BAILEYS HARBOR HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

December 2023
P.O. Box 336
Baileys Harbor, WI 54202

info@baileysharbor historical society.org

Board of Directors
-Leann Despotes
President
-Howard Williamson
Vice-president
-Marianne Newton
Secretary
-Mary Moran
Treasurer
-Tom Esau
-Ann Marie Ott
-Nancy Rafal
-Carol Schmidt
-Kriss Schorer
-

Town Board Liaison
-Roberta Thelen
Newsletter Editors
-Leann Despotes
-Ann Marie Ott

Enjoy our displays at
The Toft House
8061 Highway 57
May - October

Enjoy Our
Historic Display Cases
Baileys Harbor
Town Hall
2392 Cty Road F
*
www.baileysharborhistoricalsociety.org
*
Find us on
Baileys Harbor
Historical Society

Toft House Update 2023

The Toft House opened on the Friday of Memorial Day weekend and closed its doors early this year on October 13. The closure was necessary due to the lack of adequate heating in the house. This year the Toft House expanded its hours during July and August to operate 7 days a week thanks to the gift of time from new community volunteers.

The Toft House Information Center staff included Historical Society members Ron Holden, Howard Williamson, Mary Moran and Ann Marie Ott. Baileys Harbor Community Association member volunteers included: Ron Holden, Sally Smith, Cheryl Aukeman, Cindy Ross, Sue Dugan, Lurana Webster, Evan Webster, Mark Smith and Pat Klitzman. A number of these individuals are members of both the Historical Society and the Community Association. Eight of these individuals were new volunteers this year!!! Their contributions represent 750 hours of service in 2023. These dedicated volunteers welcomed 2208 individuals to the Toft House and provided them with information about our community and the Historical Society. Visitors who signed the Historical Society guest book noted their residence in 23 different states, including Wisconsin and 3 foreign countries.

The Town of Baileys Harbor contracted with a property inspector to evaluate the condition of the Toft House in September. The inspector identified numerous concerns related to compliance with electrical wiring codes, foundation supports and the need for lighting and heating upgrades. Roberta Thelen, Town Supervisor reports that the Town is gathering more information to set priorities for improvements. As a result, the Historical Society Board of Directors will launch a campaign to secure donations for a Preservation Fund to support improvements. For more information see page 10.

Membership Update

The Baileys Harbor Historical Society membership has remained relatively stable over the past year with 122 memberships currently on our roster. Fifty-nine of those memberships represent a lifetime membership contribution. Approximately 15 memberships are pending payment for renewal at this time following our renewal cycle earlier this year.

Membership payment amounts remain at the following dollar amounts: Business $50, Family $25, Individuals $15, and Lifetime $150. Members' dues help support our continuing research, events and presentations, displays at the Baileys Harbor Library and the Toft House, maintaining our website, and publishing our newsletters.

Consider giving the gift of membership to that hard to buy for person on your holiday gift list! Please encourage your friends, neighbors, and family members to join BHHS so that they can enjoy supporting the dissemination of our local history, sharing information, and exploring the history of our community. A printable membership form can be found on the home page of our website at: www.baileysharborhistoricalsociety.org . Just print it, fill it out, and mail it to our P.O. Box.

If you have questions about the status of your membership payment, please send an email to: info@baileysharborhistoricalsociety.org or via postal mail to P.O. Box 336, Baileys Harbor, WI 54202.

Welcome New Members!

This is BHHS' way of giving a warm smile and a hearty handshake to our new members until we can meet you in person! Welcome to Katherine Jones, Jan Groen, and the Baileys Harbor Fish Market & Grille now owned by Scott and Sarah Bennett. We appreciate your support, and hope that you will enjoy sharing and participating in our ongoing exploration of Baileys Harbor history.

Board of Directors Update

At the annual meeting of the Historical Society held in September, President Leann Despotes announced that the Board had two vacancies. Those vacancies have now been filled by members Tom Esau and Ann Marie Ott. The Board is allowed to have a minimum of 6, or a maximum of 9, members. Welcome to our new Board members and our gratitude to those who continue to serve.

