

PRESERVATION PRESS

FALL 2025



Shawano County: Part of the USA Story



As the United States of America prepares to recognize and celebrate its first 250 years the pages of Preservation Press will include items of singularly unique happenings in the greater Shawano area that caught the attention of the country coast-to-coast. It is noticeable and appropriate that most involve agriculture as the area's heritage, legacy and on-going enterprise comes from the land and the individuals and institutions who/which have plied it historically and currently.

In 1776, the vast area which is now Shawano County, Wisconsin was a land of forests, streams, rivers and lakes occupied by nomadic and settled Native America Indian tribes and the wildlife they pursued for food. While European explorers had made forays into the territory in the mid-1600s (Jean Nicolet and Fathers Menard and Allouez) it wasn't until around 1750 that explorative enterprise was being established, primarily French trappers and fur traders. The French and British were on shore fighting for territory from Quebec to the Great Lakes, often with the aid of native people.

In 1760, upon the surrender of "New France" to the British, Wisconsin (known as, in succession, Meskousing, Ouisconsin, WisKonsan) became

English colonial territory. In 1774 that area was part of the province of Quebec, and thus it remained until the close of the Revolutionary War when it was ceded to the United States.

In 1787, Wisconsin was part of the Northwest Territory. In 1800, the area now incorporated as Wisconsin was part of the Indiana Territory which also included parts of Minnesota, Michigan, Indiana and all of what is now Illinois. Wisconsin Territory was established in 1836 to include Upper Michigan, Minnesota, Iowa and parts of the Dakotas. Finally, on May 29, 1848 Wisconsin, with primarily the boundaries we know today, was admitted into the United States as the 30th state of the Union.

The area known as "Shaw-an-aw" from the Menominee nomenclature, was already occupied by some early venturers such as Samuel Farnsworth who came to the "country of the Menominees" in 1843 finding immense tracts of virgin pine with rivers and streams for logging operations and transportation. A small settlement was established where the city of Shawano's River Heights is located today.

Shawano County was organized in 1853 with 254 registered inhabitants.

YOU'RE INVITED TO THE
★ SHAWANO COUNTY ★
Historical Society
BRIDGING THE PAST TO PRESENT
Annual Meeting
Monday, October 20, 2025
Elizabeth Street Business Complex
605 E. Elizabeth St, Shawano

5:30 PM ... Registration and Snacks

6:00 PM ... Meeting with presentation to follow

Board of Directors Election
(nominations from the floor)

President & Curator Report
Treasurer's Report

Board of Directors Election Results
Other Business

HEADSTONES

If you couldn't make it to our
Headstones Cemetery Event in September
this is a great opportunity for you to come and
listen to the stories of a few of our
Shawano County Vietnam Veterans.

Presented by Tom Aumann

*Members, guests, and the general
public are welcome!*

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Happy Fall and a big thanks to all our volunteers and members for a great summer! We had our challenges, including extreme heat at Rhubarb Fest, but we prevailed and finished with one of the best summers for the society yet. This year we decided to be open on Saturdays for tours and I was very surprised by the number of visitors we had. I heard many compliments about Heritage

Park and the Society, so if you didn't get a chance to check it out this summer, please take the opportunity next year.

Just recently the society hosted our 5th annual Headstones cemetery walk at Woodlawn Cemetery in Shawano. This year we honored the Vietnam Veterans of Shawano County. Thankfully the rain held off and we were able to have the event without anyone getting wet. It was a wonderful way to honor our veterans and the planning committee always does a great job. I would also like to thank the Shawano Parks and Rec Department, American Legion Post 117, AMVETS Post 10, VFW Post 2723, Mohican Veterans, and the Shawano County Veterans Service Office for partnering with us.

As we move into Fall and Winter, some of us may look for things to fill our time. Please keep us in



JESSE BORLEN

mind. The society is always looking for volunteers, whether it is a few hours a week filing newspaper clippings, cataloging collections, and entering volunteer hours or a bigger roll, such as working on marketing, membership, and grants. There is always a job for you!



