



Golf, anyone? Read about the surprise that's coming in a future issue

Coloma Area Historical Society Newsletter

January 2009

CAHS P.O. Box 245 Coloma, WI 54930

Happy New Year

With all of your resolutions fully committed (some probably already broken) we at the CAHS wish you the best in 2009.

Why not resolve right now to send us that family story you have been thinking about.

If you don't share it with the world then you take it with you.

As always, thanks for your support.

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"A Pioneer Wisconsin Team." This postcard is postmarked from Coloma, WI, December 25, 1908. It was sent by Grace to Mrs. Arthur Stump, Normal, Illinois. Was the Coloma Post Office really open on Christmas day?

One wonders what a team like that would cost.



Because You Asked....

Brian, a private pilot, noticed an airfield on his airways charts located northwest of Coloma and asked if we know anything about it and its history. Glad you asked Brian the following is extracted from a newspaper article written by Albin in 1967.

The field had its beginning in the late 1930's when Kenyon Follett was flying an old Aeronca C-3 from a private strip on 40 acres he owned northwest of the village. Several other local flyers used the strip until World War II grounded all private aircraft.

After the war, Follett deeded the land to the village and applied to the Civil Aeronautics Commission for aid in constructing a municipal airport there.

The location was ideal. There were no obstructions in the approaches and the deal went through. The federal government agreed to pay half with the state and village each paying one fourth.

Eighty more acres were purchased and added to Follett's original 40 making a 120-acre field. Trees had to be cleared and land leveled. Smith and Gibson from Portage Engineering were the architectural designers, and Pagel of Almond did the initial grading. Elmer Payne, of Coloma, was the construction supervisor. The Coloma Municipal Airport came into being in 1947.



The first plane to fly out of the strip that later became Coloma Municipal Airport is shown here with its owner Kenyon Follett in 1939. The Aeronca C-3 had a 35 horsepower motor and was known as the flying bathtub.

Three runways, each 200 feet wide and up to 3,100 feet in length, were laid out in a three directional pattern, crossing each other at about a third the length of a runway.

Following the war, a surge in private flying caused flying schools to pop up all over the country. Webster Aviation of Waukesha was one. They had the services of ex-navy flyer Floyd Smith of Coloma Corners. When that company sought to expand its operations, Smith moved back to Coloma to open a branch office here.

Webster pulled out shortly and Smith, Follett, and Condon incorporated to form their own school in 1948, the Midstate Airways, an accredited school approved for training under the G. I. bill. Smith was chief instructor of the school and many local people learned to fly during this period. The school used the following planes; an Aeronca L-2 M, a Piper Cub, a Supercruiser and an Aeronca Champ. Gilbert King set up an aircraft and engine repair shop on the field and things boomed for about two years.

Smith went back to college in 1949 and King moved his business shortly afterward to Juneau. Ken Chatfield, who started flying in 1946 and got his license in 1948, began a rental service there.

Meanwhile the field served as operating base for several crop dusting groups and private pilots used it regularly. Resorters found it handy and a number of business execs used it often.

The village didn't concern itself too much with the field and a general lack of interest set in over a number of years and the local pilots either stopped flying or moved away.

It did enjoy a period of refurbishment and high interest in the early 1960's when the Coloma Flying Club was formed. Much work was done on the field and buildings and a number of planes called it home for several years until it again went into a long slow decline. 1967 saw its last facelift with new runway markers, weather sock, fresh paint on the buildings and then another era of decline.

On a personal note, your editor owned a 1937 Aeronca Chief in the early 1950's. It was a retired Army Signal Corp ship and more fun to fly than a kite

Please keep your questions coming; our research staff loves the challenge.

Renew your membership today and stay connected

=> It's so easy using this form <=

Mail this form with your check to: CAHS PO Box 245 Coloma, WI 54930

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State _____ Zip _____

Email: _____ Phone _____

Please circle one: Individual \$10 Family \$15 Junior \$5 Individual Life \$125 Family Life \$225

The First Two Weeks in August

By William Schmidt

Editor's note: In this, the last, of Bill's reminiscences of his youthful Pleasant Lake vacation days, he describes visits to Coloma and Westfield and sadly ends his story of *The First Two Weeks in August*.