Leann Despotes - 1 year – President
Mary Moran - 2 years – Treasurer
Nancy Rafal - 1 year – Director
Kriss Schorer - 1 year- Director
Tom Esau – 1 year - Director
Howard Williamson – 1 year- Vice-President
Marianne Newton - 2 years - Secretary
Carol Schmidt - 2 years - Director
Ann Marie Ott – 1 year – Director

2023 Display Highlights

Postcards from a larger collection donated to the Historical Society by Susie Bauldry were displayed in one of the cabinets at the Town Hall entrance this summer. The postcards offered visitors and Baileys Harbor residents a glimpse of days gone by. In addition, a display of newspaper clippings highlighting major events in Baileys Harbor were displayed. The postcards and clippings provided education to our many visitors and triggered discussions about memories of days gone by.

Visitors to the Toft House enjoyed a display of quilts shared by members of the Historical Society along with other sewing collectibles. A centerpiece of the collection was a sewing machine once owned and used by Carol Schmidt's grandfather. The tiny machine was used in his Chicago millinery shop in the early 1900s. Another early electric Singer sewing machine was displayed by Marianne Newton. The quilts represented several eras in quilting history. A quilt from the 1880s belonging to the Peil family was the oldest on display. This quilt, done in dark wool and other recycled materials, was embroidered with fancy, feathery stiches in contrasting threads. Also included were examples of quilts made using these patterns: Irish Chain, Grandmother's Flower Garden, Nosegay, Buckeye Beauty and a more modern Tulip patterned applique quilt. Thimbles, darning eggs, embroidery scissors, a wide variety and styles of pincushions, as well as vintage fabric, rounded out the display. Thank you to the following individuals for loaning their treasures to the Historical Society this season: Marianne Newton, Gail Laird, Lynn Mattke, Ann Marie Ott, and Carol Schmidt.

As we look ahead to 2024, the Board of Directors has selected "Baileys Harbor, Bird City" as our theme for displays, in part as a result of receiving 3 additional Albert Zahn bird carvings as a donation this year. Not only has Baileys Harbor been known for bird art over the years, but also was an early enrollee in the Bird City program which originated in Wisconsin in 2009. Read more about the Zahn Birds "flying home" in the 2023 Program Highlights section of the newsletter beginning on page 4. Learn more about the Bird City program here: https://www.birdcity.org/about

The Bird City Wisconsin logo which is displayed on Highway 57 in Baileys Harbor is a charming work of art created by Tom and Mary Uttech who live near Saukville, WI. The design was originally done in watercolor by Tom and then was prepared for printing by Mary, an art director for the American Society for Quality. Tom has since emerged as one of the most widely admired landscape painters in the United States and has helped make the logo one of the most recognizable elements about Bird City Wisconsin.

2023 Program Highlights

Albert Zahn and Bird Park – Wednesday, June 21

Three Zahn hand-carved birds have recently "flown home" as the result of a generous donation by Baileys Harbor summer vacationers David Goslee, Knoxville, TN and Anne Goslee-Jivovic, Wilton, CT. Anne donated the first three, carved birds in August 2019. She wrote, "When I was a small child, my family spent many, many amazing summers in Baileys Harbor. (My mom was originally from Fond du Lac.) This was in the 1940's and early 1950's. We rented a cottage on the road coming into town, from either the Collins or Christenson family. There was the beach and a rock pier there where we went fishing with bamboo poles. Each summer my older brother and I were allowed to get a bird from what we called the Bird Man." Anne reached out to the Historical Society again in 2023 and made arrangements for the remaining 3 birds in the family collection to fly home. She shared that her family paid perhaps 25 to 50 cents to purchase each of the birds.

