

County



Fare

2nd Quarter 2022

The NEWSLETTER of the
WINNEBAGO COUNTY HISTORICAL & ARCHEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

WINNEBAGO CO., WIS.

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Mission Statement

The Winnebago County Historical & Archaeological Society will represent, serve and involve community members in preserving the history of our area.

Contact Us or Submit Articles:

WCHAS
234 Church Ave Oshkosh, WI 54901
(920)267-8007

WinnebagoHistoricalSociety@gmail.com

Newsletter Editor:
Michael McArthur



WinnebagoCountyHistoricalSociety.org



WCHAS ANNUAL MEETING

ALL MEMBERS ENCOURAGED TO ATTEND

Sunday, October 9th · 1 PM

Sonrise Cavalry Church (222 Church)

*

Reception at the Morgan House (234 Church)
following the meeting.

*

History of the Winnebago County Court
House presented by Austin Frederick



WANTED

E&E Committee is looking for
board games that are new or
lightly used with all of the
game pieces. Contact Austin.

AustinMFred@gmail.com

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I wanted to use my message in this edition to talk about the changes underway with the OASD and the transition of Merrill and Webster Stanley Schools and the new Vel Phillips School.

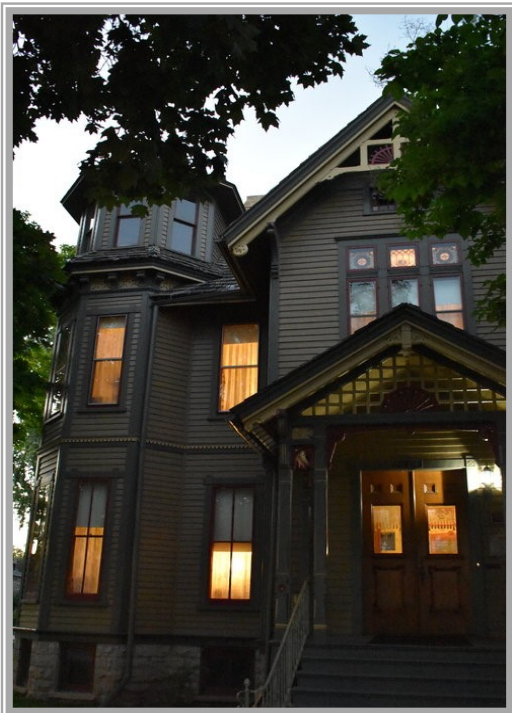
Recently a group of concerned citizens have organized an effort to save historic Merrill School. This group approached WCHAS in early July and asked if the society would support the effort to save this old building for re-purposing. The request to support this was put before the WCHAS Board of Directors and after much discussion, the Board decided unanimously to support the effort. This decision was made after reviewing our Mission Statement and Organizational Vision. It reminds us, as a society, it is our role to preserve local history for future generations. The Board felt that supporting this effort is aligned with our pledge.

The "Save Historic Merrill School" group was invited to share space with us on Main Street next to Pie on the Porch in early August. The group was there each week to answer questions, provide information about the proposal to save historical elements of the school and offer yard signs for those in the community wishing to support the effort.

Let me be clear, WCHAS is not taking a position on how to repurpose, or what the repurpose use will be, only that consideration be given to alternate plans to save the building from another wrecking ball taking away another piece of our treasured past. To learn more about this issue that affects the entire community, visit their website at www.savemerrill.com

Preserving Our Local History For Future Generations

Randy Domer, President



Join

Windigo Paranormal for a Historical Paranormal Investigation at Morgan House Museum

Friday, October 21st, 2022 · 234 Church Ave

2 Tours starting at 6PM and 8:30PM

Tickets are \$40.

For MORE INFORMATION and to PURCHASE TICKETS visit <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/historic-morgan-house-museum-paranormal-investigation-windigo-paranormal-tickets-402622042367>

SAVE HISTORIC MERRILL SCHOOL

By Charles E. Williams, Attorney



Recently, school administrators proposed that the entire school be torn down for a running track for students at the new Val Phillips Middle School.

A group of concerned citizens are working to document the historic and architectural significance of the building and bring awareness to the community in an effort to find a new use for part of Merrill School while still providing enough space for outdoor student activities. Why is Merrill Middle School so important?

In July of 1900, Oshkosh Mayor James H. Merrill passed away from a stroke while visiting his sister in New York. As a young man, Merrill had joined the United States Navy at age 17 during The Civil War. He participated in the Siege of Vicksburg in 1863 and the disastrous Red-River Expedition in 1864. Upon completion of his service he returned to Wisconsin, only to re-enlist just after his 19th birthday in the 47th Wisconsin Infantry regiment until the end of the war.