SHAWANO COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

2024-25 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Jesse Borlen, President
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GUIDING THE SOCIETY

VISION STATEMENT

The vision of the Shawano County Historical Society to "enrich people's lives through history".

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Shawano County Historical Society is to "preserve the culture and history of Shawano County by creating a vibrant learning experience and serving as a resource for current and future generations".



THE GANGSTER ERA

The United States story-line of the years 1920-40 included three remarkable eras which dominated the lives and headlines of those decades: Prohibition – 1920-33, Gangster – 1924-38, Great Depression – 1929-39. Though the events of those eras can be categorized separately they intrinsically intertwined effectively merging into the impact of one.

Wisconsin's border communities with Illinois and The Northwoods beheld many events and stories; in some cases stories with exaggerating tales. Shawano County, as a "Gateway to the North" was not left out. The following is primarily based on excerpts from the book authored by Tom Hollatz, *Gangster Holidays-The Love and Legends of the Bad Guys*.

THE PHANTOM STILL

In writing about "the phantom still of Langlade County" Hollatz relates the anecdotes centered in Shawano County. The legendary still located north of Antigo when raided and prosecuted by federal agents, "had once been located in Shawano". One of the principals involved with still operations was Walter Nier who was "shot in July 1932, near Krakow (Eastern Shawano County), but recovered. He claimed then that he had been mistaken for a hijacker by bootleggers who were operating a still in the area. Nier's assassins were never found." (Nier, in fact, was thought to be a booze trafficker.)

Continuing the story, Hollatz writes: "The other interesting question that was part of the phantom still story involved the double murder of Paddy Benell and Willie Marks. Chicago hoodlums and union men, whose bodies were riddled by machine gun fire at the Lime Kiln Inn on Highway 29, about midway between Bonduel and Shawano. Bendell, 50, an official of the Chicago Teamsters and Chauffeurs Union and Marks, said to be a survivor of the St. Valentine's Day Massacre had registered at the Lime Kiln Inn. Benell.....was on holiday as the result of the Red Barker slaying in Chicago. His gangland enemies had followed Marks' car to the inn. (Officials presumed)..... these deaths were associated with the phantom still and mob activity in the area."

DILLINGER'S GIRL

An infamous Shawano person of the era was Evelyn "Billie" Frechette. She was born in Neopit, Menominee Reservation, in 1908 and died in Shawano in 1969. At age 13 she attended "Indian School" in South Dakota before travelling to Chicago at age 18; at the apex of the Prohibition-Gangster period.

Billie married Sparks Welton, who was subsequently convicted and imprisoned. She had known "Public Enemy" John Dillinger previously and had commissioned his attorney, Louis Piquette, to execute a divorce from Welton. She had met Dillinger at a dance hall. She liked his athletic style – "he moved with the grace of a smooth fielding baseball infielder, which he had been". In several



Billie & John

Shawano and Menominee County resident Evelyn "Billie" Frechette with Chicago-based mobster John Dillinger.



bank robberies it is said "Dillinger leaped over bank counters with the ability of a second baseman avoiding the attempted breakup of a double play by a hard sliding base runner". Billie was Dillinger's 'love of his life'. They never married. She was arrested and convicted for obstruction of justice for harboring Dillinger after he suffered a gun shot wound to a leg during a robbery in St. Paul, MN.

The last time Dillinger saw Billie was April 9, 1934 when she was picked up at a North State Street, Chicago bar by legendary FBI agent Melvin Purvis to be transported to prison. Three

months later, July 22, 1934, Dillinger, 31, was killed by a team of local and federal law enforcement agents in front of the Biograph Theater, Chicago, as he resisted arrest.

