



THE HISTORICAL BULLETIN

September 2018

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A newsletter by the Brown County Historical Society dedicated to the preservation of history in Brown County, Wisconsin.

2017 HISTORIC PRESERVATION AWARD WINNER

BAY BEACH AMUSEMENT PARK 1313 BAY BEACH ROAD, GREEN BAY

by Jerry Abitz

Bay Beach Amusement Park in Green Bay has been a source of entertainment for more than 100 years. Last season, Bay Beach saw 3.5 million visitors and, seemingly every year, new features are added as part of a \$20 million master plan to re-vamp the park and continue to bring visitors back.

The Park's beginnings, however, were often filled with big dreams, not all of which came to fruition or endured. In the early 1890s, in an area already popular for swimming and picnics, developers purchased overgrown land on the bay with the intention of building a resort.

By 1900, construction included a hotel, dancehall, bandstand, bathhouses and a long pier to accommodate excursion boat traffic from downtown Green Bay. One of the earliest amusements was the "Shoot the Chutes," where steam power was used to pull a flat-bottomed

boat filled with thrill-seekers to the top of a 50' tall ramp, then released to hurtle down and across the waters of the bay. The ride did well financially, and also was a trendsetter for future development.

Around 1905, Frederick Rahr (Rahr Brewing) and Frank Murphy (Morley-Murphy Company) purchased the "Bay View Beach"

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Top: Beach scene at Bay Beach in the 1930s. **Bottom:** President F.D. Roosevelt (1934; inside white circle) giving a speech in front of the Bay Beach pavilion at the Tercentennial, the 300th anniversary of Jean Nicolet's landing in Wisconsin. Both photos courtesy of Bay Beach Amusement Park's Facebook page.

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BAY BEACH AMUSEMENT PARK

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property and proceeded with additional development, including a roller coaster, carousel and, most notably, the Park's crown jewel, the 1909 Pavillion designed by Foeller & Schober which still survives today. The 300-by-75-foot pavilion had multiple sections: the west wing was a dance/reception hall which also was used for roller skating; the east wing was another dance hall; the center first floor was a bar room, restaurant and kitchen; and the center second floor was a ballroom/meeting room.

Added to this project was a long bathhouse and streetcar service via North Irwin Avenue, then known as Bay Beach Boulevard. No longer did patrons have to rely on access via a boat from downtown, but could ride to the Park by streetcar or automobile.

By 1920, however, the Park had fallen into disrepair, and was donated to the City of Green Bay. (This new civic responsibility necessitated the formation of the City Parks Department). In time, Bay Beach Park became a setting for civic events, including the August 9, 1934, appearance by President Franklin Roosevelt for the City's Tercentennial celebration, which attracted an estimated 100,000 people. A 1940 performance by the Glenn Miller Orchestra also brought a crowd.

While swimming at the Park's beach on the

bay always had been very popular, a report of the day suggests that this activity did not always mesh well with the nearby park activities. "In 1924, bathers at Bay View Beach were told they could not be permitted to parade about the park in swimming suits unless covered by a bathrobe or other clothing due to complaints by picnic parties."¹ By 1945, the beach had to be closed for health concerns due to water pollution.

During the 1940s, the Park rented amusement park rides each season. The 1950s saw a

BROWN COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

OUR MISSION – To preserve, present and share the heritage of Brown County history through preservation activities, exhibitions, educational programs and events.

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Top: The Zippin Pippin draws the crowds from near and far. *Photo by Jerry Abitz.* **Bottom:** The Magic Mountain Big Slide clearly appealed to kids "back then," just like today! *Photo courtesy of Bay Beach Amusement Park Facebook page.*

move to permanent rides, including the Merry-Go-Round and Train (1953), the "Big Eli" Ferris Wheel (1955), bumper cars (installed in the old roller skating hall in 1959), Magic Mountain Big Slide (1970), Scrambler (1977), Tilt-A-Whirl (1982), Scat (1985), and three kiddie rides purchased from Door County's Thumb Fun Amusement Park (1998).

