
ONALASKA AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Spring 2022

NEWSLETTER

Issue 113



"Clearwater Farm"



Green's Coulee

From the President "Mag's Message"

It's happened. We turned the corner to Spring. The yearly love/hate reoccurrence of Daylight Savings Time is here again. They want to make it permanent. After 100 years of trashing our Acadian Rhythm twice a year, few people know its true purpose. We've come no farther in all these years? Standard Time is medically proven the best answer. Along with the time change, it's also the beginning of gas noise machines. Bring on the boy-toy season. Love (!?! listening to them from Saturday morning to Sunday evening, as well as on/off during the week.

Here's one for "No Mow May"! Will people ever catch on to the Eco-friendly alternatives (alter "NATIVES")? Gone for now the peaceful snowfall. At least snowblowers are muffled by closed-up houses and limited to driveway/sidewalk lengths.

OAHS's March 7th Board of Director's Meeting ended with a unanimous decision to appeal to you, our members, for input as to what YOU would like to see for OAHS within the next 5 years. As with so many organizations these days, OAHS also is victim to membership decline. What will it take to increase it? Call or email us with suggestions. We need a stimulant! Send us your ideas to discuss at the next board meeting on May 2nd.

Our March 15th membership meeting presentation switched from arrowheads to Clearwater Farm in Green's Coulee, Onalaska. We enjoyed hearing the adventures of CWF through the eyes of CWF President Shari Collas and her hubby, Frank in exchange for CWF's history and learning of a Hamlin Garland connection in this newsletter. Perhaps there is opportunity for an OAHS/CWF future collaboration to nurture that both organizations can benefit from. (That's my Spring seed planting.)

UPDATES: "From Sawmills To Sunfish" was read and enjoyed. "A Son Of The Middle Border" by Hamlin Garland is next. Puzzle # 11, a 39" long "Last Supper" resides, completed, on my table to admire. Houseplants flourish from grow light help, while 2022's Victory Garden awaits planning as I chase rabbits around and across the front yard. Another year for Rabbit Road lurks.

In closing, another lesson of history repeating itself rumbles in our midst. It's another blow. Covid with all its effects. Now Russian invasion of Ukraine. Inflation wasn't bad enough? This punch hits below the belt, way over the top and at the heart, all at once. We celebrate you brave Ukraine souls!

Till next time,
Maggie G.

OAHS 2021 PERSON OF THE YEAR

NANCY NICK

Born and raised in Green Bay, Wisconsin, Nancy took an interest in history while attending Fort Howard Elementary School on the site of the original Fort Howard. After graduating from Green Bay West, she attended and graduated from the University of Wisconsin - Madison. Nancy married her high school sweetheart Charles in 1969. They have children Stephen and Elizabeth and grandchildren David, Katherine, Megan, Anna and Julia.

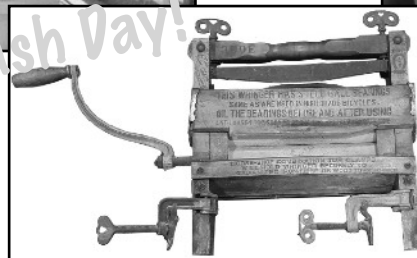


Nancy has held many volunteer positions in school and church activities over the years. Since moving to Onalaska, the Nick's have both been involved in many local activities.

Nancy's OAHS activities include museum docent, board member, as well as display and activities assistance. She has served the community by donating more than 30 afghans to veterans, those with health concerns, and those who have served our group or the community. She was a unanimous choice for 2021's recipient.

Curator's Corner

Our newest display at the OAHS Museum features a scene of domestic bliss on "Wash Day". The woman has a full day ahead of her what with all of the chores surrounding doing the family's laundry for the week. She is blessed because she owns a new "High Speed Wizard" washing machine which will help her save time and labor.