After serving her time, Billie went on a national speaking tour, 1936-41, as John Dillinger's girl friend: "Crime Does Not Pay". A reviewer wrote: "Her life story became a light concoction, like the cotton candy her audiences carried into her talks. It was Evelyn Frechette all the way. She never asked for pity, and was tough to the end of her life."

Returning to Shawano she was a companion of Main Street barber and businessman Art Tic. There is some debate about them being married, but, her gravestone at Woodland Cemetery reads "Evelyn Tic".

CAPONE HIDEOUT

There lives a local legend that Al "Scarface" Capone and his cronies had a hideout in the North Bay area of Shawano Lake. Resident story teller/tour guides would point to crumbling pillars visible from the road, through the 1970s, on the swampy land off Lake Drive as evidence of a guarded entrance. The land remains undeveloped, the pillars no longer visible.

Editors note: perhaps of interest for some readers. One of the sources for Tom Hollatz's book was Jim Ford. Ford, known as the "Spice King" (Durkee) was a prominent part of Green Bay Packer home games through the 1970's setting up for his Durkee Spice King postgame radio show on the side of the stadium formed by Ridge and Highland (now Lombardi). Always attracted a crowd. Ford played professional baseball for Minocqua in the Northwoods league. For extra bucks he was a chauffeur for Capone associates with stories to tell. George Halas, founder of the Chicago Bears, was also a client.

Tail-Gunner Joe



Portrait of Joe McCarthy has hung in the Shawano County Court House for decades.

Joseph Raymond McCarthy ---Attorney Joe McCarthy, Judge Joseph McCarthy, Tail-Gunner Joe, Senator Joseph R. McCarthy --- was a large presence on the United States and World Stage after a brief tenure in Shawano County/ Shawano County Court House; his portrait hanging above the jury box in court chambers.

McCarthy was born in 1908 in Grand Chute, Outagamie County. After gaining his law degree from Marquette University he practiced law with the Eberlein firm in Shawano. However, a political career was his focus. He ran as a Democrat for Shawano County

District Attorney at age 28, but lost. Two years later he ran for circuit court judge for Langlade, Outagamie and Shawano counties and won, being the youngest, at age 30 to be elected a judge.

He served in World War II with the Marine Corps. His a.k.a. of "Tail Gunner Joe" was considered a mockery by most as it was earned through his own exaggerated tales. His targets were reported to be coconut trees. Known as one who like a good stiff drink, or two, one can imagine the stories told in Shawano's Main Street establishments.

McCarthy then became a Republican, the preferred political party of most in Shawano, Outagamie, Brown, Waupaca counties at the time, and ran for the United States Senate in 1946 narrowly defeating Robert M. LaFollette, Jr., son of legendary "Fighting Bob". After three mostly undistinguished years in office Joe burst on the national scene with a speech in February 1950 making accusations of Communist infiltration of the U.S. State Department, Voice of America and the U.S. Army.

His "Army-McCarthy hearings" was a staple of national news and live television broadcasts in 1954. His bombastic charges of communism infiltration led to the term of "McCarthyism" which to this day is raised as a pejorative in political rhetoric. His efforts and demeanor lead to a Senate vote to censure 67-22, making him one of the few U.S. Senators ever to be disciplined in this manner.

Joseph R. McCarthy passed away on May 2, 1957 at age 48.



EVERYBODY INVITED
"SENATOR JOHN KENNEDY"
WILL SPEAK AT 12:00 NOON
LUNCHEON
BILMAY HOTEL
FRIDAY, MARCH 11, 1960

Tickets \$1.00 for the luncheon



Joe portrayed as a gun-toting wildcat in Walt Kelly's "Pogo" comic strip.

Of Note

• Joe McCarthy was a good friend of Joseph Kennedy, father of John F. and Robert F. and was a frequent guest at the 'Kennedy Compound', Hyannis Port, Massachusetts.

• He was a long time friend of Wisconsin Circuit Judge Urban P. VanSusteren, who served as a campaign strategist during his Senate run. VanSusteren's daughter Greta is a television journalist currently employed by NewsMax TV, after stints with CNN, MSNBC and Fox News.

