



Tales & Trails

NEWSLETTER OF THE BERLIN AREA
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

**SPECIAL
POINTS OF
INTEREST:**

- BAHs Tree in the Park
- Berlin hosted a successful Regional Conference
- New donations for our collections
- The Story of Berlin's Bells.

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**2016 Tree in the
Park
Indian theme**



**Berlin Historical Society's
Christmas Tree**

Thanks to Diane Olson and committee for again doing our tree in Nathan Strong Park. This has been an annual city-wide project for several years now. Each year the event gets bigger. 2016 saw 110 trees decorated and lighted. Some are in honor of individuals, some are done by businesses, clubs or schools. The annual lighting is held the same night as the Christmas parade. The park is beautiful at night with all the trees ablaze in color.

Our theme this year honored the Berlin Indians, the Native Americans who lived here before us.

**New Donations to our
Collection**

In recent months the citizens of Berlin and elsewhere have remembered the Berlin Historical Society by donating items of interest and Berlin history to us.

Remember as you clean closets and storage rooms this spring to put aside items that pertain to Berlin History and donate those things to the Berlin Historical Society.

Our mission is to preserve Berlin History and with your help we can.

**Regional Conference
a Success.**

We hosted a Wisconsin Historical Society Regional Conference on August 8 at the 1st National Bank building. It was deemed a great success. Clubmembers provided treats for the coffee hour and the buffet lunch. **Below is President Lee Erdmann ,Regional Rep Janet Seymour and the District Rep.**



2016 INSPIRATION WALL HONOREES



Pictured are the 2016 Honorees to the 'Be Proud, Be Inspired' Wall. From left is Mark Doll, Bev Biegick Keelor and Dick Fortnum representing his grandfather, Tim Fortnum who was nominated and installed.

On November 30th around 40 people gathered for the unveiling of the 2016 Honorees to the Inspiration Wall at the Berlin High School. The group included BAHS members, School Board members, a Student Council representative, family and friends of the honorees. This is the 4th year for this joint project between the Berlin Area Historical Society and the Berlin School District.

Nominations for 2017 will be open right after the 1st of the year. Nomination forms and information is available on our website. Check back page for address.



Pictured is Don Fink portraying Attorney J. J. Wood who officiated at the funeral of Chief Highknocker.

2016 Ghost Walk is in the History Books

The 2016 Ghost Walk, *Corpus Juris, A Post Mortem Look at Berlin's Bodies of Law*, was held on October 15th.

Although the numbers were down this year, those who joined us all seemed to enjoy themselves. Our crew of spirits co-operated and made their scheduled appearances.

Thanks to Julie Boeck, Don Fink, Ron Harke, Roger Mekow, Bonnie Nehring and Leone Seaman for helping them along.

Thanks also to our guides, Chris Kalupa, chairman of the event, Judy Smith, and our three new guides, Jenna Young, Fortnum's granddaughter, Kristin Erdmann, the Erdmann's granddaughter and her friend, Amber Williams.

We are now looking for our theme for next year's Ghost



Leone Seaman greeting tourgoers as Mrs. Ezra Wheeler.

Berlin Bells continued....

old frame Washington School.

St. John's Lutheran Church bell seems to be the third largest by weight at 3,000 lbs. The melodious bell rings in the key of F Sharp, the only bell whose key has been identified. The first church building was built in 1901 on the corner of Mound and S.W. Ceresco Sts. In 1999 the congregation built a new church across the street from the 1901 structure.

One other bell used to ring on a regular basis and that is the small bell located in the clock tower. In 1913 when Alderman John Nigbor proposed building his building on the corner of Huron and Capron Sts, he told the City Council he would build a tower if the city would supply a clock and bell. Up to this time the city arranged for the ringing of the Methodist Church bell located on Park Ave. to help residents keep time. The clock tower bell is small, about 500 lbs. but is of bell metal and can be heard a long distance. It is no longer rung on a regular basis but the four-faced clock still helps residents and visitors stay on time.

Another city-owned bell system is located in the tower of the 1923 built Griffith Chapel in Oakwood Cemetery. It is electronic tubular chimes made of bell metal by McShane Bell Foundry of Baltimore MD. one of the oldest bell-founders in America. The chimes can be played from a keyboard on the main floor but are currently inoperative.

The next time you hear one of these beautiful bells ring out, remember its history and the people who brought them to our city.

