

Recent Additions

In recent months the Historical Society has received several important additions to its collection of artifacts and papers. During the summer, members of the Kruse family had a reunion at the museum, bringing with them photographs of the family and the Burmester & Kruse store, two photographs of the 1923 cornerstone ceremony at St Luke's, and other family memorabilia. A donor from New Mexico sent us several previously unseen historic views of the First German Lutheran church and snapshots of church reunions from the 1960s. Reunions of the Class of 1946 are documented by a scrapbook maintained by Delma Braun Basthemer. Delma's daughter Bonnie Rae donated snapshots of her mother as a teenager. A souvenir mug from the 40th reunion of the class of 1950 was also received. Jean Meyer, who had previously donated two dolls and a wicker doll buggy played with by her grandmother and aunt, Donna Meyer Ludeking, added home sewn clothing worn by her aunt during the 1920s. Sharon Ripp has donated five telephones from her husband's collection. The early rotary phone is a special hit with young visitors. Mike Davis donated a Middleton Fire Company baseball shirt and two t-shirts from Good Neighbor Fest 5-K runs, and Carol Burger gave a Harbor Athletic Club t-shirt. In the Military Room James Esser's uniforms from Vietnam and Afghanistan are now on display, along with a portrait of John Mullen, former Wisconsin adjutant general.

Substantial donations from the Fiskars and Top Promtions document their role in Middleton's contemporary business scene, while items ranging from salt & pepper shakers to banks and postcards have been added to the display of

business "swag." These artifacts represent the Bank of Middleton, Dunn Imports, Simon Meats, Mickey's Tavern, 1848 Construction, and the Mid-View Motel.



During the Vietnam War era James Esser was a member of the 128th Infantry, a unit of the Wisconsin National Guard. Later, as a member of the Army Reserve's 826th Ordnance Company, he was deployed during the Persian Gulf War.

Doctors' Day 1949 * August 21, 1949

In the last issue of the Middleton Area Historical Society's newsletter, we explored Doctors' Day. Let's review a little bit about that day.

Doctor's Day was held on Sunday, August 21, 1949, in Middleton, to honor, show appreciation and pay respect to two local doctors who served the community for a combination of 100 years. The day was marked with a parade and a ceremony.



Float from Doctors' Day Parade 1949

The two doctors were Dr. Charles Allen and Dr. A.G. Rowley. Dr. A.G. Rowley was the son of Dr. A.A. Rowley and grandson of Dr. N.C. Rowley, two previous generations of Middleton doctors.

Dr. A.G. Rowley was born on April 1, 1875. He was born in the Rowley home that presently houses the Rowley House Museum. He attended Middleton schools and graduated from Middleton High School, after which he pursued his education at Wayland Academy in Beaver Dam. In 1895, he began studies at Rush Medical College. After receiving his degree in 1899, he joined his brother, Dr. Jesse Rowley in Prairie du Chien at the Sanatorium for Rheumatic Diseases. He was also the local surgeon for the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad. Dr. Rowley returned to Middleton when his father became ill and later took over the practice after the death of his father.

During his practice, Dr. Rowley first kept a team of horses and later rented horses from a livery. In 1905, he purchased his first car- a Franklin. These methods of transportation took him to his practice in Veroma, Madison, Cross Plains, Bine Bluff, Black Earth and Springfield. Because hospitals had limited space, most operations were performed in the home. Under lamp light, the



Dr. Rowley's first car, a 1905 Franklin

patient was given chloroform or ether and the operation was done on the kitchen table.

Dr. Rowley fit many hobbies into his busy medical practice. These included fishing, hunting, traveling, photography and the study of history, with a special interest in the life of General Ulysses S. Grant. His great uncle was a close friend of Grant. Much of his free time was spent in Wisconsin's best fishing areas. He was also a fan of duck hunting.

Dr. Rowley married Miss Otilie Kirst of Waunakee on September 18, 1907. They had two daughters.

Dr. Rowley attended to many births. He officiated at the birth of the third generation among his patients.



