

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Ring-necked Pheasant

The ring-necked pheasant, phasianus colchicus, is not native to Wisconsin, but it was initially introduced in Waukesha County, by Colonel Gustav Pabst, in 1916 and soon spread to Jefferson County. Hunting was allowed in 1927 and, based on the early success, stocking began throughout most of the state.

The question has been raised: How did Pheasant Branch get its name if Pheasants are not native to Wisconsin? Pheasant Branch historian and author **Anita Doering** may have come across the answer to this question.

According to the **Dane County Place Names** by Frederic G. Cassidy (University of Wisconsin Press, 2009). Pages 134-5 explains that "The Pheasant Branch" was first used to describe the stream or creek and the earliest record the author found was 1845 for the use of this name.

Thomas T. Whittlesey bought the land where the village of Pheasant Branch was sited in 1838, but laid out the village in 1849 and platted in 1853. Likely Whittlesey named the village for the stream or creek.



Most assume that the name "pheasant" must have been a description of some local bird. One theory not mentioned in this book was the Native American name for the turkey which was described as "peena."

However, Cassidy's reasoning makes the most sense. The ruffed grouse, would have been the most prominent local native bird in the area. Northerners called this bird a partridge and pheasant by Southerners. Clearly Whittlesey hailed from Connecticut, but Col. William B. Slaughter had purchased land in 1835 just east of the south part of the stream where he platted on paper his "City of the Four Lakes" in his unsuccessful bid for the state capital. Slaughter was from Virginia and would have likely used the Southern colloquial word for ruffed grouse as pheasant.

Middleton Historical Society's First President: *Edward Kromrey*

by Mel Krc

In the June newsletter we had an article about the early history of the board of the Middleton Area Historical Society. That focused on the first board of directors' accomplishments during the presidency of Edward Kromrey. Much of that discussion centered on the administrative structures that the first board established in order to put the society on a firm footing going forward. In this edition, we continue with some of the major programmatic accomplishments of the board during the presidency of Mr. Kromrey.

In future editions of this newsletter we will present some of the major accomplishments of the board during the tenures of succeeding presidents. From the beginning in 1972 to date, the board has had ten presidents: Edward Kromrey, Nel Ferstl, George Reinke, Jerry Minnick, John Skinner, Kathy Olson, Scott Bachmeier, Sandra Lewis, Mike Davis, and currently, Jeff Martin.

Mr. Edward G. Kromrey was president from 1972 through 1975. We have mentioned that during his tenure a committee structure was developed to deal with the issues of interest to the board. The committees were apparently quite extensive. In one meeting in 1972 Nel Ferstl, who was vice president of the board, suggested that the following committees be staffed: "projects, special events, publicity, acquisitions, fund raising, handbook, membership, facilities, programs, documents, artifacts, museum, hospitality, cataloging, and iconography." She invited the board members to suggest other committees as well.

A unique feature of the early board committee structure is that members of the society, who were not board members, helped to staff various committees. Some non-board members even chaired the committees. For example, in 1972 John and Jean Skinner were both on the artifacts and documents committee. John Skinner was the chairman of this committee. Thus, began the long history of the Skinners' contribution to the society.

The Middleton Area Historical Society did not always have the Rowley House Museum. But, as early as a meeting on November 14, 1972, the board discussed the necessity to pursue, as a long term objective, the acquisition of a building to house collected items. (Unfortunately, this long term objective was not achieved until 1989. Then, Arlene Rowley Morhoff's son Dan Morhoff inherited the house and offered it to the Middleton Area Historical Society. Mr. Gilsie T. Techam, a local farmer, donated the money to purchase the house; this allowed society artifacts to be

moved from the basement of City Hall to new quarters in the home for preservation and display.)

The early board was actively involved in doing historical research. Among the early projects were: The Stamm House, Middleton churches, Middleton schools, and the Old Sauk Trail (from Middleton to Fort Snelling.) In addition, the Junior Historian program was created by the board. This was not only a membership category. One of the first young people to become a Junior Historian was a 7th grader who would be working on the pre-history of the area. One problem with this program, as identified in the organization minutes, was that it was sometimes difficult to find someone with the appropriate background to be able to supervise the work of the Junior Historians.

