Princeton WI Historical Society Newsletter

630-632 West Water Street, PO Box 71 Princeton, Wisconsin 54968

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After 115 Years, Wedding Dress Comes Home

When Hailey Elizabeth stopped at a yard sale near her home in Greensboro, North Carolina, she wasn't looking for Princeton history. She was looking for bargains. Hailey owns Abner Ross Vintage, a boutique that specializes in antique clothes and fabrics. She finds dresses, hats, shoes, and other items from the 1800s to the 1950s, then lovingly cleans and repairs them before selling them to appreciative collectors. What she saw this time was, she says, "THE best piece of antique clothing I've ever found."

The handmade white cotton wedding dress was in perfect condition, looking like it has just come down in the aisle. Aside from a few tiny "age spots" or stains, it was immaculate. Not one eyelet was missing. And it wasn't alone. With the wedding dress was the groom's bowtie and boutonniere, and the bride's veil, flowers, and shoes. There was even a paper napkin from their wedding supper. Included was a note:

"Wedding apparel hand made by Olga Oehlke for her wedding to Charles Tews in Mc Cann [Mecan] Church at Princeton Wisconsin on February 16th, 1905. She was the first bride in that area to wear white."

Stunned, Hailey asked to speak with the owner. The woman running the yard sale, Diane Wolt, explained that the wedding set had belonged to her grandmother, Velda Kaslow. She was regretfully selling it, because she didn't know what else to do with it. Hailey bought it on the spot, and said that she'd take care of it.

"I knew this was special. Too special to re-sell," she said. She went online and found us, the Princeton Historical Society. "Please call me," she said in a Facebook message. She wanted to know if we wanted it, and if we would take care of it. She knew how rare the set was, and she knew it belonged in a museum. "To have everything together like this, and so well preserved, is incredible. And with the provenance it has!"

Continued on the next page

Wedding Dress Comes Home, Continued

Provenance means a record of ownership, a kind of "chain of evidence" that proves artifacts are genuine, and gives them context. Not only do we have the note, we have a copy of the photograph of the bride and groom wearing their wedding clothes. Although Diane Wolt, kept the original as a family memento, Hailey was able to secure a copy. Thanks to her, the provenance of this wedding time capsule is complete. But how did a wedding dress made in Princeton Wisconsin end up in Greensboro, North Carolina? The story actually starts even further away.

Olga Oehlke immigrated to Wisconsin from Russia. Ethnically, she was German, part of a large group of immigrants that were seeking escape from war and had tried Russia first. Charles (Charley to his bride) came straight from Germany. Both were seeking a better life, one where there were no peasants and kings, where they could buy their own land and decide their own futures. They found America, and each other.

Olga and Charles only stayed in Princeton for a brief time. They later moved to a farm two miles north of Neillsville Wisconsin, near the Black River. They had five children, Edna, Edgar, Nina, Velda, and Arthur. Velda inherited her mother's wedding dress, and married Wilber Kaslow. She then passed it on to her own daughter, Diane Wolt. Diane was the one who moved to North Carolina, where the dress's link to Princeton was discovered.

Above: The groom's embroidered white bowtie has yellowed slightly with age, but is as crisp as the day it was made. The full wedding set will have a special display when the museum is completed.

Below: Olga and Charles at Mecan Church

Left: Olga's wedding shoes. Larger sized shoes were unusual in the early 1900s, and these are a rare size 9 or 9.5. In a time where poor nutrition and illness often meant people were smaller, Olga herself must have stood out as a large and healthy woman.

Hailey has now not only donated these artifacts to the historical society, she professionally cleaned and repaired them beforehand. One hundred and fifteen years after it was made here by loving hands, it has been returned by loving hands. Thank you, Hailey! This precious gift will be displayed in our museum, protected for future generations.

You can visit Hailey's shop, Abner Ross, in Greensboro, NC. It is named after her grandfather. However, she will soon be moving to New York, where she will continue to promote vintage fashion and a love of history.

Pandemic: Then & Now

In February of 1902, Princeton was dealing with many diseases. With lots of people traveling longer distances faster via the railroad, a new immigrant from Germany could spread disease from New York to Princeton in only a week. Without modern medicines, sickness was much more likely to be fatal.

Diseases mentioned by the board of health include Asiatic Cholera, yellow fever, small-pox, typhus fever, bubonic plague, diphtheria, scarlet fever, measles, whooping cough, and "other contagious diseases."

In response to these pandemics, the Princeton Board of Health created a set of rules that everyone was required to follow. We have a copy of these documents (right).

