



Happy Holidays and Best Wishes for the New Year!!!

UPDATED NEWS: We will be regularly updating the “**Next meeting information and recent News**” link on the first page of the KAHS website to record current KAHS news and events. Please check this link regularly to get the latest news and information.

Don't use the Internet? Not a problem.

All important notices of events will still be MAILED to all members on a timely basis.

2008 ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Thanks to Carol Van Boxtel for compiling this list and to all KAHS members for helping us achieve these goals:

1. Over 2000 unidentified and identified photos from Kaukauna Public Library placed on Picasa website
2. Obtained tax exemption status IRS 501(c)(3) tax exempt status.
3. Created KAHS blog site
4. Developed DVD on Kaukauna swimming pool and history of the Kaukauna Locks.
5. Developed an organizational relationship and authority between KAHS and KPL on collecting and preserving artifacts which provide information on the history of the Kaukauna area.
6. Tombstones from eighteen cemeteries photographed and placed on KAHS website.
7. Assisted Bank of Kaukauna in preparing a presentation of its 150th celebration.
8. Developed a booklet on the History of Kaukauna for the regional meeting of **the Kaukauna Community Health Associates**.
9. Kaukauna Board of Education voted to allow KAHS to use a room at Nicolet School for meetings and storage of artifacts.
10. Held one general meeting. Tom Duescher presented the DVD he prepared from his research on the history of the Kaukauna Locks.

DUES CHANGE: Beginning in 2009 the dues structure for KAHS will change to a single type of membership priced at \$15.00 per household.

We hope you will continue your membership in KAHS for 2009 and send your dues, along with any changes in mailing or email address to:

Kaukauna Area Historical Society
P.O. Box 513
Kaukauna, WI 54130

THANK YOU!

A regular section of the newsletter will be devoted to thanking those who've donated money, equipment, supplies, or historic objects or artifacts to the Kaukauna Area Historical Society.

YOUR donations (or loans of objects for copying or photographing) will help us to preserve the history of our area.

Our collecting focus is simple—anything that has been made, produced or used in the Kaukauna area and which offers a view of the cultural, social and business life of our area will be welcomed and considered for addition to our collections.

Contact KAHS by mail, email, or talk to a KAHS officer if you have something you'd like to donate or loan!

Equipment/Supplies Donations: *Supplies, equipment, or facilities donated for use by KAHS*

- Kaukauna Area School District—KAHS room at Nicolet School
- 24 stacking chairs—Ecumenical Center of UW-GB
- Long wood dining table—Helen VanEpern

Loans: *Items loaned to KAHS to be copied or photographed for the KAHS collection*

- Old photographs of Kaukauna—Dean Disterhoff
- DVD of Francis Marion -- Frank & Elaine Charlesworth
- Two photographs of Marion Francis-- Frank & Elaine Charlesworth
- Wooden curtain stretcher—Ramona Welhouse

Donations: *Items donated to KAHS and which will be submitted for approval by the Board for placement in the permanent collection.*

- A pair of large scissors marked as property of the "Kaukauna Chapter of the American Red Cross 1918" - Frank & Elaine Charlesworth
- Selection of 7 Kaukauna Klub crocks—Eugene Noonan
- Stormy's Hat: Just Right for Railroad Man [2008]- Craig and Jeannette Lahm
- Proceedings of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin December 14, 1899 - Craig and Jeannette Lahm
- Railroad Magazine (October 1939)- Craig and Jeannette Lahm
- Account ledgers from the Kaukauna Area School District - Kellyn Kroll Wilson
- Miscellaneous files of the Kaukauna Area School District - Kellyn Kroll Wilson
- 100th Anniversary brochure of the Bank of Kaukauna—**Susan Ley of the Bank of Kaukauna**
- Letter dated 1882 to Andrew Black—Craig and Jeannette Lahm
- Large format photograph of creek in Kaukauna—Henry Drechsler

A Day with Dunka

By Frankie Mengeling

The sun-slanted into the lavender painted bedroom and woke me up. I lay there in one of the second floor bedrooms of my grandmother's house in Kaukauna, a secure place while WWII raged continents away. I sniffed. Yes! "Ann," I poked my sister waking her up, "Dunka's here."

"How do you know?" she asked sleepily.

