

# SHADES OF THE PAST

Williams Bay Historical Society

Established 2013

Volume 2 Issue 2

Spring 2015

## HISTORICAL SOCIETY INFORMATION PROGRAMS AND EVENTS SAVE THE DATE

### Fundraising Garage Sale

June 26th and 27th, 2015

9 a.m. - 3 p.m.

420 W. Geneva Street

Williams Bay, WI

### Williams Bay Art & Craft Festival

July 25th and 26th, 2015

Edgewater Park

Williams Bay, WI

*New 2016 Calendar, note cards and matted historical prints will be available*

### Ice Cream Social

August 29th, 2015

Edgewater Park

Williams Bay, WI

*More Details Coming Soon*

### Annual Dinner/Meeting

Friday, October 16, 2015

*More Details Coming Soon*

### Board of Directors

President - Judy Bausch

Vice President - Pat Grove

Secretary - Phyllis Janda

Treasurer - Doreen Collins

### Directors

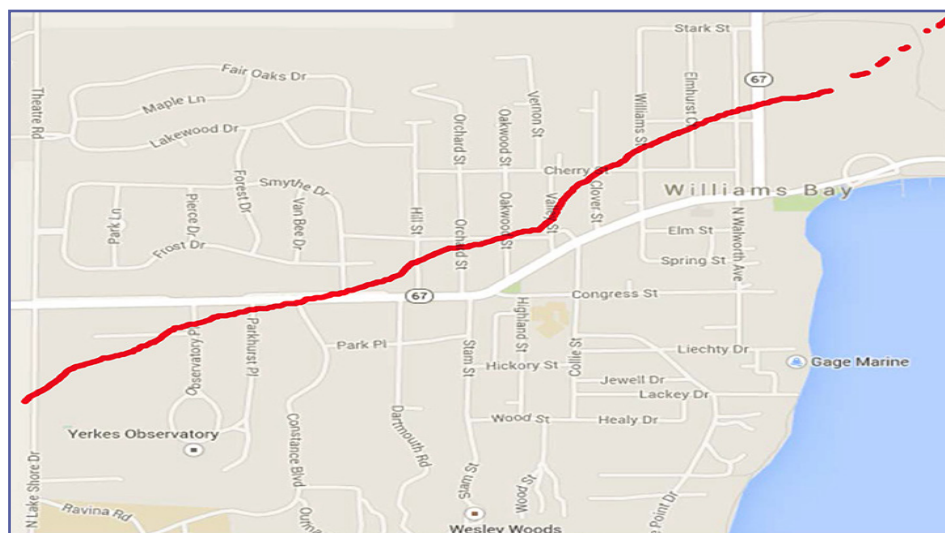
Maggie Gage

Henry Kenyon

Tom McReynolds

## Tornado Cuts Path Through Williams Bay - April 11, 1965

By Michelle Bie Love



Approximate 1.9 mile path of tornado

For those living in the Midwest fifty years ago, the Palm Sunday tornadoes are ingrained in their memory. One of the 47 confirmed tornadoes struck my hometown of Williams Bay shortly after 3 p.m. There were no warning sirens that day. The wind was blowing hard, but we didn't suspect anything more than a spring storm where we lived just north of the village.

What we didn't know right away was a tornado<sup>(1)</sup> had cut kitty-corner through town less than a mile away, damaging buildings, mangling trees standing in its path, and destroying businesses on Elkhorn Road (Highway 67) before bouncing over the swamp and causing more damage near Lake Como.

The 1965 Palm Sunday weekend began quite chilly as a large cold front moved across the Great Lakes area and into the Ohio Valley. Sunday dawned with beautiful skies and warm temperatures. People around the Great Lakes were eager to enjoy the balmy spring day after the long cold winter. All across the Midwest, people were making plans to enjoy the day or attend Palm Sunday services. There was no hint of the disaster yet to come.

The Severe Local Storms Center (SELS) in Kansas City, MO., issued the following severe weather forecast at 1 p.m. C.S.T. for extreme eastern Iowa, extreme southern Wisconsin, and portions of Northern Illinois:

*(Continued on Page 4)*

## On this Date in Williams Bay History

- March 25, 1841 - Israel Williams purchased land in Walworth Township at the United States Land Office in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.
- May 23, 1844 - Israel Williams named postmaster of Geneva Bay.
- June, 1858 - Heavy rainfall caused Geneva Lake to be filled to full capacity.
- June 20, 1864 - Kiah Bailey named postmaster of Bay Hill.
- April 27, 1936 - Albert Hollister, son of a pioneer and founder of A. Hollister and Sons Lumber Yard passed away.
- June 1966 - The Class of 1966 was the fiftieth class to graduate from Williams Bay High School.