*Dr. and Mrs.
A.G. Rowley*

Middleton Lodge No.180

A History of the Masonic Lodge in Middleton

Some excerpts from *Masonic Middleton:*

Freemasons and their Lodges in Middleton, Wisconsin

by Robert C. Blackburn

Freemasonry came to North America with the first British colonists. Many famous Americans have been Freemasons. The list includes: George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, John Hancock, Paul Revere, Merriweather Lewis, William Clark, Davy Crockett, Samuel Clemens, "Buffalo Bill" Cody, John Phillip Sousa, the Ringling Brothers, Harry Houdini, Henry Ford, Charles Lindbergh, Irving Berlin, Douglas MacArthur, Walt Disney, Glen Miller, Louis Armstrong, John Glenn, John Wayne and Alex Haley.

Freemasonry's origins are lost. While theories abound, no one knows exactly how or why the fraternity came to be, but it is a recorded fact that it has included many distinguished member. The first Masonic "grand lodge" was established in London's Goose and Gridiron Ale-house" on June 24, 1717.

One early Freemason, in Middleton, was Elisha Bailey who arrived in 1845. He is reputed to be Middleton's fifth registered voter. He was town chairman for eight years and its treasurer for four.

Another Mason, John B. Coton, was elected to the office or town's collector, one of Middleton's first two school commissioners and its treasurer and later served as a town chairman. Another early Mason involved in the establishment of the Middleton area included entrepreneur Frank Gault, who built a flour mill in Pheasant Branch with fellow Freemason William A. Wheeler. Gault would later start a peat cutting business with well known Pheasant Branch business man W.B. Slaughter. Other early Freemason business men included John Lorch, John Prien and Fritz Elver.

With construction of the Middleton Depot, the area now known as downtown came into being. Middleton's first doctors N.C. Rowley, A.A. Rowley and Sumner Curtis Coolidge, (all Freemasons) arrived in town. Also a Freemason and successful businessman Richard Green established businesses.

Earlier viewed with suspicion, Freemasonry prospered following the Civil War. Masonic lodges were a source of civic pride. Early planning minutes have been lost, but it is believed the first meeting place in Middleton was a building owned by John Green. The lodge applied for and received temporary permission to form in 1870. Middleton

Lodge 180 was established and held its first meeting on January 27, 1870. Bylaws were completed and it was decided the meetings would be held the 1st and 3rd Tuesday of each month. Besides application fees, annual dues were \$2.30 per year with \$.60 set aside for Masonic charity.

On September 15, 1871, Freemasons from the surrounding area gathered to attend the funeral of Dr. N.C. Rowley. Some local members served as pallbearers. The group collected the body at the Rowley home and continued on to the local church. Afterwards Dr. Rowley was buried with full Masonic honors in Middleton Junction.

In 1872, the lodge moved into the Odd Fellows Hall, a space on the corner of Parmenter Street and Slaughter (now Elmwood Avenue). The building was shared by the two groups with the Masons renting the space for \$24.00 a year compared to the \$80.00 a year they were paying John Green.

The Odd Fellow Hall was one of many buildings destroyed in the devastating downtown fire of 1900. A new Odd Fellows Hall was built and on December 27, 1900, Masons met there for the first time. After the fire of 1900, a fire department was established with many of its members being from the Masons.

By 1909 the lodge was beginning to plan building its own "temple". The newly organized building committee estimated the cost of building would be \$6,500.00. This cost was considered to be too high and the project was voted down. A year later a plan was proposed to relocate the old grade school instead of building a new building.



Middleton Masonic Temple (later the building would become the village hall)

The plan was approved provided the cost would not exceed \$1,200.00. A lot was purchased for \$900.00. After a foundation was built, the building was moved and modified to meet the needs of the lodge.

In 1919, the lodge agreed to sell the building to the Village of Middleton for \$5,000.00. The building then became the first Village Hall. The lodge then bought Middleton's old high school on the corner of Middleton and Franklin Streets. By 1939, the lodge membership had doubled to 139 members. From 1937 to 1939, the lodge hosted euchre parties, film nights, hired music, skits and performances.