• A "Joe Must Go" campaign was initiated in 1954 by the publisher-editor of the Sauk-Prairie Star in Sauk County, Wisconsin, for "subverting the powers and programs of President Dwight D. Eisenhower".

• As a polarizing figure on the national political scene Senator McCarthy was a popular subject of political columnists and cartoonists. Even Walt Kelly's Pogo got on the ride as a regular in the cartoon strip portrayed as a rifle-toting bobcat who ambled into Okefenokee Swamp replete with Joe's all day long '5 o'clock shadow'. At one point the publisher of the Providence, New Jersey newspaper, The Bulletin, threatened to cancel the strip if Kelly didn't drop the character. Seizing upon this fresh opportunity, Kelly drew a new 'Malarkey' panel hiding the character under a sack: "I'm afeared us will haf'ta keep these bags over our heads, otherwise that chicken from Providence might recognize us". In the context of the strip, the statement was a reference to a Rhode Island Red named Sis Boombah from a previous strip, but also a clever slap at the newspaper who tried to censor Kelly.



After a Rhode Island newspaper threatened cancelling the strip, Joe, as Simple J. Malarkey, cartoonist Kelly covered the character.

Future U.S. President Stopped By

In March of 1960 the Kennedy for President campaign hit Shawano. Shawano County Democrat Party, with Attorney Jack Schumacher and Mary Thimke (Mrs. Robert Thimke) leading, hosted candidate John F. "Jack" Kennedy and Mrs. Kennedy (Jacqueline) at the Bilmay Hotel for a luncheon and campaign speech.

JFK used the occasion to tout his "Dairy Self-Help Program" which he envisioned would be run by farmers to manage supply to match market demand thereby reducing dependency on federal government price supports. (Canada had such a "quota" system.) The concept of quotas was not well received by U.S. producers, particularly Wisconsin dairymen.

Candidate Kennedy also visited the Menominee Reservation.

Mr. and Mrs. Kennedy spent the evening in Shawano, staying at the Bilmay.

Three Native American Tribes: Part of Shawano County Story



Three American Indian Tribes and the events impacting tribal home and life are intricately woven into Shawano County history: Ho-Chunk, Menominee and Stockbridge Munsee. The stories are long and complex with multiple political, legal and treaty nuances; a few words cannot provide a full overview, so just some dates and summary background.



The HoChunk

The Ho-Chunk Nation is considered a “non-reservation” tribe. The tribe oversees parcels of land in Indian Trust; many tribal members own their own land. Ho-Chunk have members in Wisconsin (14 counties) and four other states, with their headquarters in Black River Falls, Jackson County, Wisconsin.

In the 1880s, the Ho-Chunk generally lived in two areas – Black River Falls and Wittenberg. Lutheran Church missionaries established a school at Wittenberg in 1884 to minister to, and provide formal education for, the Ho-Chunk. The tribe claims the Wittenberg area as “home for many generations and thousands of years”. The Wittenberg land was actually placed “in trust” in 1963. Some savvy members of the tribe, formerly known as the Wisconsin Winnebago Tribe (characterized as a “misnomer” in Ho-Chunk official history narratives) exploited the (U.S.) Homestead Act of 1862 to purchase land in their ancestral home. This amazing strategy resulted in a new national law, the Indiana Homestead Act of 1875.

The Ho-Chunk National Museum and Cultural Center is located at Tomah, Wisconsin. See Preservation Press, Spring 2025 for an article about nationally known artist Clarence Monegar, a Ho-Chunk member born in Wittenberg.



