



# MAHS Newsletter

WHERE MONTICELLO'S PAST MEETS ITS FUTURE

## Civil War Encampment Coming in May

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The MAHS will be unveiling their new exhibit "Jim Town" at the museum on May 2, 2009. This exhibit will feature commerce that developed in Monticello when the Illinois Central and the Milwaukee Road railroads passed by the village beginning in the 1880's. This center of commerce became known as Jim Town.

To help celebrate this exhibit opening, the MAHS is sponsoring a Civil War Living History Encampment on May 2-3, 2009. The encampment will be located on the North end of the village across from the fire station. The encampment will have units representing both the Union and Confederate armies and will include cavalry exercises, small arms demonstrations, and cannon fire.

Saturday afternoon the military units, along with the 1st Brigade Band from Watertown will march down Main Street to the Village park where the Band will present a 2:00pm concert. The 1st Brigade Band plays Civil War era instruments and plays music of the era. This years musical theme celebrates Lincoln's 200th birthday.

The encampment will go on rain or shine, and in case of inclement weather, the 1st Brigade Band concert will be held in the school auditorium. Admission for the events is free, donations will be accepted. It will be a day you won't want to miss!



## Alvin Streiff Remembers . . .

Karen Bruegger recently sent me this article and thought it would make a great newsletter piece. The following is an article written by Alvin Streiff on May 5, 1982 about his childhood trek to Monticello to visit his aunt Elfa Voegeli. \_\_\_\_\_

I was visiting with a friend the other day, and she told me the exciting news that her 8 year old daughter was going to Denmark this year to visit her grandmother. The exciting part of the journey was that she was going all alone, with out adult supervision.

This brought to my mind a part of my life so long ago, in the late 1920's, when I visited my aunt Elfa Voegeli, who had just married, and lived in a neighboring town of Monticello. The exciting part of this trip was that I was going on the train, and I, too, was going alone. Well the big day for departure came and everyone was excited, including my grandmother Barbara, who lived close to the railroad tracks. The morning I left for the trip, she was standing on the steps to her house, with a large dish towel, waving to me as the train "whizzed" by. It was an exciting ride, and I was met at the station by my aunt. I remember walking from the station to her home, which was quite a distance, and we walked on wooden sidewalks, that were suspended over sort of a swamp-like area. I was very impressed with her new house, which was very large and "castle-like", and that was the beginning of a great three week visit.

It is unusual, how little it took to make a person happy in those days. She spent a great deal of time with me, we would play games like Flinch, Parcheesi, Old Maid, and checkers. She would take me "downtown" to Woelffer Drug Store, where we would have a very fancy sundae or soda. Then we would visit some stores. We visited the Peoples Supply Store and Bontley's Store, both general stores, that carried groceries, dry goods, china and all sorts of bric-a-brac. I was very impressed with the variety and thought them

quite grand. My Uncle Fred had a furniture store and I like to roam through the store too. Often we would stop at "Jimmy the Greeks" who made the best hamburgers in the area, and who operated from a small diner-type building. People came from miles around to enjoy his delights.

Another place I was excited about visiting was a restaurant operated by a man who had been in the circus, and who had married a local girl. They had an act where he would shoot papers and cigarettes out of her mouth and he would tell us stories of those days. At this place, I enjoyed my first "Eskimo Pie". Then there was the Grand Central Hotel where they had a nice dining room and also an opera hall, where during the summer traveling shows would come and also they shown movies on Saturday nights. This was operated by the Amstutz family, and were good friends of my relatives. Another hotel in town also had an opera hall, and in the basement of this place was a restaurant and tavern. This was operated by Fannie Figi. Both of these hotels would be patronized by people traveling from Monroe to Madison and other points. A very beautiful ice cream parlor was operated by Mr. and Mrs. Stout, an older couple, but it was very beautifully decorated with tiffany lamps, mirrors, and fancy ice cream tables, and was considered quite grand for this little village of 600 souls. A beautiful marble soda fountain would dispense Green River cherry phosphates and other "unheard of concoctions". Their ice cream cones were masterpieces, and these we would look forward to almost every evening.