More recently, the Park reached back to embrace its history. Nearly 75 years after the park's last roller coaster had become dilapidated and was demolished, and with much fanfare, the ride returned to Bay Beach with the 2010 acquisition and reconstruction of the Zippin' Pippin'. It was Elvis' favorite ride back in Memphis, Tennessee, and to emphasize that connection to the new Bay Beach ride, a sign was erected at a nearby parking space that declared, "Reserved for Elvis." The Zippin' Pippin' has been a huge success, helping to increase annual Park attendance to more than 3 million.

(continued on page 4)

A SHORT HISTORY OF BROWN COUNTY'S COURTHOUSES

by Clete Delvaux

"Near the bank of the Fox River in Allouez, a dignified monument marks the site of the first courthouse in Wisconsin.

"The memorial is probably more impressive than the building it commemorates (which Judge James Doty described as 'no better than a hovel'), but within the log walls of the crude structure were tried many cases that established the supremacy of civil law west of Lake Michigan."¹ On October 26, 1818, an Act of Congress divided this area into three counties: Brown, Crawford and Michillimackinac. The lack of a judicial system in the Michigan Territory west of Lake Michigan meant that the most important court cases required a trip to Detroit. To improve the system, Governor Lewis Cass stipulated that a seat of justice should be established within six miles of the mouth of the Fox River. He appointed 24-year-old James Doty to be a federal judge for this area.

Doty arrived in the area in the fall of 1824. A log house served as his courthouse in the village of Menomineeville, also known by the unflattering name of Shantytown. The monument is all that is left of the village. Doty may have chosen this site because,



A stone marker on northeast corner of George and Wisconsin streets in De Pere, Wisconsin, to mark "the site of the Brown County Courthouse from 1838-1954." Photo by Clete Delvaux.



A Proud Past — An Inspired Future

BCHS' CAPITAL CAMPAIGN UPDATE

The Brown County Historical Society preserves the past, but its future is in your hands.

Thank you to all our members and donors for your efforts to make our capital campaign a success. Your support has an enormous impact on the Historical Society's ability to preserve Hazelwood, publish *Voyageur* magazine, provide outstanding education programs and resources for the community.

Our campaign goal to reach 1.6 million by the end of 2018 is fast approaching. Reaching the campaign goal is crucial to our continued success. We have a way to go yet and ask for your continued support to help us reach this goal. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to each of you for your invaluable efforts and support. Without you, the fulfillment of our mission to preserve and share our community's history would not be possible.

Please contact Christine Dunbar today to make a campaign contribution.

in 1824, it was the location of Camp Smith, where a commander of Fort Howard had temporarily moved the fort's troops to higher ground to avoid the swarms of mosquitoes.

In 1836, when Michigan became a state, the area west of Lake Michigan became the Wisconsin Territory. One of the first acts of the Wisconsin territorial legislature on December 9, 1836, called on voters to select their county seats. The rivalry between the towns of Navarino and Astor was so intense "that in a quiet little election one Monday in January 1837, the voters of De Pere voted their city the County Seat of Brown County.

"Because there was no building in De Pere suitable for the new courthouse, the men from De Pere, one winter night, slid Judge James Duane Doty's little log court house in Menomineeville down onto the ice and moved it on the frozen Fox River to De Pere and ran a flag up over it. It was the [first] Brown County Courthouse."²

Some county officials who lived in Navarino and Astor realized their offices would now be in De Pere. They believed that the election had been stolen.

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BROWN COUNTY'S COURTHOUSES

(continued from page 3)

The county clerk walked to De Pere every morning to punish himself for not having taken the special election more seriously. He always carried a broom to work which he used in his office. But he could not leave it there overnight, he said, because "De Pere would steal it."³

Within a year, the log courthouse was replaced by a two-story frame building erected on the northeast corner of George and Wisconsin Streets at a cost of \$5740. The court chambers were on the second floor; the jail and the jailer's apartment on the first floor.

