



This Card says "Mecan River" near Coloma. See question in this issue.

Coloma Area Historical Society Newsletter

March 2009

CAHS P.O. Box 245 Coloma, WI 54930

www.colomahistorical.org

Tooth Fairy's Challenge Is MET! AGAIN

Once again, a most generous donor and his daughter's family fully matched and even exceeded the CAHS Tooth Fairy's \$500 matching grant donation.

Please read the story in this issue

Will another Tooth Fairy be slipping something under the CAHS pillow?

Could it be you?

In this issue:

- Tooth Fairy matched again
- A note from the President
- 2nd Annual Chili Cook-off
- Because you asked...
- Some nice letters to us
- Caught On The Web
- Little Tidbits from my memory
- Spalding Store update

↓ Please read on

Pleasant Lake has always been known for its excellent fishing. It may have reached its peak while Jerry Polacek owned Sunset Point Resort as demonstrated by this card.

Kenyon Follett

We just learned that Kenyon Follett, a strong supporter and believer in the CAHS, passed away due to heart failure in Tucson, Arizona, on February 18th. Plans are being formulated to hold a memorial in Coloma sometime during the first week of July. We will provide more information about Mr. Follett's life in Coloma and his memorial in a future newsletter. Please join us in offering our condolences to the Follett family on their and our loss.



(67) MAIN BUILDING AT POLAGEK'S ON PLEASANT LAKE, WESTFIELD, WIS.

Any idea who caught this one?

Because You Asked....

A reader sent us the post card used in our masthead this month and asked if we knew of any families living near the Mekan River and who this lady might have been. Since we are the proud owners of a copy of the "Coloma Area Sesquicentennial" book, we were able to do a little research into that area's early residents. As to the identity of the lovely lady, we will need to rely on our readers to provide that information.

Sue Semrow and Mary Jane Schmudlach wrote a very good description of that part of the Town of Richford in the book under the title "History of Forest City." Seems Forest City was located near the dam on Mekan River Springs Headwaters on County Road GG and Cottonville Avenue, about four miles east of Coloma. The city was platted in 1855 and at its peak it had a schoolhouse, gristmill, a shoemaker, the dam, sawmill, and a doctor's office. An estimated 50 families live within a three-mile radius of Forest City.



Can you identify this lady?

Karl Gottlieb Schmudlach, a Prussian immigrant operated a hardware store in Coloma before moving to Forest City and building a large, ornate home to house his wife, Louisa Sophia (Butt) Schmudlach and their 10 children. This house is located on the Mekan River and since 2007 Jim and Rose Weisenberger have owned it. The Weisenberger's have completely restored the house and outbuildings, as close as possible, to their original elegance. It is truly a work of love.

Sue and Mary Jane list the following names as families living in the Forest City area in the early years: Potter, Danner, Nulton, Schmudlach, Wedell, Runnels, Jennerman, Berg, Pomplun, Vierson, Bushke, Wacholtz, Bruch, Monroe, Dixon, Schubert, Buchanan, Goodwin, Kemnetz, Nelson, Heller, Bloede, Lipke, Thompson, Bartel, Otto, Cox, and others.

The dam has since washed out and been replaced with a bridge over the Mekan River and many of the older homes has been lost. A number of residences and farms still remain and new ones are built in what is known as the "ghost town" of Forest City.

If you can, please tell us this lovely lady's name. Just in case you are 'green with envy' that we have a copy of the sesquicentennial book and you don't, a few copies are still available from the CAHS. I wouldn't wait too long, however, as copies are not all that abundant.

Send your question or questions to us at frankbr@ix.netcom.com and we will do our best to research it to your satisfaction.

Remember, if you receive your copy of the CAHS Newsletter by email, you must tell us when your email address changes and of course you must keep us informed of any postal address change if you receive it through the mail.