## Volunteer Docents Needed

Volunteer docents are needed for Yerkes Observatory on Saturdays from Memorial Day through Labor Day.

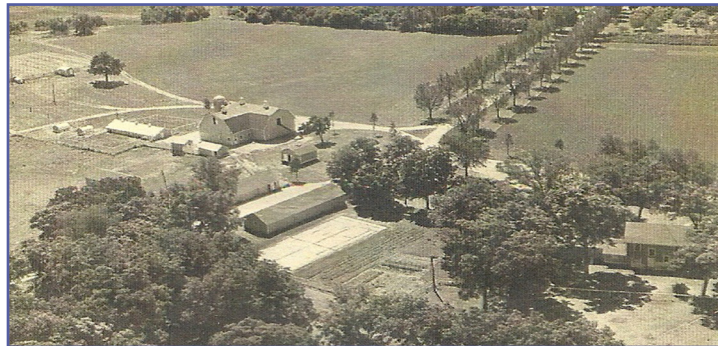
Interested volunteers should email: [wmsbayhistoricalsociety@gmail.com](mailto:wmsbayhistoricalsociety@gmail.com) for further information.

## Crane Farm — A Rich and Fascinating History

By Michelle Bie Love

Steeped in history a section of land northeast of Williams Bay on highway 50 was once home to three beautiful estates - Crane Farm owned by R.T. Crane, Kemah Farm owned by A.W. Harris, and "Boulders" summer home of H.A. Wheeler. An archaeological dig conducted by The Great Lakes Archaeological Research Center that began in 1989 discovered forty historical sites and prehistoric dwellings belonging to the mid-late Woodland Indians. Today, it is the site of Geneva National Resort. The main entrance to Geneva National was also the location of the Crane Farm entrance.

Though Crane Farm and the original Colonial Revival home are long gone the Greek Revival-style house built in 1915 remains. Over the years Crane Farm was a home, retreat for Crane Plumbing Company employees, and more. Today the Hunt Club is located in the Greek revival-style house. In 1928, a group of executives from



Crane Plumbing, following the commitment of the late R.T. Crane to care for the employees and families of the Crane Company, decided to provide a summer camp for children of Crane employees. Calling themselves the Duck Lake Committee, they had a numbers of cabins built north of the barn for the children attending two-week summer camping adventures. Boys and girls went to camp separately, enjoying activities such as picnics, playing ball, and swimming in Geneva Lake.

In the early 1930s, the Greek revival-style house became Crane Farm Sanitar-

ium. Crane employees who had tuberculosis could go to the sanitarium to recuperate from the deadly disease after they were released from the hospital. The sanitarium had a

capacity of 18 patients. Equipped with a sun room with quartz glass, billiard tables, and pheasant hunting in the fields of the farm, patients were able to come and go as their health permitted.

The development of the antibiotic streptomycin in 1946 made effective treatment and cure of TB a reality and the sanitarium was closed. Crane Farm remained an active farm for many years, the Greek revival house was rented to a family in the 1970s. Crane Farm was purchased in 1989 and was operated as a hunt club until 1999 when work began on the Gary Player golf course.

### For comments or questions please contact:

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### SHADES OF THE PAST

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Historical Society



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### 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.

## Notable People in Williams Bay History - Albert Hollister, Son of a Pioneer

In 1837 two friends from New York State who had heard the call of the west took a boat from Buffalo to Kenosha. They were Edward Brigham Hollister and John Whiteman, both only kids of seventeen. They walked from Kenosha to Lake Geneva and decided to look for some government land. They picked out farms north of Williams Bay.

In order to get a deed from the government Edward Hollister had to walk to Milwaukee. Money was scarce so he had to hire out for whatever work was available and occasionally was hired at 50¢ per day by William Hollingshead, his nearest neighbor over near Delavan Lake, a distance of four



Town of Delavan Plat Map 1857\*\*

miles, which he walk both ways. His next nearest neighbor was in Fontana.

Milwaukee was the nearest market for grain. It took three days to make the round trip with an oxen team. As a rule the first night was spent in Hales Corners. The next day would be a day-light trip to Milwaukee and back to Hales Corners for the night and back home on the third day.

Albert was born June 15, 1854 on the family farm in East Delavan now occupied by the Goodrich family (1933).

Recalling his youth, Albert told the editor that a band of Indians were roaming around these parts every summer. They had a permanent camp

near Lake Koshkonong and three or four hundred came down to Delavan Inlet and Duck Lake (now Lake Como) for the summer. The children had no fear of them and they were kind to them. Occasionally they would ask for food.

