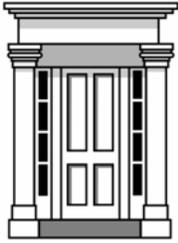


SHEBOYGAN COUNTY



HISTORICAL  
RESEARCH  
CENTER

**Did You Know?**

The first enamel cast iron bathtub and fixtures were manufactured in Sheboygan by John Michael Kohler in 1883.



**Talk Radio:** Sheboygan native Don McNeil is credited with popularizing “talk radio” when he launched and emceed the early morning Breakfast Club show on a Chicago NBC station in the early 1930s. It was one of the first radio programs of its kind nation-wide and was carried by more than 150 stations for 35 years.



# The Researcher

The Newsletter of the Sheboygan County  
Historical Research Center  
Volume XXXII Number 4 April 2022

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

## History Uncovered: Taylor Park water tower



**The Taylor Park reservoir, built in 1932-1933, was at one time the largest elevated reservoir in the world.**

It’s been confused with a flying saucer, a railroad roundhouse, and a sports venue, but most often the question asked is, “What is it?” Our own Wisconsin Gov. Albert Schmedemann (1933-1935) once quipped while motoring past, “What sort of coliseum are they building there?” The Taylor Park reservoir or water tower may be Sheboygan’s most misunderstood landmark.

Located in Taylor Park just east of Taylor Drive, between Erie Avenue and Kohler Memorial Drive in Sheboygan, the 4,150,000-gallon structure was completed in 1933. At the time it was an oddity, only one other slightly larger such structure existed in Calcutta (Kolkata), India. It was for a time the biggest elevated reservoir in the United States.

The reservoir’s most important feature was its gravity

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.

Phone: 920-467-4667

E-mail: [katiereilly@schrc.org](mailto:katiereilly@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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### New Members Welcome!

Mark Hansen, Oro Valley, AZ  
Dorothy Jurgens, Plymouth  
Scott Luedke, Sheboygan  
Brenda Mueller, Adell  
Rob & Lynn VanderSchaaf, Sheboygan Falls  
Johanna Swansopn Stearns, Grand Rapids, MI  
Ken & Alice Walter, Sheboygan Falls  
Heidi Weber, Hilton Head Island, SC  
Frank Reif, Sheboygan  
Patrick & Yvonne Curtiss, Port Washington, WI

### Programming and Classes

#### Second Saturdays

9:30am at the Plymouth Arts Center, 520 East Mill Street, Plymouth  
Saturday, May 14, 2022 - Saturday, May 14, 2022 - Waukesha Springs, John Schoenknecht

#### Genealogy Classes

1:00pm at the Research Center, 518 Water Street, Sheboygan Falls  
Monday, May 9, 2022 - What photos tell us, Mysteries and Answers

#### Saloon Stories

Chris & Sue's, W3820 Co Rd C, Plymouth  
6:30pm to 7:30pm  
Thursday, April 21, 2022 - John Eastberg with Beer Barons of Milwaukee  
Thursday, May 19, 2022 - Matthew Prigge with Milwaukee Mayhem: Murder and Mystery in the Cream City's First Century

#### Taproom History

Chris & Sue's, W3820 Co Rd C, Plymouth  
6:30pm to 7:30pm  
Thursday, June 16, 2022 - Civil War Medicine - Dr. Gordon Dammann  
Thursday, July 21, 2022 - Dillinger's Wisconsin Connections - Steve Gallimore and Steven Rogstad  
Thursday, August 18, 2022 - Wisconsin's Gangster's Past - Chad Lewis

#### 2022 Symposium - Great Lakes History - Promise & Peril Saturday, November 5, 2022 Plymouth Arts Center

Theodore Karamanski - Mastering the Inland Seas: How Lighthouses, Navigational Aids, and Harbors Transformed the Great Lakes  
Patrick Jung - Charting the Inland Seas: French Exploration and Mapping of Lake Michigan and the Great Lakes, 1534-1675.  
Brendon Baillod - The Sinking of the Lady Elgin  
Todd Gordon - Chicago's Eastland Disaster

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



## “LET’S DEVELOP OUR CENTER”

Steven K. Rogstad  
Executive Director

The ongoing quest to preserve and understand our past is anything but stagnant - always changing and evolving to meet the needs of historians, researchers, and the public. They not only want to make a connection with the past, but understand how that past has formed and influenced the world we live in today.