"Take a deep breath!"

We grinned at each other. Cigar smoke. Our grandfather was home for a few days from his job as a conductor for the Chicago & Northwestern Railroad. For four or five days he was the conductor on the Hiawatha from Chicago to Milwaukee, then home to Kaukauna for two days. Dunka, our pet name for him, meant excitement and adventure—chances to get out and about since our grandmother, Lala, didn't drive. We enjoyed our two weeks every summer with her, but looked forward to those precious days when Dunka was there.



Dunka

We had named him that because he dunked doughnuts, cookies, coffee cake and even pie into his coffee, which he always poured into the saucer to make a better dunking receptacle.

His christened name was Theodore Nicodemus Ellsworth; rarely I heard someone call him Ted but never heard anyone call him Theodore Nicodemus or even Theodore. Mom says that when Lala was angry with him she called him Theo. But I never heard that. Lala and everyone else (including his two children) called him Butch; he was from that era—the

late nineteenth century—in which everyone had a nickname unconnected to their real name.

We dressed quickly and ran down the spiral staircase, through the living room and dining room and into the kitchen.

"Dunka!" we ran into him hugging and giggling.

"Hey, Fan," he teased, "Who are these rascallions?"

We thought that was hilarious. Fan, Lala to us, dismissed his silliness with an “Oh, Butch.”

We climbed up on the chairs adjacent to him. He pointed to his coffee cup. “More jo,” he asked his wife. Then winking at us, he made an O with thumb and forefinger over the cup through which Lala had to pour the coffee. He winked again at us. “She’s never burned me yet,” he said.



He was tall and handsome. His graying hair was carefully cut and styled; his eyes, steely blue. He was vain about his appearance, probably the only passenger train conductor with tailor made uniforms. He dressed, as my dad, his son-in-law said, like a dandy—spectator shoes and panama fedora in summer, wing tips and velvet-collared overcoat in winter. Summer or winter he sported a fresh boutonniere. And always the sweet smell of good Havana cigars and Lala’s Tweed cologne that he used as aftershave. His voice was gravelly, but not that gravel tone of someone who needs to clear his throat. He hummed as well as whistled, but never a recognizable tune. He sported a diamond pinky-ring and a diamond tiepin. “Want to go for a spin?”



Lala and Dunka (Fan and Butch Ellsworth) lived on Lawe Street between Sarah and Taylor Streets.

he asked. Of course.

“I’m taking the girls for a ride, Fan,” he announced after breakfast. “Just to Appleton Junction. Boxcar tipped over last night and spilled a car full of watermelons. I’ll bring us some.” He slipped on his suit jacket and reached for his panama hat.

“Now, only one, Butch. That’s all that will fit in the icebox. And don’t put the girls in the rumble seat.” We didn’t like hearing that.

Dunka ignored Lala’s precautions. I remembered a cold spring day riding in the rumble seat up to Freedom or Shiocton to get ice cream cones; on the way home he forgot us, and my tam had blown off. I worried about a scolding from mom, but fortunately the tam got caught on

the gas cap.

But this was a summer day. We tumbled into the Oldsmobile coupe and headed out of town. Two blocks away he pulled over, winked again and opened the rumble seat. Ah, delight. We stepped up the treaded footpad over the fender and down into the rumble seat. We just fit. "Keep your hands in. Don't climb around." He turned, got in and started the engine. The wind blew our hair in our eyes and the sun made us squint. But we loved it. At Appleton Junction he left us in the car and chose three watermelons from the crew cleaning up the mess. He trudged back to the car carrying two, followed by an engineer carrying one. He nestled two on the front seat and one between our feet in the rumble seat.

"But, Lala said 'only one.'"

Dunka ignored that. He practiced his usual habit of whistling tunelessly through his teeth while chewing on a toothpick. He drove back to Kaukauna taking the road along the river, past the locks to the Grignon mansion. We knew we would make stops other than the up-ended boxcar. The Grignon home wasn't a museum in those days and people named Grignon, descendents of the original French fur trappers and Indians, still lived there. Dunka was their friend; he entered by the back door and we took seats around the kitchen fireplace. Only two Grignons were home that day: a woman Dunka's age cooking something on a wood-burning stove and an older man in plaid shirt and rough trousers rocking in a large wooden chair near the fire. These French-Indian people overawed me. I never said more than a timid hello or listened to the conversation, just stared impolitely. A visit to the Grignons was like stepping back into the early 1800s since no changes or remodeling of the original mansion built in the late 1700s had ever been made. I think he left one of the watermelons with them.

