’S DEVELOP OUR CENTER”

Autumn is traditionally a time when individuals begin to wind up things in preparation for the approaching holidays and the beginning of a new year. The fall has always been the busiest time of year for the Research Center and 2021 is no exception. In fact, we are just beginning to get things wound up into overdrive as we look forward to some upcoming programs that I am sure will entertain, educate, and excite you.

Our Annual Membership Meeting will take place on Friday, October 29, at Amore in Plymouth, 11:00 AM – 1:00 PM. This is a *free* luncheon event, which includes an Italian buffet and a presentation by Dr. James Marten of Marquette University, who will discuss soldiers from Sheboygan County who served in Wisconsin’s famous Iron Brigade during the Civil War. This is a not-to-be-missed event being hosted for our members, followers, and supporters. *Don’t miss it – but you need to call 920-467-4667 to rsvp.*

This year the Lincoln Seminar with focus on Abraham Lincoln’s assassin, John Wilkes Booth. However, the story of Booth is better explained and understandable when placed in the historical context of the Civil War politics, the history of the Booth family, and America’s view of political assassinations. Although I have presented this class before, I have never taught it the way I am teaching it this time. The four sessions will be offered Tuesday evenings at the Sheboygan County Historical Museum, October 5, 12, 19 & 26, 6:30PM – 8:30PM. The course is free and I look forward to seeing you there.

We enter November by hosting the 2nd Annual History Symposium at the Plymouth Arts Center on Saturday, November 6, 9:00 AM – 3:00 PM. This year’s theme will focus on new scholarship in Midwest his-

tory, which will include presentations about controversies over the navigation of the Great Lakes, the Ku Klux Klan in Wisconsin, Progressivism in the 1980s, and Wisconsin Native American effigy mounds. Information and registration can be found on our website – www.schrc.org. This is history at its best. You don’t want to miss it! The Research Center is rapidly becoming known throughout the region for hosting this event and your attendance is vital to keep the event growing and prospering in the years to come. Please reserve your seat today!

We have also launched our 2021-2022 *Membership Drive*. You have already been sent your renewal. Our members are the blood of the organization. Without you, the Center would be without life and activity. Please continue your support by sending in your renewal today. Also – as I have said repeatedly over the last several years – please consider sponsoring someone else for a membership. Somebody you know also enjoys history. Sponsoring a member could also make a great birthday gift or holiday gift. With more members comes more visibility and more support for the programs you enjoy. It also provides the needed financial sustainability to support the Center’s mission of preserving the documentary and photographic history of Sheboygan County. Please renew today.

Finally, I want to inform you about a restructuring of personnel at the Research Center. This past September 1, Beth Dippel was appointed Director of Operations, while I have assumed the position of Executive Director. This change will now allow Beth to better showcase her talents as a curator, researcher, and writer. She will also be heavily involved with the building committee in designing the renovation of the newly-acquired building across the street for both storage and classroom use. Beth will continue to host Second Saturdays, write stories for the newsletter and newspapers, manage our social media, and continue her fine tradition of offering fascinating and unique local history topics to the general public. I congratulate her for her ongoing passionate dedication to the Center and for all that she has meant to the membership and leadership of this organization throughout the years as she assumes this new and crucial role.

I look forward to seeing you at our upcoming events!

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

Sincerely,
Steven K. Rogstad
Executive Director



A view of Rock Ledge looking west to east. Built in 1952 by Helen Stroub, it was a home to artists from around Wisconsin. 1960.

From April 1, 1952, to October 1, 1952, the couple cleared the spot. Mosquitoes and poison ivy plagued them until they filled one of the gullies with sandstone. What Helen Stroub found was a treasure and a magnificent riverside patio complete with natural rock steps.

Built on a rock bed some $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile deep, the foundation was comprised of seven different layers of rock. Senescall's design was considered a split-split-split level built on four different levels that followed the contours of the rock. Designed to take advantage of the sweeping views over the river to the south, the gift shop was located on the upper levels, while the Stroub's five-room apartment was situated on the lowest level. The design featured redwood columns and beams, a Lannon stone fireplace and wright iron fixtures. A small bridge crossed the rock crevasse on the site.