All six birds were displayed at the Town Hall Auditorium on the evening of Wednesday, June 21. Nearly 70 individuals attended the event. Leann Despotes provided a short presentation about Albert Zahn and Bird Park. Zahn's grandson, Randy Zahn, a carver of wood birds himself, answered questions from the audience about his grandfather, shared his memories of Bird Park, and discussed his own experiences with wood-carving. We extend a sincere thank you to Anne and her brother David, for returning the birds to their original home in Baileys Harbor. The Board is taking steps to obtain a permanent display cabinet for the birds and working with the Baileys Harbor branch of the public library to display the birds year-round for the enjoyment of residents and visitors.

Birds donated in 2019:

Birds donated in 2023:

Photographer: Historical Society Board member, Tom Esau.

Roaring Dan Seavey – Pirate of the Great Lakes – Wednesday, July 12.

Bruce Fenner, retired United Methodist clergy person and former docent at Cana Island Lighthouse, shared the stories of "Roarin' Dan Seavey", the only person ever to be arrested for piracy on Lake Michigan. Tales of seafaring adventures, multiple wives, the gold rush, and bootlegging captured the attention of the attendees of this entertaining presentation.

Seavey sailed routinely from Escanaba to the Chicago docks and actually made stops in Baileys Harbor and Jacksonport. He owned and sailed a series of ships hauling a variety of cargo over nearly two decades including the *Wanderer*, the *Nellie Johnson*, the *Harvey Ransom* and the *James H. Hall*. However, his business "cover" shadowed his exploits pirating cargo from other ships as well as other illegal activities, which led to his indictment for piracy. His "business connections" seemed to support his escape and getaway from Chicago and he was never convicted of the charge. Seavey lost most of his ships in storms and by 1917 he bought a motor launch named the *Mary Alice* on which he apparently continued his "business" activities. Dan Seavey spent his final days and passed away at a nursing facility in Peshtigo on February 14, 1949, and is buried in the Forest Home Cemetery in Marinette, WI. In honor of "Roarin' Dan,"

Bruce, our presenter baked and shared a rum cake and recipe using "*Roarin' Dan*" rum from the Great Lakes Distillery with the audience. He also gave away several copies of a book called Great Lakes Pirate: The Adventures of Roarin' Dan Seavey, by Gavin Schmitt, including one donated to the Historical Society collection. Thanks, Bruce for your generosity!

Fall Member Gathering – Thursday, September 14

A gathering of the membership of the Baileys Harbor Historical Society was held at the Baileys Harbor Fish Market and Grille. The attendees enjoyed the "Grand Slam" breakfast before President Leann Despotes presented an update to the group. Leann titled her presentation "Getting Back on Track." Here is a summary of her report: "This summer we presented two programs. One displayed and discussed the six Albert Zahn bird carvings that we received from David Goslee and Anne Goslee Jovović who vacationed here as children in the 1940s. Second, Bruce Fenner presented the story of Dan Seavey, Lake Michigan Pirate.

Our tentative plans for next year include Dennis Hickey presenting a program on the Hickey Family throughout Baileys Harbor history, a program about Heins Creek which runs from Kangaroo Lake to Lake Michigan, and another to be announced.

Our display at the Toft house this summer includes many examples of hand quilting, and is very impressive. Do stop in and see it, it's just across the street! The antique postcard display at the Town Hall is fascinating and has been very well received. Additionally, the spring newsletter was interesting and very well done by Ann Marie Ott, a new member who came along at exactly the right time. I learned that my mom's black skunk fur coat is also known as American sable. Sounds much better, I think. Last, the historic boards for the Toft House are finally ready for installation, and are waiting to be finished at those two locations.

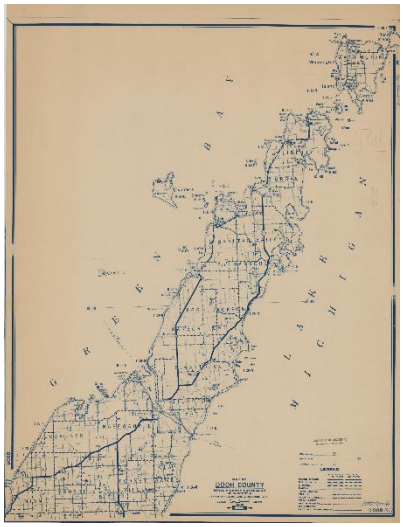
Our future plans include looking into appropriate secure, archival storage for the Zahn bird collection.