The year is 1916, and her new labor saving device is a modern marvel which cost \$7.25. It came direct from Chicago. Her husband believes there is nothing too good for "the little woman"! She also has an array

of cleaning supplies to help her put out a beautiful wash. These items include Lavender Water, Spic and Span, Bon Ami, Twenty Mule Team Borax, Lye Soap, and Fels Naptha Soap. --- Stop in to the OAHS Museum to see the entire display. This is truly a trip down Memory Lane.

Wash Day!

- Dorothy Johnson

We are very fortunate to have 12 books compiled by Nancy Westerhouse Tolvstad telling the story of Onalaska. The OAHS Museum has recently set up an area where patrons may sit and browse through all of the pictures and stories she has compiled over the years. Of particular interest this month is her "Remembering Onalaska - Volume 1". This particular volume contains stories about Hamlin Garland and the Garland Farm in Green's Coulee. The Garlands sold their farm to the Humfeld Family when they moved further west. There is an article from a March 1940 "La Crosse County Record" which details this activity. Nancy also has found an article from 1989 which is entitled "Green's Coulee Remembered" by Mrs. Ella Spors and Willard Osgood. Both of these pieces are a fun read for anyone who wants to learn more about the history of Hamlin Garland, the Humfeld Family, and Clearwater Farm. Stop in and let us show you these very informative materials. Thank you, Nancy and daughter Carol Krogan, for all of your hard work compiling this information!

OAHS DIRECTION

Financially, the Onalaska Area Historical Society (OAHS) is recovering from the embezzlement of some years ago, and it now seems prudent to look ahead and determine a course of action for the next five years. Consequently, the OAHS Board is requesting your specific comments on where OAHS should be in the next five years. What goals should OAHS set, what potential acquisitions should OAHS consider, what activities should OAHS undertake? If you have thoughts on a course of action, please phone our museum number **608-399-3386** and leave your message, Thank You.

Bill O'Driscoll

Seasons on the Farm

The Author - Eileen
(Humfeld)
Malin



By Eileen (Humfeld) Malin

Growing up on a dairy farm wasn't the easiest life, but I do believe it was the best life. I grew up on a 160-acre dairy farm in Greens Coulee. It was a beautiful coulee with only four farms at the time. I remember how lush and green it was in the summers, which, I assume, is how it got the name Greens Coulee.

My grandma was born in a stone house located at the end of Greens Coulee. Later, when she met my grandpa, they bought the Hamlin Garland Farm in that same Coulee. When my dad was young, he, along with his brothers and their father, built the house that they lived in with their family. Eventually, when my dad grew up and married my mom, they also moved into that same house with my grandparents and started their own family. I am the youngest of seven children with four brothers and two sisters.

We were all given chores to do at a very early age. As my older siblings grew up and moved out, I had to take on more responsibilities. When I started high school, I had to help do milking and morning chores before school and also after school. This meant waking up at 4:30 a.m. We milked between 60 to 75 cows at any given time. This took a couple of hours, plus extra time for feeding and other chores. After all of that, we had to catch the bus around 7:30 a.m.

Once we got home from school, we had to have a quick snack and get going on the evening chores, which usually took until 7:30 p.m. We would then have a great home-cooked meal, and do any schoolwork we had for the next day. This made for some long days—I can't tell you how many nights I fell asleep with my head in a book!

With so many memories of my childhood, it's hard to share them all. But breaking these memories down into seasons may give you a glimpse into a year on the farm ...

SPRING

I loved what spring brought: the sounds of the tractors in the fields plowing and planting, bringing new life into the ground. My dad and brothers took care of this. We had the daunting task of taking off all the storm windows, washing them, and replacing them with screens. It was so nice to feel the fresh air blowing through the house again after winter.

We had a huge garden that we planted each spring. Rows and rows of tomatoes, peas, beans, cabbage, squash, cucumbers, beets, potatoes, and peppers. My mom loved flowers, so she designated a section of the garden just for that. She especially loved gladiolus. We always had fresh flowers in the house in the summers. There were also clothes and sheets hanging on the clothesline almost daily. I remember loving climbing into bed with sheets so fresh from the outside air.

