



HISTORICAL NOTES

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THE SALKOWSKI FAMILY

by Jerry Abitz

INTRODUCTION

In the January 2012 issue of the *Historical Notes*, the lead article was about the downtown Kewaunee Mobil Station (now operated by the Parkos family), the building of this station and the dispute between Leo Salkowski and the Wisconsin Industrial Commission. Several people contacted me about the family that built this station; two were very precise about information of which I should be aware — Orville Krueger of Mishicot and Scottsdale, Arizona, and Matt Joski, Kewaunee County sheriff, whose wife is descended from the Salkowskis. There were others with hearsay of some aspects of the family as well. This information about a well-connected and prominent family was too important to ignore. Consequently, the following is a sequel that relates a portion of this family history, based on an unpublished, 1984 manuscript written by Sylvia Salkowski Gloe, the only daughter of Jozef Salkowski, and a newspaper account from the *Kewaunee Enterprise* from July 1937. The manuscript deals specifically with an emigrant father and his American-born family.

THE JOZEF SALKOWSKI FAMILY

Jozef Salkowski was born in Bromberg, Germany,¹ in 1868 to a Polish family. Hired by a Chicago brewery to install cooling systems, he came to America in 1890 from what is now Southern Poland. Every time he finished one job, he was hired by another brewery until his visa was ready to expire. Having been here long enough to be eligible, he applied for his naturalization papers (March 3, 1899), a step which led to becoming an American citizen.

If you wish to receive the *Historical Notes* in color and online, send your request to skslk@centurytel.net with your name and email address.

He established his own plumbing business



Top: The family photo includes (front row, Left to Right): Stella, Sylvia, Martin and Jozef; (back row): Edward and Leo. *Salkowski photos courtesy of Matt Joski, Kewaunee County sheriff.* **Right:** The wedding photo of Jozef Salkowski and Stella Krigalka in 1898. **Bottom:** Now The Cork, this building was originally the Kewaunee Hotel where Jozef and Stella stayed. *Photo by Tom Schuller.*



(cont. on page 2)

THE SALKOWSKI FAMILY *(cont. from page 1)*

and sent for his brother, Anton, to join him in this venture. Together they hired a housekeeper, Stella Krigalka,² whom Jozef married in 1898. Stella had come to America and settled with her family in the Town of West Kewaunee. Upon the death of her father, she and her sister, Cecila, had moved to Chicago to work as maids or housekeepers for wealthy Chicagoans, a common practice for young, unmarried ladies in those days. There Cecila met and married Anton, her sister's brother-in-law.

Three sons were born to Jozef and Stella — Edward in 1899, Leo in 1902, and Martin in 1905. Jozef ran into some allergy problems with various chemicals used in his occupation to the point his doctor recommended he stay away from these chemicals for at least six months. His wife suggested they visit her folks up in the Kewaunee area for an extended vacation and, thus, the Hotel Kewaunee³ on Ellis Street became their home away from home.

Jozef loved to gamble while playing cards; he also loved his beer. After one particular all-nighter of gambling, he retired to bed. Stella woke him the next morning with, "Jozef, wake up! The lawyer is here for you to sign the papers!"

"Vat papers are you talking about?"

"The papers for buying this hotel. You agreed to buy it last night."

"Vat are you talking about?"

He signed the papers.⁴ That pleased his wife, knowing she now could move back to her hometown. They returned to Chicago where they sold their business and also their home, thus enabling their move to Kewaunee. Stella ran the newly-acquired boarding house while her husband managed the saloon. Two more children were born to this couple — Daniel in 1910, who lived for only a day, and Sylvia in 1912.

The business flourished, and the hotel was the center for a lot of socialization. Jozef's love of betting once resulted in a situation where the city engineer was forced to pay off his bet by providing free beer for anyone who appeared at the Hotel Kewaunee.

Being a successful businessman resulted in the purchase of an existing building on the southwest corner of Milwaukee and Ellis Streets as well as an adjacent empty lot on Milwaukee Street. The building was rented to Anton Bisely for his plumbing shop. Eventually the present Mobil Station at this busy intersection was built on this property.

¹In 1868, Poland as a country did not exist. What is now Eastern Poland was part of the Russian Empire while the western region was part of the German Empire. It reemerged as a country after World War I (1914-1918).

²Her obituary spelled it as Krugalka.

³The building in which The Cork, an Irish restaurant, is located.

⁴Did he actually buy the hotel? Many elderly living in Kewaunee believe he actually won the building in an all-night poker game. Perhaps a little more in-depth research might prove this to be true.