In the middle of this little village, there was a large pond, which provided power for the Staetler Mill. This pond extended over quite an area, and came in back of my aunt's home, and often they would take me for boat rides, which was a very thrilling experience for one who had never seen as large a body of water. There was a large barn on their property, and often we would "play show" in this building.

It seemed to me there were very many wealthy people in this small village, and their very elegant homes seemed like palaces. The Edward Wittwer home, the Karlen home, the Steinman home, and the Blum home were all showplaces, and I would walk by these with awe. These people all had businesses in town, and were very influential people. Society was at a very high level, and I was impressed that my aunt knew all of these "older people". One of her neighbors were Clara and

Emil Voegeli, a childless couple, and who lived in the Freitag house and treated me with great loving respect and invited me into their house. She was an accomplished artist and she would let me watch her paint. Also in this same neighborhood were several maiden ladies, including Fanny and Frieda Benkert, and Edith Blum. They all had positions of importance in the community, and I was greatly impressed with them, too. They lived in grand houses and were always dressed in the latest styles.

Monroe was the next town and had a population of almost 5,000. One day we went there and that experience was one I remembered for a long time. There we went to Paul Ruf's Palm Garden for a sundae and popcorn!

Isn't it wonderful how little it took to make us happy in those days? There was no television, no summer camps, no groups that were trying to study the actions of children, no visits to psychiatrists, and listening to the radio and phonograph and a treat at the moving picture shows. Well times change and so do the people and I will let you decide if children are any happier or as happy as we were.

### **Volunteer Hours for 2008**

A warm, round of applause for the docents and volunteers who dedicated their time to helping out at the museum. Their efforts are the backbone that keep the museum running and without them the museum would not be what it is today.

Thank you for your 180+ hours:

Ron and Jennifer Blumer, Robert and Sally Braem, Karen Brugger, Bill and Kay Dickson, Roger and Madeleine Dooley, Lucille Elmer, Donna Ferguson, Karen Gempeler, Barbara and Bernie Green, Lillian Hefty, Lois Hopkins, Helen and Merlyn Loveland, Evelyn Moritz, Bill and Carol Moser, Paul and Sue Rieder, Marlene Schmalback, Carol Schultz, Sally Stenbrotten, Mary Strause, Carol Strause, Alice Voegeli Don Schneider, Bob Voss, John Zanoja, and Helen Wettach.

# Monticello Area Historical Society



## Annual Banquet



Thursday May 14, 2009

6pm Dinner

7pm Program

Zwingli Church

Catered by Hoesly Meats

Cost of Dinner: \$18 per person

Dinner will include:

Roll and Salad

Choice of Chicken, Prime Rib, or Teriyaki Salmon

Garlic Mashed Potatoes or Baked Potatoes

Green beans with mushrooms

Brownie or Apple Pie ala Mode for dessert

**Our program is titled "Woolen Mill Days"**

Kim Buehl will be presenting a program on the history of the Woolen Mill and sharing with us some of the artifacts and stories he has come across while restoring the mill after he purchased the property.

Please return the attached slip with your choice of main dish and payment no later than **April 17th** to the museum (see back of newsletter for address)

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Name of those attending \_\_\_\_\_

Choice of main dish: Chicken \_\_\_\_ Prime Rib\_\_\_\_ Salmon \_\_\_\_\_

Baked Potatoes \_\_\_\_\_ Mashed \_\_\_\_\_ Green Beans \_\_\_\_\_ Brownie \_\_\_\_\_ Apple Pie

\_\_\_\_\_ Remember to include your payment of \$18 per person

MAHS



MAHS

MONTICELLO  
AREA HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY

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Where Monticello's Past  
Meets Its Future



## April General Meeting Program

At the April 23rd MAHS General Meeting, Kim Tschudy will be presenting his research on Monticello Area Civil War Veterans. Mr. Tschudy has created a complete listing of all area Civil War veterans and will share with us his research, as well as some of stories of area veterans. Mr. Tschudy will also be available at the forthcoming Civil War encampment to assist anyone who may want to obtain further information on a Civil War relative.

Next General Meeting:

**Thursday April 23, 2009**  
**North room of Zwingli Church**  
**7pm General Meeting**  
**7:15pm Program**