

MUSEUM OF HISTORY AND CULTURE

Ashwaubenon Historical Society NEWSLETTER

September 2015 Volume 7 Number 2



OUR MISSION

The Ashwaubenon Historical Society is a non-profit organization whose goal is the preservation of Ashwaubenon's past and present through the collection and interpretation of historical records and artifacts of the area.

Preserving the memories of yesterday for the generations of tomorrow.

WE'RE MOVING!!!

The Ashwaubenon Historical Society and Museum of History and Culture are moving. A lease will be signed with the Village of Ashwaubenon for use of the former community center located in Klipstine Park. Lease terms are \$1.00 a year for 50 years. The AHS will assume all utility costs, estimated to be \$7,000 annually.

The current AHS and Museum building at 737 Cormier Road is a former Water Department building and is leased from the Village. When the Society and Museum moved into its current building, it raised \$250,000 to convert it for its use. There is now an opportunity for the Village to sell the building for commercial development. RODAC, a development company, will pay the Village about \$300,00 for the property: about \$100,000 will go to the Ashwaubenon Utility Department as the building is owned by the Sanitary and Water District; \$217,000 will go the AHS as repayment for its earlier investment in its current building. These funds are designated for remodeling the new building. The AHS hopes to raise an

additional \$300,000 for remodeling, enhanced displays, moving, and an operations and maintenance endowment.

The completed project will include new heating and AC, upgraded wiring, ADA compliant bathrooms, a storage addition, a display addition for the collection's vintage fire truck, and rearranged interior space for Museum displays.

This relocation of the AHS and Museum across from the new community center in Klipstine Park will increase its visibility and availability to those using the park and community center.

If you are interested in participating in this exciting venture, contact AHS president, Janet Klipstine at 339-9519. To donate to the moving/remodeling fund, contact fundraising chair, Werner Burkat, at 676-5872. The Greater Green Bay Foundation will process donations.



The current Ashwaubenon Community Center will be remodeled for Ashwaubenon Historical Society use with the majority of the space for its Museum of History and Culture. The view of the building in the photo will become the front entrance and face Klipstine Park and the new community center which is under construction. Museum storage space will be built on the right side of the building.

ASHWAUBENON HISTORICAL SOCIETY CEMETERY WALK A SUCCESS!

The Cemetery Walk at the Moravian Cemetery in Ashwaubenon on Wednesday, August 19, 2015, drew 51 people each for two performances. Members of the Ashwaubenon Historical Society worked for two years, researching the people to be portrayed, recruiting performers, and organizing the walk. Each of the six costumed performers gave the history of the person they portrayed. The Cemetery Chapel was open the evening of the performances, and the West Side Moravian Church organist provided music on the Chapel organ. Interested members of the West Side Moravian Church were invited to a dress rehearsal on August 17 and about 25 attended. Special thanks to Pastor Marian Boyle of West Side Moravian Church and to McDonalds for providing the beverages that were served with cookies. SEE PAGE 5 FOR PHOTOS AND INFORMATION ON THE PEOPLE PORTRAYED.

Plans are underway for a cemetery walk in 2016 at St. John Lutheran Church Cemetery, located at the west end of North Road.

SOCIETY/MUSEUM UNDERGOES A NAME CHANGE

The Ashwaubenon Historical Society and Museum is now “Museum of History and Culture, Ashwaubenon Historical Society.” The change was made to emphasize the museum as it is the Society’s major area of activity.

ASHWAUBENON HISTORICAL SOCIETY ANNUAL MEETING

The AHS Annual Meeting will be held at the Museum on October 22, 2015, at 6:30 p.m. The agenda will include the election of officers and board members for 2016, an update on the move to the former Ashwaubenon Community Center, and plans for fundraising.



NEW MEMBERS

**Corrie Campbell
Lisa Mleziva
Janice and Erv Coenen**

**MEET OUR MEMBERS
JUDY SCHROEDER**



Judy Schroeder has been a long-time member of the Ashwaubenon Historical Society .She joined in 1976, the year the organization was incorporated. She has volunteered in many areas, most recently as chair of the Cemetery Walk at the Moravian Cemetery on August 19. She is currently a member of the Society’s Executive Board and has held the positions of president, secretary, and treasurer. Judy was born in Manitowoc County and moved to Ashwaubenon when she married in 1967. She worked as Data Processing Supervisor/Utility Clerk for the Village of Ashwaubenon Water Department for 31 years, retiring in 2003. Not one to slow down, Judy volunteers with the Greater Green Bay Visitor and Convention Bureau, Nativity Parish, and Ashwaubenon VIPS (Volunteers in Police Service). She is also a poll worker.