At the Center we are continually looking for opportunities to engage our members, supporters, and followers in communication and participation. We strive to find imaginative and innovative ways of engaging our audience, so that each individual personally feels a sense of investment in the organization. That goal influences our program series, lectures, and events. While the SCHRC remains committed to the mission of preserving and sharing the history of Sheboygan County and nearby regions, the organization must also pursue other non-traditional types of activities that engage the public in educational and entertaining ways that make it a hub for dialogue and for social and cultural improvement.

Modern research centers and archives are developing an acute awareness of the benefits of their work, their impact on society, the experience research offers audiences, and the image they want to project. With plans for building expansion, additional collection acquisition, and more special events, the SCHRC needs to:

- Advocate for continued preservation
- Seek novel ways of engaging audiences
- Demonstrate growth in membership
- Establish partnerships that build new audiences and a broader support base
- Embrace fresh thinking and approaches
- Introduce imaginative activities and events
- Adopt new technologies

- Diversify programs, activities, and events
- Create a dynamic environment
- Become a hub of cultural, social, and meaningful experiences

We need to always be asking the questions: How can we stand out? How can we be more relevant? Stagnant organizations do not elicit excitement. A lack of growth does not inspire confidence. A failure to encourage participation does not cultivate support or membership. Poor communication signifies a lack of caring.

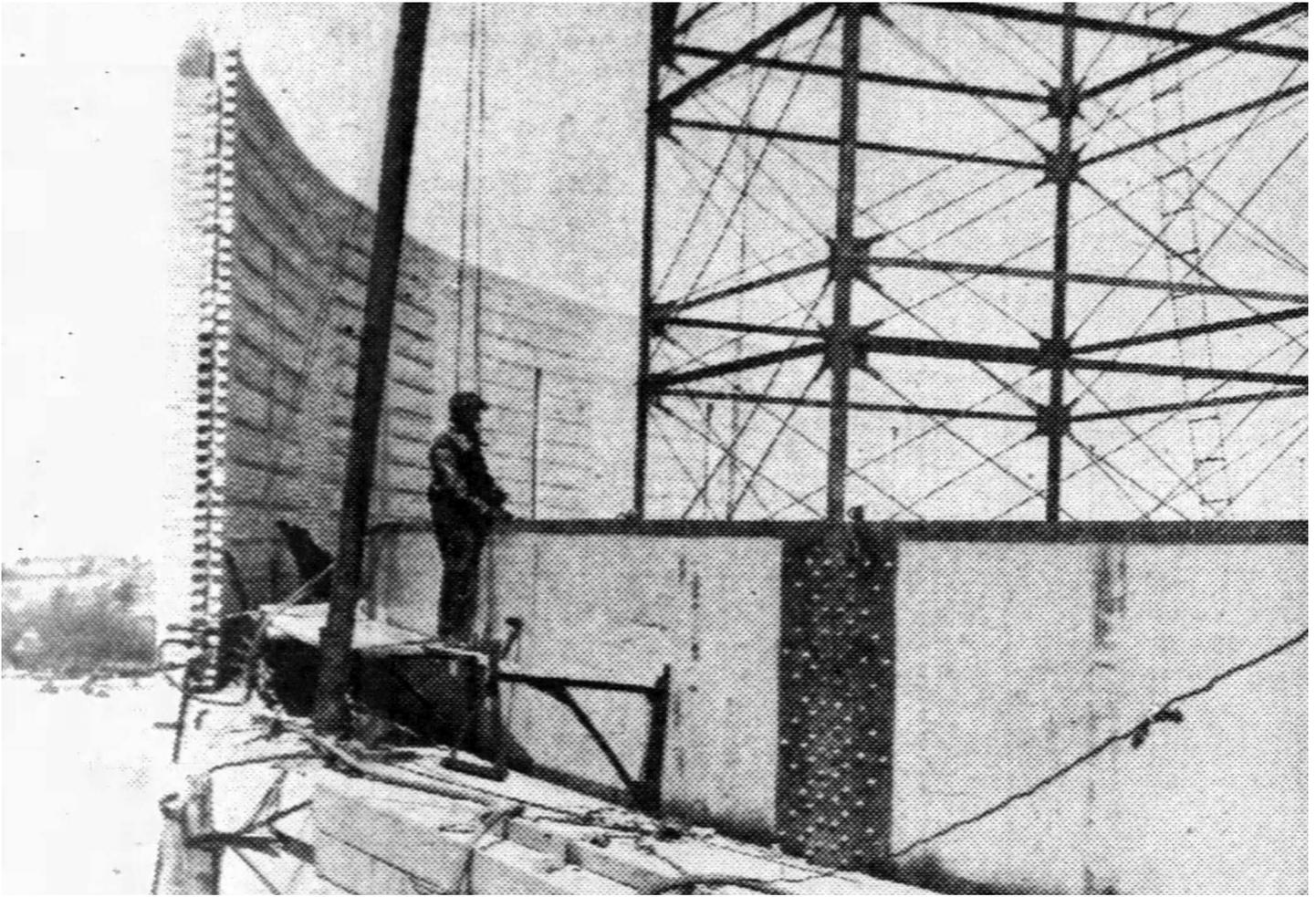
A modern research center is not just there to conserve and manage collections. They offer us – the public – much more than mere documents and images. They provide us with a space, both digital and physical, where we can redefine and immerse ourselves in our histories, providing context for local, county, and regional history within the framework of our shared national story. They also validate their relevance by connecting the world we are researching with the world we live in.