At the May 2, 1973 meeting, president Kromrey "read a tentative resolution he had prepared for presentation to the Middleton City Council, urging them to recognize the existence of the Middleton Historical Society and consider it an affiliated activity of the city." This resolution gives us an idea of the objectives and proposed activities of the society as envisioned by that early board. It read:

"WHEREAS: It is a commonly accepted belief that the past has a future and that the present and the future rest upon the foundations laid by the pioneer and, later, early families of the community, and

"WHEREAS: The recently organized Middleton Historical Society has among its many objectives the following activities which will, it is sincerely believed, make available a real contribution to the present and future people of the Middleton Community:

1. The recapture through printed and recorded words the spirit of our early settlers
2. The collection and preservation of artifacts reflective of the daily lives of our pioneers, in the home, on the farms, and in places of business
3. Recording the story of the lives and activities of the founders of our community
4. Recording the story of the lives and the struggles of the unsung members of our early days (the common people) who changed a wilderness into the present-day forward-looking, energetic, productive, and beautiful community that we enjoy today
5. Working to the end that some day our dream, of having a local historical museum of our own, will be realized."

This resolution suggests the degree to which the early Middleton Area Historical Society expressed its desires

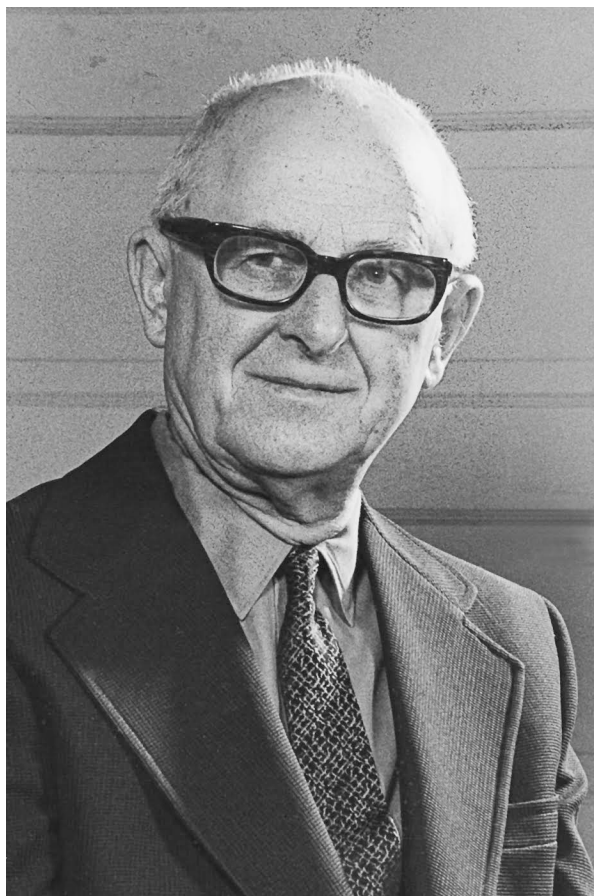
to be considered an active part of the Middleton civic community.

In January of 1974 the basement of City Hall was given to the Middleton Historical Society as a place to store and exhibit its collections. Then in April of 1974, "Schwab and Schwarz gave considerable shelving and quite a few artifacts for the museum." A group consisting of Arlene Rowley Morhoff, daughter of A.A. Rowley and his second wife, along with Nel Ferstl and Myrtle Fenner spent considerable time beginning the accessioning of items that were to be on display in the space in City Hall. (Note: From those early efforts, in which items collected were identified and described on paper log books, which we still possess, our collection is now entered into an automated data base. That data base currently lists over 8000 items.)

Arlene Rowley Morhoff began a tradition of Rowley family service to the then new Middleton Historical Society. She became a member of the board of directors beginning in December of 1973. And, as noted above, she helped with identifying and cataloging of items donated for our collections. Then, when Ralph Christianson, the board's first treasurer, had to resign for health reasons in April of 1975, Arlene took over as treasurer of the organization. She lived at what is now the Rowley House Museum until her death in 1988.

Another member of the Middleton Historical Society has a long history of making a contribution to this organization. For example, the minutes of the meeting of October 2, 1974 indicate that Joanne Kromrey Wolfgang should receive a letter of appreciation "for her contribution in securing the note paper to be sold as a fund-raising project." In July of this year, Joanne, who is now living in California, heard about the society's intention to sell pint beer glasses with a Rowley House logo at five dollars apiece to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the building of the Rowley House. She sent a letter, along with the money for the glasses and the cost of shipping, requesting that we ship her four of these glasses—a request that we promptly fulfilled. Some people are always helping out with fund raising activities no matter how far away they are.