Soon an act of the territorial legislature permitted the sheriff and county clerk to conduct business in what would become Green Bay. This compounded the confusion and multiplied the dissatisfaction over the county seat squabbles.

De Pere remained the county seat for seventeen years. In 1854, the towns of Navarino and Astor quit squabbling, united as the borough of Green Bay, and maneuvered to hold another election to establish the county seat. De Pere was hopelessly outvoted in the rematch and the county seat was moved to Green Bay. The old courthouse remained the De Pere jail until March of 1871 when it burned to the ground. A stone marker erected in 1930 marks the site of that first Brown County Courthouse in De Pere.

Following the election, the county courthouse was moved into Green Bay's old Town Hall, a wooden structure on the present site of St. Willebrord's Church. The building had been used as a town gathering place and school since at least 1840 and contained a large room on the ground floor and four small ones on the top floor.

According to author Jack Rudolph,⁴ it never made a satisfactory courthouse so planning began almost immediately to construct a better one. Hassles over the design and cost of a new building delayed the project until, in 1857, a depression finally brought the whole project to a halt. The project was not revived until the close of the Civil War.

In 1864, "Three lots on Jefferson Street, between Walnut and Pine, were purchased from W.D. Colburn for \$2,600 to build the courthouse. In 1866, the Fort Howard firm of Schwartz and Kemnitz was awarded a \$40,000 contract to build the courthouse. The new building was a substantial, two-story affair with the lower part of stone and the upper floor of brick, crowned by a cupola."⁵

This courthouse served until 1910. In 1908, construction of the present courthouse was begun. It was designed by architect C.E. Bell, who modeled it after the State Capitol in Madison. The entire bill came to

\$371,850, including \$54,276 for the site, \$24,770 for the jail (the recently demolished jail was built at the same time) and furnishings. The new courthouse was formally occupied with considerable ceremony on October 8, 1910. The new courthouse "was the finest in the state and a source of great local pride."⁶



Sources —

¹Betsy Foley (ed.). *The Green Bay Area in History and Legend: Green Bay Press-Gazette articles by Jack Rudolph*. Green Bay, Wis.: Brown County Historical Society, 2004; p. 280.

²Harold T. I. Shannon, *Little Stories About Our Town Green Bay, Wis.*: published by the author, 1949; p. 45.

³Ibid.

⁴Jack Rudolph, "Courthouse Lives Up to Cost." *Green Bay Press-Gazette*, Sept. 10, 1966; p. 35.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid.



BAY BEACH AMUSEMENT PARK

(continued from page 2)

In 2011, volunteers with the Leadership Green Bay program researched and erected historical markers for each ride. In 2013, Friends of Bay Beach was formed to fundraise for the preservation, revitalization and expansion of the Park for future generations; their work has brought new modern rides, including the Sea Dragon (2014), the Bay Beast (2016), the Rockin' Tug (2016), and the Falling Star (2018). Now that the water pollution is being cleaned up, even the reopening of swimming at the park is back in the discussion stage, and it appears to be feasible.

With all the improvements, the historic Bay Beach Amusement Park is positioned for a strong future. Prices for the rides and other amenities remain very reasonable. Online ratings note this is a kid- and family-friendly park with short lines, no entry fees and free parking. On a recent visit to Bay Beach, its fantastic success was all the more evident by the smiling faces on people of all ages.

For their efforts, Friends of Bay Beach received a 2017 Historic Preservation Award from the Brown County Historical Society for its preservation activities.



Footnote —

¹*Green Bay Press-Gazette* 85th Anniversary Issue. June 29, 2000; p. 6 (quoting material originally published June 28, 1924).

Source —

Bay Beach. <http://www.wbay.com/content/news/Bay-Beach-lays-new-tracks-for-the-future-478120373.html>. Accessed August 3, 2018.

