

SHADES OF THE PAST

Williams Bay Historical Society
Established 2013

Volume 1 Issue 3
Summer 2014

QUARTERLY MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS

ANNUAL DINNER/MEETING*

Thursday, October 16
5 p.m. Social Hour
6 p.m. Dinner
7 p.m. Annual Meeting
George Williams College
of Aurora University
Williams Bay, WI

**Members Only*

**Reservations Required*

UPCOMING EVENTS

ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM MUM SALE

Friday, Sept. 12, 2014, 12-6 p.m.
Lions Fieldhouse, Williams Bay
For more information call
Julie Poplar 262-245-2686

HISTORICAL "WONDERS OF WILLIAMS BAY" TOUR

October 18, 2014
More information to come.

FESTIVAL OF TREES

Edgewater Park, Williams Bay
Nov. 28 through New Year 2015



(Photo Courtesy of "http://www.cardcon.com/images/set229/card00256_fr.jpg")

The Rock at Conference Point What Do You Call It? by Deb Soplanda

(Story on page 3)

Shades of the Past

Mission of the Historical Society:

The purpose of the Williams Bay Historical Society is to assist in the preservation and exhibition of items of historical interest that are within the boundaries of Williams Bay, and the immediate surrounding area. It will seek to provide the public with educational opportunities to learn about our unique local history. It will also seek to organize and assist in the commemoration of significant dates and events in village history.

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For comments or questions about this publication or Williams Bay Historical Society contact:

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<http://wmsbayhistory.ipage.com>

July 7, 1895 - An Intensely Hot and Stormy Sunday Afternoon

by Michelle Bie Love

Newspaper accounts from July, 1895 describe Sunday, July 7, 1895 as intensely hot. That afternoon, five people, guests at Kaye's Park, chartered the steam launch Dispatch, perhaps in the hopes of catching a cool lake breeze, for a tour of Geneva Lake.

The Hogan party came to Lake Geneva on Saturday, July 6th. Mrs. Catharine Gilbreath Hogan and their only child, James left Elgin Friday to visit for a day at Fox Lake accompanied by Miss Mary Hogan, of Harvard, Illinois, sister of Mrs. Hogan's husband. Saturday they were joined by Dr. John E. Hogan and his brother, Father James E. Hogan, pastor of the Catholic Church in

Harvard, Illinois. They then traveled to Kaye's Park for a short holiday. They intended to return home Monday. Dr. Hogan was a physician at the Northern Illinois Insane Hospital at Elgin.

Shortly after 3 p.m., the family stepped aboard the Dispatch. The launch then chugged along the south shore toward Lake Geneva.

Failing to heed the signs of the approaching storm, the party resumed their tour of the lake's north shore after a brief stop in Lake Geneva.

Storm clouds had already begun forming in the western sky before the launch left Lake Geneva. By the time the Dispatch reached Elgin Park, the storm was already over the lake.

Seeking shelter from the approaching storm, other boats had docked at Elgin Park's pier. Witnesses reported the Dispatch came within feet of the pier before heading back out into the lake continuing westward toward Jerseyhurst the estate of R.T. Crane, changing course the launch turned south, then changed course again heading toward Cooke's pier at Ara Glen. Changing course for the last time, the Dispatch began heading south across the lake towards Kaye's Park. By this time, the full force of the storm was over the lake.

George Mason, Captain of the steamer Admiral, reported passing the Dispatch in the storm, saying the storm-curtains were down to protect the passengers from the torrential rain, hail and 50 mile-per-hour wind. This was the last time the Dispatch was seen.

After the storm passed every available steamer on the lake was out searching for the Dispatch and her passengers. The Arthur Kaye, having docked in Williams Bay during the storm, reported seeing life preservers and cushions floating near Black Point on its return trip to Kaye's Park.

The search is then split—some boats heading toward Black Point, the others toward Cedar Point. The first victim, Mary Hogan is found floating near the shore, a short distance from Alpine Villa, the summer estate of Herbert A. Beidley. Miss Hogan wore a fashionable dress with large puff sleeves and these sleeves were found to be full of air, and, together with a satchel she had in her hand, caused the body to float. No trace of the other bodies was found, although the cap of the

(Continued on page 4)



(Launch similar to the Dispatch)

Did You Know?