One example of the board's active efforts in carrying out its civic and research objectives is revealed in the following board project. At its June 5, 1974 meeting, it was reported that the actual burial site of Solomon Freeman's body at the Middleton Junction Cemetery had been found. Nel Ferstl and Wesley Burmeister had gone to the Spellman Monument Company at Sauk City and had made arrangements to purchase, for \$150, a marker with the following inscription: "Solomon Freeman--Born in Virginia 1815-Died in Wisconsin 1900—Revered and beloved citizen of Middleton—a freed slave who chose to serve his family benefactors and the people of Middleton as an individual and as a church and civic leader."



Edward Kromrey

In the Middleton Historical Society Newsletter of February 17, 1975 President Kromrey elaborated on his views of the Society. He said: "It is not the purpose of our Society to glamorize the past. However, the people of our early days had their memories, their frustrations, and the hopes for better times just as we do today. We believe that the preservation of the past is a gift to the present and the future. We believe that we have much to learn from the past, and we believe that the past does have a future." He added: "What is history? Only today's yesterdays. Today conditions are changing so fast that yesterday seems very far away—almost beyond recall. It seems that all these present-day rapid changes almost destroy memory." He also included a statement from the German writer Goethe: "The best thing we derive from history is the enthusiasm that it raises in us." He pointed to what was ahead for the Society

in 1975 this way: "No matter how active and successful our organization has been during the past, there comes a time when dramatic strokes must be taken in order to go forward. Thus we will now take a look at the needs, opportunities, and challenges for 1975. "This is an exceptional year in many respects. It is the second of the three Bicentennial years and with it are many opportunities. The Mayor of Middleton has set up a Bicentennial Commission charged with the responsibility of recapturing some of the spirit, some of the activities, and the story of some of the people connected with the early days of this community. This Bicentennial Commission is to operate under the direction

of the Middleton Historical Society. This responsibility creates a host of opportunities. "Then, too, our Society will be associated in one way or another with the activities of the Middleton late summer Good Neighbor Festival. The theme of the Festival this year is "Down at the Depot." It is an actual fact that the coming of the railroad caused Middleton to be born in 1856. Our activities in connection with the Festival this year will reflect not only the coming of the railroad, but also the people who carved homes out of a wilderness, built the first churches and schools, organized and set up a government, built places of business, and built the first roadstand bridges. Yes, indeed, it is our responsibility to make the early days beginning with 1856 come alive. This will be a real challenge."

The two passages above reflect the opportunities and challenges, respectively, that President Kromrey saw ahead for 1975. He also identified this need: "Our Society is attempting to preserve segments of the past by means of our Historical Museum. If our objective in this respect is to be achieved, we need more room and we need it badly RIGHT NOW." As noted above, this need for adequate display space is one that was uppermost in President Kromrey's mind beginning in 1972 and lasting throughout his Presidency.

Finally, Mr. Kromrey, recognizing the projects that the Society had on its plate, also identified one practical method of trying to address them. He said: "We are ankle-deep in dreams of what we can and should do. Bringing the dreams and reality together is our problem. The problem can be, at least partially, solved by adding interested and participating members to our Society. You, a present member, can help. Renew your membership if you have not already done so, and secure one new member."

This situation is no different today for the Middleton Area Historical Society than it was in 1975. In order to continue our work in the Middleton community, we need to keep adding 'interested and participating' members to our ranks. So, if you have not already renewed your membership please do so now and reach out to your family, friends, and neighbors to ask them to join our society and contribute to achieving our mission.

Local Student Does Well in History Competition

by Mel Krc

National History Day Competition

The 2019 National History Day (NHD) Competition is beginning again in February and March. The goal of the competition is to give students an opportunity to engage in real historical research using a variety of potential media approaches. The competition begins in local schools and moves through regional, state and national levels. Each year a particular theme is chosen for the competition. This year the theme is Triumph and Tragedy in History.

In last year's competition Max Kanne, of Middleton did quite well. Here is his story.

