

## The Coolidge House

WELL KNOWN DOCTOR'S HOME FALLS VICTIM TO THE WRECKING BALL.

The Coolidge House was located at 7446 Elmwood Avenue in Middleton. It was a two story dwelling built of yellow brick which was a common material used during that period. It is believed the home was built sometime around 1870.

Dr. Sumner Curtis Coolidge bought the house in 1875. Dr. Coolidge had practiced medicine in Pheasant Branch since 1858. He lived in the house until his death in 1900. Several of the out buildings and the barn belonging to the house burned down during the fire of 1900 while the house was spared.

Dr. Coolidge along with Dr. Rowley, were known for running the pest house located in Pheasant Branch. People with contagious diseases were housed there and cared for by people that had survived the same disease.

Dr. Coolidge's son, Frank, returned to the area from South Dakota and moved into the house. He and his wife lived in the house until their deaths in the 1950s. The home was then purchased by the Gruber family.

In the 1970s it became known that the home might be demolished within 16 months. The Grubers offered to donate the building if someone else would



pay the \$25,000.00 to move it. Despite efforts by the city and the Middleton Historical Society, the then recently landmarked house, could not be saved.



# A New Website (*we're excited about!!!*)

If you have not visited YOUR MAHS web site lately, we invite you to do so and “Bookmark” it for future reference. We have been updating the web site over the past 4-5 months and although it is still a work in progress, we think it is looking pretty good and has lots to offer. The address is: [www.middletonhistory.org](http://www.middletonhistory.org)

The HOME PAGE, where you first “land” on the web site, will contain the latest Society news and other tidbits of interest. Please check the **UPCOMING EVENTS** tab often, because this is where we will post the latest information on what is happening along with upcoming dates and locations.

The Middleton Historic Fact Sheet series, started last summer and now numbering 5, is available in PDF format under the **PUBLICATIONS** tab. You can easily read them online or print copies for your files. You will also find past issues of the MAHS Newsletter that you can enjoy online or print for later reading.

We now have quite a few historic Middleton photos (street scenes, businesses, churches, schools and people) under the **PHOTO GALLERY** tab and we plan to add many more.

The **LINKS** tab will “link” you with many additional web site locations: other Middleton resources, information about many local cemeteries, and various county/state organizations and locations.

The **POSTCARDS** tab links to a collection of old Middleton postcards that you can view on a web site sponsored by Wisconsin Library Service in cooperation with several partners.

The MAHS web site also has detailed information about our museums at the **Rowley House** and **The Museum at the Depot**. Photos of the current EXHIBITS in both museums are included to help showcase the many artifacts we have on display.

The **MIDDLETON STORIES** tab currently features some background information about Howard Morey and the history of our local airport.

If you need a membership form, or you want to pass one

along to a relative or friend, a printable copy is available under the **MEMBERSHIP** tab.

When you want to tell folks **ABOUT MAHS**, you will find lots of helpful information about the Society and the hours when the **Rowley House** and **The Museum at the Depot** are open. If you want to **CONTACT** Society Officers, you will quickly find the phone numbers and addresses that you need.

And finally, we also have some information about **VOLUNTEERING** to help support our MAHS programs and museum activities.

So please, check out YOUR web site and let us know if we need to make changes or add more items of information. As we said, it is a work in progress, so any helpful suggestions are more than welcome.

*Submitted by Jeff Martin*

## ATTENTION STUDENTS AND RECENT GRADUATES!

The Middleton Area Historical Society (MAHS) is seeking individuals for our summer museum internship program!

Projects may include organizing and describing archival materials, digitizing images, assisting with the preservation of collection items, working on a larger collection with another volunteer, or assisting with overall collections management and care. The internship runs June through August 2015 and is unpaid.

For more information please contact Brekk Feeley, Director with the Middleton Area Historical Society at : [brekkf@gmail.com](mailto:brekkf@gmail.com)

**Reminder:** The Rowley House Museum at 7410 Hubbard Avenue will be open this year from mid - April to mid - October. Hours are Tuesday and Saturday from 1 - 4 pm. *Please plan on visiting us to learn more about the history of Middleton.*