The Hollister children went to school in Elkhorn. After teaching school for four years about four miles north of Elkhorn, Albert went to Juneau County and taught for another four years. His interest in lumber came about during a year spent in Denver where he worked in a lumber yard. Returning to Delavan, Albert engaged in a business enterprise, marrying Ida Janette Sheldon in Delavan. Their son Edward Horace was born August Aug. 29, 1883, in Delavan.

Albert began his first venture in the lumber business in Ionia, Iowa. In those days no delivery was required and he worked alone at the yard, unloading cars of lumber by shoving a bunch off the car and then cutting and piling it up. He prospered and began establishing lumber yards in other communities in Iowa and western Illinois, at one time he owned twelve lumber yards. In order to supply the yards, Albert spent much time buying lumber in Oregon and the Northwest and at one time he had an office in Minneapolis. In 1892 he contracted for and sold 400 cars of cedar shingles under the name of the Dubuque Red Cedar Company.

Albert and Ida's second son, Lawrence Albert was born August 16, 1890 in Manchester, Delaware County, Iowa. Albert and Ida lived in Iowa until 1910 when Albert had a chance to sell his lumber yards; he retained the lumber yard in Belvidere, Illinois and moved back to Delavan.

In 1911, the lumber yard in Williams Bay was purchased and sons Edward and Lawrence came to Williams Bay to

live and work at A. Hollister & Sons Lumber Company. Even in his later years, Albert went to the lumber yard nearly every morning.



Hollister Lumber Yard ca. 1915

Reprinted from *Bay Leaves* Vol. 1 Number 11

\*\* Orange Rectangle - Edward Brigham Hollister farm  
Green Triangle - East Delavan  
Blue Cross - East Delavan Union Cemetery

Visit [www.wmsbayhistory.ipage.com](http://www.wmsbayhistory.ipage.com) and click on the People & Places tab to read more about the Hollister family history.

### 2015 Women's Banquet



In 1926, Mrs. Hazel Bjorge, Mrs. Hilda Hollister, Mrs. Oscar Waterbury, Mrs. Oetjen, and Mrs. Eric Werner organized the first

gathering for an opportunity to "go out with friends and have someone cook and serve them a meal". And so it has been every year since, except for a period from 1943 to 1945, when the banquets were held in abeyance until the end of World War II. The banquet resumed in the spring of 1946 and has continued annually since.

Chaired by Julie Poplar, the 88th Williams Bay Women's Banquet committee is preparing a wonderful event at Geneva Ridge Resort on Highway 50. Doors will open at 5:30 p.m. and dinner will be served at 7. Funds raised will go to support the Kishwauketoe Nature Conservancy.

Tickets are \$30 and may be purchased at Burrough's Floor Covering, Walworth State Bank, and Barrett Memorial Library in Williams Bay. Contact Julie Poplar at (262) 812-6297

## Tornado Slams Into Williams Bay *(continued from page 1)*

“A few severe thunderstorms with large hail, damaging winds, and one or two tornadoes are expected from 1 p.m. until 6 p.m. C.S.T. this Sunday afternoon and evening in an area bounded by the points 40 miles south of Burlington, Iowa to 50 miles west of Lone Rock, Wisconsin to Milwaukee, Wisconsin to 40 miles south east of Chicago, Illinois back to the point 40 miles south of Burlington, Iowa.”

Severe weather warnings in the 1960s were first issued to local weather bureaus, which then put the warnings out to the public. In the mid-1960s, tornado warnings were not issued until a tornado had been positively identified by visual sighting or confirmed radar detection.

Charles (Buzz) Wright observed the start of the storm in a low lying cloud at the southwest edge of the village. The cloud changed into the ominous funnel cloud that slammed into the village leaving a path of destruction. The tornado first destroyed a building on the College Camp golf course and then a garage at the home of Joe Herman as it moved into the village.



Joe Herman Home

The home of the Richard Monier family was severely damaged by the tornado, as were trees along Observatory Place. The roof of the Harold (Mac) McCarthy home on Geneva Street was lifted off and set back down, leaving the roof out of place by about a half inch. The Monier and McCarthy families were not home at the time the tornado struck.

A tree five feet in diameter on the property of Richard Kenyon was twisted by the wind leaving it resembling a huge piece of twisted taffy. Windows, structures and hundreds of trees in the tornado's path were damaged or destroyed. The roof on the new east wing of Sherwood Rest Home was ripped from the walls and disappeared with the twister. Amazingly no residents were injured.



This was Peterson's Cabinet Shop

Les Case was in his shop talking on the phone when the tornado hit, knocking him to the floor. When he stood, all that was left of his shop was one wall. Miraculously, Mr. Case was unharmed. On the opposite side of Elkhorn Road, the horse owned by Joe Herman was in the field untouched by the twister.