Thanks to Ruth Gimenez and all the volunteers who manned our open houses during the summer. You are much appreciated.

Thanks to Don Fink for maintaining our grounds, cutting grass and shoveling snow.

THE BELLS OF BERLIN

This article is a combination of essays written by Nona O'Connor sometime around 1930 and Annette Secora, the first BAHS president, written in Dec. of 1977.

With the morning sun creeping cautiously up in the heavens, the Bells of Berlin, of which there are many, peal forth their messages to the inhabitants as a daily reminder of the call to devotions.

Several of the bells in Berlin churches have been ringing for years and years. In some of the churches, the bells have been taken from old structures and are many years older than the buildings in which they are now hung.

The bell in the Methodist Church is probably the oldest bell in the city. The date 1863 is stamped on the bell and records show that it was that year, or a little later, when the bell was installed in the old wooden Methodist Church.

Popular subscriptions was partly responsible for the purchase of that bell. As a result, provision was made by the City for the bell to ring 4 times a day and such was the practice for many years. When the next church was built, the old bell was transferred to its new home, looking out over the roofs of the Berlin business section with the pride of an aristocrat of long standing.

It was also rung as a fire bell until a small bell was purchased for the engine house in 1875. The historic 1,150 lb. Methodist Church bell is now used at the new church near Riverside Park.

The two authors differ on the oldest bell but Mrs. Secora had the right information. The oldest bell is

that in the bell tower of the Federated Church (former Union Church) on the corner of E. Huron and S. State Sts. This bell was placed in the ‘sawdust’ church on the corner of W. Huron and S. Pearl Sts. before 1851. It was called the “sawdust church” because sawdust had been placed between the boards for insulation and when the bell was rung, the sawdust would rain down on the congregation below.

Miss O'Connor writes, “The Union Church may claim possession of the smallest church bell in the City. The bell sits serenely in the loft, weathering sunshine and rain and openly exposed to the wind and storm but patiently awaiting its turn to do duty.” It was moved to the new Union Church when they built their second structure around 1856. Then, having outgrown this building the congregation built the current church building in 1898 and the little bell was installed in its bell tower.

The second oldest bell in the city is no longer there. It was the Baptist Church bell, first put up in the old Free Baptist church which faced Broadway and stood on the corner of what is now Broadway and Washington Sts. The bell was put in the church sometime around 1858 or 60, and when the present Baptist church was erected, the old bell was transferred there sometime around 1870. It was removed from the belfry in 1948 after a fire damaged the tower and made it unsafe for the 2,000 lb. bell to remain installed. It is unclear what happened to this bell. (This church building is now privately owned).

The mammoth bell in St. Michael’s belfry may claim the honor of being the largest bell in Berlin.

It weighs 4,000 lbs., twice as much as the original Liberty Bell of Philadelphia. Mrs. Secora states, “It came from the Buckeye Bell Foundry in Cincinnati, was in the old church built in 1885 and transferred to the new church in 1927. An interesting historical fact is that Catholic church bells were blessed and baptized in special ceremonies down through the ages. The name given St. Mike’s bell was ‘Jesus.’

In the highest belfry and another of the larger bell in Berlin, is Zigmund, the bell in St. Stanislaus tower. It came from the Stuckstede Bell Foundry in St. Louis, MO. and was installed in the tower in 1914. A smaller bell had been used before that.

St. Joseph’s is a large bell also, weighing about 2500 lbs. It was bought for the old church in 1896 and rung for the first time on Christmas Day. It was moved to the present granite church when it was built in 1908.” All three of these bells were taken down and installed in the new bell tower for All Saints Church in 2006.

Miss O'Connor writes, “The Salem Evangelical Church bell is secreted in the short tower of the church. The bell was installed in 1924 and weighs 1500 lbs, indicating that it too, belongs to the ranks of the smaller bells. The beautifully toned bell now is located at Grace Lutheran Church, whose congregation occupied the Salem Church for a number of years. It is noted that this same bell originally called the children to school from the belfry of the

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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

Name.....

Street.....

City & State.....

Telephone.....

E-Mail.....

Individual Dues—\$10.00

Family —\$15.00

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

P. O. Box 83, Berlin WI 54923

Do you have an e-mail address? Or a new address?
Please let Dave Olson know so that we can keep our membership lists up to date.
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