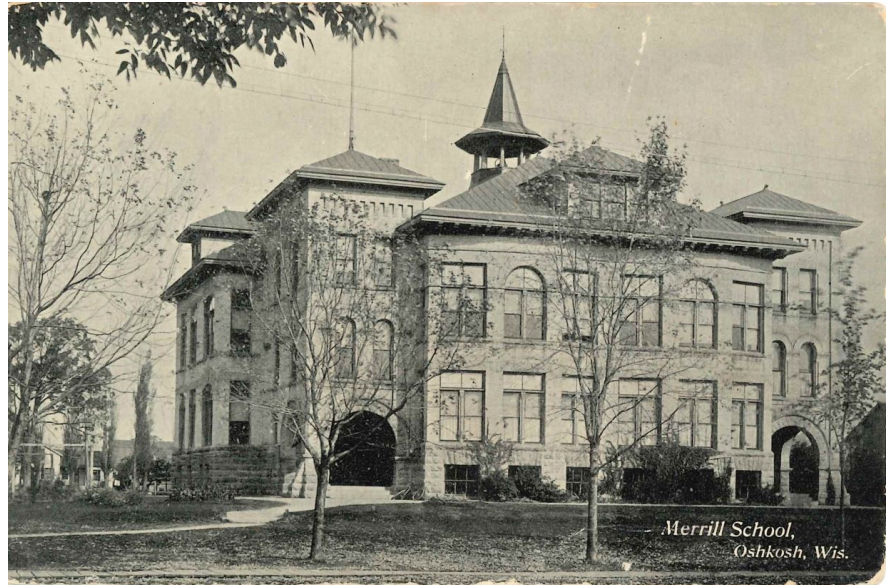
Upon return, Merrill studied law and was admitted to the Wisconsin Bar in 1868. He lived and practiced law in Winneconne before moving to Oshkosh. Merrill practiced a life of public service having served as the superintendent of schools, city attorney, justice of the peace, and court commissioner. Fifteen men, including ten prior mayors, traveled to Chicago to escort Merrill's remains back to Oshkosh for his funeral where more than 6,000 attended, which was roughly 20% of the city's population at the time. Several weeks later, the city council voted to name the new Tenth-Ward school after Merrill.

The new school opened for public inspection on New Year's Day 1901. The school would serve up to 300 pupils from kindergarten through 8th grade for the next 30 years. By 1930, the city's population had risen to 40,000 and, again, schools experienced overcrowding. Also, a new educational paradigm, the Junior High School, came into vogue and the school board solicited ideas from local architects to build a new, separate structure at the Merrill site to house Oshkosh's first dedicated Junior High School.

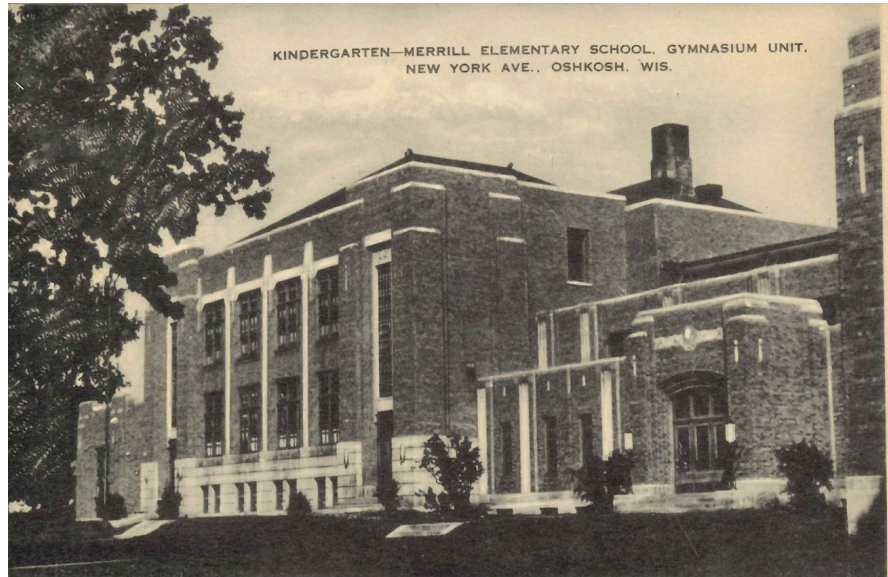
Noted architect Henry Auler, proposed combining the existing 1901 school with the new school and sharing the use of the gymnasium/ auditorium. C. R. Meyer was contracted to build Auler's Art Deco vision, which wrapped the original school in a new façade so the building had a single unified appearance.