LEO SALKOWSKI

Leo Salkowski was very taken with flying. He was an experienced pilot and owned his own airplane. To advance the status of aviation in Kewaunee County, he was instrumental in developing an airport, along with Ed Clauson, just north of Kewaunee. For its dedication on May 27, 1935, a large, Army air show was staged.

In July 1937, Leo flew part of the Clauson family to Detroit in his private plane. The following week, he was planning to leave on a family camping trip. Adolph Schuch, a personal friend, was just a step away from getting his pilot's license. He begged Leo to accompany him to help him finish his requirements for his pilot's license. Leo was reluctant because of his plans with his family but relented at the last minute to help out his friend.

Adolph was piloting his cabin monoplane over the northern part of the county; Leo was supervising, but there were no dual

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Adolph Schuch's airplane after the crash in Aude's cornfield. Neither Schuch nor Salkowski survived. *Photos courtesy of Kewaunee Enterprise, July 16, 1937.*

LIMEKILNS

by Jerry Abitz

Back in the days when Wisconsin was being settled by our ancestors from Europe, there were many trades that, today, no longer exist. Out on the frontier, the settlers basically had to be self-sufficient; they were short on money and had to make do with the resources they had. Transportation of goods was almost non-existent, except for boat traffic on Lake Michigan and the Fox River.

The settlers' early buildings were constructed with logs which were ever plentiful as the forests were being cut down to make land available for cropping. My own father told of Grandfather burning surplus trees on the periphery of fields. In 1871 the Great Peshtigo Fire occurred, affecting both sides of the Bay. Farmers lost their buildings, their cattle and, in some cases, their own lives.

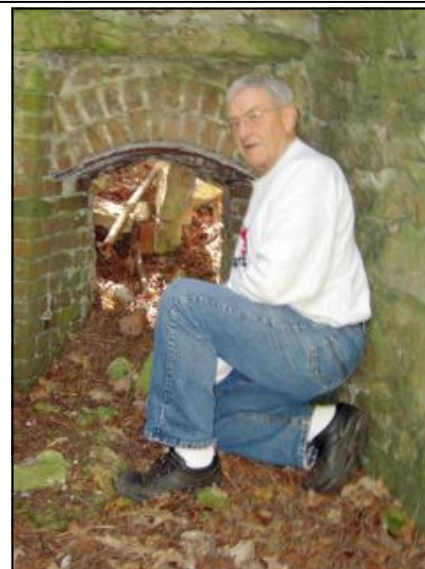
In the aftermath, farmers began to rebuild. Having lost buildings made of wood, they looked for alternate building materials that were not prone to burning. They turned to local brickyards to rebuild their homes. However, mortar was needed to bind the bricks together. From where does one get the mortar? One option is to make it from the limestone rock that underlies the entire area of Eastern Wisconsin. Exposed along the Niagara Escarpment, it was readily available. Also known as dolomite, this area's limestone contains magnesium which is the best grade for making quicklime.

Limekilns sprung up all over the place. The best known site in our area was the one located in Bruemmer Park at Footbridge, operated by the Moore family. While the limekilns once there are now gone, the company houses still exist along County Road C.

My father worked in the limekilns at Brillion, his hometown in Calumet County. Huge kilns were located near Sherwood, overlooking the northeast corner of Lake Winnebago. Today that site is known as High Cliff State Park. All of these were commercial operations, but lesser known limekilns were also located in our county.

I recently toured one such location on undisclosed private property in the Town of Red River. The commercial kilns tended to be square in shape, while this one was round. The outer walls were un-mortared limestone rock; the inner walls were lined with firebrick. The top of the kiln had to be accessible so it was built along a ridge. At the bottom was a baffle to hold the limestone pieces in place. Under this throat was the access area from which to retrieve the final product, known as quicklime. Nothing fancy, it was strictly utilitarian. Nearby I could see outcroppings of the dolomite where material had been removed. While interviewing individuals who might have knowledge of this particular limekiln, I could not ascertain its age. But with knowledge acquired from my late father, I would estimate it was built sometime about 1880.

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Top: Jerry Abitz looking at the bottom of the kiln where the ashes and quicklime were removed. Note the brickwork that can withstand higher temperatures. *Photo by Mark Abitz.* **Left:** Side view of the kiln where the ashes and quicklime were removed. Note the exterior of the kiln is rough-cut pieces of limestone. *Photo by Jerry Abitz.* **Right:** The top opening for loading the kiln with layers of wood and limestone; the interior is lined with hardened firebrick. *Photo by Jerry Abitz.*

Limekilns

(cont. from page 3)

To make quicklime, one needed (1) a kiln that could stand considerable heat, (2) a source of rock and (3) a source of fuel which, in this case, was the abundant forest. Layers of the ledge rock had to be removed, broken into small pieces and hauled to the top of the kiln. The kiln was layered with wood (starting at the bottom), then a layer of rock, the steps repeated until the kiln was filled to the top. The fire was started at the bottom, and the process took about a week. High temperatures were needed for the rock to disintegrate. The quality of the quicklime was determined by both the quality of the rock and the temperature of the fire.