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

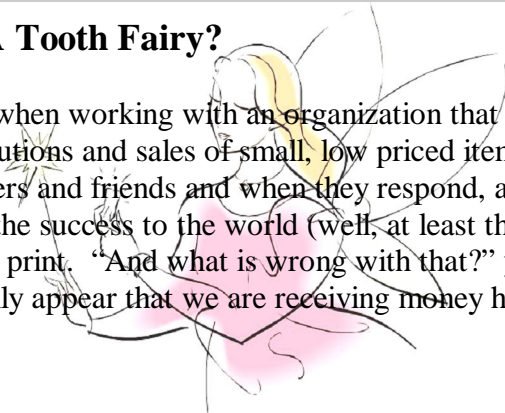
Shazam! Lightning Strikes Again!

No sooner had the Tooth Fairy placed a \$500 'matching grant challenge' on the table than Milton Busse stepped up and accepted the challenge fully matching it! Then, just to make sure they had our total attention, daughter MaryJo (Busse) McKay and her husband David McKay added an additional \$100 to the pot! David and MaryJo live in Appleton and are life members of the CAHS. Mr. Busse is remembered for the half century he served the area in various positions with the Peoples Bank of Coloma and then with the Coloma M&I Bank after its purchase of the Peoples Bank. He retired in 1982 as President of the Coloma M&I Bank and continued as Chairman of the Board and as president of the M&I Bank of Westfield. He and his wife, Evelyn Hanson Busse, moved to Oshkosh in 1991 where he currently resides. Mrs. Busse passed away in 2001. These matching funds mean that the CAHS now has an additional \$1,100 toward the cost of getting the Spalding Store into a condition where it can begin serving this area again.

These are not the kind of economic times that a tax-exempt organization expects to be very successful in their fund raising. Add to that the fact that the CAHS is only going into it's second full year, has a relatively small membership, with very limited exposure and you can begin to appreciate the magnitude of the generosity of the King's, the Busses', and the McKay's and those 'not to be exposed' Tooth Fairies. Support of this magnitude demands a Thank You with more elegant words than this writer can muster. He can, however, paraphrase Churchill's very gracious words during another time: "Seldom have so few, done so much, for so many, and in such a totally unselfish manner." Please, each of you, accept our deep appreciation for your helping the CAHS through its early life and helping it establish a firm foundation from which it can serve this beautiful area of Wisconsin and be a reminder to our children of their heritage.

Where Does One Find A Tooth Fairy?

One walks an interesting line when working with an organization that depends almost totally for its financial support from contributions and sales of small, low priced items. One hopes for great 'grass roots' support from its members and friends and when they respond, as ours have, it makes one's heart swell and we announce the success to the world (well, at least that portion of the world that reads this Newsletter) in large print. "And what is wrong with that?" you ask. Nothing is really wrong, it's just that it can easily appear that we are receiving money hand over fist and don't really



need any more. That is the interesting line, how to celebrate success without diminishing the magnitude of what we are trying to accomplish and money we still need. If you enjoy leaving money under a deserving pillow, we would like to help you do it. No previous experience required.

The 2nd Annual CAHS Chili Cook-off Winners Are...

The real winners were, of course, all the one hundred thirty some attendees who got to enjoy all that wonderful chili and fixings. This hugely successful event sponsored each year by the CAHS drew



The Contestants with Steve

ten competing teams and individuals. Contestants were: Donna LaVore, Arden Bandt (the defending champ), Tom Pintar, Karl Zimmerman, Deb Zuehlke, Jean and Norb Potter, Ralph Sadowski, Ed Burrows, Susi Kuckuk, and the National Exchange Bank (NEBAT) ladies—Linda Lehman, Karen Giese, Maxine Geers, Val Schroeder, and Sue Kopach. Next year we are

considering offering valet parking, as people arrived commenting on the fact that there were no parking places left. Voting was done by putting quarters in your favorite's money jug and the one with the most quarters was declared the winner. To make sure everything was on the level, Waushara County Sheriff Dave Petersen sold quarters 3 for a \$1.00, while Steve McDiarmid emceed the entire event in his always-engaging fashion.