Max Kanne, a Middleton 11th grader, finished 9th in the nation competing in the individual website category of the 2018 National History Day (NHD) competition held in College Park Maryland. Max first won the state competition in his category in order to advance to the national competition. Max attends some courses at Middleton High School, but is primarily home schooled.

The NHD competition is a nationwide event. Students from across the nation compete in one of nine categories: paper

(individual only), individual exhibit, group exhibit, individual performance, group performance, individual documentary, group documentary, individual website, or group website. Each category in each division is judged separately.

Each year the NHD organizers select a particular theme for the competition. For the 2018 competition the theme was Conflict and Compromise. Competition begins in the classrooms and progresses to higher levels (school, region, and state) and culminates with a national competition. Only three projects from each project category advance to the regional and state levels and only two projects from each category in each state advance to the national competition.

Student projects involve the use of primary and secondary sources, as well as photos and video materials. Students develop research skills and learn how to document their positions with footnotes and a bibliography. Along the way, judges help the students to hone their projects.

Max's mom characterized the contributions of the judges this way: "We are so, so grateful to the people who

generously donate their time to judge these projects every year. This was our family's fifth year participating. The kids have learned so much from it, and feedback from the judges is essential to their growth."

Some additional insight into the judging process was provided by Middleton Area Historical Society board member Claire Buchinger, who was asked by the Wisconsin State Historical Society to be a judge for the NHD competition.

Claire judged Senior papers at Regional and Junior papers at State, as well as the final round of Senior group exhibits at State. She said: "We were to judge based on the project alone, with the student interview being a formality. Our three main categories were clarity of presentation, connection to the theme ("Conflict and Compromise"), and overall quality of the paper (research, analysis, and accurately recounting the event)."

Claire said that her comments on the entries that she judged were of two kinds:

1. Simple tips/changes for the students to remember for the next paper. Most of the complimentary comments were along the lines of: clear organization of events within the paper, good supporting details, and having all paragraphs tie back to the thesis.
2. The "room for improvement" comments stemmed from the following issues: Having a strong thesis, but getting overwhelmed by the enormity and details of the historic event. Also consistency in formatting, such as, tabbing some paragraphs over twice, having page numbers on some pages but not others, using MLA and Chicago Manual citations interchangeably, and including sources on the bibliography page that were not used in the paper.

Her overall assessment of the process was: "For many students, it is their first taste of a lengthy research process, and the competitive environment creates a strong finished project that the students can be proud of. I believe National History Day inspires confidence in critical thinking abilities and writing skills, and is great preparation for future assignments, especially if students are choosing to pursue continuing education."

Claire's comments, offered from the viewpoint of a judge in the competition, illustrate what it takes for a student's entry to make it to the top levels of competition.

Max's chosen project was "Ford vs Unions: Conflict and Compromise." Max told us that "It's fun to choose to do something you enjoy learning about." He also indicated

that he likes to learn about anything car related. "Luckily the auto industry has been filled with conflict and compromise since the beginning, so it was just a matter of choosing which small aspect to focus on."

Max said that he chose to compete in the website category because he liked "the shorter 'bloggie' style" and also that he wanted to be able to include some pictures and video material. He stated that "A website was also great because it allowed me to create separate sections on each subtopic and finally join them all together."

His project is a nice blend of written reporting and opinion from various news sources and corporate archives, photographs, and video material. The main points from these sources are woven together by Max's own writing.

Max described his research techniques this way:

"I knew about the 1937 Battle of the Overpass, and delving deeper into this exposed that major conflict surrounding unionization and Henry Ford's vehement opposition to it. I had also heard that Ford had eventually given the unions what at the time was the best deal ever, and I was curious as to how this happened. My decision to pursue this topic was also driven by the wealth of resources provided online for free by The Henry Ford museum.

"The Wisconsin Historical Society Library online catalogue was the place where I started my research with a search for anything related to the Ford River Rouge complex, as that is where the 1937 Battle of the Overpass occurred. The Historical Society was kind enough to provide a tour of their library and archives to me for National History Day. I found many useful books, and, most importantly, a pamphlet published by the UAW immediately after the Battle of the Overpass. After this I looked for articles about Ford labor conflict in the periodicals database at the University of Wisconsin. I completed my research by looking for accounts of labor conflict in transcribed interviews with Ford workers on The Henry Ford's website."