About every other day or so we would go to Coloma or Westfield after breakfast dishes were done and the cottage was "picked up"...Aunt Edie and mother did housekeeping just like home. Coloma was four miles north on highway 51 and Westfield was nine miles south. Coloma's stores and business faced the railroad with Main Street in between. The Coloma Mercantile was the most pretentious and prominent building that also housed the Peoples Bank, a one story red brick structure with huge windows. The "Mere" and the Bank were owned and operated by the Follett family. A two story gray building prominently displayed a sign above the second floor "A.G. Hamilton Furniture—Undertaking—Jewelry". There were the usual assortments of gas stations, barbershops, and "home cooking" cafes. Best remembered was the ROYAL, hardly twenty feet square, but its clientele came from far and wide.



The cottage that Bill built on Pleasant Lake in 1949-50

was purchased by Frank Calugi, a Chicagoan, turned local promoter and realtor. Calugi had the depot sawed into several sections and then reassembled and converted into his home on the southeast corner of Pleasant Lake near Sunset Point Road.

To walk into the Coloma Mercantile characterized the general store described in folklore and nostalgia, a general store in every sense of the word---squeaky wooden floors, high ceilings covered with embossed metal, big windows for natural light, floor to ceiling shelving with every necessity, groceries, meats, clothing (all ages) dry goods, hardware, pots, pans, and household needs...After the railroad stopped running, the railroad depot across from A.S. Hamilton's

There wasn't much of interest for kids in Coloma, and sometimes we would go to Westfield the same day. The best remembered business was EUBANK'S DEPARTMENT STORE. The catchy small town slogan, a play on words was painted on the side of the building on the corner of Main and Second Street, "SHOP HERE AND EUBANK THE DIFFERENCE". They had lots of groceries, clothing and, "kid's stuff". The aroma of fresh ground coffee permeated the air. Whole banana stems hung in the produce department...and there were no fancy display fixtures...piles of clothing lay on the big open counters, Eubank's had the best selection of trinkets and toys kids liked ...I don't think the folks ever kept track of how much they saved so that they could "bank the difference." Across the street on the corner, dad would stop for his visit to Schwark's Furniture Store and talk shop about the furniture business

Waldo's Drug Store was next to Schwark's. They had lots of souvenirs, more kid's stuff and post cards of the area. Mother would get the post cards dash off a few lines, and go to the post office next to the bank to post them to the folks back home. Before we would go back to the cottage, our always-generous dad would take all of us to Waldo's for sundaes or malts (15 to 25 cents). Just off Main Street there was the Hotel Hammond. In later years, when I was building my cottage, we stayed there (mother, Winnie, Art, Chris, and I) on Fourth of July eve. That had to be the hottest summer night on record. None of us slept and were wringing wet with sweat. We all looked like wrecks the next morning. Rev. Gohlke had a pastor friend in Westfield at the Immanuel Church. One evening we went for a visit at the parsonage and a bad thunderstorm came up. Dad and Rev Gohlke were concerned about getting back to the cottage on "Sand Road", but we made it probably because of the presence of our good pastor and devout man of the cloth...Rainy, cloudy, or cool days meant less time to be in the Lake so we would go on hikes and explore the woods and hills around the lake...Rev. Gohlke teased and "warned" us about "anikams", giant monsters he said were described in the Old Testament, who inhabited the woods around Pleasant Lake.



Just like all kids we hated rainy days on summer vacation days and confinement in the cottage while the folks played cards...Sometimes dad or a neighbor would gather up a bunch of the restless kids from the surrounding cottages and take us to Pleasant Inn or to Coloma for an ice cream cone. Slowly, inevitably (as Uncle Dell used to say, "All good things must come to an end") the fun-filled days waned and eroded the "first two weeks in August". On the Saturday night before we had to return to Beloit, and later Rockford, a bunch of the cottage neighbors would gather for a good by potluck picnic. The kids vowed eternal friendships (I remember Hal and Pal ????.). With all good child-like intentions, the friendships survived no more than a few summers as we all grew up and our lives took separate paths. Sunday noon was check out time, and we hated to get up earlier than usual, to pack suitcases, gather