And the winner is: First place went to Deb Zuehlke, the new CAHS Chili Champ! She must be one good chili cook to beat out this talented group. A Bevy of Beautiful Bankers, that lovely team from National Exchange Bank, swept into second place! Way to go girls, but wouldn't one think the bankers would have the most quarters? Dropping from first place last year, but still high in the finishers, was that well-known Coloma bon vivant, Arden Bandt finishing in third place.

The children were treated to piñata's full of candy and other goodies and played "old fashioned" games.

Two big questions came up... How do I sign up to be a contestant next year and where are we going to find a place large enough to hold next year's crowd (with parking!) Since we will, no doubt, have many more contestants next year and even more attendees, location may become a big question. How big is your kitchen?

As always, we thank all the volunteers, contestants, attendees, and especially Steve and Sheriff Peterson for their help and support. Now just wait until next year...



And the Winners are....

A Note From The President

I want to express my personal appreciation and that of the entire CAHS to all the generous people who have matched and exceeded the Tooth Fairy donations.

We have several volunteers who have been working hard on the interior of the building. The latest progress report includes: the back room is now paneled in knotty pine and varnished; the trim is up, the floor repaired, and more. So even though it's February, the clock is ticking!

Our hope is to have the building open in May so the school classes can tour prior to the end of the school year. In order to do that, we have several hurdles to get over. The next hurdle is to get the Heating and AC system installed, then a thorough cleaning, and start to furnish the interior. Last issue we included a list of items we would like to display, if you have anything you would like to donate, please contact us as early as possible, as it takes time to catalogue the items before we can display them.

We hope to have rotating displays in the display room, so you'll want to come back often. We need to devise a good display system, please give us your ideas.

Our plan is to have the bricks installed and some landscaping done prior to June. So, you can see we have a lot to do. Can you help?

On another subject, plans are now being formulated for Tombstone Tales 2009. Now is your chance to participate.

Last year's event was so wonderful and so many people had suggestions of people they would like to represent or see represented. Many were family members. So now's your chance! Contact Dorothy Dee as soon as possible (608 296-2282.) This year's event will once again center on the Coloma cemeteries, but future plans will include other area cemeteries such as White, Richford, Burr Oak, etc. Your help and input will help to

make this year's Tombstone Tales an informative, fun and interesting event.
Sue

Little Tidbits from my memory

This month we have some wonderful memories from Ron Ploetz about the 1930s and early 40s living, working, and attending school in Coloma. This is part 1 of his story and we will continue with part 2, the professional baseball years next month. So stay tuned!

Dear Floyd,

When I received a phone call from Elaine King asking me to write a story about a picture of me signing my major league contract, I was flabbergasted. After all, this happened in June of 1948 and I'm still wondering who in Coloma still has this picture. Something that took place sixty-one years ago this coming June has brought back many memories, including my boyhood years, from 2-12, when I lived in Coloma.

Here are some memories of my childhood days in Coloma from 1932 through 1942. I was born on March 6, 1930, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin and moved to Coloma in 1932. Frank and Bertha Ploetz were the parents of the 15 children, with my Dad being the oldest. Theodore and Amelia Hoffmann were the parents of the 7 children, my Mom being the only girl in the family.

The reason for moving to Coloma was that my Dad, William (Bill) Ploetz, lost his job as a tool and die maker during the depression. He was a hard working and very skilled man. In Coloma he did electrical, mechanical, plumbing, windmill repairs, and roofing work to support his family of three boys and one girl.

My Mom, Adeline (Lena) was a homemaker in its truest sense of the word. Cooking, baking, sewing, planting a garden every year, and canning the many vegetables she grew, to

feed our family. Most of all, our Mom and Dad were loving, caring parents.