SUMMER

Some of my fondest memories from summers are of bailing hay. It was physically exhausting, but so gratifying once the hay was neatly stacked in the barn. When we had a lot of hay cut down, my dad would say, "All hands around!" And remember that garden we planted? It thrived in the sun, with the occasional summer rain. So just about every day, something needed to be picked. I remember bending over picking for so long that I had to stretch out my back along the way. One thing I enjoyed the least was snipping the ends off of beans—it seemed endless.

My dad planted a lot of sweet corn that we had to pick by the crates. Some of which we sold to a grocery store, but we froze and canned a lot, too. He planted the corn in stages, so it wouldn't all ripen at once. This made for another consistent job of husking piles of corn.

We used all the natural resources we could from the farm. Nothing went to waste. We had a lot of hickory trees, so we would pick the hickory nuts off the ground by the pail-full, and my mom would crack them open so she could use them in cookies and bread. There were also several chokecherry bushes, so we would pick the berries, and she would make them into jam. And sometimes we would go out into the fields and pick as many dandelions as we could, and then my parents would make dandelion wine. We only got to sample, of course, but as I remember, we actually liked it!

We were never bored. If we were not working, we played games outside, like freeze-tag, capture the flag, cowboys and Indians, kickball, baseball, and shadow tag. On Sundays, we often had free time if there wasn't hay to make, so we would go on long hikes in the woods and pick wildflowers, like honeysuckles. My dad would tell us to watch out for rattlesnakes. I never saw one, but they were out there. We also played out in the yard by the moonlight. I remember my dad telling my sisters and me to cover our hair so the bats wouldn't get tangled in it.

FALL

Picking corn is my favorite Fall memory. I loved watching my dad out on the corn-picker. We would have to unload the wagons that he filled into the corn cribs. A couple of us needed to kick the corn down each side of the peak so it would fill the cribs evenly. After the corn was picked and the stalks were chopped, we would let the cows out in the fields. It was my job to get them back in the yard for milking. I rather enjoyed this and found it peaceful.

Fall also brought the job of harvesting everything from the garden that was left before the frost. We had a cellar in the basement that was well-stocked by the time it was all done. We ate well and never had to worry where our next meal would come from. Our mom was a great cook, and she also worked very hard. She helped milk the cows and worked in town to help with finances. She was the best and was taken from us way too soon.

Fall was—and to this day is still—my favorite. I think it's because of my memories on the farm. I loved the colors, the chilly rain, and getting things done before winter set in. I remember one evening after milking, it was a cold, rainy night. I was standing with my dad out by the barn and I said to him that I was so grateful to have a house and a warm bed. I think this warmed his heart as he hugged me.

WINTER

I remember a lot of snow growing up, much more than we seem to get now. Greens Coulee looked so beautiful and pristine with a fresh blanket of it in the winter. Sometimes it would drift so high that we would have to push hard to get the door open. My dad would have to plow out the road to the barn to make sure the milkman wouldn't get stuck, as he sometimes did, or else dad and my brother would have to pull him out. My friends would wish for a snow day, but I never did, because that usually meant cleaning pens and other odd jobs around the farm. It was rarely a lazy day for us.

When I was still pretty young, we had a coal furnace. And my older siblings had to shovel the coal in it at night and then again in the morning to keep the house warm. It was later converted to an oil furnace. As things on the farm got more modernized, it made for a little less work—which was good for me, being the youngest, having to take on more work as they moved out.

One of our favorite things to do was to go sledding at night after the chores were done. We would put Wonder Bread wrappers inside our boots to keep our feet dry and bundle up. The moonlight and stars were vibrant and lit up the sky, with no houses or city lights in the Coulee. Finding the big and little dipper was always so easy, and it felt as if you could reach up and touch them. When we got too cold, my mom would have homemade bread, fresh out of the oven, with hot chocolate for us—it was the best!