EVENTS

Join us for one or all!

IF TOMBSTONES COULD TALK CEMETERY WALK

~ WOODLAWN CEMETERY ~
WED. AND THURS., SEPT. 5, 6, AT 6:00P;
AND SAT., SEPT. 8; 4:00P

What *IF* tombstones could talk? What stories would they tell? Join us on the beautiful grounds of Woodlawn Cemetery as costumed re-enactors portray individuals representing all walks of life. The stories shared are based on the theme of conflict and compromise. Put on your walking shoes and bring your family to participate in this fascinating, outdoor theatrical program.



Timothy Howe portrayed by Bill Jones. Photo by Dale Devillers.

Reservations requested.

To reserve your spot as an individual or group, please call 920-437-1840 or email us at bchsvolunteer@netnet.net.

Cost: \$8/individuals; \$18/families
(2 adults with up to 4 children, up to age 16)

IF THESE HOMES COULD TALK ASTOR HISTORIC NEIGHBORHOOD WALKING TOUR

SAT., SEPT. 15, 10:00A-11:30A

Get an insider look at this historic neighborhood, from architectural gems to colorful tales of the people who lived and worked there. Homeowners have researched the history of their homes and look forward to sharing



Join us for the Astor Neighborhood Walking Tour. Photo by Tony La Luzerne.

their discoveries. We will step inside several homes and be inspired by some amazing gardens.

Sponsored by the Brown County Historical Society and Astor Neighborhood Association.

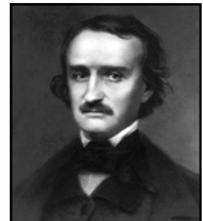
Reservations required.

Contact BCHS at 920-437-1840. \$15/person or get tickets online at Eventbrite (<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/if-these-homes-could-talk-astor-neighborhood-walking-tour-tickets-48617572468>)

HAUNTED HAZELWOOD

SATURDAYS, OCT. 6 AND 13
4:30-9:00P

When the sun sets in October, the Brown County Historical Society turns up the spooky thrills at Hazelwood. Ghosts, ghouls and supernatural specters come to life as visitors tour the house. Commune with ghosts in an old-fashioned séance, have your



palm read, your fortune told, and enjoy performances of chilling stories written by Poe and others. *Recommended for adults.*

Reservations are required. Cost: \$15/person

To reserve your spot as an individual or as a group, please call [920-437-1840](tel:920-437-1840) or email us at bchs@netnet.net.

For more information, check our website.

HAZELWOOD'S ETHNIC HOLIDAY TEA

FRI., NOV. 30, & SAT., DEC. 1, 1:00-3:00P

While the custom of afternoon tea originated in England, the beverage itself has ties around the world. Join us to celebrate tea's global roots with a menu inspired by our ethnic holiday event. Teatime guests will be treated to a relaxing cup of tea accompanied by savories and sweets, perfect for an international culinary tour.



Photo courtesy Kathy Kauth

Reservations are required. Cost: \$22/person

(See more Events continued on page 6, left column)

CALENDAR

EVENTS FOR 2018*

SEPTEMBER

Wednesday (6:00p), Thursday (6:00p) and Saturday (4:00p), Sept. 5, 6 and 8 – “If Tombstones Could Talk” Woodlawn Cemetery Walk. \$8/person.

Saturday, Sept. 15, 10:00a – “If These Homes Could Talk.” Sponsored by Astor Neighborhood Association and Brown County Historical Society. *Reservations required.* \$16/person.

OCTOBER

Thursday, Oct. 4, 6:00-9:00p – “Dining with the Dead.” \$75/person. Call [920-437-1840](tel:920-437-1840) for more details.

Saturdays, Oct. 6 and 13, 4:30-9:00p – Haunted Hazelwood. \$15/person.

NOVEMBER

Friday, Nov. 30, 1:00-3:00p – Hazelwood Holiday Tea, \$22/person.