Dunka had several friends he'd visit dragging us kids along. Sometime we visited with Mame LaFave confined to her wheel chair and tended by her daughter Carol. Mame scared us because she looked so old and grim while Carol, barely in her 20's, was so lovely and blonde. I learned years later that Mame's husband, a railroader and good friend of Dunka's, had died in an accident on the train. Other times we visited his mother, my great-grandma Gretskey, her daughter Rose and Rose's son Francis, a severely deformed and retarded man who lived in a play pen. These were not "kid-friendly" places, but visiting them taught us about the real survivors of troubled lives.

This day, though, we had only one more stop before we went home: a sulfur creek, which he called Chief Concapot's Creek. I've tried to find this spot within the last ten years, but failed. And when I ask Kaukauna folks about it, they frown saying, "Never heard of it."

Well, Dunka knew where it was. He pulled up the Olds on the creek bank and got a collapsible cup out of the glove compartment. He climbed down the steep bank past saplings and tall grasses and filled the cup with the warm creek water. He took a generous swallow. “Good for what ails you,” he’d say and offer the cup to us. It was terrible tasting—hot, effervescent and sulfur smelling. We never refused even though one time it made Ann throw up.

After dinner he set up a card table in the sunroom and we four played cards. He taught us Hearts, Crazy 8’s, Seven Up and gin rummy. As if he were playing with the men at the depot, he would not “let us win” just because we were his granddaughters. Sometime during the games Lala brought out a box of Kaaps candy, usually bon bons in summer. “Don’t get the cards sticky,” we were warned.

Dunka was not the stereotypical modern-day grandfather—dressed in plaid cotton or flannel shirt and jeans—who played kid games with his grandkids. He never took us to a Disney movie, read us children’s books, played baseball or board games with us. Dunka didn’t alter his routine to suit us, but rather brought us into his world. He treated us like little adults and, I think, we repaid him by loving every minute with him.

Frankie notes: Lala and Dunka (Fan and Butch Ellsworth) lived on Lawe Street between Sarah and Taylor Streets. Their house took up all of the frontage on Lawe street between those two side street except for a gas station on the corner of Taylor and Lawe. The house, which belonged to my grandmother’s family (Jon Jansen) was sold in the late 40 or early 50s. The buyer turned it into apartments, then it was torn down and a supermarket was built there. Later that became a video store. I have not been to Kaukauna and driven down Lawe street in years, so I have no idea what is there now.

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Kaukauna Times—August 9, 1907

Saved Two Lives

Robert Jones Heroically Stopped a Runaway Horse

Robert Jones, colored, an employee of Kaukauna Machine shops, probably saved the lives of a woman and her daughter Tuesday morning and is undoubtedly entitled to a Carnegie medal for his heroic act. He was mowing grass in front of the company’s plant when his attention was attracted by a woman screaming. On looking up he saw a runaway horse coming towards him behind which in a light wagon filled with fruit and vegetables was Mrs. Geo. Gertz and her 10-year old daughter. Several unsuccessful attempts were made by pedestrians to capture the horse in its flight across the bridge. The animal was making direct for the railroad crossing where loco-

motives were passing back and forth with strings of cars varying in lengths. Mrs. Gertz was unable to guide the animal having lost possession of the reins. It was evident to Mr. Jones that the vehicle would strike the telephone pole in front of the Kaukauna Machine company's plant and without counting the cost he ran out and caught the horse by the bit as it dashed by. He was thrown from his feet but clung to the animal with a death grip and finally overpowered it after having been dragged several rods. Mrs. Gertz was so frightened that she lost the use of her vocal organs and for some time was unable to tell what frightened the horse. After quieting the animal and assuring himself that the harness was secure, Mr. Jones returned to his scythe to resume his work apparently unconscious that he had done anything out of the ordinary. When seen by a reporter a few minutes later he made light of the affair and said that his greatest concern was to prevent the vehicle from striking the telephone pole which might have meant instant death to the occupants.