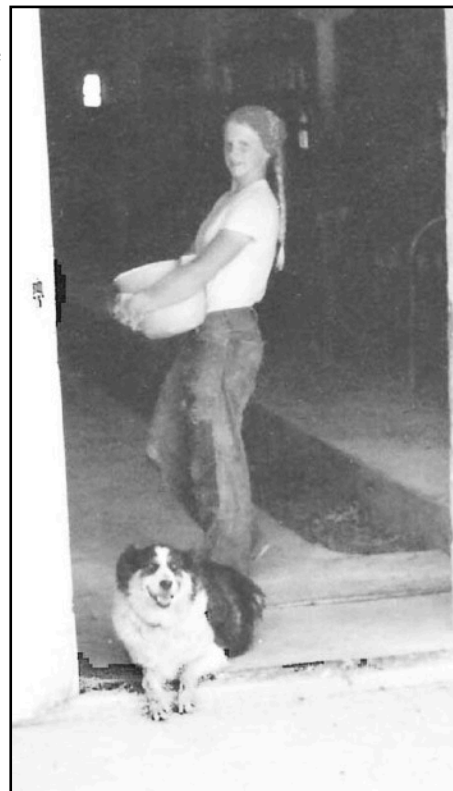
We grew up learning how important responsibility was through working together to achieve a common goal. Another thing my dad always said was, "If you're going to do a job, do it right, or don't do it at all." And trust me, not doing it at all was never an option. As I said, it was not an easy childhood, but we

learned the strong family values and work ethics that we carry with us to this day. I wouldn't have wanted to grow up any other way!



Dahlia and Herman Humfeld, early 19th Century.

Teen Age Eileen (Humfeld) Malin



Hamlin Garland, A Son of Green's Coulee

by Bill O'Driscoll

Hamlin Garland, Pulitzer winning author of the novel *A Daughter of the Middle Border*, was born near West Salem on 14 September 1860. At the time of his birth, his parents were building a cabin in Green Coulee, Onalaska and Hamlin was soon living his formative years at that cabin in Green Coulee. When he was old enough, Hamlin walked from the Garland farm in the coulee to school in Onalaska every day and walked home every night..

The Garland family owned what later became known as the Humfeld farm. The Humfeld farm has mostly been sold off except that Garry Humfeld still resides on thirteen acres of the original farm. The original farm also included the three acres now known as Clearwater Farm.

Hamlin's father, Richard Garland, spent the year 1863-64 in patriotic service in the US Civil War and on returning went back to work on the farm he had purchased in 1860. In the story *The Return of the Private* Hamlin tells of his father's return to Green Coulee after his service in the US Civil War.

Although Hamlin lived in Green Coulee for about nine years, the Richard Garland family did not remain any longer. In 1869, his parents sold the farm and the family moved westward, a trend that would continue throughout Hamlin's teenage years.

Not much remains of the original Garland farm other than the land itself and a small stone building. "The former Garland farm is now owned by Mr. and Mrs. Herman Humfeld but the white frame house is one of the present owners built in 1939. They tore down the former large house with some regret, because they liked it, but they could not heat it well. When dismantling it they found the siding was put on without any sign of paper for insulation." "The Humfelds have lived on the farm since 1917." Both quotes are from The La Crosse Sunday Tribune in 1958.

"Asked about the small stone building on the house side of the road, Mrs. Humfeld expressed a belief it might have been built by the Garlands. She is the former Della Pierce, whose parental farm was at the extreme end of the coulee. She says the little building has been there as long as she can remember and she passed it every day in her childhood. Ten years ago, however, a cyclone took off the roof and set it down on the road. The roof had to be repaired and put back on again, so it is not as old looking as the building itself." also from The La Crosse Sunday Tribune (1958).

In addition to his Pulitzer winning novel, Hamlin is well known for *A Son of the Middle Border*, and for other works based upon his boyhood experiences in Green Coulee. *A Division in the Coule* is specific to Green Coulee, while other works like *Up the Coule* and *My Grandmother of Pioneer Days* generally memorialize the area between Onalaska and West Salem.