Sick people and the families of sick people were not allowed to go to school or college, or "enter any assemblage, or railway car, vessel or other public conveyance." Teachers were expected to help keep sick children out of school.

Just like today, it would have been tough for these families to isolate themselves while taking care of children and caring for the sick. Possibly some sick families tried to send their children away to friends or relatives for a time, because another rule says that children could not leave their families without a "permit from the board of health or its proper officer."

Doctors and landlords were required to tell the Board of Health the names and addresses of those who were sick within twenty-four hours of symptoms. Afterwards, a health officer would mark the house with a "quarantine card," a large sign on the front door naming the disease. From that point onward, only doctors and "necessary attendants" were allowed to enter the home.

Physicians were directed to "use every possible precaution to prevent communication of the disease or diseases to others." This included disinfecting houses, or directing others how to do so.

People who died of a contagious disease could not be taken into a church or any other public place. They had to be buried under the supervision of a member of the board of health with "greatest care."

Although this is a grim part of history, the bright side is that our ancestors made it through those tough times. Their resilience can inspire us today.

Historic document echoes today's health guidelines

By Steve Clark

Vickie Wielgosh of the Princeton Historical Society discovered proof that the adage of history repeating itself really does happen.

While going through documents during the renovation at the Princeton Historical Museum, Wielgosh came across a document from the Board of Health of the Town of Princeton that lists quarantine guidelines for the community.

The document, which was dated February 10, 1902, obviously has no mention of the coronavirus but cites illnesses such as Asiatic cholera, yellow fever, scarlet fever, small pox, diphtheria, measles, whooping cough and even the bubonic plague among the dangerous illnesses that people needed to be aware of.

"None of these things had any kind of medicine to get rid of it at that time," Wielgosh said. "It's funny that many of these things listed aren't much different, except in a newer way. They are 118 years different but not so different. History really does repeat itself."

The document Wielgosh discovered listed 11 guidelines for the community to follow, dealing with such topics as keeping sick kids home from school, the responsibility of physicians to report all cases of illnesses and the guidelines for church services and funerals are discussed.

The first guideline, listed after the types of diseases that should result in quarantine, is centered around creameries and skimming stations not being allowed to accept milk from farmers with family members sick with one of the listed diseases.

See HISTORIC, Page 16

S OFFICIAL NEWSPAPER LOCALLY OWNED SINCE 1867
WI 54968
Find us on Facebook

Our pandemic experiences now are both similar and different. We'd like to document YOUR story for future readers.

1) How has the pandemic affected you, your family and friends?

2) What advice would you give people 100 years from now if another pandemic occurs?

Responses can sent to us via Facebook, emailed to use at princectonhistsociety@gmail.com or mailed to:
Princeton Historical Society
P.O. Box 71, Princeton WI 54968.

New Book Published on Princeton's Canadian Club

Joan Petruske Guckenberger

Joan Petruske Guckenberger has just published a history of Princeton's Canadian Club. The 112 page book includes a list of club members, a history of the mill ditch, copies of club documents, plenty of photos, and the original story about the club written by Anna Marshall, "Where There's a Will There's a Way."

The Canadian Club was a group of young men who, prior to World War II, created a club on the west side of the Fox River, which they called "The Canadian Club" for reasons lost to history. They built a club house which had heat and electricity and held club events. Some of these events were community-minded, while others were just plain outrageous fun, like a hockey game with a strict dress code (boxer shorts only). The clubhouse was located on the mill ditch near Highway 23 along where Canal Street is now.

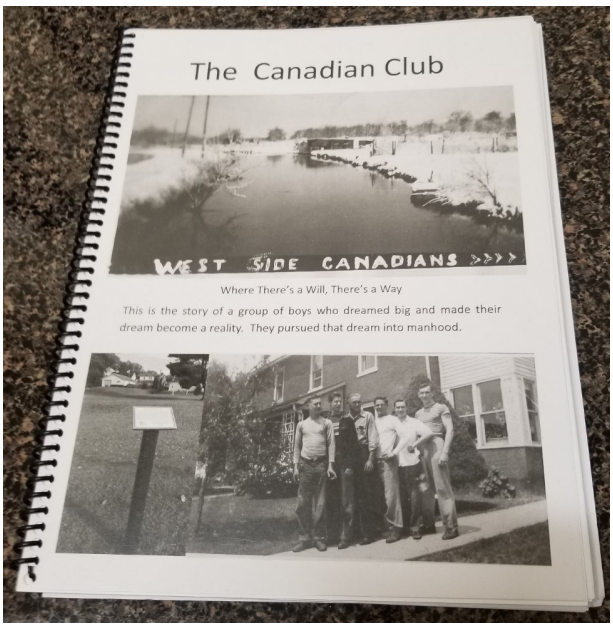
Joan's father, John "Pat" Petruske, was a member of the club, along with at least 26 others, including:

Norb, Lenny, & Rudy Wielgosh;
Eddie, Sy, and Donny Frost;
Bob and Bill Sosinksy;
John and Jim Wyse;
Vic and Louie Brown;
Benny Dalka;
Lee, Donald "Poso," & Henry "Hank" Bednarek;
Edward "Brass" Kwiatkowski;
Ralph Guderske;
Paul and Darrell Ladwig; and
Arnold Renn.

Most of the young men in the Canadian Club went off to fight in World War II, and this largely ended the club. However, it remains a treasured part of Princeton's history.

Joan began working on her book when she discovered a treasure trove of documents and photos from the club. She wanted to preserve them along with the Anna Marshall story. She worked for months on the project, transcribing notes and captioning photos with the help of the historical society and local volunteers. She has donated a copy to the Princeton library.

If you would like to purchase a book, contact Joan Guckenberger at guckenberger@baldwin-telecom.net. When our historical society reopens, we will also have copies available for purchase there. The cost is $20. All proceeds above the cost of printing go to the historical society. Thank you Joan!



Steaming Ahead: Museum Improvements

Right: Elizabeth Ladwig, Vickie Wielgosh, and Chris Frasier review photos. Pictures are now being chosen to be enlarged and hung to adorn the walls of the museum.

Left: Vickie Wielgosh stands next to a moving paddle wheel, part of an exhibit on the steamboats that used to traverse the Fox River. The wheel is powered by the motor of a rotating Christmas tree stand, hidden behind the wall in the records room. The paddle wheel was painstakingly built by Norb Wianecki. Alex Nimphius has also helped. It will eventually be complimented by a paddle steamer mural and the recorded sounds of a steamer in action. "Big River Steamers" often visited Princeton, shipping goods and passengers up and down the Fox.

Right: two of the Amish men who worked on the museum building purposely left their hats behind. This lovely local Amish custom shows both appreciation for the customer and a respect for the project's significance.

Below: The Rapids at a dock in Princeton. This large commercial steamboat which traveled as far as Arkansas via the Wisconsin and Mississippi Rivers.

Can You Help? Museum Donations Wanted

Are you holding a garage sale this year, and are not sure what to do with some of the leftovers?
Are you moving, downsizing, or decluttering?
Our historical society and museum building are maintained entirely by donations. As such, we have a very limited budget. You could help us a great deal by donating any of the following items. We don't want to appear greedy, but at the same time, we know there are folks out there that are looking to donate things., and it never hurts to ask. Thank you!

Donation Requests

- Mannequins or dress forms for use in displaying historic clothing

- Large leaded glass lamp shade, 18" in diameter or more, for a special display

- Clear plastic sign holders for signage and documents

- Sturdy yard signs for our programs and fundraising efforts

- Acid-free, archival quality photo albums and artifact boxes

- 100% cotton rags/material for cleaning

-armless swivel office chairs

- an old hay mow ladder for our farm exhibit

- room darkening shades and curtains to prevent sunlight from fading and degrading artifacts

Help Us Keep the Lights On

Because of the virus/shutdown, we are not getting the donations that we normally do.
We can't run the food/information booth at the flea market, or hold meetings or events. As a result, we are nowhere near where we need to be financially.

Can you help us? Becoming a historical society member or sending us a small donation would help us tremendously.

No one at our organization gets paid. Your donations go towards basic utilities at our buildings and to finish the new museum. We are committed to preserving community history, including one-of-a-kind artifacts, records, and photographs.

If you can, please send checks to:
Princeton Historical Society, P.O. Box 71,
Princeton WI 54968. **Thank you!**

Office Help Wanted

Chris Frasier is working very hard on cataloging historical photos and needs someone to help her. It can be an interesting job, seeing all the old photographs and documents.
If you live in or near Princeton and know your letters and numbers you're qualified!
If you would like to help, please call her: 708-425-0921.

Fit to Print

On June 30th, we received the wonderful donation of every issue of the *Fox River Patriot.* Daniel Nickolie from Marquette County Historical Society brought these in to us. Thank you!