DECEMBER

Saturday, Dec. 1, 1:00-3:00p – Hazelwood Holiday Tea. \$22/person.

Saturdays, Dec. 8 and 15, 11:00a-7:00p – Hazelwood’s Ethnic Holiday. Regular admission.

EVENTS

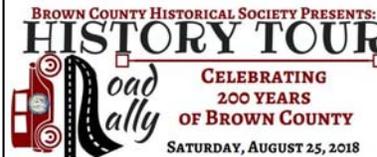
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AN ETHNIC CHRISTMAS SAT., DEC. 8 AND 15, 11:00A-7:00P

Brown County’s diverse ethnicity contributes to the special atmosphere of the holidays at Hazelwood’s Ethnic Christmas celebration. Today’s Christmas customs are derived from a wide array of inspirations, as plentiful as the immigrants who settled Wisconsin. Join us and explore ethnic traditions, crafts, foods and decorations. Share your traditions with us and start some new ones!

Cost – General admission. BCHS members – Free.

**Events can be added, changed or cancelled without notice. To make sure you stay informed, make our website one of your Favorites – www.browncohistoricalsoc.org!*



THANK YOU!

THANK YOU to all our participants, event partners and sponsors for making the History Tour Road Rally a success!

A special thanks to the Brown County Trust for Historic Preservation, PDQ Car Wash and Cliff Wall Automotive for their sponsorship. In addition, we would like to thank Star98 and DigiCOPY for being our media and printing sponsors. We could not have done this without you!



JOIN US!

IF YOU LIKE ...

...GETTING YOUR HANDS DIRTY

We are seeking volunteers to assist with the maintenance of Hazelwood’s Historic Site’s flower gardens. Our long-term goal is to plant gardens based on journals kept by the Martins as well as utilizing period available plants. Our current goal is to do a proper fall clean-up of the garden beds.

For more information, please contact Christine Dunbar by calling [920-437-1840](tel:920-437-1840) or send an email to bchs@nentnet.net.

...ACTING OR RESEARCHING

We are looking for researchers, actors and guides to join our Cemetery Walk committee. First meeting is in September. If interested, call for date ([920-437-1840](tel:920-437-1840)).

NEUFELD HOUSE — NEW ENTRY INTO HISTORIC PLACES

by Christine Dunbar

The Albert C. and Ellen H. Neufeld House, located at 204 West Whitney Street, was recently listed into the National Register and State Register of Historic Places.

Congratulations! to the Neufeld House owners Mary Ellen Martin Zellerbach and Patrick A. Martin, the two oldest grandchildren of Albert C. and Ellen H. Neufeld, for this distinguished honor. The owners grew up several blocks from the house and spent much time visiting their grandparents. They describe the house as a magical place. The fifth generation of family currently lives in the house.

A listing on the National Register of Historic Places is governmental acknowledgment of a historic district, site, building or property. For a property to be eligible for the National Register, it must meet at least one of the four National Register main criteria. Nominations contain a narrative section that provides a detailed

physical description of the property and justifies why it is significant historically with regard either to local, state, or national history. The house was nominated for its architectural significance.



Neufeld House—Whitney Street preservation efforts. Photo by Ric Larson of DigitalVision360, Green Bay; provided from the collections of Mary Ellen Martin Zellerbach and Patrick Albert Martin.

The Neufeld House, constructed in 1941, is an exceptional example of Georgian Revival Style. The Neufeld family worked with architect Clarence O Jahn, a partner in the firm of Foeller, Schober, Berners, Safford and Jahn, to design the house. It is one of the most prominent residential projects designed by the Green Bay firm. The home also is renowned for its remarkable designed interior and is described as one of Brown County's most architecturally intact and significant residential buildings. Discover more about this fascinating house and family at www.wisconsin-history.org/Records/NationalRegister/NR2563.