# Historic First German Lutheran Church



*Submitted by Alice Drake*

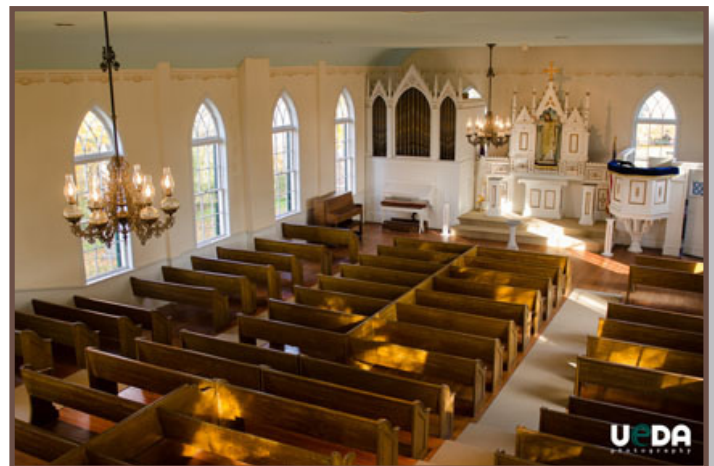
*Photos courtesy of Udea Photography*

The founders of the First German Evangelical Lutheran Congregation of Middleton were a group of immigrants from the small German duchy of Mecklenburg-Schwerin located in northern Germany near the Baltic Sea. When land opened for settlement in Wisconsin German immigrants began to arrive. Hoping to find farmland in Milwaukee which was at that time not much larger than their small German villages, they were obliged to travel further west in search of fertile land to homestead. Many found that land in the town of Middleton and surrounding areas and as one told another, immigrants from Germany flooded the area eventually making the population predominantly German. The faith, determination and hard work of these early German families has greatly contributed to the community we share today.

It is unknown when the first of the “Mecklenburgers” arrived in Middleton but it is known that in the fall of 1852 one of them, Gustav Polkow invited his neighbors to his home for prayer and hymns. Soon fourteen families would agree to build a place of worship. The first structure built in 1854 was a log “chapel.” Settler Henry Niebuhr donated the land and John Voss, a wheelwright, supervised the work. The remaining families worked as a community, each adding one long and one short log for the structure and building a bench on which to sit for services. The old cemetery with a few tombstones still exists on Pleasant



View Road in the town of Middleton. As more German immigrants made their way to the Middleton area, church membership swelled and a second structure was built; this time on land located at the top of the hill, donated by Gustav Pulchow. There were now thirty-one families, each agreeing to pay \$82 and combine their labor to bring materials to the site. This building, today called First Lutheran Church, became known at “the big white church.” Membership continued to grow and in 1884 the members



added a 40 foot addition, a more elaborate steeple, an organ and a better bell. Then membership began to decline and by 1947 most of the congregation had moved into town for services. The new St. Luke’s Lutheran Church had been built in Middleton. There services were conducted in English rather than the German language of the early settlers. The First German Lutheran Church closed its doors and stood empty for many years.

Time and vandals had their way with the building. Then, in the 1980’s the Lutheran synod announced its intention to burn the derelict church to the ground. The community rallied, raised money and restored this historic site. In 1988 it was named by the Secretary of Interior to the National Register of Historic Places.





Today, the church is a well known landmark and one of the oldest buildings in Middleton. As far back as the 1980s it was described as one of the finest frame 19th century churches remaining in Dane County. The architecture is Victorian Gothic which was typical of German architecture of the late 1850s and 1860s. The original altar, pulpit, kerosene lamp chandeliers (now electrified),

hand-grained pews, and rare Schuelke pipe organ known for its distinctly Germanic sound (though no longer working) have managed to survive the ravages of time.

Since its restoration volunteers have been stewards of the property. There are no paid employees. Income comes only from building rental for weddings, sales of cemetery plots and some good-will donations. The site has been self-sustaining since 1987 but now the board of trustees is asking the community to help preserve the legacy of these

early settlers. Estimates to fix the leaking steeple, repair the weather vane, reinforce the crumbling foundation and address other maintenance issues have reached \$57,000.

The founders include some well known area names including Carl Albrecht, Joachim Benn\*, Carl Boeck\*, Peter Britt, Henry Burmeister, John Durkopp, Fritz Elver, John Elver\*, John Facklam, John Findorff, Joachim Frenz, Carl Goth, Juergen Goth, Joachim Harloff\*, John Ibenthal, John Koch, John Loehrs, John Lübcke\*, John F. Lübcke, Fritz Mühlenbruch\*, Friederich Niebuhr\*, John Niebuhr\*, Christian Ort, Carl Pierstorff\*, Christian Pierstorff\*, Gustav Polkow\*, Henry Prien\*, John Prien\*, John Schewe, Carl Schwenn, Christian Schwenn, John Voss\*, William Wesenberg, John Wittenburg

\*The fourteen founders of the log church built in 1854

Tax deductible donations in any amount will be greatly appreciated and can be made with checks payable to: First Lutheran Church, c/o State Bank of Cross Plains, 8301 University Ave, Middleton, WI 53562 or donate through our website: [www.historicfirstlutheranmiddleton.org](http://www.historicfirstlutheranmiddleton.org).

Questions can be addressed to: Alice Drake, (608) 827-8728, amd1@charter.net.