*Topless bathing was a problem at the Williams Bay Beach in 1934!

* In 1935, Gladys Peterson was voted the "Most Popular Lady in the Bay" with 5000 votes!?

*Peggy Ecklund was voted to have the "Most Perfect Physical Measurements"!

* Barnard's Star, is a small red dwarf named after E. E. Barnard, who discovered it

in 1916. It is the star with the highest known proper motion.

*When the Potawatomi first moved to Williams Bay, they called the lake "Wind Lake". Later, it was called "Big Foot Lake" in honor of Chief Big Foot. Lake Como was "Duck Lake" and Delavan Lake was "Swan Lake".

*The bandstand in Edgewater Park was the site of free summer concerts and free movies every Friday night.

1919 - Williams Bay Votes to Incorporate

by Michelle Bie Love

Eighty-three years after Captain Israel Williams founded Williams Bay, the village had to decide whether it should incorporate or not. After much disagreement, the residents of Williams Bay

voted 66 to 41 to incorporate the village.

At the time of incorporation, the village had a population of 450 and an assessed value of \$1,180,000—the highest of any village in Walworth County.

Weird Williams Bay: Strange happenings, UFOs and things that go "bump" in the night!

"By the pricking of my thumbs, something wicked this way comes" could be said about the weirder side of Williams Bay. The "Mayberry-like" day face of Williams Bay sometimes gives way to a darker side once the sun sets over Yerkes Observatory. Strange sights, strange sounds, and even stranger encounters with the supernatural can be found in Williams Bay when you least expect it.

Tales of unusual happenings go all the way back to the Potawatomi days when Williams Bay was the summer camp of the Potawatomi tribe. The mighty Thunderbirds known as "Wami-go-huk-nen-kikuk" circled over the cliffs of Conference Point where they

resided, awaiting the appearance of their nemesis, the Great Horned Water Panther (Nampeshu), who loved to drag the unwary native fishermen to the bottom of the lake were no match for the lightning that flashed from the Thunderbird's eyes.

Frequent sightings of a huge eel that came out on stormy days over-turning small boats on the Bay were all part of the folklore early residents learned of upon settling in Williams Bay. Reports of sightings of the huge eel have occurred as recently as the early 1900s.

Supernatural encounters, too have left their mark, as recently as the summer of 2013, the

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The Rock at Conference Point *(Continued from page 1)*

Around the western edge of Conference Point in Williams Bay lies a source of controversy. Jutting into Geneva Lake, this object has been a source of heated debate for many years. This object is a giant boulder of granite lying next to the ancient shore path-what is its name?

Putting the question to local Williams Bay History Buffs on Facebook, a surprising variety of names appeared. "Kissing Rock," "Indian Rock," "THE Rock," names I had never heard before began appearing. Different generations seemed to have called it different names.

No allusion to the boulder by the Potawatomi People who lived on the shores of Geneva Lake from 1641-1836 has been

found. The earliest (1890-1940s) references to this puzzling boulder name it as "Plymouth Rock." Pre-1960's Bay-ites seem to have named it "Indian Rock" (because it followed the Native American Shore Path) or "Flint Rock" because sparks flew when you struck it with another rock. Post 1960-1980 Bay-ites are adamant that it was called "The Big Rock," its size being the obvious naming factor and claim to never have heard it called anything else. More recent generations are certain it is the "Kissing Rock" or just "THE Rock."

Local Williams Bay Resident, Jeff Smith stated when the question came up on FaceBook: "I worked at Conference Point for 22 years and had the opportunity to work with Palmer

Delap. Palmer started there in 1937. He called it "Plymouth Rock." In my 50+ years I have never heard it called "Big Rock" until this thread of comments began. In the historical documents that I read while I was there, Rev. Collie named the rock as a tribute to the founding of America."

Jeff's wife, Jane, added: "Conference Point is over 115 years old and all references in its history about this rock refer to it as Plymouth Rock."