I would like to close with two words: growth and support. So far this fiscal year, we have had fabulous response – growth - to programs and events. We attracted 127 people to our Annual Meeting last October. Gavin Schmitt’s tales of Milwaukee mobsters (with Sheboygan connections) drew 126 people at our March offering of Saloon Stories. Speakers at our Second Saturdays programs are pulling in about 100 attendees every month. We have two more programs for Saloon Stories before we slide into our 2022 Taproom History presentations. Check [www.schrc.org](http://www.schrc.org) for dates/times. Mark your calendars! Come on out for some great history and good times!

Now support. We just launched our Annual Campaign, which is our major fundraiser. Please consider increasing your gift this year and supporting the SCHRC’s goal of enhancing and increasing the reach of the organization. The cost of operating never decreases, but only increases as our collections and events increase. Please give generously this year and enable us to do so much more. Support the SCHRC and continue its fine tradition of being a purpose-driven organization!

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

Sincerely,  
Steven K. Rogstad  
Executive Director



**Part of a giant steel tank with a capacity of more than 4,000,000 gallons as it is being erected more than 27 feet off the ground. Image taken June 5, 1933.**

-driven design and location, sitting high above the city of Sheboygan on Taylor Hill. Elevated another 27-feet above the ground, it was designed to give the city's water pumps a break. City pumps could be shut down for at least 24 hours to make repairs. The drop to the city also made available a large amount of water for sizeable fires or other emergencies. Built on a 153-foot elevation, the distance to the top is about 200 feet.

