



HALES CORNERS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Newsletter

OCTOBER 2017

THE BOSCH TAVERN: VILLAGE LANDMARK

The history of the Bosch Tavern will be the focus of a presentation by **Al Strekow**, president of the Hales Corners Historical Society, on Wednesday, October 4th at 7 p.m. in the Hunt Room of the Hales Corners Library. On display during the presentation will be the Bosch's hand-painted advertising curtain, which has not been seen by the public since the 1920s.



Built by Herman Bosch in 1904 to serve passengers of the Rapid Transit station just across the street, the Bosch Hotel and Tavern had a dance hall on the second floor.

In the 1930s, Arthur Byrnes took over the hotel and converted the upstairs to apartments. The tavern served food, and, starting with the ownership of Helen and Michael Majdecki, became known for its bean soup.

The Bosch also was known as Swede's, Svetislav's, and Popper's before returning to its original name. If anyone knows additional names for the building, we'd be glad to learn them.

Please join us on October 4th and bring your friends!

IN MEMORIAM

Ron Kinart, one of HCCHS's earliest members, passed away on August 21, 2017, at the age of 81. Ron was responsible for the Society's logo and other artwork. He is survived by his wife, **Marcia**, and children **Douglas, Dan, Denise**, and their spouses and children.



Ron Kinart appeared on the cover of the Franklin Hales Corners HUB newspaper in 1972. Ron was the Scoutmaster of Boy Scout Troop 598 that was involved in a bicycle skill test sponsored by his troop and the Hales Corners Police Department.

BRIDGES RESTORED ON WHITNALL PARK DRIVE

The Highway 100 entrance to Whitnall Park is being transformed. Trees and brush have been cleared within the triangle formed by the roads. The roads have been repaved, curbing has been added, and the two historic bridges have been refurbished with concrete along the tops of their arches to help preserve the stonework beneath.



BEN HUNT AND BOY SCOUT TROOP 598

Recently, our Society received an album displaying the photographs of Ben Hunt and the Boy Scout troop he was associated with. The album was the property of **Joseph Seymour** and it captures the local Boy Scout scene in 1937. Along with Troop 598 photos, the collection provides several images of Ben and his cabin, which have been added to our digital archives.



Ben Hunt (left) checking the archery prowess of two Boy Scouts from Troop 598 in front of his cabin.



Troop 598's campsite in Whitnall Park featured the totem pole that Ben Hunt illustrated in one of his books.

COUNTRY FAIR SHOPPING CENTER BEING REBORN

Built in the 1950s, Country Fair Shopping Center has housed an assortment of past-and-present local businesses through the years, including Kmart, Michael's Footwear, Consumer Beverage, Launderama Cleaners, Krambo, and Don Diven's barber shop. The entire complex is undergoing a make-over in preparation for the Festival Foods store scheduled to be built (so we are told) in 2018/2019.



AUTUMN IN HALES CORNERS HISTORY

From the files of the *Tri-Town News and Hub*

50 years ago (1967)

Open house is scheduled for the new Edgerton Elementary School. Total cost for the facility comes to \$433,000.

60 years ago (1957)

Plans are made to open a Hales Corners Library in the old post office on Forest Home Avenue. It will be run by Hales Corners Woman's Club volunteers until money is approved to hire a librarian.

80 years ago (1937)

A Halloween Jamboree is planned for the village. Attractions will include a Chamber of Horrors, a magic show, a boxing match, fortune tellers, and bobbing for apples.

CABIN & SUMMER KITCHEN OPEN HOUSES

The Ben Hunt Cabin's September open house hosted nine visitors. The Cabin will be open on October 7th, from 1-3 PM; and October 20th for two Halloween Story Times, from 6:30-7 PM and 7:30-8 PM. In addition, the Badger State Carvers have reserved the Cabin for their private use on October 10th.

The Summer Kitchen will be open on July 4, 2018, or by appointment.

This article is the first in a series about regional history that we will feature from time to time.

THE TRAIN TO NOWHERE — Submitted by Robert Liebl

Back in the 1850s, the City of Milwaukee invested, unwisely, in many train ventures. City fathers recognized that railroads were destined to link the nation together. At the time, Milwaukee and Chicago were neck-and-neck in size, and each city aimed to become the largest metropolis west of Ohio. Travel from the East coast to those two cities was best accomplished by water. Boats would head west via the Hudson River, Erie Canal, and the Great Lakes. Entering Lake Michigan, they would then head south, reaching Milwaukee first because it was 90 miles north of Chicago. Due to that shorter travel distance, Milwaukee was long expected to surpass Chicago. It also offered a better harbor and many more miles of Lake Michigan shoreline.

In the 1850s, Milwaukee's favorability started to lessen as railroads began to compete for freight business from the West. The 90 miles that had been Milwaukee's advantage now became a disadvantage because trains had to travel those additional miles up the west shore of Lake Michigan, past Chicago, to reach Milwaukee.