Sunset on Pleasant Lake from Bills Scrapbook keepsakes, stones from the Lake and "pick up the cottage." But the big treat before departing was a home-cooked chicken dinner prepared by Mrs. Ploetz served in the Pleasant Inn dining room (adults 50 cents--kids 25) the dining room with the spotless white tablecloths. The menu--chicken, gravy, sliced tomatoes, mashed potatoes, cabbage slaw, green beans, homemade bread, and apple or rhubarb pie (with ice cream if you chose at no extra cost.) Preparation had started at 4:00 am on a cook stove in summer heat, and vegetables were from the garden back of Pleasant Inn near the icehouse. Then came the sad departure. Mr. Ploetz would give dad a couple of cigars; we exchanged good-bye and "See ya next year"... We headed up the road where the cottage roofs were below the grade of the road, and turned on to "Sand Road" where we could take one last look at the Lake, passed the limestone bluff and on to Highway 51 stop sign across from the church and cemetery...and the landmark corner with the cluster of signs pointing to Pleasant Lake. The right turn onto old 51 between the two farms on the corners would take us to Beloit. Hopefully we would be back by five o'clock.... The signs of the season were ominous...There had been a tinge of fall in the air I wanted to ignore. Even in vacationland, the Coloma Merc and Eubank's had been advertising "Back to School" clothes and school supplies...All of these sent a ripple of reality: IT was going to

happen.... BACK TO SCHOOL, the day after Labor Day... about two weeks away...Another first two weeks in August at Pleasant Lake had slipped into the black hole of time.

As we left Westfield, I would think ahead of the railroad underpass in Portage and ask dad to "toot the horn"... If we took highway 13 out of Madison, it meant we would stop at "The Bungalow" on the west side of Beloit for a Sunday night hamburger. When we pulled into the driveway at 1353 Yates Avenue in Beloit, the lawn had overgrown... neighbors would come and welcome us back.. I don't remember any tears, but the day would come when there would be no more family times and togetherness the "first two weeks in August" at Pleasant Lake.

I hope you have enjoyed Bill's sharing his First Two Weeks in August with us. Several folks from the Beloit, Rockford, and Chicago area have told us how their memories were revived by his description of the drive up to Pleasant Lake. Kathy said she remembered every landmark in his narrative when some years later she came with her parents to the lake. Thanks William Schmidt for putting your words on paper for us to enjoy.

Mini Golfing on Pleasant Lake

The picture on the masthead of this issue of the CAHS Newsletter shows some well-dressed ladies enjoying a leisurely game of golf at the Pleasant Lake Miniature Golf Course. In an up coming issue we will have a story and several pictures of the course and how it came into existence in the early part of the last century. I have asked many older people about it and have not found anyone who remembers it. If you have memories of it, have heard of it, and /or have pictures of it let me know, we would love to include any first hand knowledge in the article.

One of our members supplied this picture and is writing a story about the course and how she discovered the granddaughter of the man who built and operated it. The granddaughter is the source of the many pictures and detailed descriptions of the construction of the course including details of each hole. This was no halfhearted effort, this course was beautifully laid out and the construction was first class. The elaborate bridge in the center of the photo connects two sets of holes over a water trap and a small stream. The area was completely fenced and landscaped. Take careful notice of the overhead electric lights that were run from the owner's private generator.

The course was located across 3rd Drive, east of the old Pleasant Lake Inn, between Czech Drive and Czech Lane. The Inn is clearly shown in several of the pictures.

The tooth fairy (one of our members who goes by several alias's) has pledged up to \$250.00 toward insulation for the Spalding Store—provided we receive matching funds. If we receive \$25.00, the occasion the offer. Send

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**The Tooth Fairy's
Offer has been accepted and matched by
Robert and Elaine King**

Thanks to their generosity the Spalding Store will soon get a set of very warm "Long Johns" to keep it cozy for many winters to come. Thank them when you see them and look for a thank you article in the February Issue of the CAHS Newsletter

Please see the Special Supplement to this Newsletter

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Coloma Business Values in 1926

The following was extracted from the 1926 edition of the *Mercantile Agency Reference Book* by R. G. Dun, later Dun and Bradstreet.