Max explained the structure of his project this way. "I started to create my project by providing a view from each side of the conflict. This was followed with an overview of the conflict. Next, I explored the compromise and its results, and finally I explained its historical impact."

Some of the main points about the conflict are highlighted in the following:

The Wagner Act: Max said: “The Ford Motor Company’s labor conflicts and their eventual compromises occurred at a time when the government, led by Franklin Delano Roosevelt, was trying to pull the United States out of the Great Depression. A pro-labor Congress passed the Wagner Act in 1935, which stopped companies from blocking their workers from unionizing. This law allowed the government to force Ford to let the UAW into its factories in 1941. With World War II on the horizon, Ford had a sizeable defense contract. The government finally enforced the Wagner Act so that their war preparations would not be held up by labor conflicts.”

The Ford Motor Company Position: Max stated: “The Ford Motor Company did not want its workers to be unionized, mainly so it could hire and fire them at will. It also thought it offered sufficient pay. Henry Ford liked to always be in control of the company bearing his name, and if his factories were controlled by the UAW he would lose some of that power.”

Max cites the following from Henry Ford's autobiography: “I am not opposed to labour organization. I am not opposed to any sort of organization that makes for progress. It is organizing to limit production—whether by employers or workers—that matters.”
“The only strong group of union men in the country is the group that draws salaries from the unions. Some of them are very rich. Some of them are interested in influencing the affairs of our large institutions of finance. Others are so extreme in their so-called socialism that they border on Bolshevism and anarchism—their union salaries liberating them from the necessity of work so that they can devote their energies to subversive propaganda.”

Max’s project makes the points that Ford management tried to disrupt the UAW’s attempts to organize the Ford workers, and also tried to counter the UAW’s efforts by creating a “Ford Union” for its workers.

Union Reaction: Max tells us: “The Battle of the Overpass brought the Ford labor conflict to national attention...When UAW organizers first tried to distribute literature on a large scale, they were beaten by Ford security guards led by Harry Bennett at the Battle of the Overpass... Photographers captured the event, and it sparked public outrage.”

“This violation of their rights under the Wagner Act did nothing to stop them. Instead, it raised public awareness and sympathy for the UAW.”

“The UAW wanted to secure better wages, seniority protections, and collective bargaining rights for Ford workers...They too wanted a voice in the process.”

“A large, pivotal strike took place at the Ford River Rouge Complex in April of 1941...This strike was driven by the Supreme Court confirming that the Ford Motor Company had indeed violated the Wagner Act in 1937 at the Battle of the Overpass. Union leaders were then motivated to recruit more Ford employees. A few men were fired solely for their involvement with the UAW, and so the strike began.”

Outcomes: “During the strike of 1941, the government ordered the election of a union in the Ford River Rouge plant. This was likely expedited due to Ford’s massive defense contract and the looming threat of WWII. The UAW won this election, taking a sweeping majority of the votes. Ford now only had to deal with one organization, which was much more efficient than dealing with multiple weaker organizations.

“Once Henry Ford realized that there was no way around having to deal with unions, he decided to give them the best deal ever to maintain control and show that he was doing exactly what he wanted to do. In addition to giving the UAW everything they asked for, Ford also gave them a closed shop, requiring all his employees to be union members. Furthermore, he deducted union dues directly from his workers’ paychecks, making organization easier for UAW leaders. Ford even went so far as to reinstate 4000 wrongfully fired workers with back wages.

“Previously, a closed shop was unheard of in the automobile industry. By becoming the union’s best friend, Ford was again becoming the model employer he was in the 1910s. “Henry Ford’s generosity towards the UAW after the conflict of the 1941 strike impacted both the UAW’s relationship with the Ford Motor Company and auto manufacturers as a whole. Thanks to the precedent set by Henry Ford’s compromise, a closed shop was up until recently the standard for any car factory with union presence. By giving the UAW more than they ever asked for, Henry Ford secured control of his company and prevented many more major conflicts.

“This series of conflicts and compromises shaped the American automobile industry for a significant number of years.”

We may be hearing more about Max in the future. He told us that he plans to enter the NHD competition again. He said: "This time I want to win."

Good luck to you Max.

Max Kanne, car enthusiast, preparing to go for a ride on Germany's famed Nurburgring race track while on a recent trip to Germany with his dad.