The West was beginning to develop and, in time, Milwaukee would become the largest shipper of grain in the world, a distinction that would continue for many years. As railroads expanded westward, cities popped up along the tracks. Because Milwaukee wanted a piece of that action, it invested in almost every hare-brained railroad scheme that came along.

First: The Milwaukee & Mississippi Rail Road

In the fall of 1836, a group of investors led by Solomon Juneau, one of Milwaukee's founders, met to plan a railroad to the Mississippi River. It was later named the Milwaukee & Mississippi Rail Road. However, the panic of 1837 set the group back. Finally, in 1845, a plan was put in place to build the railroad to Prairie du Chien. This was the beginning of the big railroad boom in Wisconsin. By 1850, the train extended to Elm Grove, and by 1851 to Brookfield, and then by 1852 to Waukesha. By 1857, *21 years* after the initial plan, it *finally* reached Prairie du Chien.

Next: The Milwaukee & Beloit Rail Road

In addition, there was the Milwaukee & Beloit Rail Road. In 1846, it was only a concept laid out on maps. But by October 1856, not only was start-up money raised for the railroad, but grading and land procurement began in earnest. Messrs. Muggins and Company of Ohio were hired to do the construction work. A cost average of \$14,500 per mile was estimated. Terms of payment were 1/4 cash, \$80,000 in company stock, \$100,000 in City of Milwaukee bonds, and the remainder in a real estate mortgage.



The Milwaukee & Beloit Rail Road was intended to be part of a longer route extending east into Michigan and Canada and west into Iowa. It was to work with the steamship lines crossing Lake Michigan. By doing so, it could compete with the railroads going into Chicago, thus saving many miles by not having to go around the lake.

Milwaukee River frontage of 1,300 feet was purchased for the depot and dock, which was expandable by another 1,000 feet. A contract was closed to build a grain warehouse as well.

By this time, the City of Milwaukee had invested in several railroad companies and had almost gone bankrupt as a result. It seemed that the M&B was destined to be one of the biggest failures thus far.

An 1876 map showed the proposed Milwaukee & Beloit Rail Road running southwest from Milwaukee to the cities of Janesville and Beloit.

The railroad was to cross the Janesville Plank Road at what was then 60th Avenue (today's S. 68th Street). At about today's S. 72nd Street and I-894, it crossed the Greenfield Summit which is 215 feet above Lake Michigan. It then continued to run just east of the Trimborn lime kilns and on to St. Martins where it joined the Fox River Rail Road, entirely bypassing the Hales Corners area.

Work started on November 15, 1856 with more than 300 men. The right of way was surveyed and graded. At the crossing of Janesville Plank Road, 60th Avenue, and the railroad, several city-type lots were laid out in anticipation of the coming railroad. Small shops sprang up for craftsmen and tradesmen such as blacksmiths, cobblers, and butchers, who also had their homes along this stretch. The area became known as Root Creek, and some of the businesses there lasted until the early 1960s. One would seem to think that this was the intended "downtown" of Greenfield Township. It never materialized, although several churches, schools, a few hotels, and lots of saloons were built along this section of road.

Until the 1980s, there still remained at least two concrete foundations for railroad bridges that were installed over creeks in the township: one over the Kinnickinnic River at about S. 51st Street, and another just southwest of St. John's Lutheran Church on S. 68th Street and Forest Home Avenue.

How far along did the Milwaukee & Beloit Rail Road construction get? The roadbed was surveyed and graded at least out to East Troy, and most likely to Elkhorn. Unfortunately, in St. Martins and Muskego Center, the crews hit bogs and quicksand that seemed bottomless. There are some accounts that tracks were laid and some rolling stock was purchased.

We do know that according to the surviving business ledgers for the railroad, there was a company store in Hales Corners that sold beef, salt, and other items. The railroad crossed at least 30 farms in the town of Greenfield. Not only did many farmers lose money on the scheme, they lost everything they had because the right of way cut up their land so badly that it became useless. For example, on the little 20-acre farm of Francis Bergold located north of S. 60th Street and Morgan Avenue, the railroad was to cut directly behind the house, separating it from the fields.

Final Destination: Nowhere

Construction work stopped before January 7, 1858. The ledgers indicate that bonds were being sold off to pay for work that had been completed; they were initially sold for 80 cents on the dollar and went down from there. By July 1858 it was all over. The ill-advised train venture had gone nowhere.

WISCONSIN HISTORY CONFERENCE

The Local History & Historic Preservation Conference is in La Crosse this year, from October 20-21. It features 30 sessions and 12 in-depth workshops. The **Wisconsin Council for Local History** will sponsor the sixth annual Town Square, where organizations share information and network with colleagues. For more information contact amy.norlin@wisconsinhistory.org or visit the website.

ST. MARY 175TH ANNIVERSARY

St. Mary Parish celebrated its 175th anniversary on September 24th. Milwaukee **Archbishop ListECKi** presided at the 11 o'clock Mass and noted that the parish is actually *one year older* than the Milwaukee Archdiocese itself. Our Society is saving the commemorative booklet for our archives, and we suggest that any other churches celebrating significant anniversaries send us copies as well.



Log Cabin Church, 1842

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