Coloma, Waushara Co., Wisconsin Pop 309 A banking town

Name	Business	Notes	Estimated Pecuniary Strength	General Credit Rating
Baker-Upham Co	Lumber	Br in Hancock	\$20 to 35,000	High
Bartz, H. F.	Gen Merch		\$10 to 20,000	High
Cochrane, T. H.	Seed/Prod	Br in Portage	\$125 to 200,000	High
Coloma Creamery	Cream		\$2 to 8,000	Good
Coloma Drug Co.	Drugs	not inc.	\$200 to 800,000	High
Coloma Mercantile	Gen Merch	not inc.	\$200 to 800,000	High
Coloma Produce Co	Prod/Implts		\$10 to 20,000	Good
Coloma Telephone	Utility		\$3 to 5,000	Fair
Cotton, Lee H.	Gen Merch	near Coloma	\$2 to 8,000	Fair
Curran Bros	Hardware		\$5 to 10,000	Good
Follett Co.	Agl Impts, Gar, W/R	Branches	\$35 to 50,000	High
Gould,	Gen Merch		\$5 to 10,000	Fair
Hughes, A	Furn		\$1 to 2,000	Good
Hughes/Hamilton	Undertaking		\$10 to 20,000	Good
Kloss, A. K.	Meat/Groc		Less than \$500	Limited
Machan, J.	Bsmith/Gar		\$2 to 8,000	Fair
Maynard, F. E.	Harn/Shoes		\$2 to 8,000	Fair
Premo, Ed	Hotel		\$1 to 2,000	Fair
Runnels, S. C.	Hardware		\$10 to 20,000	High
Spalding, J. F.	Gen Merch		Less than \$500	Limited
Tarkin, Wm. E.	Restaurant		Less than \$500	Limited

Taking a rough average of the "Estimated Pecuniary Strength" it would appear that the village businesses strength aggregated to some \$1,330,000 (the range being from a low of \$634,000 to a high of \$2,026,000) and overall had a credit rating of good. I'll bet that's not bad for 1926.

I was shocked to see Coloma Drug Company listed at \$200,000 to \$800,000, as was the Coloma Mercantile. That was a real value for those days if you look at the next paragraph.

I used an internet based inflation calculator to see what one dollar in 1926 would be worth today and found that we would need \$11.79 to purchase the same amount today. This surprised me; I thought I had seen a 10 to 1 increase just since the early 1950's. I was also surprised that there was not a Coloma Coffeehouse in operation; it must be one of our newer businesses.

A Note From The President

Thanks to all for their contributions in 2008. Be they great or be they small, they all helped us get where we are!!!

For your 2009 resolution, why not consider writing a “tidbit” for the newsletter. We all feel that our story is not significant, but consider how much you enjoy those written by others. Our newsletter will only be as good as we make it!

Check out our website at www.colomahistorical.org Mark and Vicki Botner continue to do wonderful things on it. Thank them if you get a chance.

Spalding Store progress continues. We are submitting our grant application to the USDA. It looks possible that we could receive a 35% match for our heat/AC and security system. Our dedicated building committee plans to make use of the portable heater loaned us by Kerschners to complete the attic insulation, the back room walls, etc. this winter. The front windows are completed, but not yet installed.

Our museum committee has met and will soon be creating a wish list of times we’d like to have in the store. We’d like to open it in May so all the school classes can visit before school is out!

Our archiving group continues to work on a large obituary file. We’ve indexed a number of scrapbooks given us. Come visit us on Thursday morning. We’re excited about our progress.

We want to start planning for a “grand opening”. What ideas do you have? Our meetings are the second Monday of each month at 7:00pm at the Community Center. Come join us!

Happy 2009 to all!

Thank you all for your support this past year.

Sue

Little Tidbits from my memory

This is a new column for the newsletter. We asked in the November issue if people would be interested in contributing some small personal memory and reading other folks tidbit. Several of you said, “Yes”, but I have not received anything

No tidbit this issue. Everyone seems to enjoy reading them, but no one sent one in. Without your input the CAHS Newsletter can become very thin.

The Bathhouse is a Disaster!

In the spring of 1921 an article in the Hancock-Coloma News described the condition of the bath house on the north shore of Pleasant Lake as being so disreputable that it “is unfit for human usage!” To correct the situation a fundraising was started with the aim of building a new bathhouse and destroying the existing one. The following article appeared in the August 5, 1921 issue.

