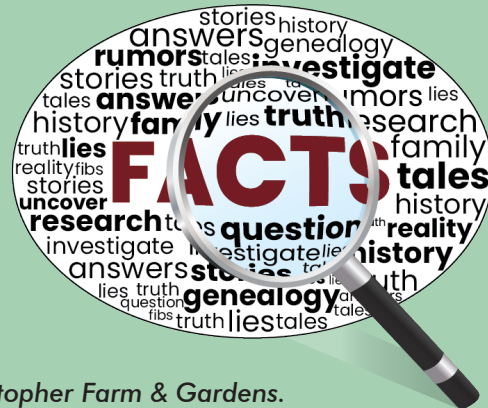


THE RESEARCHER

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE
SHEBOYGAN COUNTY HISTORICAL RESEARCH CENTER

Volume XXXVI Number 6 August 2026

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



Did You Know?

A short-lived community named Union Corners was once found on the northwest corner of Highways A and GW four miles west of Oostburg. A cheese factory, owned by G.J. Dulmes and G.J. Rauwerdink was there as early as 1888. Rauwerdink separated from the partnership in 1890. Dulmes sold shares of the factory in 1893 and 1900. Along the way a store was added to the factory business. It was mentioned in the 1903 sale of "cheese factory and store" to William Stanton of New London. The factory burned on September 6, 1922, and was not rebuilt.

Information sourced from the books *Lost Places of Sheboygan County* and *The Cheese Factories of Sheboygan County*, both available for purchase in the bookstore at the Sheboygan County Historical Research Center.

The 1974 Sheboygan Glass Explosion: The Day the Neighborhood Shook

Zeke O'Grady is no more.

A two-day vigil for Zeke O'Grady ended when his canine remains were found under the family couch. Zeke, a white peek-a-poo dog and a friend to many, died from smoke inhalation. The home of Zeke's owner was part of a multi-building disaster that unfolded the morning of June 19, 1974.



The Sheboygan Glass sign and iconic clock sit atop a pile of debris that was blown outwards from the building when an explosion leveled much of the 600 block of Center Avenue on June 19, 1974. In the background is the Sheboygan County Courthouse.

continued on page 4



SHEBOYGAN COUNTY
HISTORICAL
RESEARCH
CENTER

518 Water Street
Sheboygan Falls, WI 53085
Open Tuesday through Friday
9 am to 4 pm
(920) 467-4667
schrc.org • research@schrc.org



The Researcher is the official newsletter of the Sheboygan County Historical Research Center, 518 Water Street, Sheboygan Falls, WI 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 surrounding areas. It is a repository for documents and images.

SCHRC Board of Directors

Tony Gentine
President

Dr. James Kuplic,
Vice President

Kevin Widder,
Treasurer

Angela Miller
Secretary

Bridgitt Zielke

SCHRC Staff

Tony Gentine,
Interim Executive Director

Mary Parrish,
Operations &
Communication Manager

Katie Reilly,
Research & Programming
Manager



Visit schrc.org!



View our
online media!

Welcome New Members

Linda Miley — Ixonia
Richard Kuether — Sheboygan

Program Schedule

See schrc.org or Facebook for more details.

Book Club

1 to 2:30 pm at the Research Center (upper level—no elevator access), 518 Water Street, Sheboygan Falls

September 16 — *Wrecked: The Edmund Fitzgerald and the Sinking of the American Economy* (2025) by Thomas M. Nelson with Jerald Podair

November 18 — *Wisconsin for Kennedy: The Primary That Launched a President and Changed the Course of History* (2024) by B.J. Hollars

Gravestone Cleaning Workshops

9 am to 11 am. Cleaning supplies are provided. Please bring your own waterproof gloves and/or kneeling pad.

September 5 — Saron UCC Cemetery, County Road J, Sheboygan Falls

September 26 — Salem Plank Road UCC Cemetery, County Road C, Sheboygan Falls

October 3 — Town of Lyndon Cemetery, Highway 57, Waldo

Genealogy Classes

1 pm to 3 pm. Classes held at the Research Center, 518 Water St., Sheboygan Falls. Cost: \$15 members/\$20 nonmembers. See schrc.org for detailed class descriptions and to register.