The final product was used as mortar for binding brick or stone together. It also could be used for whitewash, a product frequently used in the stable walls of dairy barns when I was a kid, or to neutralize soil acidity but, with the alkaline soils in this area, there wasn't a need for that application.

These small limekilns were eventually replaced with the commercial variety. Even the operation at Footbridge was purchased by the Nass Brothers, which later developed into the Western Lime Co. Today these operations have all closed down; their demise may have been due to consolidation to become more efficient, the need for better transportation systems, or simply the exhaustion of the necessary raw materials on site.



RICHARD KOHRT (1924-2012)

by Tom Schuller

The death of a prominent Kewaunee recently resulted in a gift to the KCHS. Richard Joseph Kohrt, a grandson of the pioneer woodcarver, Joseph Svoboda, has been a friend of the Kewaunee County Historical Society of some duration. When the old jail and sheriff's quarters were transformed into a museum in 1969, a huge carving of Custer's Last Stand, produced by the Svoboda Company, was installed in the Jail Museum. Kohrt was responsible for additional Svoboda carvings being donated to our society. When his Aunt Vi [Kohrt] died, she left us with a sizeable legacy that has been part of our nest egg. When Kohrt retired from running the Svoboda Co., he and his wife spent some time traveling in a RV. Eventually, they spent winters in the Phoenix area and summers in Green Bay.

Kohrt's obituary requested that donations be made to the KCHS. *We sincerely thank the family for carrying out his wishes.*

EARTHQUAKE! IN KEWAUNEE COUNTY

by Jerry Abitz


It was reported in the local papers of March 1902 that an earthquake rattled dishes and shook the area in the towns of Casco and Lincoln. The news article continued that no one was aware of anyone blasting with dynamite. Normally, this skeptic would roll his eyes and say, "*Really? Do you expect me to believe that? There are no fault lines anywhere in Wisconsin.*" But, with the recent news of a confirmed minor earthquake affecting the Clintonville area of Waupaca County, earthquakes apparently can occur here.


Well, we do know that it could not have been a jet airplane breaking the sound barrier in those days because the Wright brothers' flight at Kitty Hawk [North Carolina] took place 18 months later in 1903. Could it have been caused by a mother/housewife exploding over the antics of her kids or her spouse?

Was it really an earthquake? I guess we will never know.



THIS ISSUE'S GUEST AUTHORS...

 **Jerry Abitz** (see pages 1, 3 and 4) — Jerry has been working with and for the KCHS since 1973, serving as its newsletter editor since 1996. Married to Althea since 1956 and living along the shoreline of the bay, he enjoys writing about historical topics, and takes time to dabble in landscaping; he's a gardener, a voracious reader, and loves the outdoors. Equipped with a very curious and active mind, he's taught 45 classes for Learning in Retirement at UWGB, and is still going. If you'd like to contact him, send an email to gabitz@centurytel.net.

 **Tom Schuller** (see page 5) — Currently president of the Kewaunee County Historical Society, Tom is a self-proclaimed information junkie — he's been collecting stories about Kewaunee County since he was first asked to join the Society. He and his wife, Bonnie, live in a restored Victorian home built in 1890 which is surrounded by over 3,000 plants. If you'd like to contact him, send an email to gandolf00@hotmail.com.

OF LADDIES AND LASSIES¹

by Tom Schuller

When one considers the different ethnic groups that settled in what is now Kewaunee County, we usually think of the Germans, Bohemians and the Belgians. We usually do not think of other ethnic groups, especially any from Great Britain.

In mid-November of 2011, I received a phone call from 84-year-old Sheila Tanzer, living in Hanover, New Hampshire. Sheila, along with her 82-year old Milwaukee sister, is trying to complete their family tree. Her query was “What caused her great grandfather to leave the beautiful state of Vermont to settle in the wilderness of Wisconsin in the mid-1850s?”

I immediately started to ask questions, such as: “What was his name?” “What do you already know about him that would help me to find information?” “Of what nationality group was he?”