Highlights of 2018 ...Year in Review

Membership and Donations...

The year 2018 was an especially good one for the Middleton Area Historical Society! Therefore, I would like to share a few highlights with you. During the past year we welcomed 34 new memberships to the Society and one-half of them were in the "Family" category. At our Annual Meeting on December 1, 2018 we gained an additional 8 memberships whose dues were allocated to 2019. One of the best recruitment periods in our history.

MAHS currently has 275 memberships which, assuming at least 2 members per Family Membership, means we have about 355 members. I was delighted to learn that this means we are one of the larger local historical organizations in Wisconsin.

Another membership statistic that pleases me is the retention rate for existing memberships who renewed again in 2018. Our retention rate of 87 percent (as of December 31, 2018) is considerably higher than the average of 60-76 percent reported by the Wisconsin Historical Society for multi-year members of arts and cultural institutions.

I was also greatly pleased to see how MAHS Life Members continue to support our organization. As I did in 2017, I mailed a letter this past November to around 75 life memberships asking for donations to support MAHS projects and programs. As of December 31, donations of \$2,100 were received from 17 donors.

Visitors to Rowley House & the Depot ...

Visitor Traffic at Rowley House during our "open season" of April to October reached a new high in 2018 as 376 "walk-ins" signed our guest book and toured the house. This was more than double the previous 4-year average of 184! At the Depot Museum visitation was about average with 145 "signing in".

Of course, we also enjoyed the planned visits to Rowley House of second-graders from Elm Lawn, Sauk Trail and Sunset Ridge Schools, a total of 319 young historians and their teachers. Four separate school tours were organized by Jan Martin who recruited a truly dedicated group of volunteer Tour Leaders: Steve Drake, Carolyn Mattern, Carol Burger, Dave Baltes, Jean Devore, Mike Lutz, Nancy Stratman, Dorothy Hawkins, Molly McDermott, Claudia Miska, Sharon Brown, Mary Hilgendorf and Jeff Martin. The hard-working tour leaders repeated their 7-minute message 8 times as student groups moved from room to room during their one-hour visit to Rowley House ... and this was done for each of the 4 tours ... lots of fun but tiring as well!

Why the Increase ?

I think that early articles by George Zens in the Middleton Review appearing in January, February and March started things off. These were followed with a room by room tour in 8-9 issues of the Review from April to August. The Rowley House turned 150 years old last year and the

timely articles generated a lot of interest in the old house and what we have done with it.

Several MAHS volunteers, most notably Alice and Steve Drake, Jan Martin and Steve and David Olson spent many hours last year in beautifying the Rowley House grounds. Flower beds were renovated and many new plantings installed. A great start was made on rehabilitating the back-corner area and adding a path to the spot that will soon be our new Memorial Garden.

We also had an opportunity to fix and repaint our MAHS sign that stands in front of Rowley. Thanks to the effort of Kristi Warriner, we received a donation from Middleton Endowment that covered most of the cost.

We were also fortunate to finally complete the historic sign project that was placed along the city sidewalk in front of Rowley House. Lots of work by a number of MAHS volunteers including Mary Hilgendorf, Carolyn Mattern, Steve Olson, Mel Krc, Duane Van Haren, Marty Van Haren and Jan and Jeff Martin helped plan and complete this project. MAHS applied for and received a grant from the Middleton Tourism Commission that covered most of the project costs ... we are very appreciative of their assistance in helping the project become a reality. The signs have received a lot of interest from folks passing by ... which has led many to stop and visit Rowley House to learn more about Middleton's past.

Great cooperation from Scott Wiener and his staff at Capital Brewery helped MAHS celebrate the 150th anniversary of Rowley House. The Brewery folks created Rowley House lager beer and had it for sale on August 4th in conjunction with Middleton's Mustard Days. They also helped MAHS produce a beer glass with the Rowley House logo and these went on sale early in the summer... and we still have some for sale! A keg-tapping event on the front porch kicked things off and provided an opportunity for some MAHS publicity. MAHS sponsored a band for the August 4th event at Capital Brewery and we were able to sign up several new members.