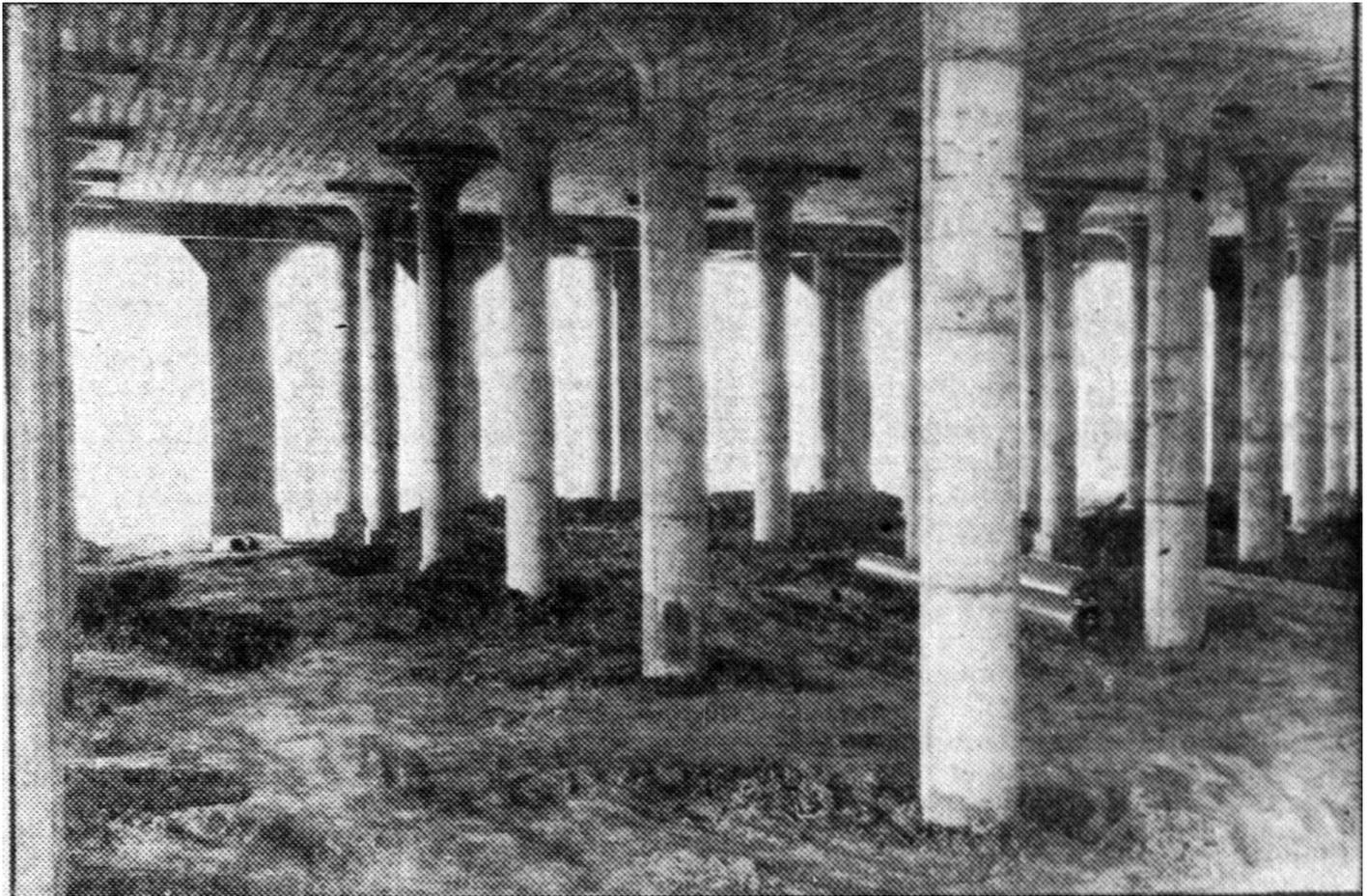
Costing nearly \$200,000 to build, it was constructed of brick, steel, and concrete. Designed by Edgar Stubenrauch and engineered by Jerry Donohue, Immel Construction of Fond du Lac was the general contractor. The tank was built by Chicago Brick and Iron Works. Financed by a bond sale, the debt was settled in 1949.

The structure is 185 feet in diameter and 20 feet high. It rests on a slab 16 inches thick. Supported by 80 columns or pylons, each flares out at the top; 52 of them are 30 inches in diameter, and 28 are larger and brick covered. The entire tank is encased in brick for a polished look. There is a three-foot walkway between the tank and the exterior curtain wall.

The concrete needed was mixed at Eighteenth Street and Erie Avenue and hauled to the site. That was the closest location for the needed water supply there. Pipe for the connecting mains came from Ohio.

Construction commenced in October 1932 when the work of laying pipe was started. The structure was tested for leakage on June 22, 1933. The project wound down in fall of 1933 with final landscaping projects. Arthur Miller was the Superintendent of the water department at the time of construction. He estimated an annual savings of \$7,000 in water costs should be realized by the city.

Water was pumped through 30-inch mains, 10,000 feet to St. Clair Avenue and North 11th Street where it



**Also taken June 5, 1933, the project is nearing the end of the construction of the Taylor Park reservoir. Here we see the pylons or columns supporting the water tank above.**

joined the city water system.

At the time of construction, daily water usage in the city was 7.8 million gallons. Today the city reports a 15 million gallons per day.