The Menominees

Though not occupying land in Shawano County as do the Ho-Chunk and the Stockbridge-Munsee, the Menominee Tribe and the county have a long and intricate history. The Tribe’s culture, history and residency in Wisconsin dates back 10,000 years. In the 1800s, the Menominee occupied a land base estimated at 10 million acres. Today their land consists of approximately 235,000 acres of Menominee Reservation and Menominee County. The reservation was created in 1854 through a treaty with the United States Government. (See Preservation Press, Spring 2025 for the article about Father Bonduel, the village of Bonduel’s namesake, and his efforts on behalf of the Menominee.) The tribe’s logging operations and saw mill at Neopit, known as Menominee Tribal Enterprises, has been, for decades, held in high esteem, nationally; a successful tribal business and a paragon of forestry management.

On July 3, 1959 then Governor Gaylord Nelson signed a law making Menominee County the state’s 72nd county. Preservation Press, Spring 2026 will include an article about the saga of the Menominee People through reservation status, the termination “experiment” and restoration, including the Novitiate episode. The tribe operates an elaborate and well-curated museum on the Wolf River just north of Keshena: Menominee Indian Tribe Cultural Museum and Logging Camp.



The Stockbridge-Munsee

The Stockbridge-Munsee Band of the Mohican Indians is originally from the northeastern part of the United States. Mohican, originally pronounced Muh-he-con-ne-ok, means “People of the waters that are never still”. Like their name, they have been on many trails, seemingly never still, on their journey to reservation land in western Shawano County, towns of Red Springs and Bartelme, with a Bowler address. The Stockbridge-Munsee were established on this site since 1856. Subsequent Federal legislation in 1871 and 1906 significantly reduced tribal holdings. The parcels the tribe currently holds was placed in trust in the 1930s. Their first location in Wisconsin, after leaving New York and Massachusetts, was on the eastern shores of Lake Winnebago, a settlement known as Stockbridge. The Calumet County village maintains that name.

The reservation consists of 40,000 acres with 16,000 held in trust. Their current tribal population is approximately 1,500.

The tribe maintains a museum and archival depository on MoHeConNuck Road off of County Highway A. See the Preservation Press, Fall 2022 for highlights of the exhibits.

Milk Strikes – Tough Times

The Great Depression which began in 1929 was a devastating period for agriculture as well as most sectors of the U.S. economy. At-the-farm milk prices had declined from \$2.00 per hundredweight

to \$0.89. Small, family dairy farms were driven into poverty and insolvency; desperation prevailed. Milk and cream was delivered/sold to the numerous small cheese and butter factories that dotted the rural counties, such as Shawano, at lower values than farmers would get when shipping milk to beverage milk operators nearer population centers. Shawano County was characterized as having some of the lowest milk prices in the state. This factored into the start-up of Consolidated Badger Cooperative, based in Shawano, in 1931. The milk cooperative was facilitated after a study by

the University of Wisconsin College of Agriculture and fostered by the County University Extension Office, Chamber of Commerce, and local business and farm leaders.

All around Wisconsin, in the months preceding 1933, rural areas with milk producers were aflame with a seething farm violence. Dumping of milk, blockades, sabotaging milk trucks, livestock embargoes, clashes between farmers and law officers was the order of the day. Milk processors were caught in the middle. Farmers, themselves, were split in beliefs, rhetoric and action. While factions pursued violence, others supported their marketing associations to find more orderly solutions.

The Milk Strikes of 1933 was a national story. Shawano County was a story focal point.



Roads and highways were barricaded with vehicles, trees, rocks and farm equipment to prevent milk from making it to the processing plants.



Shawano County deputies and deputized citizens guarding the county garage which was a temporary jail during the milk strike confrontations.

The Stories

Wisconsin Historical Society - Wisconsin 101

On May 15, it became clear to state officials that Shawano County Sheriff Otto Druckery could not repel the strikers attempting to raid the Consolidated Badger production plants and creameries. "Wisconsin Governor Albert G. Schmedeman personally removed Druckery from power, denouncing his ineptitude and failure to protect private property. Druckery was replaced by Sheriff Oscar Dettman." Dettman engineered the job of stopping the strikers with the aid of National Guard Colonel Holden and several hundred deputies. When appointed, Sheriff Dettman was the elected Shawano City Clerk and had served in WWI.