September 14 — Using AI in Genealogy Research

October 12 — Genealogy Show and Tell: Sharing Family Treasures

November 9 — Researching Your Irish Ancestors

Visit schrc.org for the full genealogy class schedule.

Second Saturdays: Journeys into Local History

9:30 am at the Plymouth Arts Center, 520 E. Mill St., Plymouth

September 12 — Historic Churches of Sheboygan with Erin Brehmer. This presentation focuses on the histories and architecture of six nineteenth- and early twentieth-century churches in Sheboygan, Wisconsin.

Annual Meeting

Begins at 10:30 am at The Wade House, W7965 State Highway 23, Greenbush. See schedule on page 3.

October 9 — Rick Dodgson presents *Hometown Harmony: The Story of Local Music Legends*

CLOSED FOR ARCHIVING

We will be CLOSED for ARCHIVING
September 21 to October 2

Interested in preserving history?
Volunteer to help with archiving. Call today!



SHEBOYGAN COUNTY
**HISTORICAL
RESEARCH
CENTER**



Phone
(920) 467-4667



Website
www.schrc.org

**10:30 AM –
1:00 PM**

**Friday,
Oct. 9**



Meeting Location:
The Wade House
W7965 State Hwy. 23
Greenbush

To reserve your seat,
call (920) 467-4667
or scan the QR code



**Please respond
before
October 2.**

Annual **Business** Meeting

- 10:30 Social Gathering
- 11:00 Annual Meeting
- 11:15 Lunch Buffet
- 12:15 "Homegrown Harmony:
The Story of Local Music Legends"
presented by Rick Dodgson, Ph.D.,
Professor of History at
Lakeland University



continued from page 1

The back story begins with a 4 a.m. blast that shattered windows for blocks around. Smoke and flames poured from the ruins of the Sheboygan Glass Company at 611–617 Center Avenue in Sheboygan. It was one of those moments when firefighters based three blocks away pulled on their gear and hopped aboard their trucks before the alarm was called in.

Destroyed in the explosion and accompanying fire were the Sheboygan Glass Company plant and the adjacent offices of the Sheboygan County and City Employees Credit Union. Both companies were part of one building complex built in 1931. The two-story home of Vincent O'Grady, located to the east, also suffered catastrophic damage.

The neighborhood was littered with debris. Doorknobs, once displayed in the windows of Sheboygan



Mr. Vincent O'Grady surveys his ruined home after the early morning blast.



The aftermath of the Sheboygan Glass blast has firemen searching through debris and attacking hotspots. (Looking east toward Sixth Street.) More than 50% of the building was destroyed making it impossible to rebuild on this site according to changes in zoning laws. The company would need to move to an industrial park. In the short-term the company opened offices in the Motor Transport Terminal at Seventh and Jefferson.

Glass, were blown through *The Sheboygan Press* art department annex across the street. A resident of an apartment at 608 N. 6th Street, around the corner to the east, was dismayed to find a large chandelier ripped from the ceiling. A half-ton steel beam was tossed across Center Avenue, landing on the sidewalk near the Commercial Printing offices. Checks from Sheboygan Glass were picked up five blocks away at the Yacht Club.

Initially, the cause of the big boom was unclear. Mrs. Bruce Teetzen, 519 Center Avenue, reported hearing a smaller blast just moments before the main report. She also saw fire come out of all four storm drains at Sixth and Center. The fire took a turn around the corner and then followed the curb along the north side of Center toward Seventh Street. Seconds

later, the glass company blew up.

High-pressure gas lines and pressure regulators were installed along Center Avenue and into Sheboygan Glass only a week earlier, but that was discounted by John Mattila, manager of WPS, who flatly denied that the gas lines could have been responsible.

Investigators believed the ignition site was in the northeast corner of the building's basement, as the basement walls were buckled and the force of the blast was directed north. Two days after the explosion, sewer gas was ruled out, and a natural gas explosion was deemed the most plausible cause.