Sheila’s Irish grandfather, Patrick O’Shea, was part of the huge migration out of Ireland after the Great Potato Famine² which started in 1845. Blight had all but wiped out their staple crop and forced many of their fellow countrymen to flee their beloved land or die.³ The O’Sheas of County Kilkenny, along with their neighbors from County Tipperary, had come to America around 1849 and settled in Barnardston, Massachusetts.

In 1850, Patrick married Eliza Meagher, an Irish lass. Their first child, Mary, was born in October; William Francis was born in 1852. Patrick was a day laborer working in Brattleboro, Vermont, preparing the way for the railroad to come through. Unfortunately, people of Irish descent, the latest emigrant group, were not readily accepted in many areas, and this was probably true in this town.

Was that the reason for moving to Wisconsin? Was it resentment expressed towards the recent invasion of these poor Irish peasants? Or was it the availability of good land for cheap prices? Patrick and his family, along with the McGowans, moved to Brookfield in Waukesha County, Wisconsin, in 1860. A year later found them in Kewaunee County, where land was plentiful.

They settled in the Town of Pierce, north of Kewaunee. Their fellow Irishmen joined them — the Murphys, the Fitzgibbons, and the Shannons. On the 1876 plat map in the KCHS History Center, their properties clustered along the lakeshore and spread westward from there. Not much is known about their everyday life except that Patrick O’Shea, now known as Patrick Shea, did work at the Slauson-Grimmer



Postcard artwork courtesy of www.irishpostcards.com.

lumbermill in Kewaunee. His son, William, “read law”⁴ under William Timlin.⁵ Upon completion, he moved to Ashland where he set up his own law office.

Several epidemics took a toll on the Shea family. Patrick died in 1877; his daughter, Eliza, died of consumption (tuberculosis) in 1878. Another daughter, Katie, passed away in 1879, while a son, James, also died of consumption in 1884. Eliza, Patrick’s wife, lived until 1908 when she died of pneumonia. Other children survived her.

The last reminder we have of Sheila Tanzer’s family is Shea Lake in southern Kewaunee County. This lake is on property once owned by Michael Shea who, it turns out, is no relation to Sheila and her sister! Possibly, one day, we’ll figure out the rest of the story.

¹Technically, “ladies” and “lassies” are part of the vernacular referring to young men and women of Scotland and Northern England, not Ireland. However, Sheila Tanzer, the main contact and inspiration for this article, preferred these terms for the title.

²This blight was experienced throughout all of Northern Europe. What made it worse in Ireland was the way the governments of Great Britain and Ireland reacted which, in essence, ignored the peasant farmers’ plight. In many cases, potatoes were the only food these poor, destitute farmers had.

³One million Irishmen died of starvation; an additional million immigrated to the U.S., Canada and other countries.

⁴The usual course to become a lawyer in those days was to apprentice oneself to a lawyer whereby learning enough to pass the bar examination.

⁵William H. Timlin, a fellow Irishman, practiced law in Kewaunee. He served from 1906-1916 on the Wisconsin State Supreme Court.

NEWS FROM THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Report from the Trenches

MEMORIAL DAY IN LUXEMBURG — Tom Schuller, KCHS president, gave a very interesting presentation on Al Vivver, a Kewaunee County Civil War survivor, which included a display of Civil War artifacts from the Jail Museum. The presentation was part of the Luxemburg Legion Post 262 Memorial Day services on Monday, May 28, at the Luxemburg Village Hall Community Center.

NEW COPY MACHINE — The new copy machine



Tom Schuller, KCHS president (center), accepting a donation from Kim Tuttle, Auxiliary president (left), and Dave Baierl, Legion president (right). *Photo by Arletta Bertrand.*

has arrived at the History Center which enables us to scan, copy and print in color as well as black/white. It is definitely an improvement in reproduction over the old one which had seen better days and is now on

standby. Arletta Bertrand, KCHS treasurer, did the necessary research and pricing before the purchase was made.

We would like to thank the Luxemburg Legion Post 262 and the Auxiliary for their generous donation to help us purchase the new copy machine. We also received a donation from the Baylake Bank for this same purpose.

Additional donations are needed to finish paying for the new copier.

DONATIONS TO THE HISTORY CENTER —

We recently received a donation of a collection of pictures and articles featuring the Algoma Harbor and boats made by Peterson Builders, donated by Bill Garrett from the collection of Dorothy Bell Spindler. They presently are being organized and documented in the computer.

•Mark Teske donated four 2-1/2' x 6' computer tables and four computer chairs along with two 4-foot long cabinets to the History Center in Algoma.