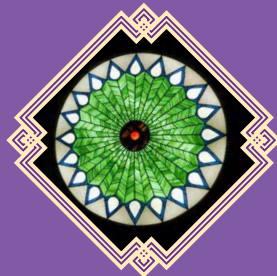
The debate appears to swing to the "Plymouth Rock" fans. Logic dictates that the earliest references to the rock are most likely to be the correct name. The rest of us, I personally am a "Big Rock" fan, are just going to have to get used to the idea of calling it "Plymouth Rock."

The next time you are trudging towards Fontana on the Shore Path, stop at the giant rock, sit on it for awhile and ask yourself "Is this "Plymouth Rock? Or is it "BIG Rock," "Flint Rock," "Kissing Rock," etc. What would YOU call it????



(Photo courtesy of Michelle Bie Love)

Night at the Museum - April 24, 2014



(Photos courtesy of Williams Bay Historical Society, Deb Soplanda, and Geneva Lake Museum)

Notable People in Williams Bay History

Elizabeth Morrison Boynton Harbert 1843-1925

- * Attended Western Female Seminary in Ohio and Terre Haute Female College.
- * Authored - wrote three books
- * Suffragette Movement Leader
- * Married successful attorney William Soesbe Harbert in 1870.
- * First woman to design and secure a woman's rights plank in a major political party's state platform.
- * June 11, 1884, she was awarded an honorary Ph. D. in Philosophy by Cincinnati Wesleyan College for Young Women for her work in the Suffragette Movement.
- * Hosted Susan B. Anthony, Suffragette Leader, in her summer home, Tre-Brah, in Williams Bay for several weeks in 1892.



Mrs. Harbert



Susan B. Anthony



Tre-Brah in 1895

(Photos from "Tre-Brah, History of a House in Williams Bay, Lake Geneva by William Frederick)

On this Date in Williams Bay History

- * July 1, 1798 - Israel Williams baptized in the Congregational Church of Ashfield, Massachusetts.
- * July 24, 1881 - A water spout, over a hundred feet high, was observed near Camp Collie (Conference Point).
- * July 24, 1964 - Harrison Ford performs in "Night of the Iguana" at the Belfry Theater.
- * August 9, 1970 - First fireworks display set off in village to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the incorporation of the village.
- * August 26, 1886 - Royal Joy Williams, son of Capt. Israel Williams, dies at the old homestead in Williams Bay. He was 68 years of age.
- * September 28, 1954 - Dr. Clifford Wiswell resuscitates a 6 year old drowning victim after he falls off a pier near his home.

July 7 (Continued from page 2)

engineer was picked up close by.

The Arthur Kaye and the Majestic searched the lake for the next three days, finding no further sign of the Dispatch or her passengers. The Dispatch was finally found on July 11, about a quarter of a mile off of Cedar Point in 108 feet of water. A diver from Chicago began searching for the

remaining victims on Sunday, July 14th. The body of Father Hogan was found under the bow of the launch. A short time later, the body of Dr. Hogan was found on the opposite side of the hull. The search was called off on Sunday due to rising winds.

On Monday, July 15 the bodies of two year old James Hogan

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Weird Williams

Bay (Continued from page 2) infamous "White Lady" has made yet another appearance, appearing on the Shore path in Cedar Point one evening last summer in the presence of a local jogger at sunset.

Rounding a turn in the path, the jogger encountered an elderly lady, dressed in a long old-fashioned white nightgown, barefoot and with her long white hair blowing about her shoulders. As the startled jogger stopped, the elderly lady began to laugh loudly.

The jogger quickly turned tail

and ran the opposite direction. The White Lady has been seen near Yerkes Observatory and Conference Point Camp as well over the years, as has our next weird Williams Bay apparition, "The Man on the Bike".

"The Man on the Bike" appears to be a fairly young man, dapperly dressed in the fashion of the early 1900's (Derby hat and stiff collar included) who rides an antique bike and rings its bell as he approaches, only to disappear from sight seconds

later. First reported by stargazers on Yerkes lawn in the late 1990's, he appears to be a Yerkes phenomenon, not



making an appearance anywhere else in town as far as we know.

While the 1970's were a time of unrest for our nation, in Williams Bay, it was a time of "Daddy- get the shotgun, the aliens are coming!" Unidentified Flying Objects (UFOs) were reported around Williams Bay and the Lakes area, appearing singly and in grouped formations that have remained unexplained. While no alien abductions were reported, the local citizenry were more than a bit leery about leaving home at night. UFO sighting over the lake go back to the end of the nineteenth century.