During World War II, American Freemasons were active through the Masonic Service Association of America. They established forty centers near military camps providing

America's armed forces with welfare services, entertainment and comfort. Money was raised for rehabilitation among Masons, widow of Masons and sons and daughters of Masons, who served in the armed forces of the United States. Locally, Middleton Lodge No. 180 shipped clothing to needy persons in Germany.

After the war, the local lodge grew and peaked at 226 members in 1958. In 1964, a new nine member building committee was appointed. The existing building was showing signs of wear and two adjoining lots had already been purchased. Middleton Lodge No.180 broke ground on June, 1968. The cornerstone was set in place and confirmed by Grand Master Risberg that it was square, level and plumb.

A Middleton Business Turns 40

by Mel Krc

How does one go from planning to teach history to owning a successful import auto repair shop? One person who made this transition is Jeff Dunn, owner and operator of Dunn's Import Car Service, Inc. here in Middleton. Recently, we sat down with Jeff at his shop to talk about his business.

Early Beginnings: Jeff was pursuing a degree in history and art at the UW-Madison. He and his wife Susie were married when they were 18. While in school, Jeff and Susie became resident managers for an apartment complex on campus to save on rent, but that proved to be insufficient. So Jeff applied for a job at Park Bug Town, a used sports car lot on Park Street. He hoped to sell vehicles in the evenings. The dealership owner said that what he needed was someone to service vehicles not someone to sell vehicles. Jeff thought he'd give that a shot. He had always been interested in foreign cars like Fiats, Triumphs, VWs and Volvos, and did the repair and maintenance work on his own vehicles.

Jeff would get the parts he needed to repair vehicles at Park Bug Town from another foreign car service shop—Denny's Imports on Spring St. in Madison. He subsequently worked at Denny's from 1974 to 1979.

Business Ownership: In 1979 Jeff had an opportunity to buy his own auto repair business. He has owned the business since September 1, 1979. He sold his own Fiat for \$3,500, that was the start-up money to buy the current business at 6516 University Avenue in Middleton. Jeff told us that that building itself had had quite a history. It passed through several phases as a car dealership (new and used), a service shop, and an alignment shop early on.

At various times, the building housed Pride Motors, Don Gurney Imports, University Imports, and Reg Reise Racing. There were some major remodels to the building during its history. At one point, it was expanded to the west. Then in 1966 Pride Motors doubled the size of the building to become an import, new car dealership.

Jeff worked "turning a wrench" in his new business beginning in 1979 both as the owner and a mechanic. He did that until the mid '80s. Jeff did not want to spend his life doing hands on car repairs himself, and since 1985 has been managing his business while still monitoring the repairs done at his shop daily.

Because this marks Jeff's 40th year of operation we asked him about the longevity of his business. Jeff said he thought his was the second oldest business, which continues under the same management throughout its existence, not only on University Avenue in Middleton, but along all of University Ave. He said that both Smoky's and the Century House are older than his business, but that those businesses have been passed on to younger generations of owners. Only Bagels Forever and Dunn's Imports have had the same managers since they first opened. Bagels Forever is older than Dunn's Imports.

Technology Changes: We asked Jeff how the car repair business has changed since he first opened. He said that the biggest changes have been the technological advances in the cars themselves. "Cars last a lot longer, they don't rust, and they don't pollute like they used to. The only way to keep up with the changes is to keep going to school." The schools are operated mostly by manufacturers and by part suppliers. They try to offer auto service technicians the information they need to properly repair vehicles as technology changes.