In 1941, an electric rust preventive system was added. That replaced the need for a labor-intensive cleaning of the steel tank every 2 years. During that cleaning the tank was first drained. Then a fifteen-man crew scrubbed the walls, and finally hand-applied a waxy coating to prevent rust.

The roof of the structure was emblazoned with directional markers for pilots. It also had the moniker Sheboygan painted in 10-foot letters across the top of the structure.

The reservoir was designed to be a landmark. Great care was taken to make the place beautiful and fit into the park. Rain gutters prevented drippage on the sidewalks. It even had a bubbler underneath for those who frequented the park.

Located 2.5 miles west of Lake Michigan in 6-acre Taylor Park, the reservoir recently went through a hands-on inspection and a LiDAR scanning as part of an engineering study, and it was decided the structure was in decent shape and repairs could be made. In 2018 Sheboygan's Taylor Hill Reservoir Structural Eval and Reno Project won an ACEC National Engineering Excellence Award.

Unique in the world of water towers, Sheboygan has a treasure in its Taylor Park reservoir.



## **A Morning of Music and History**

On Saturday, April 9, 2022 we enjoyed a most unusual and fun Second Saturday presentation by Sheboygan's very own Concordia Singing Society, the county's oldest cultural organization. Gesangverein Concordia, is a mixed voice chorus, and was founded in Sheboygan in 1860. The main goal of the organization is to perpetuate the German heritage in our area. When the society was formed its purpose was to spread and preserve the German language and song. That ethnic love continues today. Our members love to sing and perform for many community events throughout the year.

Sixteen members entertained a crowd of just over 100 for two hours at the Plymouth Arts Center. The morning was part music, part history lesson. A number of the members, relatively recent immigrants of German ancestry, made a huge impact on the audience by sharing their sometimes harrowing immigrant stories. Hannelore Geyer's poignant story follows:

"My name is Hannelore Geyer. I was born in the Sudetenland, the historical German name for the northern, southern and western areas of former Czechoslovakia which were inhabited primarily by Sudeten Germans. My ancestors had lived there since at least the Thirty Year War which was in the first half of the 17th century. In 1938, Hitler annexed the Sudetenland to his Third Reich and called it the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. After World War II in the summer of 1945, The Potsdam Conference decided that Sudeten Germans would have to leave Czechoslovakia. As a consequence of the immense hostility against all Germans that had grown within Czechoslovakia due to Nazi behavior, the overwhelming majority of Germans (around 500,000) were expelled. My father and mother, pregnant with my brother, and us 4 little girls, each permitted one suitcase, crossed the border and lived for a while in the basement of a Bavarian "host". Then my journey west began, always in search of better housing and better opportunities. I lived in 5 different places in Germany, and after a short stay in Canada, lived in 4 different places on the East coast, then 9 different places in the Midwest and eventually landed in Kiel at Christmas of 2000, where I finally was able to stay and grow roots. The following December I attended a German advent service in Louis Corners where I met Trudy and George Hohmann. They invited me to come with them to the Gesangverein Concordia in Sheboygan. Trudy and George have been my friends and Concordia has been my family ever since."

Concordia is always looking for new singers and new members and supporters. You can find them on Facebook and at their website, [concordiasingerswi.org](http://concordiasingerswi.org). There are a number of fine videos to watch.

Check out [concordiasingerswi.org](http://concordiasingerswi.org) for more info and lots of music. Thank you to the singers for a wonderful morning.

## Outreach Programing brings History to You.



**Top: Tim Maahs, Ex. Dir. Of the Rock County Historical Society, March 2022 Second Saturdays.**

**Center: Gavin Schmitt, author, brings the story of the Mafia to Saloon Stories, March 2022**

**Bottom: Gavin Schmitt and Ex. Dir, Steven Rogstad ham it up for the camera after a successful Saloon Stories.**



**Tim Maahs, Rock County Historical Society, prepares for his presentation.**

**Hannelore Geyer, member of the Concordia Singing Society, informs and inspires the audience with her story.**



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**In an aerial photograph we see the name Sheboyan painted across the top of the water tower.**

**This image was taken in April 1957. You can see a trail through Taylor Park. Our Redeemer Lutheran Church is to the upper right. Wilgus Road still crosses Kohler Memorial Drive.**