The Fox River Patriot was an alternative newspaper that circulated in central Wisconsin, co-founded by Denis Kitchen and Mike Jacobi. They were two of the co-founders of an earlier Madison/Milwaukee-based underground newspaper, *The Bugle-American.* Both papers were deliberately given "square" names in an effort to reach more mainstream midwestern readers. The contents could be funky or serious, covering everything from gardening and fishing to colorful locals and the danger of nuclear waste. Kitchen and Jacobi both moved to rural Princeton WI in the early '70s and founded the *Fox River Patriot* in 1976. They published it in a converted cow barn on Swamp Road. The paper only lasted until 1980. Today, copies in good condition sell for $5-$50 each.

Mike Jacobi puffed an ever-present pipe in the 70s, hence the smoking fox on this vintage pin.

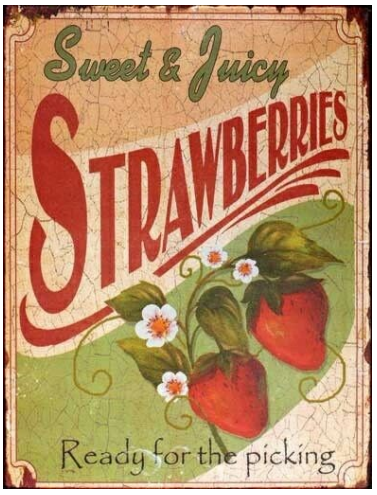
Denis Kitchen went on to found Kitchen Sink Press, and worked with now-famous illustrators such as Will Eisner, Harvey Kurtzman, Al Capp, and others. He later sold Kitchen Sink Press, and began the Denis Kitchen Art Agency and the Denis Kitchen Publishing Co . He is also a founder of Hansen in Kitchen & Hansen Agency, LLC, which serves as a literary agency for Will Eisner's estate. He was a guest on Wisconsin PBS, and his illustrations are celebrated in the book *The Oddly Compelling Art of Denis Kitchen*, published by Dark Horse Books. Learn more at deniskitchen.com.

Mike Jacobi is a pillar of the Princeton community. As a long-time member of the Princeton Chamber of Commerce, he has devoted many Saturdays to getting up at the crack of dawn to open the flea market. He owns *Yesteryear Publications*.

Marj Remembers: Summer Days

From the Memories of Historical Society President Marjorie Mlodzik

In the Garden: Strawberries and More



When I was growing up, many people lived on farms, and every farm had a large vegetable garden. As early in spring as the ground could be worked, Daddy got our garden ready and marked out rows for early lettuce, radishes, peas, and spring onions. Though sometimes he helped us with the planting, it seemed so tedious for kids. But oh, when the first lettuce appeared on the dinner table, with fresh crisp radishes! There were little round radishes with white tips, and some of the long white ones with a sharp bite to them.

Later, Daddy marked more rows for peas and green and yellow string beans. There were a nice size and easy to plant. There were also many rows of sweet corn, planted to ripened at spaced-out intervals so the season could last as long as possible. But the highlight of summer was strawberry picking. My favorite variety was the Dunlap, sweet and juicy, with no white tips. They made marvelous, delicious shortcake, soaked with the juicy berries and topped with fresh whipped cream from our Guernsey cows' rich milk. During the season, it was my job to bake a fresh cake every day. With Mother, Dad, Grandpa, me, and my brothers, we could finish one off every day.

I don't think you can get Dunlap strawberries anymore. Experts are always coming up with new "better" berries that can transport well over long distances, but lose something in flavor and quality compared to berries fresh picked and served.

When it came to harvesting all the vegetables and fruits, my Grandma frequently drove out from town to help. She wore a big old fashioned sunbonnet, with flaps down the back to protect the neck from sunburn, and big pieces stiffened with cardboard to shade the face. One year she even made a couple for us girls to wear to "protect our complexions." We of course wanted to get as tan as possible and sometimes took off our shirts so our backs and upper arms could get tan. Grandma always gave us a strong reminder to put our shirts back on before returning to the house!

We did garden work as early as possible before the heat of the day. Some days I had a big bucket of peas to shuck out of their pods. Other days I cut the tops off string beans. We had a hammock in the yard strung between two pine trees, and it was a pleasant task to work from the hammock, a cool retreat from the garden sun.

On canning days, the kitchen got pretty hot. Some things were canned with the pressure cooker, others were processed in a hot water bath. We used pint and quart jars for most veggies but large 2 quart Mason jars for tomato juice and grape juice (no, it was not fermented into wine). Flat red rubber jar rings were fitted on the jars and then the zinc caps with glass liners were turned on tightly. The zinc was a little flexible so it could make a tight seal. These lids and rings could be used over and over if they stayed in good shape, not like the single use caps we use now.