Baileys Harbor – Harbor Holiday - Saturday, December 9

The Baileys Harbor Christmas Event, coordinated by Cynde Krowas, Director of the Baileys Harbor Community Association (BHCA) is scheduled for Saturday, December 9th, 2023 and will be held in and outside the Town Hall. The BHHS will assist the BHCA with craft projects for families and children attending the event. Three stations will be available and manned by Historical Society volunteers, where attendees can make one of the following decorations: a pine swag with bow, birch tree base with pines which serves as a table decoration and a green paper wreath to hang. Historical Society volunteers participating in the event will gather at the Cornerstone Pub at the conclusion of the celebration. Thanks to Marianne Newton and Susie Bauldry for creating the craft projects and coordinating with BHCA.

With Appreciation

The Historical Society wishes to thank Mitch Leavitt for donating a fire board found in the attic of his home on Ridges Road in Baileys Harbor. As seen in the photograph below, the board was made by the Wabash Company in Minneapolis, MN and is 30 inches square. Boards of this kind date back to the late 1800s and were used to protect wood floors from burning ash. The boards were placed tin side up under a metal stove that was likely used for heating in that era. Stop by the Toft House next summer to take a closer look at the intricate design found on the tin side of the item. Thanks for the donation, Mitch!



In addition we would like to thank Eric Bonow, of Appleport and Superior, WI for digitizing some archival materials for us. Over the summer while doing some research on Baileys Harbor lighthouses and maritime history, Eric discovered copies of 1924 and 1947 Door County highway maps in our collection. While he was able to personally digitize the 1947 map, he is working with the University of WI -Green Bay, which has a scanner available to accommodate the large size of the 1924 version. Eric has a scanned copy of Beverly Anclam's book, *Baileys Harbor's Early Days: It's Beginnings through 1880*, which is a hardcover book in our collection. Eric generously shared his digital version with us. We are working to make updates to the Historical Society website and hope to be able to share these digital materials with members in the future. Thanks, Eric!

Town Hall History Display Board

The Toft House story board was installed near the entrance to the Toft House in October by the Town of Baileys Harbor Public Works Department staff. We are now working with the staff to install the second story board at the Town Hall in the spring. Similar to the Toft House Board the display offers a timeline of the history of the building.

BAILEYS HARBOR TOWN HALL & McARDLE LIBRARY

1848 Captain Jusice Bailey discovers Baileys Harbor

1849 Baileys Harbor builds the first pier in Door County

1851 Baileys Harbor established as county seat

1935 Michael W. McArdle dies in Chicago leaving funds to be used for a new Town Hall & Library in his native Baileys Harbor

1937 Construction on new Town Hall begins at County F & Highway 57

1938 Town Hall building completed for a cost of $50,000

1938 Dedication ceremony of the Town Hall & McArdle Library

1982 The library moved to an empty Town Schoolhouse to make room for office and meeting space

1994 The McArdle library reurned to the Town Hall after an expansion project was completed

Then through narrative and historical photographs set into three columns, key details about our community and the Town Hall are conveyed to viewers.

Baileys Harbor Originial Town Hall

Captain Justice Bailey discovered Baileys Harbor, while seeking shelter for his merchant ship and crew during a violent Lake Michigan storm in 1848. Soon wood and stone were being shipped out. In 1849, a dock to support shipping was built. Soon the port was very busy, and the town convinced the Federal Government to construct a lighthouse at the harbor's entrance known as the Bird Cage Lighthouse. Settlers were arriving by ship at the Anclarn Dock and making Baileys their home. In 1851, Baileys Harbor was established as the county seat.

The town grew and the first Town Hall was built on Bluff Rd. The building was a simple wood frame building with a minimal kitchen. An outside pump furnished water and the bathroom was "out back". The building hosted town meetings, social gatherings, fund raising dinners, and as the school when the school building burned.