Rock Ledge was dedicated on October 25, 1952, by Rev. E.T. Holland with Mrs. Stroub calling it, "the handiwork of God".

Part gift shop, part museum, the store initially housed displays of 28 stuffed water, wading and land birds from the collection of August Kavel, Helen Stroub's father, a noted Sheboygan taxidermist. Kavel studied taxidermy at the Milwaukee Museum from 1877-1881. The small museum also hosted Hans Borchert's collection of 29 bird eggs dating back to 1887. One was an egg from one of the last remaining passenger pigeons in existence.

Always filled with art and artists, in March 1953, the Stroubs hosted the one-man show of Michael Brandt, Jr., an art teacher at Sheboygan's south side junior high school.

By 1966, Helen's dream had come to an end. Frank had died in 1962 and it was too much for Helen. The building was put up for sale.

The Sheboygan Falls Jaycees worked to make the building the new Falls Public Library. They launched a petition drive for 500 signatures hoping the Sheboygan Falls Common Council would consider the site for the new library, but the council soundly rejected the effort.

Rock Ledge was sold to the Louise Sills Studios in June of 1967. Sills planned to continue it as a gift shop with a tearoom and an art gallery.

Shown here is the book room, Lannon stone fireplace and valuable bird collection at Rock Ledge.





In 1968, the first annual outdoor Rock Ledge Art Fair took place. Two thousand people, from as far away as Chicago attended. On hand to demonstrate their techniques were Brother Cosmos, Salvatorian Brother from New Holstein, Violet Jahnke of Cedarburg, both portrait artists and Wolfgang Geisler of Kohler, demonstrated with his potter's wheel. Sales amounted to nearly \$3,000 (\$25,000 today). The public participated with art contests for adults and children alike. In June 1969, Rock Ledge Tuckahoe Gallery for artists was opened. Such a beautiful setting for art, the gallery was considered contemporary featuring only Wisconsin artists whose paintings were sold in the gift shop. The first three artists highlighted were Othmar Seme, Bette Hedblom and H. McGaffrey Jr. Seme, a native of Austria, began to paint while a WWII German prisoner of war in the United States. He returned to the U.S. after the war, became

a citizen and settled in Wisconsin with his wife. Bette Hedblom was a wife and mother and an executive at Marshall Fields. She frequently had one-woman shows. Mr. McGaffrey worked in metal, acrylics and oils. All three were trained at Milwaukee's Layton School of Art.

In September of 1970, Louise Sills sold the building to Sheboygan Falls Mutual Insurance Company, a fire and casualty company that had been located at 604 Broadway Street in Falls. The building was extensively remodeled for office usage and was used in that capacity for the next 50 years.

Today, ReMax/Universal Realty Company owns the beautiful piece of architecture with one of the best views in the county, having purchased it in 2021.



Two views of Rock Ledge's rock ledge south of the gift shop. Artists at work. 1953.

Research Stories



A few months ago the Research Center was honored to host Jo Deusvult from Arizona, who came to perform research for a family history project. She just didn't happen to be in Wisconsin and added a visit to the Center as part of her trip. Her visit to the Center was the purpose for the trip and she spent several days working with our staff and conducting research in our collections. She has since written to us about her experience using the Center and it is reprinted here. Thank you, Jo, for all the kind words. They are an inspiration to other individuals who may require assistance with research projects and not know how to begin or where to go for help.

- Steven Rogstad, Executive Director

Jo, outside the Research Center

Once upon a time, there was a little girl, who would sit at her father's knee and listen to many stories about his grandmother's relatives from a far away country called Prussia. I was fascinated about where in the world this place could be and who these mysterious people were that my father said were dressed all in black and were Lutherans!