Late in life, Hamlin fondly recalled his years in Green Coulee. "Green's Coulee belongs to the semi-mythological age of the world – to me" wrote Hamlin Garland reminiscing in a 1939 letter to historian Fred Holmes.



Figure 1: Hamlin Garland as a boy



Garry Humfeld says that this stone structure, which was built during the Civil War Era, originally served as an icehouse, but was later used as a milkhouse by the Humfelds.



- Bill O'Driscoll



The Onalaska Area Historical Society will be celebrating **Flag Day** with flag folding demonstrations, informational posters, and activity packets. "Take and Make" packets with a small American Flag will be handed out to the first **100** visitors on **Thursday, June 9, 2022 at 1:30 pm** after the Library's "**Mad Science**" program. Come visit the museum!

Clear Water Farm
Logo



Education, Recreation, Demonstration



A painting of the farm with dirt road.



Photo of the farm from a dirt road

Bulletin Board, Etc.

SUNSHINE REPORT

Sympathy Cards were sent to: John and Kay Sagen - her mother's passing. Dan and Rita Netwal Family - his brother's passing. Maggie Gianforte - her stepmother's passing. Shirley Lemke and Family - husband's passing. Family of Dave Holthaus - his passing.

Get Well Cards were sent to: Nancy Nick - hospital stay. Kay Sagen - surgery and rehab stay. A Thinking of You Card was sent to Sheryl Horman after surgery.

Donation from Bert & Judy Sasse to OAHS in memory of David Holthaus

Thank you to the West Salem Historical Society and the La Crosse Tribune for their input and materials in this issue.

EDUCATION is the only thing that really matters in the world today: an assigned parking space.

THEY CALL IT a family tree because if you look hard enough, you'll always find some sap in it.

WHERE DID people hang their children's drawings before there were refrigerators?

OUR REMAINING SPRING PROGRAMS

**Abraham Lincoln,
Now He Belongs to
the Ages**

- Fred Beseler
Tuesday, April 19
6 PM

**A History of the
La Crosse Tribune**

- Dave Burgess
Tuesday, May 17
6 PM

More on the Clearwater Farm

According to an article in the La Crosse County Record for March 1940, Green's Coulee is named for widow Green who lived on a farm at the mouth of the coulee. Her son Ira gave an interview three months before his death in 1924.

Clearwater Farm is located at 760 Green Coulee Road in Onalaska and is a 100% volunteer-operated, non-profit organization. Established in 1999, the idea was to preserve parts of a 19th Century Onalaska dairy farm for education, recreation, and history. When the 120 acre Humfeld Farm was sold for development in 1998, the developer was willing to see the group's vision for 3 of the acres to become an educational site. In May of 2006, Clearwater Farm purchased three red barns and the surrounding grounds. And that was the start of an amazing endeavor. It has since grown to a membership of 385 and has become a place of serenity and activity for members, visitors, and various resident animals. The farm offers a multitude of healthy outdoor and indoor activities which appeal to varying interests.



Eileen's sister Marlene & brother Marvin playing in old barn



*Thank you all for renewing your memberships.
Your dues and contributions keep us going.*

ONALASKA AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Museum Suite, 741 Oak Ave. So.

Onalaska, WI 54650

OAHS MEMBERSHIP FORM

Name(s) _____ Date _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

E-mail Address _____

Phone # _____ Cell Phone # _____

Amount Paid \$ _____ Year(s) _____ Life _____

MEMBERSHIP CHOICES

ANNUAL

- Single: \$10.00
- Family \$20.00
- Student: \$1.00 (grades 9 -12)

LIFETIME

- Single: \$150.00
- Family: \$300.00
- Business: \$500.00

OPTIONAL

- Single, 5 yrs \$45.00
- Single, 10 yrs \$90.00

- Family: 5 yrs \$90.00
- Family: 10 yrs \$180.00

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