Expanding the Business: In addition to servicing foreign cars, Jeff also added a scooter and motorcycle sales dealership. We asked how that started. Jeff said that in 2005 he bought a Honda Helix scooter new to drive to work each day because that would free up one additional parking spot and be fun. Customers saw the scooter and asked him about it. They were interested in gas mileage and cost. He told them "\$6,000 and 80 mpg." He noticed that there seemed to be an interest in scooters so he decided to begin selling them. He purchased a Vespa dealership from an owner in Shorewood in 2006. In 2015, Jeff began offering Moto-Guzzi motorcycles for sale in addition to Vespa scooters.

Jeff thought his customers, based on the response to his original Honda scooter, would want to buy a scooter. Instead the reverse happened. People, who first bought a scooter, then started bringing in their cars for servicing. Also, it turned out that customers buying the vast majority of scooters were from other states like Illinois and Minnesota.

Jeff noted that although scooter sales were good in the beginning, when the financial downturn came in 2008 sales dropped, became flat, and never have recovered to their original levels.

Middleton's Business Climate: Jeff said that the City officials that he dealt with were always helpful and pleasant to work with whenever he needed to obtain permits, or his dealership license, which needed to be obtained from the city. He said he likes to keep his business looking good which from time to time meant dealing with city planning staff to obtain permits.

He said that the biggest problem in Middleton, and that's for all businesses not just his, is the absence of sufficient parking.

Challenges to Business: Jeff said his goal for customers who visit his shop is to get people's cars back to them quickly and in good working order. He noted, however, that many people just don't understand how complicated many of today's vehicles are and how much work it takes to repair them. "This is not magic; you actually have to do all the steps in auto repair." Newer cars with more developed technology will make this situation even more demanding.

Another big challenge is getting the necessary auto technicians. He mentioned that, for example, technicians, auto upholsterers, body technicians, and other specialized jobs are no longer being filled as people retire. Jeff said that "there will be a price to pay" for that in the near future.

Jeff said that he likes to treat his employees very well and to enable them to provide for their families. He also strives for a clean, well-lit and safe work environment.

Job Satisfaction: We asked Jeff what, about his work, gave him the greatest satisfaction. Jeff said that his "customers

were a lot of great families who have been coming in for decades." He has "developed a sincere relationship with people that make them continue to be repeat customers." He gets satisfaction from being able to maintain his customer's cars and get them to where they are going safely. He also "derives satisfaction from the success that his business has had."

Jeff said that he still sees customers that had their cars serviced by him in the 1970s.

He thought that the current size of his business is "just right...I wouldn't want it to be any bigger...this is still fun, the next level is all business only...this is as good as it gets."

Jeff's 40th Year Celebration: When his business was 25 years old, Jeff had a celebration at the Capital Brewery that drew about 700 visitors.



Jeff Dunn explaining to his youngest employee, Murphy (on the left), how to greet customers that come into the shop.

This year, to celebrate 40 years in business, the celebration will be held at the Middleton Sport Bowl on University Avenue. There will be "food and beverages as well as entertainment provided by the Johnny Chimes Band." There will be a silent auction with proceeds benefiting three groups: The Middleton Outreach Ministry, The Middleton Fire District, and the Middleton Area Historical Society.

If you'd like to help celebrate one of Middleton's longest running businesses, Jeff would be happy to have you join him at the Sport Bowl on September 14th, from 1:00 to 5:00.

Although Jeff did not become the history teacher he had planned to be, he has instead created a business with a long history of providing service to the foreign car owners of Middleton and south central Wisconsin.

President's Message ...

The Building and Grounds Committee has been working on a couple of projects during the past few weeks. The Rowley House storm windows, at least 18 of them, are in need of re-glazing and repainting. Therefore, we solicited bids from four painting contractors during the summer and decided to go with Ayres Painting, a local Middleton firm. They will remove the windows this fall and do the repair and painting in their shop ... and then, hopefully, rehang them before the snow flies.

The Memorial Garden in the back corner of the Museum property is shaping up quite nicely. We've added some

the key to success. We had 52 pies, along with a variety of cookies, bars, cakes, etc. and only 3 pies remained at the end ... and these were donated to our Police, Fire, and EMS first responders! But be advised, the June 17, 2020 event may be held at Fireman's Park if the Lakeview Park shelter is under construction next year as planned.