PAST PERFECT UPDATE. MORE HELP WELCOME!

Past Perfect is a software program that allows us to create an electronic record of objects in the AHS .Museum collection. A team has been hard at work entering items into the database. This is a large project and anyone interested is invited to help. If you’re comfortable using a computer, you could help with data entry. However, there are many other things that need to be done to help those doing the data entry. To find out how you can participate in this important project, contact Suzanne Schatt at 494-4688.

ASHWAUBENON HISTORICAL SOCIETY COMING EVENTS
The calendar for the year is on the Society’ website: www.ashhs.com



October 9-10 Local History/Preservation Conf.
Marriott Hotel–Middleton
October 22 6:30 p.m. Annual meeting
November 19 6:30 p.m. General meeting

December 9 1:00 p.m. Executive Board meeting
NO GENERAL MEETING IN DECEMBER

SUGAR BEET PROCESSING PLANT: ONE OF ASHWAUBENON'S FIRST INDUSTRIAL OPERATIONS

Long-time residents of Ashwaubenon will remember the GREEN BAY SUGAR COMPANY, a sugar beet processing plant on North Broadway that produced the brand Crystal Pure sugar. It was one of Ashwaubenon's first industrial operations.

Sugar beets as a source of sugar came into their own in the early 1900s after processes were developed in Europe. By 1900, in the U.S., there were 32 sugar beet factories in 11 states.



Plans for a sugar beet plant in the Green Bay area were described in an August 21, 1919, article in the *De Pere Journal Democrat*. The plant was to be built on the Fox River near railroads and lake boats and designed to handle 1,000 tons of sugar beets each day. The company was to be capitalized for \$1,000,000 with \$500,000 available for local people. A field force was to be organized to secure sugar beet crop contracts from area farmers. The company said it would furnish farmers with laborers to help with the cultivation of the beets. At that time, the thinning of the beet plants and harvesting were done by hand.

Large ads began to appear in the newspaper encouraging local residents to invest in the new company at \$100 a share. The ads had headlines such as "The World Needs 2,000,000,000 Pounds More Sugar Annually" and "Your Head and Your Pocketbook: A Straight Talk About Sugar."

The Green Bay Sugar Company began operation in October, 1920 and represented an investment of over \$1,000,000. It employed 200 workers, but, when at capacity, was expected to employ 600. "It is expected that the refinery will have enough beets to run 90 to 100 days. Beets are now arriving at the rate of 50 carloads a day and are being stored in beet warehouses, which are capable of holding about 50,000 tons of beets." (*De Pere Journal Democrat* 10-20-1920, p. 1) When beets began arriving at the plant for processing, it was called a "campaign."

In a report of the 1921 Green Bay Sugar Company Annual Meeting, it was stated that the company was paying \$1.00 per ton more for sugar beets than any

other company in the United States. All of the 180 farmers present at the meeting said they were planning to raise large sugar beet crops and were encouraging neighbors to do the same.

When the Green Bay Sugar Company began, the first sugar refined went to a firm in Iron River, MI, but most of it went to the Northwest, including Minneapolis and St. Paul. The Green Bay refinery was the only one in its part of the state. The next closest was the Menominee Sugar Company in Menominee,

HOW TO MAKE BEET SUGAR

1. Plant sugar beets in the spring and hope for a warm summer with cool evenings. A sugar company will contract with you for the acres you planted.
2. Cut tops from beets before hauling by train or truck to the sugar beet processing plant.

At the plant:

3. Beets are floated in a concrete ditch to the processing area.
4. Beets are washed and run through slicers so they look like shoestring potatoes.
5. Water is used to penetrate the beet cells and displace the beet sugar into the water.
6. A variety of processes are used to remove any non-sugar material..
7. Resulting juice is concentrated and filtered, then boiled under a vacuum until crystals are formed.
8. Crystals are dried and packaged.

Michigan. (*De Pere Journal Democrat* 11-11-1920 p. 9)

According to a history of the Menominee River Sugar Company 1903-1955, the firm purchased the Green Bay Sugar Company in 1924.