Streamlined pilasters separate bands of windows while modern layered and molded piers adorn the entrances on the exterior. These influences are carried throughout the interior hallways, as well as within the detailed gymnasium.

Numerous additions were added to the school after 1930. Merrill School was well maintained and served the community's children for over 121 years.



Circa 1902. / Oshkosh Public Library



Circa 1932 / Oshkosh Public Library

More information can be found on the website www.savemerrill.com or through The Save Historic Merrill School public Facebook page.

CIVIL WAR TOKENS OF WINNEBAGO COUNTY

by Jeff Reichenberger and Larry Spanbauer

PART TWO

(This article is a continuation of research and collaboration with my friend and mentor Larry Spanbauer, who passed away September 4, 2018. As many of you know, Larry was a treasured Oshkosh historian. What you may not know, is that he was also a highly respected numismatist. I write this in his memory.)



**HAY & CLARK, DEALERS IN HARDWARE, OSHKOSH WIS.
Two die varieties are known for the back of this token
(Eagle w/date), (Eagle w/o date)**

Samuel M. Hay was among the first enduring businessmen in Oshkosh. Emigrating from Pennsylvania in 1848., he opened a hardware store with a gentleman named E. C. Hall. Two years later, Mr. O. J. Clark succeeded Mr. Hall and the firm of Hay & Clark was established. Mr. Clark was then succeeded by Samuel's Brother, W. H. Hay, forming the business S. M. Hay & Bro. All the Hay stores were located on Ferry Street. In addition, Samuel Hay served as the Mayor of Oshkosh in 1858-59.



HASBROUCK & FANCHER, DEALERS IN STOVES AND TIN WARE, OSHKOSH, WIS. (Stove w/date)

This business began in 1862 on Kansas Street (South Main) near the bridge. They advertised as Wholesale and Retail dealers in Stoves. Manufacturers of Tin, Copper, and Sheet-Iron ware, as well as metal roofing. Known for high-quality workmanship.



JAENICKE & KLOTZSCH, MANUFACTURERS AND DEALERS IN LEATHER HIDES & C., OSHKOSH, WIS. (Eagle facing right w/date)

Jaenicke & Klotzsch advertised in the city directory as Manufacturers and Dealers in Leather, Hides, Findings. Cash paid for hides. Located at 'Mark's Brick Building', Ferry Street. By 1867 the partnership had divided into competing businesses.



LEVY & DUNCAN, DEALERS IN CLOTHING, OSHKOSH, WIS.

Six die varieties are known for the back of this token (Bust w/Phrygian hat), (Head of Hermes w/signature), (Head of Hermes w/o sign.), (Head of Hermes w/o stars), (Flying eagle left), (Anchor)

Dealers in ready-made clothing, Levy & Duncan began in 1859 at 27 Ferry Street. They employed around 30 people. They were also agents for the Singer Sewing Machine company, reportedly selling 60 of the machines in 1866. Mr. Levy was elected as a city alderman several times.



KELLOGG & HUGHES, DRY GOODS, OSHKOSH, WIS. (Head of Hermes w/date)

In the spring of 1860, Arthur Kellogg and John Hughes formed a Dry Goods business, advertising "Dealers in all kinds of Dry Goods". Located at 'Wright's Block', Ferry Street. The business lasted until 1865 when Kellogg sold his interest to his partner. Mr. Kellogg went into the milling business, was elected as Brown County Sheriff. Then, in 1888, returned to Oshkosh to join the Clark Carriage Company. Mr. Hughes remained in Oshkosh and continued the Dry Goods business until 1867 when he partnered with K.M. Hutchinson in hardware.



**S.B. & J.A. PAIGE, GROCERS, OSHKOSH, WIS.
Three die varieties are known for the back of this token**

(Bust w/Phrygian hat) (Bust w/Phrygian hat w/signature), (Eagle w/date)

Brothers Simon B. Paige and John A. Paige came to Oshkosh from New Hampshire in 1856 and bought out a merchant business. They were burned out in 1859 but quickly resumed business and prospered with their main interests being wholesale groceries and lumbering equipment. They also invested in lumber mills in northern Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Iowa. Their store was located at No. 26 and 28 Ferry Street.