HISTORY NEWS FROM UW-GREEN BAY

by Heidi Sherman, Chair of History

We have exciting news to share with the BCHS members. The UW-Green Bay History Department was awarded the 2018 UW System Regents Teaching Excellence Award. Given once a year to just one department in the entire University of Wisconsin system (14 campuses) in any discipline, ours also is the first department in a humanities/social science field in many years to receive the award. In the words of the committee, we were selected for our "ability to inspire students with an enthusiasm for learning in general and for making interdisciplinary connections in the classroom and beyond." Our enrollment has increased steadily over the last five years, contrary to national trends of decline, in part due to our emphasis on innovative instruction and community outreach. The award comes with a \$5,000 stipend to be used for professional development in teaching.

The UWGB Viking House also has big news to report. The donors, Elspeth and Owen Christianson, visited for three days and helped raise a beautiful outdoor kitchen, with dragons carved into the gables and a clay bread oven. We additionally spruced up

the house's trim with a fresh coat of black Swedish pine tar paint to help protect it from the Viking-like wintery climate of our campus.

On August 1, we held a dedication ceremony

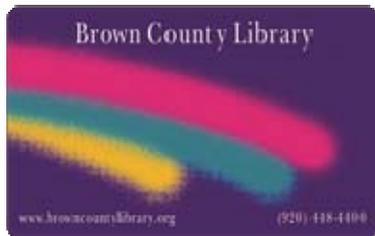


Viking kitchen dedication. Photo by Heidi Sherman.

in honor of Owen and Elspeth and Tom Olson, who made a handsome financial contribution for the house's rebuild on campus in honor of his father, Harry Olson. Two plaques, hung to the right of the Viking House's front door, now tell visitors about the Christiansons and Olsons and their donation.

The Viking House will host three visiting Viking artisans this fall: Daniel Serra (Viking culinary archaeologist from Sweden), Adrian Spendlow (Viking storyteller from England), and Douglas Swenson (Viking blacksmith from Moorhead, Minn.). To check out their classes, please visit <http://www.uwgb.edu/viking-house/> or follow us on Facebook: UWGB Viking House. You also may also contact Heidi Sherman, curator of the Viking House (920-465-5146).

SPOTLIGHT ON OUR NEIGHBORS —



BROWN COUNTY LIBRARY

30TH ANNUAL LOCAL HISTORY SERIES

THURSDAYS
SEPT. 25 THROUGH NOV. 1
NEW TIME! 6:15-7:45P

This year's series will focus on the history and topics about Brown County in recognition of the 200th anniversary of the establishment of the County in 1818.

Sept. 27 — "Ancient Native Cultures of Brown County" by Bob Birmingham, retired Wisconsin State archeologist

- Oct. 4 — "Brown County's Courthouse and County Seats" by Mary Jane Herber, Local History librarian
- Oct. 11 — "Alexis de Tocqueville in Green Bay" by Jerrold Rodesch, retired professor of History at UWGB
- Oct. 18 — "Behind the Walls: 120 Years of the Green Bay Correctional Institution" by Michael Telzrow, director of the Wisconsin Veterans Museum, Madison
- Oct. 25 — "Train Tracks to Green Bay: The Story of Our Railroad Heritage" by Bob Lettenberg, Education director, National Railroad Museum
- Nov. 1 — "Brown County Rocks!! The Geological History of Brown County" by John A. Luczaj, professor in the Dept. of Natural and Applied Sciences at UWGB



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515 PINE STREET, GREEN BAY, WI

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visit www.browncountylibrary.org.

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Adult \$6.00 • Seniors (60+) \$5.00
Children (5-17) \$4.00 • Children under 5 are FREE.
AAA and Time Traveler discounts available.

ADMISSION

See details for events on page 5 and 6 of this issue.
Tours, programs and teas scheduled at your convenience
by appointment throughout the year.

HAZELWOOD HISTORIC HOUSE MUSEUM

BCHS offices — 8:30a-4:00p, weekdays
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HOURS for
JUNE — SEPTEMBER 2018

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