Fast forward many decades and I can say hearing those family stories from long ago sparked my interest in genealogy. I knew nothing of this Gartman Family and certainly didn't know about a town called Sheboygan or even what state it was in. I started doing a little research online and found a distant relative on Facebook who supplied me with 20,000 names but not a lot of details. She mentioned contacting the SCHRC and that they may be able to help.

I went to their website and asked for assistance in my quest for more information about my family in Wilson Township and parts around Sheboygan. A very nice gentleman by the name of Richard Stoelb contacted me and we began to work together and put together a research plan. He helped me prioritize what was important and narrow my focus, as this side of my family happens to be extremely large. I became so engrossed with some of the preliminary information that I excitedly planned a vacation to Wisconsin to visit Richard and 'America's Dairyland'!

Upon arrival, I was warmly welcomed at the SCHRC and everyone there stopped what they were doing and greeted me and were so excited to see me! I immediately felt like I was part of their family and they seemed amazed that I would come all the way from Phoenix, Arizona. I was so happy to be there. Richard whisked me away to a back room, offered me coffee, and had stacks of material all organized, categorized and presented me with my own Gartman Family book! I could not believe all the information he was able to provide: family trees, land plats, letters, obituaries, and photos. I found out my 4x great grandfather, Christian Friedrich Gartmann, immigrated to the Town of Wilson in 1858 and showed me where the original homestead stood. Richard explained my family was one of the early pioneer cheese manufacturers in Wisconsin. I most enjoyed driving around the beautiful green countryside and seeing where these places actually once stood. Richard had all the tombstones at Flader Hill Cemetery mapped out in order to make it easier for me to find everyone. I've never been to a cemetery literally surrounded by cows on all three sides, staring at me. I even saw a red barn with "Gartman" written on the side as I found out there are many, many descendants still living in the area.

I had such a nice experience working with Richard and the SCHRC and want to thank them from the bottom of my heart for taking the time and interest in showcasing my family from Sheboygan. I hope to visit again real soon!

- Jo Deusvult
Phoenix, Arizona



New Board Member

Bridgitt Zielke has agreed to serve on the SCHRC's Board of Directors. She is the program manager at the Kohler Foundation, where she plans, manages and implements the foundation's major program activities: Distinguished Guest Series (DGS), grants, scholarships and Waelderhaus.

Prior to joining the foundation, Bridgitt was a versatile and creative museum professional with 20+ years of experience in history museum and historic sites. She managed public programs, marketing and event services at the Wade House Historic Site in Greenbush, Wis. (2012 to 2018). While at Wade House, she developed and organized more than 15 education programs and large-scale special events annually that led to an increase in attendance of 61%. She also established and managed a facility rental program for Wade House Historic Site. As the curator of programs at the Wisconsin Veterans Museum in Madison, Wis. (1998 to 2004), Bridgitt developed programs and special events to coincide with multi-million dollar, state-of-the-art exhibits, including two AASLH award-winning events. Early in her career Bridgitt worked as a curator of education for the Rock

County Historical Society in Janesville, Wis. and for the Wheaton History Center in Wheaton, IL.

Her areas of expertise include program development, special event and tour creation, development of interpretive plans for exhibits and house museums, and marketing and public relations.

Bridgitt grew up in Cuba City, Wis. and holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Wisconsin-Platteville, where she also played four years of varsity women's basketball. Her love of basketball continues, as she'll be entering her first season as the Kohler High School varsity girls' basketball coach this year. She is married with two children and resides in the Village of Kohler.

We look forward to working with Bridgitt on the board as we further develop our collections, programming, and public outreach! Welcome!

SCHRC Receives 2020 Award



The SCHRC was presented with the 2020 Business Growth Award by the Sheboygan Falls Chamber-Main Street on March 11, 2021. Shirl Breunig, Executive Director of the Chamber, presents the award to Steven Rogstad, Director of Development for the Center.

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A contemporary view of the Brickner Woolen Mills and Falls and rapids south of the Rock Ledge area of the Sheboygan River in Sheboygan Falls. Photo courtesy of Sarah Lynn Arpke.