In 1872 they sold the grocery business and concentrated their efforts into lumber and milling. Simon and his wife, Leafy, (they had no children) traveled extensively at this time while John Paige remained in Oshkosh and oversaw financial and business matters. After returning from their travels, Mr., and Mrs. Paige endured another fire that consumed their home. As a result, they took residence on the fourth floor of the Beckwith House, (New Moon Café today) which itself had been rebuilt in 1876 after the downtown Oshkosh fire of 1875.

Sadly, tragedy by fire again befell the Paige family in December of 1880. The Beckwith House caught fire and was destroyed. Three people perished including Mrs. Paige. In the following months Simon was reportedly inconsolable having lost the love of his life. They had been married 32 years. He was also plagued by legal issues at this time. He removed himself from Oshkosh and took residence in Davenport, Iowa. Two years later, Simon remarried hastily to a much younger woman that he had met through written correspondence. It was reported that the marriage was not well received by either family. In addition, he was reported to be in financial trouble. Having grown despondent, Simon Paige killed himself by gunshot in his Davenport residence, March 11, 1883. He was 58 years old.

This story will be concluded in the following County Fare coming December 2022.

Panic! at the Circus

By Dawn McKone

It began as a one-line note in the Northwestern: "The Inter-Ocean Circus and Menagerie will exhibit here July 9th."



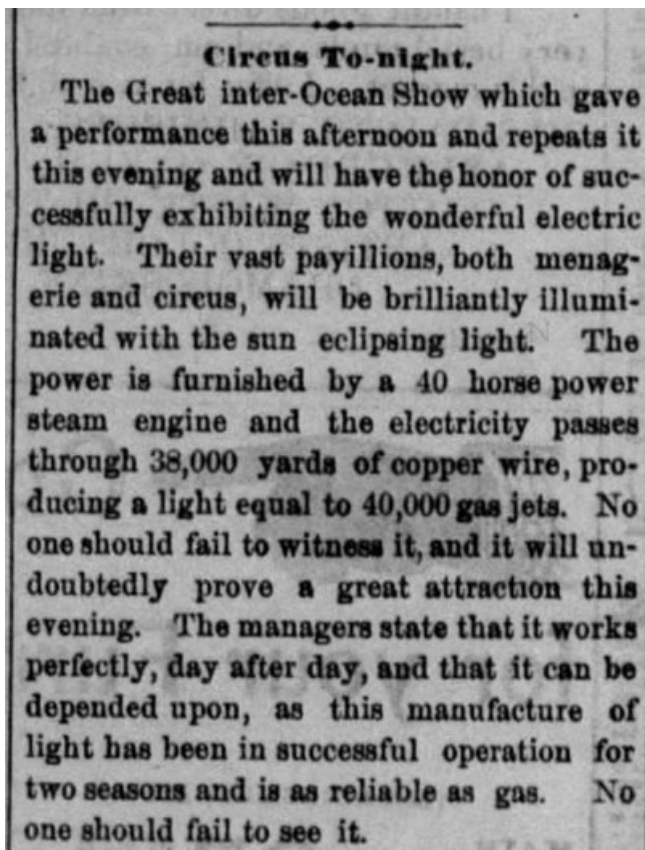
June 1880. When people across the country could pay a few dimes and see the wonders of the world, right in their home towns. The Great Inter-Ocean Circus and Menagerie promised plenty for those thirty cents. It claimed to be “twenty times the best entertainment you ever saw in your life.”

The circus would have “the Leading Characteristics of 12 Traveling Museums, 12 Grand Menageries, and 12 First-Class Circuses.” Patrons could see twenty elephants, gigantic sea lions and sea elephants, trained dogs and horses, royal Egyptian jugglers, acrobats, athletes, and “fifty of the best male and female riders on earth.” All this spectacle would be under the illumination of a \$50,000 electric light, the first time most residents of Winnebago County would have had the chance to see

electric light, since Edison received his first patent for a light bulb just a year earlier. The managers of the circus offered to give \$100,000 to charity if they weren't offering the best entertainment of any show in the world.

A little more than a week before circus day, William C. Crum arrived in Oshkosh. Originally the editor of *The Rochester Evening News* in New York, Crum had worked as an agent for his cousin, Dan Rice, who performed as a clown for various circuses and who may have been the inspiration for the image of Uncle Sam. Crum took out ads in the *Northwestern* and handed out promotional fliers.

As circus day approached, the police put out a warning to merchants to lock their back doors and for the general public to watch out for pick-pockets, as a large gang of thieves was said to be traveling with the circus.