The one thing I remember most about the planting/harvesting was the cucumber field. I was 8-9 years old at the time and a lot of hoeing of weeds and backbreaking work was required. One year we planted 3 and 1/2 acres and hauled the harvest to a Heinz sorting facility. We did this because my oldest brother needed money for tuition to enter Oshkosh Business College.

I attended the Coloma School from the first through sixth grades before moving back to Milwaukee where my Dad went back to work at the job he left in 1932.

Through those years in Coloma during the summer months when I was 10 through 12, I would go work on my grandfather's (Frank Ploetz) farm. Although there was a lot of hard labor the old fashioned way with horse drawn machinery, pitchfork type work, it was a great time in my life. As the saying goes, "hard work never hurt anyone".

Grandpa Ploetz started the resort activity at Pleasant Lake, a mile and a half from his farm where he built the Pleasant Inn. This has been mentioned in some of the articles written in the monthly Coloma News Letters. He was a stern energetic man who did not put up with any shenanigans, especially at the resort cabins. At his home I remember a thing about the dinner table. In the middle of the table sat a large glass filled with spoons. Their purpose there was for eating dessert and that was the way the table was set. There usually were from ten to twelve people at the table and when things got to be too noisy or loud for him, he would take his fist and rap it once on the table. The spoons would jump up in the glass and rattle!! All things turned quiet and the eating process continued.

Another thing about Grandpa Ploetz, he was hard of hearing. When he would get into his Thirty-three two door Ford, you never wanted to be behind him when he backed out of his garage to go down to the lake. He would rev up the engine because of his lack of hearing and let the clutch out fast. It was like a shot coming out of the garage.

When the thrashing crews gathered on the farm, that was the place to be if you liked good old home cooking. All the farmers' wives brought their favorite recipes of chicken, potato salad, pies, cakes, bread, and home made ice cream. Need I say more? On Saturday night during the summer months it was the time to be up town in Coloma. The farmers came to town to do their weekly shopping along with the Coloma residents. The feature for the evening was a free movie that was shown on a white cloth dropped on the wall of what was called the Opera House in the old days. You would either lie on the ground or watch the movie from your car. The movies were mostly Westerns with the film breaking several times during the showing. Our sons have said that Coloma reminded them a lot of "Mayberry" on the Andy Griffith



Ronnie Ploetz, son of Mr. and Mrs. William Ploetz of Milwaukee, is shown signing a baseball contract with the Chicago White Sox. With him are Charles Sanhuber, Milwaukee scout for the Sox, and Doug Minor, chief of all the Chicago club's Middle West scouts. Ronnie is now pitching for Waterloo (Iowa), a White Sox club in the Three I League.

The picture that brought us this story

show on TV. A nice, quiet, friendly, place to live; where you knew all the people, and they would do anything for you. The only difference I could see was the fact that Coloma didn't have a jail as in Mayberry, but we had the Soo Line Railroad and free movies on Saturday night.

When we moved back to Milwaukee in 1942, I attended Boy's Technical High School in Milwaukee with about 2200 other boys. During my junior year in high school some baseball scouts only briefly contacted me because they were not allowed to talk directly to me until after graduation. After graduation, in June of 1948, I signed with the Chicago White Sox.

As we said in the banner, next month Ron will relate some of his professional baseball years with us. Look out for such names as: Berra, DiMaggio, Rizzuto, Stengel, and some guy named Ted Williams. See you right here next month.

Last month we showed a picture of a very pretty plate from the Coloma Mercantile Co. and asked, rhetorically, if any of you might have one. Well, Brenda Hansen, of Clintonville, WI, (she seems to be somehow related to a fellow around Coloma named Floyd King) sent us a note saying "...I do, indeed, have one of the Coloma Mercantile plates..." and a lot of other goodies that are on wish list. Thanks for the note Brenda and your kind offer.

Did you know we are read worldwide?