ANNUAL MEETING —

On Saturday, May 5, the KCHS held their annual meeting in the Town of Franklin Town Hall in Stangelville. (In our planning, it is our intent to hold the KCHS annual meetings in the various towns of the county.)

This year's featured speaker was Ray Selner. Those who know him are aware that he is an expert on the Czech/Bohemian migration and their settlement in the southern regions of our county. He came prepared with a beautiful PowerPoint presentation and answered questions from the audience.

A short business meeting was held which included reelection of various board members and the election of officers for 2012-2013. A light lunch was served.



Ray Selner making his presentation at the KCHS Annual Meeting. *Photo by Jerry Abitz.*

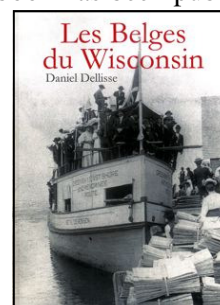
KCHS ANNOUNCES NEW DIRECTOR —

Richard Dörner has lived in Montpelier Township of Kewaunee County his entire life. Intent on bringing together his own family's history, it took six years to gather the info on the European connection of the Dörner family through the Plzen Archives in Bohemia, Czechoslovakia. He enjoys sharing what he's learned with others, hoping it will inspire them to do the same.



Richard Dörner, new KCHS director. *Photo supplied.*

NEW BOOK — Another new book has been published about the Walloons in Northeastern Wisconsin, *Les Belges du Wisconsin*. The author, Daniel Delisse, a native of Belgium, has published a book in French, detailing this migration. Joyce Lampereur and Jerry Abitz, both of Dyckesville, are cited as contributors. The cover photo,



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Report from the Trenches (cont. from page 6)

courtesy of Joyce's father's collection, is an early 1900s' photo of Barrette's dock, whose ruins are just a five-minute walk from Jerry's house. If you'd like your own copy, search for *Les Belges du Wisconsin* (ISBN 978-2-8710-6577-7).

MUSIC! MUSIC! MUSIC! — Our curator, Darlene Muellner, was given a box of polka albums and decided to incorporate them into our display of old-time instruments. Using them for a background display enables our guests at the Museum to see what bands were in the area and the types of music they played. Given to us over the years, we also have accumulated a large collection of sheet music. Since the two wall displays near the band room needed updating, we used the sheet music, with the notes showing, for the background, and the album covers as our display. You can now see when Frank Sinatra was doing "The Huckabuck," someone else was saying "Yes! We Have No Bananas!" and a lot of other music that most people have never heard of.

NEW FURNACE — The furnace quit working just as the weather was warming up; it will be replaced by the owners of the building (Kewaunee County) by the time that it cools down again. Ferns and flowers were planted outside to give the place a more cheerful look, and guests are arriving for the summer season!

RUMMAGE SALE UPDATE — We had a very successful Rummage Sale at Arletta Bertrand's house on May 18-19. A special thanks goes out to Judy Srnka and Mary Reckelberg for their help. Also, thank you to everyone who donated items for the sale.

NOTE — We are planning another rummage sale for May 2013, so please keep us in mind as you come across items that could be donated next year.



LEO SALKOWSKI

(cont. from page 2)

controls whereby he could intervene. As Adolph approached the Kewaunee Municipal Airport, he cut off the engine about 100 feet above the ground. Suddenly the plane's nose dipped and the plane plummeted; its nose plowed into the earth in a cornfield on the Aude farm. Both were thrown against the control panels and lost their lives. Leo Salkowski, 35, was survived by his wife and three children; Adolph Schuch, 36, was survived by his wife and five-week old twins.

The subsequent Salkowski funeral was large and brought many out-of-towners. Virginia Kostka, a young girl at the time and living near the cemetery, remembers a low-flying plane over the cemetery dropping red roses in memory of Leo.

Friends of the Kewaunee County Historical Society

~~ 2012 Donations ~~

We sincerely thank you for your generosity and continuing support of the Society. Your donations help pay the rent and have allowed us to replace obsolete equipment, such as the new copier at the History Center. Upgrading equipment is a necessity in this fast-changing world of computers and electronic devices.

In recognition of your contribution(s), you should have received a personal thank you note from us. Since we are a 501(c)3 non-profit organization, these donations can be used as deductions on your income taxes.

Note: The listing below is based upon donations received February 21 - May 29, 2012. If your gift was received at a later date and not listed, it will be acknowledged in the next issue. If your name is not listed and you gave, please contact our treasurer, Arletta Bertrand (see info below).

~~ If you have a change of address, please notify Arletta Bertrand as soon as possible. ~~

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Historical Notes

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