—Searched and transcribed by KAHS member Ginny Mulvey

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Kaukauna Times—July 19, 1932

Roosevelt For President Club Being Started Here

Mrs. Sullivan Directs Local Organization

Sees Return to Jeffersonian principles as Only Hope for the Nation

That Kaukauna is to figure prominently as a center of Democratic activities in this section of Northeastern Wisconsin is a certainty with the determination of local Democrats to effect a strong organization with headquarters in the city. A "Roosevelt for President" club is being organized under the direction of Mrs. Katherine Sullivan, member of the Democratic State Central committee. Pledge cards are being circulated and are being generously signed.

Officers are to be selected from the territory including the surrounding towns and villages and a goal of 1,000 members has been set and present indications are that it will be reached. Mrs. Margaret V. Fragstein, state organizer of "Roosevelt for President" clubs, working under the state central committee, is expected to be in the city this week and will be the guest of Mrs. Sullivan. She will aid with the organization plans for the local club. Plans are being made for a large open air meeting to be held in the city in the near future. Mr. LaBudde, chairman of the state central committee, has consented to come to Kaukauna to take part in this event.

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In an interview given to the Times, Mrs. Sullivan made the following comment: “This entire section of Outagamie county and territory in adjoining counties is potentially democratic. We are the hub of democratic territory in three counties. We are affecting a militant organization and propose to function in a manner so as not to surrender any of our former prestige or identity. This is in reality a Democratic home coming year—those who have been away, on leave of absence, are coming home and we welcome them to bring along their Republican friends. Thousands of disillusioned Democrats, who were weaned away from the principles of Jefferson; mystified by magic names and fantastic impractical creeds are now in open rebellion at the present order in both state and nation. America is socially and economically in a state of complete paralysis. It is shivering on a foundation of sand. Around the corner was not prosperity, but disaster.

Agriculture, labor, industry, all the social and economic groups now recognize the folly of a political creed, having for its purpose the concentration of nearly the entire wealth of a nation in the hands of a few. We are literally being submerged in the both state and nation with fanatical tax measures, tantamount to confiscation of all property. Too few men or women of today, irrespective of former political affiliations, recognize the folly of our misapplication of democracy. A regenerated Jeffersonian democracy under the courageous and able leadership of Gov. Franklin D. Roosevelt is the only hope of 120 million free people in this, their darkest hour of distress.”

—Searched and transcribed by KAHS member Ginny Mulvey

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Editor Comment: Is it me or does the above article sound like it could be contemporary if you changed some names?

“Plus ça change, plus c’est la même chose”
[the more things change, the more they stay the same]

Kaukauna Area Historical Society (KAHS) Newsletter

The Kaukauna Area Historical Society (KAHS) publishes the "KAHS Topics" Newsletter quarterly (Spring, Summer, Fall, and Winter). It is intended to promote Kaukauna area history, to assist members with historical and genealogical research and to provide current society activity.

Editors: Craig Lahm

Send submissions to:

Kaukauna Area Historical Society, Inc.
P. O. Box 513
Kaukauna, WI 54130

Or submit via email at:

kaukaunahistory1@gmail.com

Deadlines for article/letter submissions are:

Spring Issue (March) by February 1

Summer Issue (June) by May 1

Fall Issue (September) by August 1

Winter Issue (December) by November 1

Meetings

The KAHS **Board of Directors** meets at 6:00 pm on the second Wednesday of the month (except December and June) in the KAHS Room located on the bottom floor of the Nicolet School building located at the southwest corner of Highway 55 and 8th street on the south side of Kaukauna.

KAHS members are invited to attend the KAHS Board meetings.

Meetings for the general membership, special events and programs may be scheduled at other sites to accommodate historical learning experiences. Meetings are generally held in the Haen Meeting Room located in the St. Paul Home at 316 East 14th Street in Kaukauna.

Check newspaper or web site for upcoming events.

Membership Information

Annual Dues: \$15

Membership year is from January 1 through December 31

2007-2008 Officers—[June 30 to June 30]

President—Craig Lahm

Vice President—Carol Van Boxtel

Secretary & Treasurer—Diane Wittman

Historian—Helen Van Epern



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