Site clean-up had to wait until September 1974 because of insurance problems. The investigation took forever.



Sheboygan Glass has a remodeled facade in this 1957 image. The sign is the same as the one in the rubble pile after the 1974 explosion. The iconic clock is seen on the west side of the building.

Company President Richard Thieme noted that 33 insurance companies were involved. Damage was estimated at \$306,000 (\$1.64 million today). The company rebuilt, but at a new location. Zoning restrictions prohibited rebuilding in the same location, as the area was no longer zoned industrial after 1960. Temporary quarters were set up at the former Motor Transport Terminal at 7th and Jefferson, and, happily, fireproof file cabinets saved the company records.

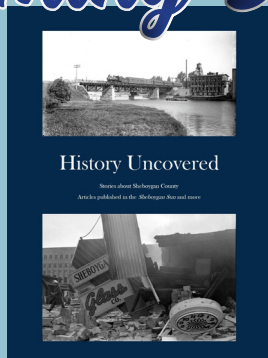
Though the area suffered great

damage, no human lives were lost. Poor Zeke O'Grady was the only casualty. The loss of their pet, along with their home and all belongings, was a blow to the O'Grady family. But the neighborhood stepped up and eased the pain a bit. The CYO kids of St. Dominic and St. Clement parishes raised enough money through car washes to buy a new Maltese puppy for the O'Grady family. The puppy's name was, of course, Zeke. 🍀

Right: Windows, doors, and most of the front porch of this home were seriously damaged by the blast.



Coming Soon!



Were you aware that much of Sheboygan closed up shop to allow their employees to watch the launch steamship Helena from the Rieboldt & Wolters shipyard in 1888? Often confused for a flying saucer or a railroad roundhouse, did you know that the Taylor Park water reservoir was at one time the largest elevated reservoir in the world? Did you realize that Sheboygan's murky, mineral laden water was marketed as a wonder drug for an assortment of common ailments?

History Uncovered is a compilation of articles published by the Sheboygan County Historical Research Center through the Sheboygan Sun and the Research Center's newsletter *The Researcher*. This new book will be available the second week of August.

Pinehurst Farm: A Sheboygan County Landmark Through Two Centuries

Pinehurst Farms of Sheboygan Falls, started in 1838 by David Giddings, was a model of innovation from the very beginning. An article in the March 4, 1908, edition of the *Sheboygan County News* states the following: “Pine Hurst Farms, which is situated partly within the limits of the picturesque village of Sheboygan Falls and part in the town of Lima, is one of the most beautiful and productive farms in the Northwest, consisting of over 400 acres, about 200 of which is under a state of cultivation, 120 in beautiful woods and the balance in natural pasturage, well supplied with water by the Onion River and an abundance of natural springs.”

Giddings, a consummate businessman and adventurous Yankee, never stayed very long with one occupation. He always took an active interest in political affairs. When the Greenback party sprang up, he became identified with it, and in 1878, was a candidate for Congress, receiving more than the party vote. In 1863, he purchased a farm containing five hundred and seventy-seven acres southeast of Fond du Lac, and in 1874 went there to live leaving Sheboygan Falls behind.

On November 20, 1912, Harvard Giddings, son of David Giddings, sold the Giddings Pinehurst Farm to Peter Reiss, president of C. Reiss Coal Company. Pinehurst Farm became the summer home of the extended Reiss family. Reiss upgraded the buildings and in the fall of 1913 the completion of the new 210-foot long barn was celebrated with a barn dance hosted by the Reiss family for over seven hundred guests.

Peter Reiss enjoyed his farm and summer home for just fourteen years, passing away on September 5, 1926. Peter and Mattie had two daughters, Carita who married Harold Bachmann and Gertrude who married John Corbett. Both families spent their summers at Pinehurst.