New York Times, May 18, 1933

**WISCONSIN TROOPS BEAT OFF FARMERS;
1,000 Soldiers, With Clubs and Gas, Rout Milk Strikers
and Imprison 200.**

14 NEW COMPANIES CALLED Governor Puts Half of State's Guardsmen
Into Readiness for 'Organized' Rebellion.

May 18, 1933, Milwaukee Journal

"Fifty automobiles gathered at a point near the line between Shawano and Brown counties early today. A scout for national guard forces saw them and messaged headquarters: 'looks like a gathering of strikers in force here. Send somebody quick.' Soldiers with gas masks, bombs and revolvers leaped into trucks and hurried to the scene. The autos were parked in front of a house from which came strange and solemn voices. The soldiers crept up --- ready for action. Then they grinned sheepishly at each other. Inside the house a Polish priest was performing a marriage ceremony. The autos belonged to the guests."



Shawano Leader-Advocate, May 18, 1933

The high point of a three day milk fight in Shawano County came shortly after noon yesterday when 450 militia, deputized by Shawano County and nearly 500 home deputies met Walter Singler's strikers at Cemetery Hill in a free for all battle in which the strikers fled as fast as gasoline would burn to send their motor trucks speeding back to the East. Two strikers received serious scalp wounds during the skirmish. Consolidated Badger Manager Frank Stone attempted to strike a truce with Singler, however, the strikers were not satisfied. In the end cooperative members brought their milk to Badger plants for processing, but this was met with protests and uneasy times.



Gas masked and armed deputies confronting the protesters.

Hartland Roots, Shawano County Town of Hartland Sesquicentennial Book

Mrs. Alfred Heller wrote in her autobiography: (her husband farmed and served as a deputy): "He spent both his days and nights at the Bonduel Creamery. Sometimes he did not come home for a couple of days. I never knew how or where he was. I was never so scared in my life as when the strike was on. We had only been hauling our cream there for about five years. A lot of our neighbors were picketing. Richard Heinz got shot full of pellets and couldn't sit for awhile, Lewis Krake also got wounded."

Mrs. Herbert Wussow stated "Money was very scarce as 1931 was the beginning of the Depression. In addition, a milk strike was going on so we couldn't sell any milk. So we bought a cream separator to process our own milk. We had all the milk, cream and butter that we could possibly want. We sold the cream but fed the skim milk to the pigs and calves.



Deputies forming up for close hand-to-hand battle with the strike-supporters.

Aggregated from various newspaper accounts

Walter M. Singler, of Black Creek and Shiocton, was President of the Wisconsin Cooperative Milk Pool formed in 1932. Singler quickly gained a reputation for his charisma, powerful appearance, distinction style of dress and fiery debating style. His first attempt to launch a state-wide strike for February 15, 1933 was largely unsuccessful, ending one week later after a meeting with Wisconsin Governor Schmedeman. After meeting with National Farmers' Holiday Association and national labor unions, Singler declared a second strike on May 12, 1933, leading to many acts of violence and physical confrontations between striking farmers and county deputies assisted by National Guardsmen.



Battle at Shawano's Cemetery Hill

||| CONTRARIAN SECTS |||

Shawano County attracted national attention through the activities of two groups, unrelated, that set up camp in our thousand square mile (actually 990) land of rivers, streams, lakes, trees, farms, business/industry, churches and parks.

SIST, aka The Ramas

Samanta Roy Institute of Science and Technology (SIST), which the natives refer to as the “Ramas”, came on the scene in the 1970s; also known as the Disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, led by Rama Behera. He subsequently changed his name to Dr. Rama Chandra Samanta Roy and is currently believed to be known as Avraham Cohen.