Nice New Bath House At Pleasant Lake

These are the names of the donors who have helped, by their money, to erect the neat bathhouse for the lady bathers at Pleasant Lake. None have donated more than \$1.00 and a few 50c but smaller donations will be gratefully accepted: H.B. Breeden, R. W. Drew, F. A. Bartz, Earl Hamilton, W. M. Smith, Gust Graichen, E. Yach, John Semrau, Wm. Verthein, Verona Premo, Ed. Premo, L. E. Smith, David Kennetz, Herb Koenecke, F. E. Tullar, Bernice Caves, F. Jacobs, C. Kreuger, A. Dietz, Leonard Twist, E. Gould, W. A. Roblier, H. R. Shorey, A. Borsack, V. Follett, H. H. Bartz, Agnes Parkin, W. F. Curran, F. E. Maynard, O. Schloemer, W. A. Graichen, H. F. Bartz, A. K. Kloss, James Laing, J. D. Hollister, Guy Love, Matilda Foss, H. L. Rehkamp, Royallynn

Adams, W. E. McGowan, Erve Caves, Alvina Strohschein, Herm Williams, Otto Johnson, I. O. Lane, Guy Gibson, Jesse Allen, Tony Urban.
 Frank Ploetz donated the use of the ground where the building stands and also quite a bit of work.



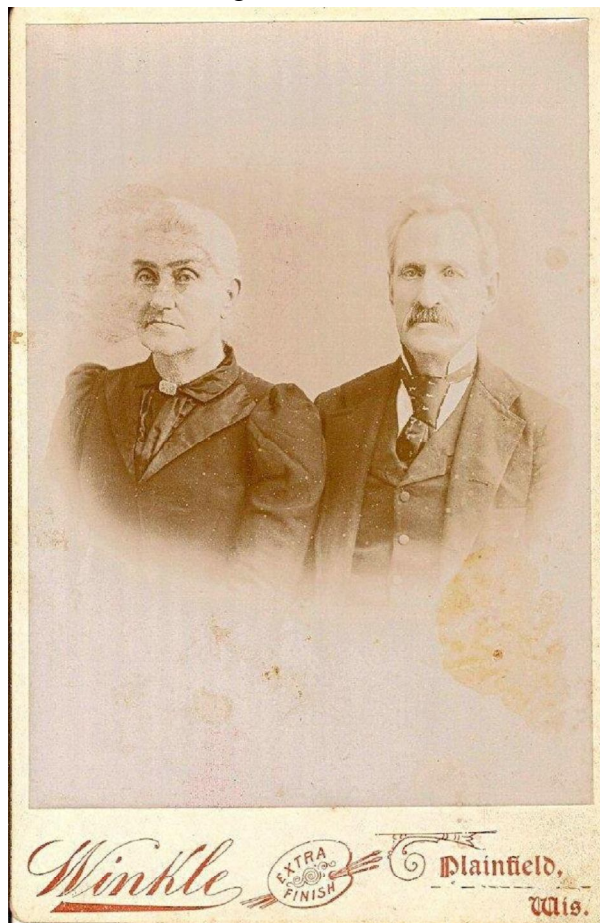
The one on the left is the men's, right the ladies

Baker-Upham Co. discounted the lumber bill as their share. D. Follett hauled the lumber, and the work was donated by several friends. The building is now nearly completed and is furnished with hat, coat and clothing racks, a mirror donated by Mrs. Borsack and bracket lamp by Miss Lizzie Uher. E. Gould furnished brooms and match boxes for both bath houses and a lamp for the men's house. They are still \$5 short on the amount needed to pay for the new building. Anyone wishing to assist in this worthy cause may send the amount, more or less, to Mrs. E. Gould who has carried the work of collecting to nearly a successful close. As soon as you have donated your bit all we ask is your care and assistance in keeping the building as neat as possible. Throw no waste paper or articles about as we have no caretaker and cannot afford one there.

Please note that the old bathhouse was "unfit for human use", but this article clearly points out that the men will now use the old one.

A short note on the Spaldings

We did a quick genealogy search on the web to see what we might find on the James Spalding family (owners of our Spalding Store.) To our surprise the line has been traced back to England in 1613. There are the



usual anomalies in the records as one comes to expect in any genealogy research. His full name is given as James Farley Spalding, but hers is Augusta Amanda Beckwith (not Beckworth as I have seen in other places.) These records give his birth information as born 7 September 1824 at Wilton, New Hampshire. Augusta was born 3 July 1829 at Walpole, New Hampshire and they married on 5 July 1849. A son, James Nelson Spalding was born on 22 August 1867 at Coloma, Wisconsin.

Does anyone know more about James Nelson or other children and grandchildren? If so, please share it with us.