Mattie Reiss continued the operation of farm after Peter's death, but in 1930, hired Harry Hill to manage it. Mr. Hill managed Pinehurst Farms for fourteen years. Hill, a native of Scarborough, England, was widely known in regional farm circles. He was active in the Wisconsin Holstein Breeders Association and was awarded the Wisconsin Agriculturist gold



This is a classic view of the dairy complex at Pinehurst Farms in post card form. At one point the dairy had seven barns and seven houses on 500 acres. The water tower, erected in 1912, stood 125 feet above the barns and cows it served.

medal in 1937 as one of Wisconsin's five outstanding farmers. Hill left Pinehurst in 1944 for a position in the farm industries' division at Curt G. Joa.

At that point the dairy stopped bottling its own milk, selling its product to Verifine where it was processed. Besides the cattle, Pinehurst also operated a greenhouse and continued to raise poultry. In 1948, Mrs. Reiss donated a part of the property to the city of Sheboygan Falls to be used as an athletic field. The following year, the summer home, the original Giddings home, a large garage, two poultry houses, a greenhouse, ten acres of virgin pine woods, 180 apple-bearing trees and twelve acres of garden land comprising 37-1/2 acres was sold to The Christian Home Inc., a nonprofit organization which took over the property for a home for the aged. The corporation represented thirteen churches in Sheboygan, Oostburg, Cedar Grove, Sheboygan Falls, Gibbsville, and Hingham. The Giddings home, greenhouse, stable and apple orchard were sold to private parties. The remaining property was remodeled into a residence for the aging. This part of the estate became Pine Haven Christian Home.

In 1950, Mrs. Reiss sold the rest of Pinehurst Farm to her grandsons, Peter and David Bachmann. The two young men operated the property together until 1955 when Peter sold his share to David. David had a keen interest in breeding registered Holsteins and developing bloodlines to produce exceptional dairy cows. He went on to breed and develop a Holstein herd known worldwide. In 1976 and 1980 Pinehurst Farm won Premier Breeder and Premier Exhibitor

at all three National Holstein shows, a feat achieved only by Pinehurst. In 1975, 1976, 1977, 1978, 1979, 1980, and 1981 the Pinehurst herd was the leading exhibitor of All-American Nominees. David managed and worked dairy cattle sales across the country and exported thousands of cattle to Japan and Europe.

Lightning struck between a pair of concrete silos the evening of September 16, 1983, during a severe electrical storm. The large L-shaped frame barn, a landmark along State 32, was destroyed by the resulting fire. The barn was immediately rebuilt, but on June 29, 1993, a second fire demolished the barns at Pinehurst. No cause was ever found.

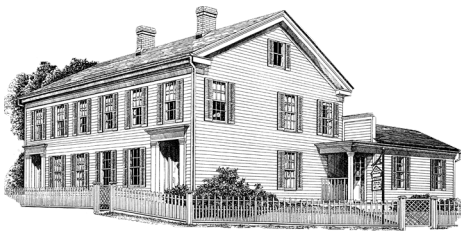
The 1993 fire marked the end of Pinehurst as a dairy farm, but began the dream of a championship golf

course on the property. Construction on The Bull, a Jack Nicklaus signature golf course, began August 4, 2000. The course meanders through the farm and features beautiful views of meadows, woods, wetlands and streams. Each of the 18 holes is named after a bull bred by Pinehurst Farms, each with its own unique story.

The death of David Bachmann in May of 2026 closes the chapter on Pinehurst Farm of Sheboygan Falls. Its story began one hundred and eighty-eight years ago and the beautiful property, cared for by just two families, is a landmark of which the citizens of Sheboygan County can be proud. 🍀



Aerial view of the entire Pinehurst farm looking south southeast toward the signature dairy barns taken prior to 1942. What is now Highway 32 is the road at left. Highway 28 does not yet exist—it later bisects the property. Today's Pine Haven Christian Home would be situated in the center of the image in the farm's extensive orchards.



Sheboygan County
Historical Research Center
518 Water Street
Sheboygan Falls, WI 53085



RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
PERMIT #19
SHEBOYGAN FALLS, WI 53085



The SCHRC is currently working with Road America to digitize their archives. Here are two images from that collection. Top left: Coming out of the Carousel near corner 11, circa 1955. Top right: The Jim Kimberly racing team, circa 1956.