In 1926, the Green Bay plant of the Menominee River Sugar Company employed 200 men for 24 hours a day for nine or ten weeks. The counties of Brown and Calumet led Wisconsin in sugar beet production. Sugar from the plant was used statewide in canneries, bakeries, candy factories, and ice cream plants.

There was apparently some prejudice against beet sugar. To help eliminate this, the company's

extension division offered prizes to girls' jelly and cake making clubs in the state and took the ten highest teams to the State Fair in Milwaukee where they put on demonstrations.

In 1931, operation of the Green Bay sugar plant was taken over by the Menominee Sugar Company, a recently organized operating group which leased the plant from the Menominee River Sugar Company. It was interested only in operation of the Green Bay plant.

On July 1957, a fire at the Menominee Sugar Company destroyed a warehouse and dryer building. The efforts of firemen were hampered by a lack of water. Some water was brought to the scene in ready-mix concrete trucks. The fire loss was estimated at \$100,000, but was not expected to affect plant operation scheduled to start in late September.

In January 1962, the Menominee Sugar Company, announced that it had suspended operations in Green Bay. Negotiations with a Michigan firm that would have kept a market for Wisconsin beets failed. Some beet growers proposed that they, as a group, purchase the plant and run it as a cooperative or corporation. A major issue was the lack of sufficient sugar beets to keep the plant operating.

In June 1962, in response to the planned closing of the sugar beet processing plant, a resolution by the Brown County Agricultural, Conservation, and Reforestation Committee asked the County Board of Supervisors to "respectfully request that the Green Bay Association of Commerce through its appropriate committees immediately investigate all possibilities that could keep this local industrial plant in operation." (*De Pere Journal Democrat* June 28, 1962.)

Efforts to save the plant failed, and the plant closed in 1962. After production ceased, the building was used for storage. It was torn down in the 1970s to make room for the Highway 172 overpass.

LLOYD SMITS REMEMBERS

Lloyd Smits, age 93, grew up in Ashwaubenon. From age 13 until his early 20s, he helped his dad with their sugar beet crop. They were paid per ton and earned about \$700 per year, "enough to buy a car." As they grew, the beets were thinned by hand, but harvested by a machine that pulled them out of the ground. The beet tops were taken off and used as feed for the



cows; the sugar was in the beets. They used a horse and wagon to haul the beets to the factory where they were weighed. Lloyd recalled that Mexican migrant workers helped with the harvest. During the season, many lived in what were called "migrant shanties," long narrow buildings across Broadway by the river.

Lloyd worked the 11:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m. shift at the factory for two weeks, but found it too difficult to continue the schedule with his farm work.

Copies of the articles listed below are on file at the Museum of History and Culture, Ashwaubenon Historical Society.

Mahar, Thomas. "The Story of the Menominee River Sugar Company 1903-1955." Submitted June 18, 2009. <http://ezinearticles.com>

Valitchka II, Roy F. "Sugar Processing Underway in Mill," *APPLETON POST-CRESCENT*, October 21, 1960, p. 1.

Kampfer, Don. "Favorable Weather Aids Beet Harvest," *APPLETON POST-CRESCENT*, October 21, 1960, p. 1.

"Proposed Sugar Beet Plant," *DE PERE JOURNAL DEMOCRAT*, August 21, 1919, p. 18.

Legal Notice, *DE PERE JOURNAL DEMOCRAT*, June 28, 1962, p. 8.

"Sugar Beet Plant is Now Running," *DE PERE JOURNAL DEMOCRAT*, November 11, 1920, p. 9.

"Sugar Beet Plant Starts Next Week," *DE PERE JOURNAL DEMOCRAT*, October 7, 1926, p. 4.

"Sugar Plant Starts Monday," *DE PERE JOURNAL DEMOCRAT*, October 21, 1920, p. 1.

"Annual Meeting of Green Bay Sugar Company," *DE PERE JOURNAL DEMOCRAT*, April 7, 1921, p. 3.

"Fire Scenes at the Menominee Sugar Company..."(pictures) *DE PERE JOURNAL DEMOCRAT*, July 25, 1957.

"The World Needs 2,000,000,000 Pounds More Sugar Annually," (Ad) *DE PERE JOURNAL DEMOCRAT*, December 25, 1919, p. 10.