Even the most famous cryptozoological creature, the Beast

of Bray Road, that 7-foot tall hairy hulk of road-kill eating werewolf of movie and national broadcast fame, apparently counts Williams Bay in its territory. Twice seen in the past 20 years, once near Conference Point, and once atop the old gas station building just south of what is now the Frosty Moose.

So when you are looking for a bit of excitement, take a walk on the wilder side of Williams Bay after dark. Wander the shore path, gaze at the sky-who knows what you may encounter?????

(Sketch by Dier Caldez which resembles eyewitness descriptions of the White Lady.)

Williams Bay - Stage Coach Town! by Deb Soplanda

The first stagecoach in the Williams Bay area ran from Kenosha to Beloit, passing through Lake Geneva and Williams Bay. The journey was long, a two day - 70 mile -trip. The horses could make about 5 miles per hour meaning that it was 14 hours of travel. Never traveling at night, the stagecoach men found Williams Bay was the logical spot for a night's lodging for both horses and passengers as the sun set.

The Buck Horn Tavern was the first framed house built in the Geneva Lakes area in 1839 by the founder of Williams Bay, Captain Israel Williams and his sons. Made from local black walnut and oak, probably hewn at the new saw mill in Lake Geneva, with the lumber then floated on rafts across the lake

to Williams Bay. Designed in the New England "Salt Box" architectural style, its two stories and glass windows



(Photo from Grassroots Lake Geneva by Phil Fogle)

were statement of Captain Williams's wealth and status locally. When the stage line men came through recruiting homeowners to open a stagecoach stopping place, Captain Williams saw a way to earn some extra cash. He and his sons built a further addition onto to his home, put a giant pair of buck antlers over the front door, and the Buck Horn Tavern and Inn of Geneva Bay (as Williams Bay was known then) was ready when the first stagecoach arrived in 1841, blowing its horn as sign of its arrival!

The Buck Horn Tavern furnished not only food, drink,

and shelter, but was also the place for indoor amusements such as checkers in front of the fireplace, political discussions, and of course, picking up those all-important letters from family back east. Ladies would gather in the kitchen area with their "fancywork" and to bring gossip to Mrs. Williams and her daughters from the big cities of Kenosha or Beloit about the latest fashions. Tallow 'dips' (candles) in tin reflectors hung on the wall near the bar, but usually no other light but that from the fireplace was needed. On one side of the fireplace was piled half a cord of dry oak, and on the other was the sink where the guest of high or low degree performed his/her ablutions with plenty of hard water and either a cake of yellow laundry soap or a bowl

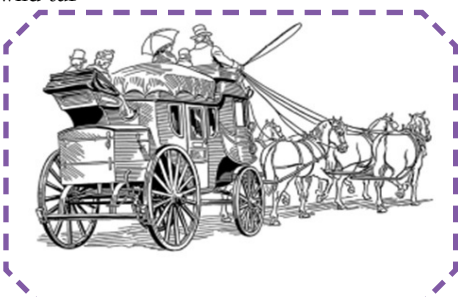
of soft soap. Over the wooden sink there was a small mirror for the ladies. Guests were separated by gender, ladies in one room, men in the other, proba-

bly to bed down on straw/grass filled ticks (mattresses) on the floor with a blanket for the sum of several dollars per night. Meals for the passengers would have been roasted, stewed or baked in the large kitchen fireplace by Mrs. Lavina Williams with the help of her two daughters, Hannah and Lavina, for the likely sum of 25 cents per person per meal. Deer, wild turkey, pigeons, partridge, fish, eels and quail were plentiful, along with pumpkins, squash and corn. Mrs. Williams's reputation as a cheese maker was well-known. In 1839, she made 800 pounds of cheese, the

cheese was shipped by canoe to Lake Geneva to travel overland to Fort Dearborn (Chicago), so guests were most certainly treated to her cheese, perhaps with a slice of fruit pie for dessert. Sweetening was usually exclusively maple sugar/maple syrup found locally; white sugar being too expensive to serve on a daily basis. Beverages could have included water, milk, beer, ale, rum, and homemade applejack served in pewter or wooden tankards. It is doubtful that Captain Williams and his family indulged in the consumption of hard alcohol, as he was known to have never "taken alcohol" in adherence to his strict Puritan upbringing. Stage horses were watered, fed and bedded down for the night, either in the pasture or the barn depending on the season and weather for around 75 cents per horse.