Seemingly endowed with unlimited funds SIST bought businesses and other property in the Shawano area without apparent purpose, though it was rumored the assets were to be eventually used to establish a private boarding school. A “compound” was established just north of the city bordered by County Highway H and State Highway 47/55; remains occupied and guarded today. A school was never established, however, some businesses remain in operation. A series of legal issues regarding members of the group and property disputes garnered national attention and local consternation; an abstracted history can be found on the Wikipedia site.

Posse Comitatus/Life Science Church

The Tigerton area - Tigerton Dells, Town of Fairbanks – was the site of another, presumably religious based, organization which attracted national attention: Life Science Church-Christian Liberty Academy. Known more commonly locally as “The Posse Comitatus”. Posse Comitatus, as codified, is a group of citizens who are called upon to assist a sheriff in keeping the peace. The Posse Comitatus Act of 1878 bans federal troops from participating in civilian law enforcement. In the extreme, some have claimed Posse Comitatus as “keep the government out of my life”.

From the pages of the Los Angeles Times: *(abstracted and paraphrased)*

Residents link the origins of the Posse to a day in the late 1970s when farmer Donald Miniescheske, owner-operator of the Tigerton Dells resort and ranch, dumped two loads of sand along the banks of the

Embarrass River-South Branch for a swimming beach for the resort. Wisconsin DNR called it a violation as he did not have a permit --- his outrage against the government interference fueled a movement recognized as the Posse. The tavern/ballroom/resort/community hall became the group’s headquarters.

Initially, there was community support for the group until “they started going crazy with the stuff, when they started flashing guns.”

James Wickstrom, a white supremacist and far-right activist who identified as a minister joined Minniecheske in leadership of the Posse. During their reign there was no end of skirmishes with town, county, state and federal authorities and institutions.

Minniecheske served time in prison for destruction of property, possession of stolen property and transfer of stolen property. Wickstrom was imprisoned for impersonating a municipal official in Fairbanks, Shawano County and in Pennsylvania for conspiring to distribute \$100,000 in counterfeit money.

The LA Times article concluded, “Townfolk have pronounced the Posse dead since 1985, when officers swooped on the hundreds of acres of property the group had assembled and removed some trailer homes that violated county zoning laws.”



The property still standing but deteriorating.



Tigerton Dells as a “go-to” resort along the Embarrass River in the 1930s.





This photograph was published in the Green Bay Press-Gazette on September 7, 1950 with the following caption, "Gary Magee sitting on his gig, represents the fourth generation of his family in the harness racing world. Standing behind him, from left, are his grandfather Hugh Magee Jr., of Shawano, his great-grandfather, Hugh Magee Sr., of Pulaski, and his father, Elwood Magee of Gary, Ind. The Magees have had horses at the Shawano County Fair for a number of years and train on the grounds the year 'round."

The McGees (from the left): Hugh McGee Jr., Hugh Sr., Elwood and Gary in front.



1940 Shawano County Fair

The Shawano County Fairgrounds oval in 1940.

County Fair 2025 – The McGee Family Legacy

The featured exhibit of Shawano County Historical Society's booth at the 2025 County Fair was the Magee Family Story – the five generation harness racing legacy.

The story starts with Hugh Magee Sr. (1869-1951) who farmed in the Town of Angelica and established a far-flung reputation as a trainer of harness racing horses. His son, Hugh Jr. (1900-1987) grew up around horses and began harness racing at various county fairs in the mid-1920s. When Shawano County added harness racing to its fair program in the 1930s, Hugh Jr. was one of the first to enter. His passion was passed on to his son, Elwood (1922-2007) who continued the legacy winning many races at the Shawano County Fair and other tracks around the state. The Magee's once stabled their horses at the fairgrounds and practiced on the oval.

Elwood's sister Joyce introduced William Scheider Jr., her future husband, to horses and racing. Bill worked with the Magee family on developing and training horses, becoming a sully* (the two-wheeled, one seat cart used in harness racing) driver himself. Some folks may



recall the homemade track he exercised on at the corner of County Highway M and



Elwood McGee with the family's famous Red Hunter, harness racing champion.