Carolyn Mattern and the Collections Committee worked hard to revamp and enhance our various Rowley House displays during the past year. Several rooms received some major changes; for example, Carolyn created a very nice WWI display in the Military Room and made a number of changes to displays in the Doctors Room, replacing some items with new material for a completely new look. She was also able to borrow a few items from the State Historical Society to add greater interest to the Rowley family display in the Entrance Room.

Other MAHS Activities...

- In June, MAHS hosted another great Pie and Ice Cream Social with lots of volunteer help from the Board,

other MAHS members, and community leaders: Mayor Gurdip Brar, MPD Chief Chuck Foulke, and City Administrator Mike Davis.

- We have developed five PowerPoint presentations for taking Middleton's history "on the road":
 - (1) The Great Fire
 - (2) Rowley Chronicles
 - (3) Middleton's Early Years
 - (4) History of Pheasant Branch
 - (5) African-Americans in Early Middleton.
 We look forward to talking to more groups in 2019.
- Board member Dan Barker opened Rowley House on Sept. 7 for the Strollin Middleton Jazz Festival and over 20 visitors stopped by for a short tour.
- MAHS members Claire Buchinger, Mel Krc, Joy Bauman, Steve and Kathy Olson, and Jocelyne Sansing helped decorate Rowley House for the annual October Trick or Treat Day in downtown Middleton and over 850 youngsters stopped by for some candy on the front porch!!
- On November 17, the Rowley House was open for visitors as part of the Holiday Tree Lighting activities in downtown Middleton. Volunteers Carolyn Mattern, Steve Olson, Jan Martin and Kristi Warriner served popcorn and hot apple cider to over 330 guests that toured the house while waiting for a carriage ride around town.

When we look back at 2018, it is very rewarding to know that the 150-year old Rowley House was a very popular place to visit and that many people are interested in learning about, and preserving, Middleton's past. When the numbers are totaled, we find that over 1,900 people, both young and old, visited Rowley House in 2018 ...a most impressive number!!

But what is also very impressive is knowing that we have so many MAHS volunteer caretakers who have worked so hard on these projects and programs ... and who are enthusiastically helping to keep our history alive! If you would like to become more involved with MAHS projects and programs please contact us ... we would love to have you as a partner!!

Jeff Martin, President
Middleton Area Historical Society



MARK YOUR CALENDAR----

The annual cleaning day will be Saturday, **April 6th** starting at **9:00 AM**

The Rowley House will opens its doors for visitors on **Tuesday, April 16**

Memories from,

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

by Mary Lamm-Feltman and
Jeanie Sakrison Velarde

Does anyone remember when Decar Plastics burned down? We lived on Oakwood at the time. It's amazing the entire block didn't burn.

- I remember it was extremely cold with high winds and opening day of deer season.
- I remember the deer hanging in a tree nearby that were covered in plastic ash.
- I totally remember getting up in middle of night and having to water the roof on houses as fire department was requesting. I also recall definitely November and winter weather. What a mess it was!
- My husband and brother-in-law also had to climb up on the roof and water it down. It was quite an explosion and folks on Middleton Beach Rd heard it. It was deer-hunting season and many firefighters were in Baraboo hunting. Chief Willie sent someone to bring them home.
- Shorewood Fire Dept. came to help and Madison as well. It burned off and on for over a week.

- I recall my grandmother was house sitting as my parents were at our cabin in northern Wisconsin for deer hunting. Funny you referenced that as I was thinking of that. It was a pretty traumatic event.
- We were on Oakwood at the time. We camped in the church parking lot while our Dad hosed down the roof.
- Yes- we lived on Columbus Drive, not far... it smoldered for days...
- I move into one of the duplexes on Oakwood soon afterwards. The back wall tiles of the house were melted. A friend of mine said he raided the cigarette machine only to find a wad of melted coins.
- We lived on Mendota Ave. and were really nervous after the police came down the street and asked everyone to hose down our roofs. Big chunks of burning plastic embers were blowing over all of our houses. It was scary for sure.
- I remember when my brother-in-law knocked on our door and hollered to get up and get outside something blew up. I got mad and thought 'who cares? Don't bother us about it!' Then we went outside and there was the biggest fire I've ever seen. Even the trees on Oakwood were burning!

Decar Plastics, *November 23 1970*

You can see the Top Hat sign in the distance, over one million dollars in damage. It was super windy that day also.





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- Junior Historian (under 18) \$5.00
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via email, please contact Mary at 836-6776.