

Confluence

The Two Klondikes

Mason Dobson, editor of the Beloit Daily News, never interviewed John Crist before Crist died in 1935, but he did write an article about him in 1939.

As Mason reports, Crist was in his mid 20s in the late 1880s, when his yearn for adventure took him west and eventually to Alaska where he struck it rich in the Klondike area in the late 1890s. He returned to Beloit to build the home and outbuildings he dreamed of, calling the operation Klondike Farm.

Crist was a good carpenter and ended up on the first leg of his journey in the Bitterroot Mountains of Montana working in a railroad construction camp for the Northwestern Pacific. He ended up building bridges for the railroad, which was pointed toward Spokane, WA, and he eventually became a construction superintendent.

In 1894 construction slowed and Crist, along with another restless adventurer named John Lind, headed for Seattle. After thoughts of traveling to South Africa, they decided instead to head toward Alaska.

In 1894 the two Johns made their way to Dawson City in the Klondike region of Alaska where they worked building warehouses for suppliers and outfitters.

In 1896 gold was discovered in the gravel bed of Bonanza Creek. Crist and Lind were among the first to stake a claim there and, despite hardships, worked for five years panning and digging on what was one of the richest claims in the area.

Mason reports on some of the friends they made while in Alaska, friends like Jack London who would eventually write "Call of the Wild" and "White Fang;" Tex Rickard, who would become a prominent fight promoter in New York City an idea-man behind Madison Square Garden; and others of less renown like Rex Beach, Joaquin Miller and "old" Jack McQuiston.

Mason does not mention how much Crist and Lind made, only that they eventually returned to their respective homes in 1901 (Lind to Ontario, Canada and Crist to Beloit where he built one of the loveliest homes in Beloit.)

The two also became brothers-in-law when Crist married Lind's sister, Adah, in 1902, and she joined him on his newly constructed Klondike Farm..

There is probably more to say about John Crist's adventures than there is to say about the time he spent at his home, the Klondike, here in Beloit.



The Klondike Farm at Afton Road and County Trunk Q,

Crist sold the farm in 1914 after the outbuildings burned down. He and his wife moved to 905 Bushnell St.

John Crist was a prosperous man and civic minded. He was also involved with agricultural concerns and served on the Rock County Board of Supervisors.

He and Adah had three children, all girls—Lucile, Alice and Mary. John wasn't a talkative man. His friends of the Masonic Temple said he was quiet, well-mannered and a great listener. When he died in 1935 he was missed by one and all.

Here are a few tidbits about Beloit's Klondike Farm:

- ◆ Built in 1901
- ◆ Outbuildings destroyed by fire in 1914 and property sold to W.J. Allen
- ◆ Sometime in the 1940s W.C. Heath of A.O Smith Corp. buys the property
- ◆ W.C. builds elaborate concrete, brick and steel dairy
- ◆ W.C. also raises one of the finest herds of Brown Swiss in Wisconsin and renames the farm Swisstown
- ◆ In 1947 A.O. Smith Corporation buys the property and uses the site for research purposes
- ◆ A.O. Smith experiments with Harvester Crop storage units and dairying equipment
- ◆ No date for the sale of property to Janesville's Lester A. Helgesen

Information compiled by Paul Kerr

Christmas Tree Ship sailing in for Annual Meeting

Plan to bring a guest who may want to join

This year's Annual Dinner, set for Friday, April 27, offers opportunity for members to bring guests who may also be interested in joining BHS.

The program will feature an underwater archaeologist for the State of Wisconsin who will discuss and show slides of

the sinking of the Christmas Tree Ship, as it was known, in 1912.

The cocktail hour will begin at 6 p.m. with wine and appetizers. A buffet dinner is set for 6:30 p.m. and the program to follow.

Price for members is \$35, and \$40 for non-members. Reservations are desired by April 20.

(Use reservation form on page 3 of this issue.)

The meal will include stuffed flounder, boneless BBQ ribs, twice-baked mashed potatoes,



The Rouse Simmons (aka Christmas Tree Ship) went down near Two Rivers, WI in 1912.

green beans almondine, oriental salad, rolls, chocolate creme pie and coffee.

Beloit Historical Society

Founded 1910

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Treasurer Harry Schermerhorn

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Executive Director Paul Kerr

Custodian Fred Bull

Newsletter edited by Sue Kurth

Other contributors to this issue:

Paul Kerr

Date of Next Board Meeting:

April 19, 2007

Executive Committee Meeting:

April 12, 2007

The Newsletter, *Confluence*, is published quarterly for the membership of the Beloit Historical Society to inform readers of Society activities as well as educate them on the history of Beloit. The Beloit Historical Society manages two sites, Lincoln Center Museum with main offices at 845 Hackett St. and Hanchett-Bartlett Homestead, 2149 St. Lawrence Ave. For further information please call (608) 365-7835 or e-mail us at Pkerr@beloithistoricalsociety.com. Or see our new website which is located at beloithistoricalsociety.com.

A Recipe to Try

This recipe is one in the Lincoln Center files which was originally printed in the Chicago Tribune years ago.