Since this is "Dues Collecting Season" (The 2019 dues-renewal letter was sent to MAHS's dues-paying memberships on July 8) I thought it would be a good time to review a few membership "stats". Currently (as I write this in mid-August), MAHS has 277 memberships, of which 132



The Memorial Garden located in the back of the Rowley House Museum

Cocoa Shell mulch and removed a lot of weeds (thanks to our dedicated volunteers). Duane Van Haren recently placed a large rock among the plantings, to which we will soon add a plaque indicating the garden's purpose. We are also planning to add a sign, on a post near the Carriage House, that will describe a bit of MAHS history and include a list of our founding Board Members and first President, Edward Kromrey.

MAHS's hard-working Collections Committee has been very active the past few months. I asked them to provide a summary of recent activities and their review of new acquisitions is found elsewhere in this Newsletter.

Our annual Pie and Ice Cream Social was another great event this year, even though the weather was not very favorable. But thanks to our loyal members and many others, the band played on and the deserts were enjoyed by a large crowd. Donations of baked goods were again

are in the Life or Complimentary categories. Of the 145 dues-paying categories, we have 1 Business, 5 Contributing, 67 Family and 72 Individual memberships. The exciting thing is seeing our Society grow, with 34 new memberships in 2018 and 23 additions so far in 2019! I certainly look forward to your continued support and promotion of MAHS; and, with your help, we may be able to recruit more new members in 2019!

Lastly, here are a few upcoming MAHS activities and events that you may want to note on your calendar:

- **School tours at Rowley House on September 17, October 2, 15 and 17.**
- **Holiday Tree Lighting activities, November 23,**
- **MAHS Annual Meeting, December 7.**

Jeff Martin, President
Middleton Area Historical Society

Memories from,

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

by Mary Lamm-Feltman

Rather than wait for the carnival to come to town Peppermint Park was open all summer long! A visit to Peppermint Park was a highlight for many Middleton kids during their summer vacation from school.

David Sakrison: My father, Robert Sakrison built and ran Peppermint Park. I helped him put it up and tear it down for eight years. My sister Jeanie worked at the park. My father ran the live-steam locomotive that took passengers on a loop around the property.

- I worked there running rides. My husband to be worked at the Go cart track. Fun times.
- I also worked there, fun job running rides and working the concession stand. At one point I returned and mended trampolines. Bob and Barb Sakrison were really nice people to work for.
- Wasn't it out by the Big Sky Drive-In and they had trampolines?
- The park was located close to the intersection of mineral pt. rd. and the beltline, or hwy 12. Both of them just 2 lane roads. It was at or near where Menards and the auto parts stores are now.
- My kindergarten class went there. I screamed my head off on the roller coaster and they had to stop the ride.
- Very good friend, initials S.O., used to work the go-carts there. Sometimes we'd get an extra track lap as an excellent perk!! Great salesmanship and PR! Thanks, buddy!
- I remember the small ground level trampolines!
- We went there several times. I was too young for the trampolines, but my older brother used them. Seems like a million years ago now.
- I am amazed at how many people I know that worked there.
- My first job running rides, helping in concession stand and with Birthday parties! Also got to use trampolines during break.





Executive Officers

- President** Jeff Martin
- Vice President** Ruth Bachmeier
- Recording Secretary** Carolyn Mattern
- Treasurer** Kristi Warriner

Board of Directors

- Joy Bauman
- Claire Buchinger
- Duane Van Haren
- Steven Drake
- Donna Parks
- Mel Krc
- Cathy Haberland
- Steve Olson
- Edith Ersland
- Jocelyne Sansing
- Dan Barker

Newsletter Editor

Mary Hilgendorf

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) \$5.00
- Individual \$15.00
- Family..... \$25.00
- Business/Club \$75.00

Special Donor Category

- Contributing \$100.00

Mail to:

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

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 **MAHS** at: middletonhistory@gmail.com