Shawano County Historical Society booth at the 2025 County Fair featuring the McGee Family and their horse training and racing legacy.

Rosebrook Road.

Harness racing at the Shawano County Fair ended in the early 1960s. Thus, Elwood's son Gary never got to race on the home track. He is continuing the tradition today, however, with his son Mike at three Wisconsin fairs and a race track in Minnesota.

*Sully, by definition, is someone who is gloomy and quietly unhappy. Harness racing carts are called sulkies because they were said to have been chosen by unsociable people fond of their own company or having fits of sully. (While the definition might fit the cart it did not fit the personalities

of the Magee family and their engagement with the local community and the community of harness racing.)



Hugh McGee's sully uniform.

OUR THANKS FOR THESE DONATIONS

(Received March 13, 2025 - September 22, 2025)

MEMBERSHIPS

Lifetime - \$1,250

Bill & Karen Monfre

Guardian - \$250

Bonnie Splitt & Joe Skaleski

Premier - \$100

Greg & Lesley Nemetz

Tom & Karen Grover

Richard & JudyAnn Pahlow

Barbara Mortensen

Lloyd & Carolyn Gutt

James & Judith Judd

Bonnie Sperberg

NEW MEMBERS

Kody Kraabel

Andrew Barron

James & Nancy Maier

Mary Jo Menacher Brown

MEMORIALS

In memory of:

Lorna Dumke - \$300

Rita Trinko - \$245

Elaine Knope - \$635

Gene Zeuke's 100th Birthday
- \$100

CASH DONATIONS

Shawano Woman's Club -
\$1,056

Community Foundation-

Bohm Family Fund - \$1,000

Geri Van De Loo - \$500

Robert A White - \$500

Michael & Marilyn Hille - \$200

David Winship - \$100

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AMERICA ONLINE GIVING

Stacey Bartz - \$350

Jenna Krause - \$450

17th Annual

Rhubarb Fest Event Sponsors (\$1,000)

Edward Jones

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ELECTRIC SERVICE

Swedberg
Funeral Home and Crematory, Inc.
Remembering and Celebrating Life

17th Annual

Rhubarb Fest Sponsors

GOLD (\$500)



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Liz Eberlein Redpath

The Stock Market

Doug & Wendy Engel

The Wallrich Agency

Marion Body Works

Mickelson Funeral &

Cremation Services

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IN KIND



Rent a Church for Your Event!



Use it for weddings,
reunions, anniversaries,
memorial services,
meetings, concerts,
special events.

The Old Tabor Church located
in Heritage Park
524 N. Franklin Street,
Shawano, Wisconsin
Comfortably seats 60 adults

For more information on rates and availability, contact the
Shawano County Historical Society at 715-526-3323
or email us at office@shawanohistory.com

RhubarbFest 2025



Shawano Area Quilters displayed quilts old and new. Here Marlene Bowen discusses the art with attendees.



Rhubarb Pie contest, coordinated by Bonnie Splitt, was judged by Terri Dallas, Travis Lubinski and Jerry Anderson.



There were over 15 entries in the annual pie baking contest with Wendy Darm's entry coming in first; Rose Salzmann, second.



It was a very warm day for RhubarbFest 2025, but interest and attendance was good. The event continues to be the Society's top fundraiser.



RhubarbFest exhibitors and vendors offer a wide array of crafts and how-tos. SAQ has been one of the continuing supporters. Pictured here are members Carol Weyenberg, Mary Ellen Felts and Cheryl Tiegs.

Save
The Date -
**SATURDAY,
JUNE 20,
2026**

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- Connect with others who care about local history



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Shawano County Historical Society
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*The Shawano County Historical Society is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.
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**SHAWANO COUNTY
 HISTORICAL SOCIETY**
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