Untouched by the twister

In the following days the tornado was the talk of the town. Everyone seemed to have a story to tell. What follows is a recap of what a few of the village residents had to say.

Roland Salzmann, who lives on Observatory Place, reports his Springer Spaniel, tied to the bumper

of his car, was suspended in the air when the big wind came. The dog was dazed, but not injured, and there was only slight damage to the car.

John Brusner's trailer on Valley Street was destroyed, and the glass was blown out of the windows of his car. A garage nearby owned by Yerkes Observatory was also destroyed.

Police Officer Oscar Ortiz was coming out of his home when he heard the roar of the wind and sounded the first alarm and summoned emergency help.

Mrs. Hans Wendt reported seven rooms in Sherwood Rest Home were destroyed. The occupants of these rooms were not in them when the twister hit. Reconstruction work on the one-year-old wing began Tuesday. Residents of the rest home feted Louis Rasmussen on his 83rd birthday with a party less than three hours after the storm.

Albert Horvath was in his garage on Clover Street at the time of the disaster. Mr. Horvath saw the roof blown off of Sherwood Rest Home. The trailer home adjacent to the garage was set on its side, and the refrigerator almost fell on top of Mrs. Horvath and their daughter, Wilma. They were treated for minor bruises. The trailer was demolished, but the adjacent garage was not affected by the winds.

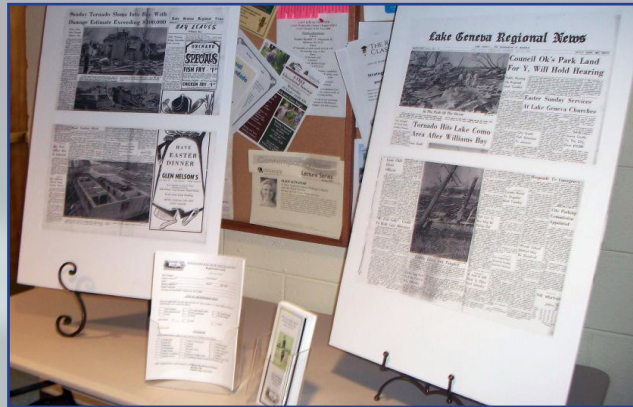


Horvath trailer on Clover Street

Mrs. Fritz Granath described the sound of the storm as like “a lot of low flying jets.” She was in her living room when glass started flying through the house.

*(Continued on Page 6)*

# Remembering the Palm Sunday Tornado



April 11, 1965 - April 11, 2015

**Tornado Slams Into Williams Bay** *(continued from page 4)*

Bob and Jan Hanson were visiting the Elmer Hanson family. Bob was sitting in front of a large picture window when he saw the large gray funnel cloud bouncing along the ground. "It is a sight I hope to never see again," he said.

Dr. Clifford Wiswell treated 12 residents for minor injuries.

Although no warning siren was heard in Williams Bay on April 11, 1965 no one was seriously injured or killed. Regrettably, the same couldn't be said elsewhere in what was one of the deadliest tornado outbreaks

in U.S. history up to that time. Forty-seven confirmed tornadoes struck Iowa, Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan and Ohio on April 11, 1965, killing 271 and injuring over 1500 more.

<sup>(1)</sup>According to Wikipedia, the Williams Bay tornado was an F1, the least powerful on the Fujita scale, with F5 being the strongest.

*Photos Credits:  
The Lake Geneva Regional News,  
The Times - Williams Bay, Fontana,  
and Walworth, and N.O.A.A.  
(National Oceanic and Atmospheric  
Administration)*

*Personal accounts reprinted from The Times.*

**Historical Society of Walworth & Big Foot Prairie Annual Dinner & Program**

***Laura Ingalls Wilder, The Wisconsin Years and Beyond with Connections to Local Families***

Historical Society of Walworth and Big Foot Prairie will hold its annual dinner and program on Thursday, April 23, 2015 at 6 p.m. at Lake Lawn Resort in The Great Room by the Lake, 2400 Geneva Street/ Hwy 50, Delavan, Wisconsin.

The program for the evening is called Laura Ingalls Wilder, The Wisconsin Years and Beyond with Connections to Local Families. Jennifer Van Haaften, Associate Director of Old World Wisconsin will present the program in costume. Our own Ingalls family cousins, Sue Ingalls Anderson and Jane Ingalls Piero will tell of their Ingalls family history. Their great grandfather was Silas

Ingalls.



Residence of Silas Ingalls  
Sec. 19 Linn Township, Wisconsin

Cost is \$32.50 per person.

For information call Richard Rasmussen at 262-275-5482 or Nancy Lehman at 262-275-2426. Or email WalworthHistory@gmail.com for information and/or to receive a reservation form. Make Your Reservations for the Society Dinner by April 15.