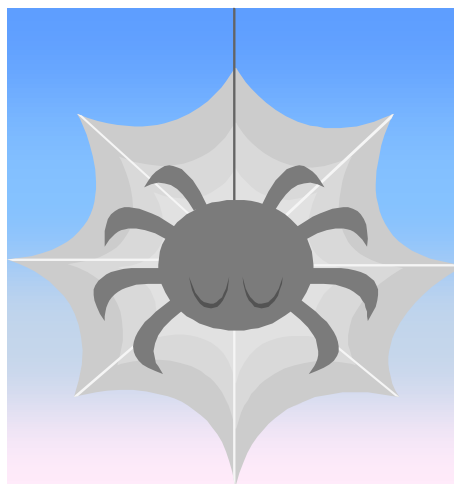
This nice note came to us from Ellen Decker Fetu and she adds that she remembers, "Robert King was such a vibrant, jolly, GOOD COOK there at the Café."

Hello,
I happened to be on your Coloma Historical Society webpage and read it with enjoyment! What interesting memories and projects and chili suppers! I am not surprised at the generosity of Robert and Elaine King in the tooth fairy complement. My father and I used to stop at the

Royal Diner occasionally in the 60s in passing through Coloma on his business trips. Coming from Green Bay, I learned to like the small towns and cafes of central Wisconsin. Then, when I was at WSU-Stevens Point, I met Ken King of Coloma. We dated for a time and I will never forget how wonderful and welcoming Robert and Elaine King were to me when I visited there one winter vacation time. I had my first snowmobile ride and that was something! The funniest thing, which I will never forget, is using Brylcreem to brush my teeth, my mistake. I guess I wasn't looking very carefully and it was in the place where our family kept the toothpaste!! I now live in Paris, France, teaching at the American School here. I have three grown children and one granddaughter in Bozeman, Montana. Please greet Mr. and Mrs. King for me, if you would, and good luck with your renovation!

Ellen Decker Fetu

Caught On The Web



www.colomahistorical.org

The CAHS website was designed, created, and is maintained by Mark & Vicki (Janke) Botner. They will use this column to keep us informed about changes they make. This month Vicki writes:

Last month's issue contained an illustrated article about the miniature golf course built and operated by Carl Kenyon on the north side of Pleasant Lake in the early 1930s. Several people have said they remembered the course and asked if there are additional pictures of it. Thanks to Betty (Kenyon) Wickus and Ron

and Rita Giles, we have several additional photographs as well as a copy of a hand drawn layout of the course. By the time you read this, they will be featured on the CAHS website as the new homepage slide show. For those of you who remember the mini-golf course, it will be a walk down memory lane. For those of us (myself included) who have no memory of this, isn't it amazing to learn about the past of a place you thought you knew everything about? Please contact the CAHS if you have some other photos or a story you'd like to share. Please continue to visit and enjoy the website.

How does it happen?

It's so satisfying to see the pictures of the old Spalding Stores metamorphosis from a near disaster to a comely new centerpiece of historic restoration. I often wonder how it does that all by itself and in the dead of winter... you see it seems all of this buildings significant moments only occur when "it's too cold to whistle and there's too much snow to maneuver." I think the wrappers, loaders, movers, and setter-uppers will agree to that. Yet, day-by-day, picture-by-picture we all see its progress. One becomes a little suspicious that the old store may be getting some help along the way, maybe with a pinch here, a tuck there, some new windows up front, a little insulation between the ribs, and a skin of knotty pine inside and cedar outside.



Thanks to Floyd King and his 'candid camera' we have caught some of the Spalding Store elves in action and it is clear the old store is getting some TLC from a team of under paid elves!

Some of the folks caught in action are Karl Zimmerman, Mike Schliepp, Paul Leibsle, and others who you will no doubt recognize.



Look at that knotty pine! Is that Wally's back?



I don't recognize the back of that head, but I sure like the ceiling.



This is going to be one beautiful display room!



Thanks to all those shown and all the others, not shown, who have made all of this possible!
Job Well Done!!
