



Tales & Trails

NEWSLETTER OF THE BERLIN AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Newly refurbished Merry-go-round at Clark School
- New Programs available
- Heritage Tourism Guide
- Amazon.Smile program
- New Exhibits at Museum
- Clark School celebrated
- 4th of July events

NEWLY FURBISHED MERRY-GO-ROUND AT CLARK SCHOOL



The very popular merry-go-round next to the Clark School has been repaired and refurbished recently, thanks to Wayne, Joan and Mike Besaw. The wood seats were replaced with new boards and the whole piece was repainted in a colorful red, green and silver color scheme.

The merry-go-round was put in the park a number of years ago, thanks to Sal Mlodzik, father of Joan Besaw. When they saw it was in need of help they put their talents to work. Thanks to the Besaws for this fine gift.

Amazon.Smile Program

DO YOU SHOP ON AMAZON? ARE YOU AWARE OF THEIR NEW PROGRAM TO DONATE TO CHARITABLE ORGANIZATIONS?

BERLIN AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY IS NOW REGISTERED WITH AMAZONSMILE. WHEN YOU SHOP THIS WEBSITE AND YOU CHOOSE BAHS AS YOUR CHARITY .5% OF YOUR SALES OF ELIGIBLE PURCHASES WILL BE CONTRIBUTED TO OUR ORGANIZATION.

AMAZONSMILE HAS ALL THE SAME ITEMS THAT THE REGULAR AMAZON SITE HAS SO IF YOU ARE A REGULAR USER OR EVEN A SOMETIME USER YOUR PURCHASES CAN ALSO BENEFIT OUR CLUB. THANKS FOR YOUR SUPPORT.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Clark School open house July 4th	2
Clark School museum 50 years old	2
Heritage Tourism Guide	2
The Telephone, Communications with the World	3
Membership	4

New Programs Available

Bobbie & Lee Erdmann have developed several new programs that are available to be presented to the public.

One is about 'Berlinites Who Hold Patents.'

Another is a virtual walking tour of the Victorian homes of the Historic District. Around Nathan Strong Park.

There are three different programs for the different neighborhoods

All are slide shows. Call the Erdmanns for information.

New Exhibits at the 111 Museum

***The Evolution of the Telephone**

***Dolls & Doll House - personal collection of Diane Olson**

***Photos from 1995 celebration of St. Stanislaus' 125th Anniversary**

CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF THE CLARK SCHOOL MUSEUM



Former teachers from Clark School taken at 1999 reunion.

L-R. Ruth Stevenson Hoffman; Rose Treder Gneiser; Dorothy Zelinske Thoresen; Viola Turner Wood; Ruth Walker Blasé; and Ellen Posorske Muscavitch.

The small rural school, sitting on the corner of some local farm, was the bastion of education for thousands of students in the growing State of Wisconsin. When the leg-

islature decreed that all areas must provide for the education of their children, counties all over the new territory began building school houses. For efficiency of materials and low numbers of students most of these rural schools were built with only one room. All graders would be taught there up to eighth.

Given the importance of this chapter in Wisconsin history and the area's history, the Berlin Historical Society took the opportunity to preserve one such building in 1963 called Clark School. Classes had just stopped being held there in 1960 and the owner of the property was willing to allow the building to be removed.

Members of the Society promptly went to work and found a new site for the building and help to get it moved. Berlin's Park Board agreed to allow the

Society to move their school (which they purchased for \$10) to the south end of Riverside Park. They put out a call for information on the school or people who once attended classes there. They were blessed with a wealth of artifacts, pictures and stories. Over the years former students have helped with maintenance and open houses at the school.

The Clark School District Record for Joint School District No. 9, Towns of Aurora, Waushara County and Rushford, Winnebago County start with the election of the board officers on Sept. 23, 1866. No one knows for sure how it came to be named "Clark" but the guess is that the Clark farm was next door and Benjamin Clark was on the school board. The family also boarded the teacher and furnished water until a well was dug.

Since acquiring the school the Society has worked to furnish and maintain the school as a museum to Wisconsin's educational history. For the past several years Berlin elementary teachers have scheduled programs at the school, sometimes having their students walk there to get the flavor of how early students got to school. Volunteer members of the Historical Society, sometimes dressed in costume, act as 'teachers' and talk about what a typical day might be like in a multi-grade school. Students get a chance to examine early schoolbooks and view pictures in stereopticons. Teachers have used this experience to give their students a 'hands-on' history lesson.

BAHS will hold an open house at the school during the July 4th, 2015 festivities to commemorate the 55th anniversary of the closing of Clark School and the 50th anniversary of the opening of the Society's museum.

BAHS IS ALSO SPONSORING A CHILDREN'S PARADE AND FREE ICE CREAM AND AMERICAN FLAGS TO ALL PARADERS ON THE 4TH. 'SPIRIT' OUR HORSE MANIKIN WILL BE ON HAND FOR PHOTOGRAPHS

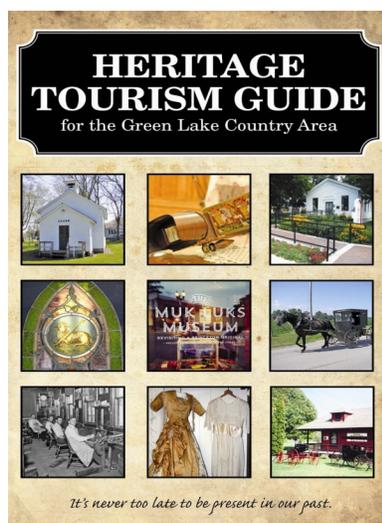
HERITAGE TOURISM GUIDE

Berlin Area Historical Society is part of the new Heritage Tourism Guide put out by the Green Lake Country Visitor's Bureau.