Oshkosh Northwestern. Friday, July 9, 1880.

The morning of July 9th saw a dark, threatening storm approach Oshkosh, but it veered north, and the day was clear and hot. People thronged the streets to see the circus parade. The *Northwestern* noted that the parade was long, and despite the less-than-fresh costumes of the people on the circus wagons, the show was expected to be a good one. A forty-horsepower steam engine would provide the energy for the electric lights, which the circus manager claimed were as “reliable as gas.”

The three thousand people who took seats in the main circus tent weren't initially concerned with the rain that had begun to fall by the time of the evening performance, but about halfway through the show, the lightning intensified, and a few people headed for the exit. The ringmaster stepped in to calm the crowd. He reassured them that the tent was waterproof, and that they would be fine as long as everyone kept their seats.

The members of a tumbling act were leaving the ring when a gust of wind lifted the tent, “stakes, poles and all” from the ground. Chaos erupted. People rushed towards the exits, ladies clutching the arms of their escorts as they negotiated their way down the wooden bleachers. Most people were still heading toward the ground when the tent itself collapsed on their heads. The center pole had fallen onto a quarter pole and snapped in two, missing the people crowding to the exit. Wind shredded the tent, then twisted the shreds into ropes that pounded on the heads of the crowd. The reliable electric light and the oil lamps were all extinguished, leaving the terrified people in darkness.

Amid screaming and yelling, the circus-goers stampeded to the exit—any exit. Children were separated from their parents, and numerous people were knocked off their feet and trampled. Mothers who stood outside the tent looking for

their children struggled to keep their footing in the strong wind, and many people sought refuge in the surrounding homes, sometimes depositing up to an inch of rainwater on their hosts' floors.

About the same time, the tent housing the horses blew down, and the terrified animals ran amok. Also, the center pole of the dressing room tent snapped in two, leaving performers still dressed in tights to chase after their costumes and worldly possessions in the driving wind and rain.

Once the majority of the patrons were clear of the remains of the main tent, policemen, circus people, and spectators began searching the rubble for anyone who may have been trapped beneath the collapsed bleachers. Everyone seemed to breathe a sigh of relief when no bodies were found. Although numerous reports of broken limbs were unsubstantiated, photographer Cook Ely sustained an injury to his shoulder from a

falling tent pole, dry goods merchant James McCourt received a black eye, and a man named Barker carried the print of a boot heel on the side of his head.

Within half an hour the storm had passed, and residents from the downtown area hurried to the circus grounds to offer what help they could. The circus people began the task of cleaning up, and by morning they headed off for their show in Ripon later that day, under a spare tent they held in reserve.

A twelve-foot anaconda snake was found on the deserted circus grounds. When Chief of Police Ford telegraphed the circus manager, he was told he could keep it.

There was no report on what happened to the snake.

Torrents and Terror,

**"Greatest Railway Show on Earth"
Routed by the Biggest Storm
of the Season.**

**The Pavilion Blown Down and a Wild
Panic Ensues.**

Description of the Fearful Scene.

**THE OSHKOSH DAILY NORTHWESTERN,
SATURDAY EVENING, JULY 10, 1880.**

Winnebago County Historical & Archeological Membership Form

Join or renew your membership
with the Winnebago County Historical & Archeological Society

(check one)

(check one

_____ \$5 Student (15-25 yr old)

_____ \$15 Individual

_____ New Member

_____ \$25 Couple

_____ Renewal

_____ \$35 Family

_____ \$250 Lifetime Membership

Complete/Update Information

Name: _____

Street Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone Number: _____

Email: _____

In an effort to be more green and reduce postage costs, newsletters will be sent via email unless you signify you require a printed copy below.

_____ Please send me a printed copy of the newsletter .

Interested in Volunteering? Let us know what you're interested in! (check all that apply)

_____ Give tours of the Morgan House (docent training available)

_____ Historical research on specific topics determined by committees

_____ Social Media/Publicity

_____ Newsletter Editing or Content Creation

_____ Locate and/or events and speakers

_____ Decorate for the Holidays

_____ Develop exhibitions (in-person and digital)

_____ Transcribe Historical Interviews

_____ Event Photographer/Videographer

_____ Archive artifacts

Mail this form with payment to:

WCHAS

234 Church Ave.
Oshkosh, WI 54901

OR

Pay electronically via Paypal by sending
payment to:

winnebagocountyhistoricalsociety.org



Winnebago **C**ounty
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Society, Inc.

234 Church Avenue - Oshkosh, Wisconsin 54901