The stage ran for almost fifty years through Williams Bay, until the next modern mode of transportation arrived - the railroad. Captain and Mrs. Williams continued to run the tavern and inn during their lifetimes, then their sons closed the inn after other boarding establishments came to town. The Buck Horn Tavern and Inn stood until 1963 when it was torn down.

You can see the location of the First Home/Buck Horn Tavern site in Williams Bay at 47 Geneva Street, Williams Bay, the current location of the Bayside Motel.



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and the Dispatch's engineer, 21 year old John Preston, of Lake Geneva, were found. The search for Mrs. Hogan continued with no results and the diver returned to Chicago on Wednesday.

Determined to lay their sister to rest, Catharine Hogan's brothers continued the search dragging the lake in the area of the wreckage of the Dispatch. This search finally recovered the body of the last victim.

The Chicago Daily Tribune describes the storm that hit the area: "Delavan, Wis., July 8.-- The most destructive rain and wind storm that ever visited this locality came yesterday afternoon. The wind... blew down houses and barns, uprooted trees and plowed up corn fields, great trees were broken like pipestems. The wind was accompanied by a deluge of rain and great hailstones that broke windows and leveled fields of grain.

The roads and fields are strewn with debris of trees fences, and buildings."

The Dispatch was one of the launches at the Columbian Exposition in Chicago. The launch was about 30 feet in length, had no deck, was built of oak, brass-trimmed, and had plush upholstery. It was brought to Geneva Lake by Mr. Albert L. Ide of Springfield, Illinois who used it as a private yacht. At the time of the disaster the Dispatch was owned by the Lake Geneva Steamer Line and used as an excursion boat.

(July, 1895 Centralia Enterprise and Tribune, Centralia, WI and Chicago Daily Tribune accounts of the sinking of the Dispatch and the storm on Sunday, July 7, 1895. Photo of launch similar to the Dispatch from an Official souvenir World's Columbian Exposition.)

Williams Bay High School History Club Members Make History: Cardinal is Official Village Bird! By Deb Soplanda

The Cardinal's presence in Williams Bay is directly tied to the efforts of Dr. Edwin B. Frost (1866-1935), Professor of Astronomy and Astrophysics at the University of Chicago and Director of the University's Yerkes Observatory at Williams Bay, Wisconsin in the early 1900s, according to student Brandon Wulf.

"Cardinals at the time migrated through Williams Bay area on their way north or south. Dr. Frost noticed a lone male cardinal in his yard for several weeks; hoping to keep the beautiful bird in the area he contacted an associate at the University of Chicago and asked the associate to bring a female cardinal from the aviary on the train to Williams Bay as further incentive for the male cardinal to make Williams Bay his home.

The associate did as Dr. Frost requested Dr. Frost released the female into his screened porch to see if any interest was exhibited on the part of either



of the two cardinals. It was love at first sight! Dr. Frost released the female cardinal, the pair successfully nested, and we have had cardinals in Williams Bay ever since."

Thanks to Frost Park Chairs Brandon Wulf and Naomi Frederick, Juniors at Williams Bay High School, the new Official Bird of Williams Bay is the Cardinal! Because of Dr. Edwin B. Frost's efforts, we have cardinals in the area.

Naomi and Brandon's proposal that recognized Dr. Frost's efforts was passed April 21, 2014 by the Williams Bay Village Board!

For Sale: Historical Society Calendars and Note Cards

Support the Williams Bay Historical Society by purchasing these great items. Calendars and Note Cards will be available for purchase at all Historical Society meetings and events..

The **2015 Calendar** has 13 great historic images of Williams Bay and makes a great gift for out of town friends and family! Only \$10.00

The **Note Card Pack** is a package of 5 note cards and envelopes containing 5 different pencil sketch images of historic buildings and locations in Williams Bay. A great gift for family or friends! Only \$5.00



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