## Building Fireman's Park

One Sunday in June of 1949, approximately 30 men gathered at the Middleton Firemen's Memorial park to lay forms for fireplaces and rest rooms, dig holes for guard rails and paint picnic tables. Masons volunteered to build the initial fireplaces and planned for work to be completed by the end of that summer.

**Pictured left to right:** Roland Knocke, Charles Erdman, Joe Gessler, Ernest Schuetze, A Schwarz Sr., Hans Kopke, and Jake Schlump.

*Courtesy of Wisconsin State Journal*

# If You Grew Up In Middleton Do You Remember...?

by Mary Lamm Felton and  
Jeannie Sakrison Velarde

Does anyone remember ice-skating at Fireman's Park at the end where the carnivals were held in the summer? They had a warming house and music we could skate to. I think the fire department flooded the rink every winter.

This question was posted recently. The comments brought back many fond memories of our time skating at Fireman's Park. Evidently, many people agree with us because we had to sift through 72 comments and it was hard to choose which ones to use for this article.

- I went almost every evening during high school. Crack the whip and other games were so much fun. Good memories. I think we had ice-skating for gym class too.
- Loved the ice rink, it was a short walk from the Maywood Ave. house. When we called home from the warming house, the number was TE6-4459, a party line!!!
- I remember skating at Fireman's Park . Walking on the wood floors in the warming house with your skates was kind of neat.
- I broke my right wrist skating there day after Christmas, 1958. Didn't stop it from being one of my favorite places to skate.
- I loved skating there, although I think I spent more time in the warming house. Not a great skater, but had fun joining groups in "crack the whip."
- I used to walk thru Fireman's Park to get to the skate rink at night, all by myself with no worries. I would never let my grandkids do that today.
- I spent many school nights at that rink. I was not a very good High School hockey player, but I was better than the guys that would show up with magazines taped to their shins to play. LOL!
- I loved skating there. I remember the benches had gouged out places where we'd put our skates. One thing I do want to know... why was I always the last one in line for Crack the Whip? I went sailing into a snow bank more than once!

- How about making those pompoms for the tops of your skates. They looked so bare without the pompoms.
- There are certain songs from the 50's-'60's that whenever I hear them, I am back at the ice rink. Hey Kari Ann, Wipeout, Sherry Baby, Duke of Earl, My Boyfriend's Back, It's My Party. What are the others? They played the music all night. How many remember playing "Pom-Pom" for hours? The ice rink got me to do my homework pronto, because there was no going skating till the homework was done.



## Reminders

Here are some reminders about upcoming events. Please remember to check our web site often for any changes or additions to this schedule.

### **March 21 (Saturday) 10 a.m.**

Presentation by Anita Taylor Doering featuring the Pheasant Branch area, to be held at the VFW Post, 6710 Century Avenue, Middleton.

### **April 11 (Saturday) 10 a.m.**

Museum Cleaning Day at Rowley House

### **April 14 (Tuesday) 1 - 4 p.m.**

Rowley House Museum opens for season

### **June 17 (Wednesday) 5 - 8 p.m.**

Annual Ice Cream Social at Lakeview Park

### **October 9 - 10 (Friday/Saturday)**

Middleton will host the Annual State Historical Society Conference being held at the Marriot Hotel. Work is underway to organize a Middleton area tour and evening dinner.

### **December 5 (Saturday)**

Annual Middleton Area Historical Society meeting at the Middleton Senior Center.



Please remember to like us on Facebook.





**Executive Officers**

President Mike Davis  
Vice President Ruth Bachmeier  
Secretary Sandy Lewis  
Treasurer Edith Ersland

**Board of Directors**

Erin Hughes  
Carol Burger  
Jeff Martin  
William Reinke  
Duane Van Haren  
Steven Drake  
Mary Hilgendorf  
Brekka Feeley  
Jessica Conteras  
Carolyn Mattern

**Honorary/Ex-Officio**

**Board Members**

John Skinner  
Joanne Kelly  
Vera Bauman  
Dan Ramsey

**Newsletter Editor**

Mary Hilgendorf

[middletonhistory.org](http://middletonhistory.org)

**We Value Your Membership**

Already a member -- you will be contacted by mail or email when it is time to renew

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

**Annual Memberships**

- Junior Historian (under 18) .....\$2.00
- Individual .....\$10.00
- Family.....\$20.00
- Sustaining Member .....\$100.00
- Business/Club.....\$50.00

**Mail to:**

Middleton Area Historical Society  
7410 Hubbard Avenue  
Middleton, Wisconsin 53562-3118

**Life Memberships**

- Individual .....\$200.00
- Business/Club.....\$500.00

Gift for Museum Restoration/Maintenance: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Total Enclosed \$** \_\_\_\_\_

For those who itemize their taxes:  
The Middleton Area Historical Society is a  
not-for-profit 501 (c) (3) corporation

To update your contact information or to receive this  
newsletter via email, please contact Mary at 836-6776.