Special Supplement to the January CAHS Newsletter

JUST IN__ as we were going to press (well, email anyway) we learned that the Tooth Fairy's offer of up to \$250.00 to be used for insulating and other related work on the Spalding Store has been fully matched by **Robert and Elaine King**. We are delighted and overwhelmed with their generosity. This major \$500.00 task can now get underway. It, coupled with the superb windows and temporary heating system, will allow us to make progress in the building during this typical Wisconsin winter.

A huge Christmas season Thank You to the Kings for this fabulous present!

I chatted with the Tooth Fairy when the offer was first made and ask why the offer was set at \$250.00 and was told that the estimate for the job was \$500.00 so it seemed appropriate to offer half and let others match.

Our next major project is to acquire the necessary heating, ventilation, and air conditioning required before the building can be properly used for storing or displaying artifacts. We have an estimate for that work at about \$5,000. The materials cost for finishing the interior of the back room is estimated to be \$600. This begs the question: "Are there other Tooth Fairies out there who would be willing to pledge all or part of that amount, either as a tax deductible donation or as a tax deductible matching grant pledge?"

Would one or more like to pledge the cost of the ductwork, or the furnace, or the ac unit, or even the electrical and plumbing portion?

Is it possible that we could make the first, major milestone just a beginning? Could our Tooth Fairy or another Tooth Fairy leave something more under the CAHS pillow? Or perhaps you might like to offer a donation in a love one's name or that of a friend or show your personal pride by offering it in your name.

The really important thing now is to make this celebration the first of a series. Imagine your comfort and pleasure next Chicken Chew when you can hangout in air-conditioned joy while checking out the contents of the Spalding Store. I'll bet then you will say: "Worth every penny of it!"

YES, I want to help the CAHS Spalding Store Renovation Project.

If you would like to make a contribution, set up a matching grant, or offer another form of help. Please contact any of the following using your method of choice.

- By mail: CAHS P.O. Box 245 Coloma, WI 54930
- By email: Sue Semrow (president) wormes@uniontel.net
Frank Robertson (VP) frankbr@ix.netcom.com
Mary Jane Bandt (T) mjbandt@uniontel.net
- By phone: Please respect the hours for these home phones
- | | |
|-----------------|----------------|
| Sue Semrow | (715) 228-2371 |
| Frank Robertson | (770) 722-8305 |
| Mary Jane Bandt | (715) 228-5761 |

More late news...

Chili Creators and Chili Tasters are wanted for the 2nd annual "Coloma Chili Cook-off Contest and Chili Supper" (commonly known as the famous CCCCCS) on January 24, 2009, you better mark your calendar because you don't want to miss this one, burp!

The Coloma Area Historical Society (CAHS) will host the 2nd annual "CCCCCS" on January 24.

The public is invited to the Anna Follett Community Center, located in the central Coloma business district, between 4:30 and 6:30 p.m. for you to serve up your sumptuous old family receipt or to be served any of the contestant's chili that catches your eye or nasal glands and with sufficient quarters to support your support your favorite "Chili Champ."

Unfortunately, last years winning chef, Ardent Bandt, a well-known local underworld character, is still under investigation by the WCCCVA (also known as the Wisconsin Chili Cook-off Contest Validation Authority) for partnering with Wally King, also known as, the brick man and money exchanger, to broker bricks for quarters into the Bandt bowl. There was a far superior southern chili in the contest that was just ignored by the biased money judges in the contest.

However while the National Chili Authority sorts this out, you are invited to enjoy Chili host, Steve McDiarmid of the Coloma Coffeeshouse will enliven the evening with his own brand of humor as last year's chili cook-off winners defend their titles against the newest batch of Chili cooks.

Everyone is invited to contribute and sample each cook's outstanding chili recipe and then vote for their favorite by using an unlimited number of quarters. The Chili Champ will be determined by the cook with the most quarters at the end of the festivities, so chili tasters are advised bring lots of them. Cheer them on, as they stand ready to roll up their sleeves and serve up a batch of their favorite chili to sample. All proceeds of the evening will go to the Coloma Area Historical Society.

For the price of admission, there will also be plenty of tasty traditional chili and fixings for the heartiest of appetites and door prizes for the lucky ones. Dessert bars for the sweet tooth and beverages will be available to finish off the meal.

For more information call Pat Pintar at 715-228-2095 or check out the CAHS website at: www.colomahistorical.org.