When the new Town Hall was built the original building was sold and divided into rooms for tourists. It was eventually torn down and sold. The Baileys Harbor post office now occupies the lot.

Students & Teachers in front of the Town Hall "School"

Michael W. McArdle

In 1935, Baileys Harbor native son Michael W McArdle passed away in Chicago. McArdle was a successful businessman in Chicago and was very supportive of his hometown. His will bequeathed funds to Baileys Harbor to be used for the construction of a Town Hall and Library. The will had specific instructions for the building. It was to be designed by a known architect, constructed by local labor, using local stone, include a full basement, a hall capable of seating three hundred and a library named "The McArdle Library". Funds were also left for equipment and maintenance of the building. One stipulation, however, it must be completed within five years of his death.

Town Hall Under Construction

The property at the intersection of County F and Hwy 57 was purchased from the Hickey family for the new Town Hall. The Hickey home was moved two lots to the North. Sylvester Schmidt, a Two Rivers architect, designed the building.

Construction began in 1937, with Ed Olson Construction of Sturgeon Bay as the General contractor. Many local Baileys Harbor names and Door County businesses are included in the old payment ledgers. Limestone was brought from a quarry west of the town. Some of the work was done through the WPA program in Door County. The building was completed in 1938 for a cost of $50,000. Well within the required allotted time set by the will.

The Baileys Harbor Woman's Club (AKA Ladies Improvement Club) equipped the kitchen and dining room. Herbert Erickson sold tickets for a donation of $1.00 each, to fund the purchase of chairs for the auditorium.

The third column of information is depicted below:

The dedication ceremony was held on Sunday, August 21, 1938 at 3:00 in the afternoon. Town residents and well-wishers from the surrounding area came for the celebration. Local dignitaries spoke and local people provided the entertainment.

Following the ceremony, the Baileys Harbor Woman's Club (AKA Ladies Improvement Club) served supper to over 150 people in the auditorium of the New Town Hall.

The McArdle Library
The first month of operation, the library issued 109 cards, 57 to residents, 19 to BaileysHarbor children, 14 to summer residents, and the balance to others in the surrounding area. The Librarians first check was $28.05 for working 93 ½ hours.

In 1982, the need for office space for town offices grew, the library moved to the empty town schoolhouse and the library room was converted to office and town board meeting space.

In 1994, the town undertook a building project to expand the town hall building. The addition would include a new library, bathrooms, elevator, and handicap entrance. When the project was completed, the main town office moved into the former library room, meeting rooms were opened in the renovated lower level of the building and the library came back to the town hall location.

The New McArdle Library Addition
The new library includes a children's area, a reference area with computers, movie rentals, and self-checkout. Showcases in the lobby display local information, historical displays, and upcoming events.

The Town Hall hosts many entertainment and community events throughout the year. Summer brings craft shows, farmers markets, festivals and Friday night outdoor entertainment to the yard surrounding the Town Hall. Kendall Park, behind the Town Hall, has a covered picnic area and a popular children's playground.

Our Town Hall truly is an anchor for the town.

In Homage to the Housedress

The COVID pandemic brought many changes to American culture, including a shift to using technology to work from home, rather than commuting to one's traditional office space. As a result, the daytime uniform for many working women changed dramatically, shifting from required business suits in some industries, and occasional blue jeans on "casual Fridays," to comfy clothes, such as sweatpants and slippers beneath everyday knit tops, suitable for video-conferencing. This look at a woman's uniform from an earlier era, the house dress, was sparked by a gift of vintage fabric for quilting to the author of this article from a friend, Linda Schiesser, New Glarus, WI. Linda acquired an affinity for fabric as a result of her grandmother's long quilting history and Linda's own teaching career in Home Economics. In fact, Linda spent her student teaching days at the Gibraltar High School. When Linda shared a box of vintage fabric, at bottom of the box were well-worn house dresses, likely saved with plans to include the dress fabric in future quilts. Several of the dresses retained their original labels which prompted this author to

do some research, including an interview with Joanne, the daughter-in-law of Louisa Buesser who we discovered had actually worn the dresses in her younger years.