The guide features all the museums of this area with information about each and contact information. There is also a map to show locations.

We have a small supply of guides at the museum.

Green Lake Country Visitor's Bureau has established a Heritage group from within their service area. Members of the group consist of representatives from the various Museums or Historical Societies. BAHS has been a part of this group since its inception. The meetings move around the area so that each facility is visited by the group.



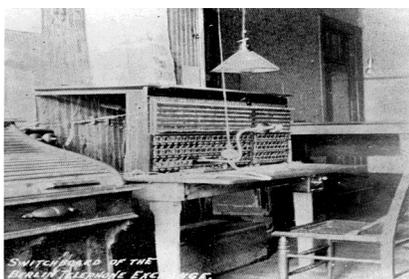
THE TELEPHONE, COMMUNICATION WITH THE WORLD

Berlin was the center of one of the first systems of telephone lines ever built in Wisconsin. The fascinating new instrument that ‘talked’ was introduced to the community in 1878 by Charles G. Starks, publisher and editor of the Berlin Evening Journal.

His interest in this new art of making the human voice heard beyond shouting distance, and his efforts to make the telephone a part of the community’s life, earned him the title of ‘father of the telephone in Berlin.’

Starks leased the telephones from an agent in Janesville just two years after its invention by Alexander Graham Bell in Boston, Mass. The first telephones connected Starks’ newspaper office (at that time on Pearl St.) with the homes of Charles Davis and A.W. Davenport. According to one account, ‘Many folks would go to the little print office to call up the Davis’ and Davenports just to hear the voices come over the wires.’ The telephone lines, it is said, consisted of stove pipe wire strung on housetops and trees.

During the following year, 1879,



1st Switchboard

Starks became Berlin’s toll agent and took on the ambitious task of building telephone lines within Berlin and to neighboring towns. He strung some 35 miles of long distance circuits to Auroville, Eureka, Green Lake, Pine River and Poy Sippi. By the end of 1879, there were about 25 local subscribers.

The first telephone exchange was located in the Field Block on Huron St. In 1883 the first operator, John Gor man, was hired. Other early operators

included Mrs. A.C. Watts and Miss Jenny Biggert. As the operation grew the young telephone business included Miss Nora Willis, Harry Davis, A. F. Adams, and Rodney Barnes. Starks sold the property and facilities of the Berlin exchange to the newly organized Wisconsin Telephone Company in 1883. He continued to serve as local exchange manager however.

The year 1894 saw the exchange acquired by the Waushara Telephone Company which was organized by John Moffat of Poy Sippi, D. J. Walbridge, H. C. Truesdell and Starks, all of Berlin. But by 1911 the Wisconsin Telephone Co. again assumed full operation of the local phone system. At this time there were more than 300 telephone subscribers here.

In 1914, the hand-cranked magneto telephone passed into history. Taking its place was the new common battery telephone system with the central office established on the second floor in the Buell block on Huron St. (above the Farmers & Merchant’s Bank).

Operators left their post only one time in the 1950’s when they had to be evacuated because a fire swept through the bank. Operators were very important to communications during the tornado strike on April 3, 1956, we are told.

Berlin’s 2,000th telephone was installed in August of 1961. It took nearly 66 years, from 1878 to 1946, to reach the 1,000 telephone mark but it took only 15 years to add the second thousand telephones. By 1963 there were almost 3,000 telephones served by the Berlin exchange.

April 15, 1962 witnessed the introduction of dial telephone service, with equipment installed at the company’s new building at 144

N. Pearl St. This project cost over \$1,135,000. In that year the Wisconsin Telephone Co employed 50 people at Berlin with Richard Sherman as local commercial manager; Gordon Tellock, exchange foreman, and Mrs. Mary Parker, chief operator.

As time went on less and less ‘operator-assisted’ calls were needed and the company began consolidating the smaller exchanges into larger offices. The Berlin office was officially closed and transferred to Appleton in March of 1975.

The first subscribers in the late 1800s, early 1900s couldn’t possibly imagine sending copies of papers over the phone lines; or pictures; or knowing who was calling without picking up the phone; or having conversations with multiple people at the same time, from other countries even, or carrying your phone in your pocket or connecting to the world through the Internet or.....on and on and on.

(info from articles in the Berlin Journal, May 2, 1949; March 6, 1975 and the Oshkosh Northwestern, Feb. 22, 1963).

Exhibit at Berlin Museum



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**NEWSLETTER OF THE
BERLIN AREA
HISTORICAL**

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Meetings are held on the 2nd Wednesday during the months of Jan. through May and Sept. through Dec. at 6:30 p.m. at the Berlin Public Library, corner Park Ave and N. Pearl St. Guests are always welcome

The Berlin Area Historical Society is a fully recognized non-profit Educational Institute affiliated with the Wisconsin Historical Society. The Mission of the Society is to preserve and interpret the history of the Berlin Area.

Currently the Society owns and operates four museum buildings. The Museum of Local History, located at 111 S. Adams Ave includes a two-story brick house, the former Kroll Bottling Works and the former Huser Blacksmith Shop. This museum complex is open on the second and fourth Sundays from Memorial Day to Labor Day from 1-4 p.m. and always by appointment.

The one-room school house, Clark School is located at the entrance to Riverside Park on Water St. and is open by appointment.

Call 920-361-2460 for information on these museums or to make an appointment.

The Berlin Area Historical Society is maintained by DONATIONS and membership. All persons interested in history are encouraged to join.

**JOIN THE BERLIN AREA
HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

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Do you have an e-mail address? Or a new address?
Please let Lee Erdmann know so that we can keep our membership lists up to date.
lerdmann
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920-361-2460

Individual Dues—\$10.00

Family —\$15.00

Make Checks payable to: Berlin Area Historical Society and mail to

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