"Your Head and Your Pocketbook," (Ad) *DE PERE JOURNAL DEMOCRAT*, January 29, 1920, p. 10.

"Warehouse of Sugar Firm Razed by Fire," *GREEN BAY PRESS-GAZETTE*, July 20, 1957, p. 1.

"Survey Begun on Sugar Firm Fire Damage," *GREEN BAY PRESS-GAZETTE*, July 22, 1957, p. 14.

Pagel, Ray. "Sugar Beet Growers to Consider Ways to Keep Refinery Operating," *GREEN BAY PRESS-GAZETTE*, February 19, 1962, p. 1.

Interview with Lloyd Smits, October 1, 2014.

***Tombstones
Come Alive***

***Wednesday
August 19, 2015***

Below are pictures of those who portrayed the people featured in the "Tombstones Come Alive" cemetery walk. The descriptions were taken from the program brochure.

A video of the program can be seen at the Museum of History and Culture, Ashwaubenon Historical Society. Scripts of each presentation are in the Museum's collection. The scripts were also printed in the September 4 and September 11 issues of the Ashwaubenon PRESS.



Bessie M. DeGroat Doxtator (1890-1963) Portrayed by Eliza Skenandore.

Bessie was born on February 18, 1890, outside of Long Prairie, Minnesota and died at home in Green Bay on January 23, 1963. Bessie and her husband, Ted Doxtator, had two sons, Leo and Kenny. Bessie's family had strong Mohegan ties and were descended from from Uncas, a famous Mohegan warrior. Ted's family ancestors were from the Oneida and Brotherton tribes.

Ronald B. Reignier (1933-2004) Joan Reignier Van Beaver, portrayed his wife, Carol Penman Reignier.

Ron was raised in Ashwaubenon, Wisconsin, and was a resident of the Village most of his adult life. He was active in the community, notably as chairman of the Zoning and Planning Board. He was a member of the West Side Moravian Church. He had an interesting tie to the Green Bay Packers.



Nels A. Sorenson (1911-1987) Portrayed by his son, David Sorenson.

Nels was born on March 23, 1911, in the Town of Eaton. He was a part-time farmer and full-time golf course superintendent. He and his wife, Rosella, had five children and lived in west Green Bay. Nels was a religious man and his life revolved around his family and faith. He passed away on February 8, 1987 after a very full and happy life.

Joseph E. Jacobson (1905-1954) Portrayed by Charles "Chuck" Delaney.

Joseph was born and raised in Green Bay. He was employed as a car man for the Green Bay & Western Railroad. He was a member of the Board of Elders of the West Side Moravian Church. Joseph was a gifted athlete and was a major league kegler in the 1940s and 1950s. He was inducted into the Green Bay Bowling Association Hall of Fame.



Howard N. Smith (1903-1984) Portrayed by A. J. Blazek. Meet a man who lived in Ashwaubenon his entire life and was an avid fan of sulky races. He and his wife raised six children on a dairy farm, and he also worked part-time at the sugar beet factory. He died at age 81 due to a car accident.

Samuel G. Torgerson (1883-1969) Mary Kugel portrayed his wife, Agnes S. Torgerson (1880-1977).

Samuel, born in Canada, came to Green Bay at age two with his parents. He was a captain in the U.S. Army during WWI. He served in France and, after the war, took a job as an engineer on the Milwaukee Railroad in Miles City, Montana. Retiring in 1948, he and Agnes returned to the Green Bay area. He was a member of West Side Moravian Church.



MUSEUM OF HISTORY AND CULTURE



737 Cormier Road
Ashwaubenon, WI 54304

HOURS

1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.
Wednesdays and Saturdays
Closed January - February
Admission: \$1.00

Phone 920-429-2863

Leave message or call 920-339-9519
if the Museum is closed.

E-mail: ahshistory@att.net

Website: www.ashhs.com

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***WE'RE ON FACEBOOK! CHECK OUT
"ASHWAUBENON HISTORICAL SOCIETY."***

To join the Ashwaubenon Historical Society, fill out the form below. We invite your active participation, and you will receive our newsletter, meeting agendas and minutes, and free admission to the Museum.

MEMBERSHIP FORM FOR 2016 (January 1 to December 31)

MAIL WITH DUES TO:

Ashwaubenon Historical Society, 737 Cormier Road, Ashwaubenon, WI 54304

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