JoAnne shared that Louisa nearly always wore a house dress, with a cardigan sweater added to the ensemble in colder weather. She reported that Louisa did put aside her house dress for helping with the milking chores in the barn. But, Louisa's standard, perhaps those dresses with a bit more trim or fancy buttons, would not only be worn to do housework, but be suitable for a Ladies Aid meeting at the local church or shopping downtown. Does this description bring to mind someone that you know?

Fashion historians report that the earliest version of the house dress was called the "Mother Hubbard. " The loose fitting, shift style garment allowed a woman to set aside her corsets and other stiff undergarments in the 1800s. Utilitarian, made of cotton, with no form fitting features, women at that time might even wear the gown during a pregnancy. Later, house dress fashion became a bit more form-fitting with nipped in waists, front closures, matching belts, and functional patch or inset pockets. Some say that designer Diane Von Furstenberg was inspired by 1950s housedresses and when she created the "wrap dress." In rural areas, some women may have made housedresses from fabric saved from flour and feed sacks, or inexpensive checked gingham, adding rick rack and bright bias tape to personalize the dress, like one of Louisa's, pictured at the right.

While Louisa, clad in blue plaid with rhinestone buttons, may not have been as glamorous as Jane Wyatt in *Father Knows Best* or Barbara Billingsley in *Leave it to Beaver* and their TV housewife fashions, the look and style is truly representative of an era in fashion history. Perhaps Louisa was inspired by the television housewives! Two dresses in the box were very likely sewn by Louisa, based on an examination of their construction and seams, and were adorned with rhinestone buttons and lace trim. An example of one pictured at the left. Labels in two other dresses confirmed that they were purchased at a J.C. Penney's Department Store or through a Penney's catalog, and online research verified them as dating to the 1950s and 1960s, based on those labels. Here in Door County, women may have shopped at Bunda's or the H.C. Prange Department Stores to purchase their housedresses (see the advertisements pictured below). Perhaps you'll be inspired to go retro and choose a house dress for your wardrobe. Vintage house dresses can be found for sale online and range in price from $5 to $95 dollars. ------*Ann Marie Ott*

Donate to the Baileys Harbor Historical Society Preservation Fund

December 2023

Dear Members:

Our last fund-raising campaign was held prior to the COVID pandemic and since that time we have chosen not to solicit donations since the pandemic protocols limited our ability to mount displays and offer public programs.

Now that we have moved on from those historical years, I am writing to ask you to make a donation to our newly designated preservation fund. Monies donated to the Preservation fund will not be used for general operations, but rather to support specific projects such as the much needed improvements to the Toft House, the Centerpiece of our Historical Community. In addition donations will be used to purchase a professionally designed, locked museum display case to house the Albert Zahn Birds recently gifted to the Historical Society.

As you may know, the Town of Baileys Harbor purchased the Toft House in 2016 to serve as a home for the Historical society and the Community Association Information Center. You may feel that it is the Town's responsibility to make improvements as they own the building; however, the Town has never charged rent for our use of the house for displays and also provides the Historical Society with free office and storage space in the lower level of the town Hall.

In appreciation for this support, which is not received by historical societies in most other Wisconsin communities, we would like to make a substantial gift to the restoration of the Toft House so that it can be a charming and useful year-round venue for both visitors and Baileys Harbor residents.

Please join me in demonstrating the Historical Society's commitment to preservation of our community history and make a donation in any amount that you feel that you can afford. Please fill out the form below and mail it to Baileys Harbor Historical Society, P.O. Box 336, Baileys Harbor, WI 54202. Please enclose this form and indicate on your check that your donation is for the preservation fund.

With thanks,

Leeann Despotes, President, Baileys Harbor Historical Society

Please Print:

Name:_____

Address:_____

City:_____State:_____Zip Code:_____

Donation Amount:_____