Crunchy Bars

2/3 cup butter

1 cup brown sugar

4 cups quick cooking rolled oats

1/2 cup light corn syrup

3 teaspoons vanilla

1 package (12 ounces) semi sweet chocolate pieces

2/3 cup crunchy peanut butter

Cream butter and sugar until light and fluffy. Add oats, corn syrup and vanilla; mix thoroughly. Pat in bottom of a 13 by 9 by 2-inch pan. Bake 350 degrees for 15 minutes. Cool slightly. Melt chocolate and peanut butter in top of double boiler. Cool slightly and then spread it on the baked layer. Cut into bars. Makes 24 bars.

SPECIAL GIFTS TO THE SOCIETY

In Memory of:

Thelma and Forest Hile, in memory of their wedding anniversary

Given by Sharon (Hile) Eisendrath

Gloria Lawver

Given by Roberta and John Lightfoot

Bequest:

From Lucile Lourim

From the Director

Three years from now the Society will celebrate its 100th birthday.

Outside of a few businesses and banks in town, the Society is one of Beloit's oldest institutions.

It got to this grand old age because of the people who volunteered for it throughout its long life. It operates today because people of like mind and action see fit to do the same.

And of course, there has been a lot of generosity over the years.

This April 19th we have a Volunteer Brunch to thank these volunteers, to acknowledge them and their predecessors for all that they have done for us. (*More information page 4*)

From the Board of Directors we thank you all and hope so see you this April.

By the way, the Society has a new web page and domain. Check it out at beloithistoricalsociety.com.



Paul Kerr, BHS Director

Luncheon On the Lawn



Join us for a Luncheon on the Lawn of the beautiful Hanchett-Bartlett Homestead, 2149 St. Lawrence Ave., June 6 and 7 at 11:30 a.m. Cost is just \$25 and reservations are required. Payment by June 1 will confirm your reservation. (*Use form at right*)

Included in the cost will be:

- ◆ A meal of chicken salad, croissant, fresh fruit, dessert and beverage,
- ◆ A 20-minute fashion show featuring vintage hats
- ◆ The celestial melodies of Gary Alseth on the harp,
- ◆ Self guided tours of the "Gem of Beloit" (the 1857 Hanchett-Bartlett Homestead, barn and schoolhouse)
- ◆ A walk around the various flower gardens

Comfortable attire and shoes are recommended, with hats suggested and gloves optional. Red Hat clubs are welcome to attend.

For information call the Beloit Historical Society at 365-7835. Reservations may be mailed to BHS Lincoln Center at 845 Hackett St., Beloit, WI 53511.

Reservation Form for Annual Dinner & Luncheon on the Lawn

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Daytime phone _____

Annual Dinner (due by April 20)

_____ number of seats desired

X \$ _____ \$35 members, \$40 non members

\$ _____ Total due

Luncheon on the Lawn (due by June 1)

_____ number of seats desired

X \$ _____ \$25

\$ _____ Total due

Send to BHS, 845 Hackett St., Beloit, WI 53511

INVITATION... *The Beloit Historical Society is dedicated to the preservation, restoration and interpretation of Beloit's rich history. Please support us by becoming a member and receive membership benefits: the quarterly newsletter, free admission to Hanchett-Bartlett Homestead, complimentary passes for friends, affiliate membership in the Wisconsin State Historical Society and discounts on local Society activities & programs.*

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Family _____

Beloit Historical Society, 845
Hackett St.,
Beloit, WI 53511
Phone: 365-7835
Fax: 608-365-5999
E-mail:
pkerr@beloithistoricalsociety.com

INDIVIDUAL		FAMILY	
1 Year	\$20	1 Year	\$25
2 Years	35	2 Years	45
3 Years	50	3 Years	65
Additional, tax deductible gift			
Sponsor	\$50		
Supporting	100		
Sustaining	250		
Patron	500		
Benefactor	1000		
Other			

UPCOMING EVENTS

April 19—Volunteer Brunch, 11:30 a.m. A thank-you brunch for our volunteers, musical program by Linda Bachand. Please phone in reservations.

April 27—Annual Meeting. The annual meeting date has been changed from fall to spring. Program will be on the 1912 Christmas Tree Ship. *See full information on page 2.*

June 6—Luncheon on the Lawn (of Hanchett-Bartlett Homestead). Alfresco luncheon, vintage millinery fashion show, Gary Alseth on the harp, tour of the homestead. \$25 per person. Red Hatters Welcome. *See more information on page 3.*

Contact Beloit Historical Society for further information (608) 365-7835



Membership News



Please make a special effort to thank and welcome our new members.

The following have joined the Beloit Historical Society since the last newsletter:

Joseph Accardi
Cecilia and Edward Blackwell
Lucile Carlson
Sonja Darlington
Russ and Rose Drevdahl
Deb and Mike Goodwin
Sally McGovern
Tom and Mim Warren

Wish List

Volunteers:

- ◆ Docents needed for May school tours of the Hanchett-Bartlett Homestead;
- ◆ Photographer(s) to record the many changes occurring in Beloit, and then share the photos with BHS
- ◆ A chair person to head up this year's Gala Auction

Office Supplies: Scissors, standard three-ring binders

Miscellaneous: 15-foot stepladder, 8" disc sander

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Beloit Historical Society
845 Hackett St.
Beloit WI 53511

Address Service Requested

The Vision of the Beloit Historical Society is to make history a focal point of community pride and to serve as a constant reminder to the community of its great and diverse heritage.

Visit our web site at
beloithistoricalsociety.com

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