When I was about 12 years old Dad bought a freezer. It had huge thick walls for insulation but generous shelves inside provided lots of space for vegetables and fruits. Mother used to can 40 or 40 quarts of strawberries every year, but frozen berries were even better, just like fresh. Mother still preferred canning peaches, but they had to be the Colorado Lions Cling Free kind. They came in a box with each peach individually wrapped in a square of pink paper, which we saved to wrap apples in the fall.

Ham by Name, Ham by Trade

Most people know the name Megow. Megow park is named after the family, and sits where the Megow photography studio and store once was. Only true Princeton old-timers know the name Ham Megow.

Herman Albert Megow, son of photographer Herman Edward Megow, went by the nickname "Ham," a play on the initials H.A.M. However, his actual name was Albert Robert Herman Megow. He was born in 1884 and became an apprentice butcher as a teenager. He lived in Milwaukee for a time, where he met his bride, Condina Leon Zierke. They moved to Colorado for a time before returning to Princeton in 1916, where Ham started his own butcher shop. It became famous, shipping meat all over America, and customers would drive from Chicago to load their cars up with bacon, sausages, and of course, ham.

Albert Megow often used H.A.M. in his marketing, as in the banner painted in the back of his butcher shop: "H.A.M Keeps This Place, This Place Keeps H.A.M."

Ham was a dedicated member of the Chamber of Commerce, and played a part in getting the Community Hall at 101 Wisconsin Street started. He retired from the meat business in 1953, leaving it to his son Norman.

Ham and Condina had two other boys, plus five girls: Raymond, Gale, Nadine, Lois, June, and Marjorie.

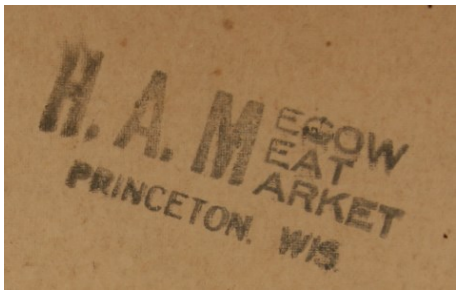
In his private life, Ham loved photography. He inherited some of his equipment from his father, which is now in our historical society collection.

Ham could often be seen walking home with his dog Smokey, who would carry the newspaper in his mouth after a stop at the post office.

HAM died in 1982, aged 87. He and his wife are buried in Princeton's City Cemetery.

Above: Ham salutes the camera during Princeton's Quas Qui centennial in July 1973. On the back of the photo, in his own handwriting, is a note: "This is Grand for Ham on the grand stand."

Below: Ham's stamp on packaging.



Contact Us!

Have a question about local history, genealogy, or our organization? Interested in donating? Want a topic featured in the next newsletter? Please email or write to:

princetonhistsociety@gmail.com

630 West Water Street
PO Box 71
Princeton, Wisconsin 54968

Don't Forget to "Like" Us on Facebook!

Princeton WI Historical Society

Volunteers Wanted

-to staff the museum on weekends, giving tours and tidying up in the spring and summer when the museum eventually opens

-to staff the raffle and information booths at the Princeton Flea Market on Saturdays from April through October in 2021

-to help plan and staff events, including Trick or Treat on Water Street, food fundraisers, and special events

-to help us catalog and organize original historical photos, documents, and artifacts

Please call Chris at 708-425-0921 or Vicki at 920-291-5434 for more information on volunteering.

Our museum and historical society is entirely run on donations. This year is an especially difficult one, as we are unable to do our usual fundraisers because of the virus shutdowns. Please consider sending even $5.00.

Become / Remain a Historical Society Member!

___ $2 Annual Student Membership (high school and lower grades)
___ $10 Annual Individual Membership
___ $15 Annual Family Membership (parents + children under age 18)
___ $100 Lifetime Individual Membership
___ $250 Lifetime Family Membership
___ $500 Charter Membership
___ $1,000 Donor Membership
___ $5,000 Patron Membership
___ $10,000 Founder Membership

I am interested in helping with (please check one or more):

☐ Computer Entry
☐ Special Events
☐ Building Construction
☐ Giving Tours at the Museum
☐ Staffing Our Fleamarket Booth
☐ Fundraising

Name: _____

Street Address: _____ Apt. # _____

City, State_____ ZIP: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Cut out this form and send in your membership today! Make checks payable to the Princeton, WI Historical Society, and send them to PO Box 71, Princeton, WI 54968. All donations are tax deductible. Thank you!