



HISTORICAL NOTES

VOLUME XXVI, No. 3

JULY 2014

JULIUS CAHN, FATHER OF THE COUNTY FAIR

by Jerry Abitz

As residents of Kewaunee County, we take for granted the County Fair every summer. Little do we know how tenable this institution was in the early history of the area. The first such attempts at staging a fair were held in Kewaunee at the Steamboat House in 1873, today's location of the Kewaunee Inn. Eventually an outdoor fair was established, but it languished and folded. Later attempts resulted in a Door-Kewaunee fair located somewhere in Door County.¹

Meanwhile, in the western part of the county, there was a hotbed of horseracing centered around a track at Scarboro on land owned by Frank Novak, proprietor of a local saloon. Enters the scene an immigrant from Westphalia, Germany. Born in 1874, he came to Milwaukee where a brother was already established. Employed by an eyeglass company that he represented, he moved to Luxemburg in 1907 to set up his headquarters at the Julia Alger's boardinghouse,² located on Main Street next to the railroad tracks and near the train station.

Julius Cahn had many things working for him. He was a problem solver; he also seemed to have uncanny foresight and had the moxie to follow through to completion. He remained unmarried so did not have some of the typical constraints that could interfere with solutions. Likewise, he seemed to have sufficient income to grease the skids to bring a project to fruition.

Recognizing the interest in the horseracing and the lack of a county fairgrounds, he worked with a cadre of interested citizens, headed by his friend, August Spitzer, to develop an area for this annual fair on the western edge of tiny Luxemburg Village. It was established on a 20-acre plot, 17 of which was owned by the Kollross family. Cahn sold ads for the premium book³ to raise the money while Spitzer cleared the land and built the racetrack. When his arrangements to have the book printed locally fell through, Cahn went to Milwaukee and found a print shop that could produce it. That premium book financed the 1918 fair.

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



Posing for a publicity photo for the 1925 County Fair in front of the Bank of Luxemburg (razed in 2007) are (left to right): Charles L. Peters, Luxemburg Village president, Chief "Rising Sun" Kah-quados, Julius Cahn, and Hector Boncher, prominent businessman (August 1925). *Photo from KHCH photo collection.*

Meanwhile, Camille Stage made arrangements for a merry-go-round to be used at the fair. When that deal fell through, Cahn located another one in Sturgeon Bay, although he was forced to personally leverage the agreement to complete the deal. It arrived at the fairgrounds via the Ahnapee & Western Railroad and was carted to the grounds on a hay wagon, piece by piece, where it was reassembled. At five cents a ride, it took in an unbelievable \$200 in two days, a tidy sum in 1918! The merry-go-round was such a hit that the Fair Association bought out all other shareholders.

(cont. on page 2)

JULIUS CAHN, FATHER OF THE COUNTY FAIR

(cont. from page 1)

That first fair did not have any permanent buildings. Tents were used to house displays. While the county refused to get involved in staging the fair, they did contribute money, starting in 1921, to pay for the construction of a grandstand and other buildings; they also gave an annual stipend to underwrite some of the costs of staging such an event. The fair was managed by the Kewaunee County Fair Association.⁴

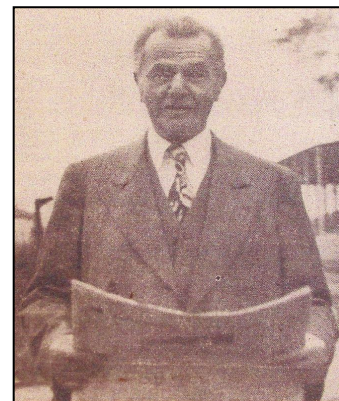
Cahn remained connected to the fair as its secretary. As such, he made the contacts for various entertainments and shows. One very notable fair in 1925 involved the Potawatomi Indians, whose native village had been located south of Norman at Black Earth.⁵ The *Luxemburg News* of August 21, 1925, stated:

"...to bring to the Kewaunee County Fair the original Kewaunee County Potawatomi Indians, consisting of 30 people. There will be a combined historical and educational feature. The Indians will be headed by Chief Kah-qua-dos. The Indians will pitch their tepees on the grounds and show the present inhabitants of the lands their ancestors once owned just how the Indian tribes of long ago lived."

This was in addition to the other free attractions.

While the early fairs were strictly displays entered by any citizen, they evolved slowly to include animals, handiwork, garden produce, machinery displays, entertainment, and all of the other accoutrements we associate with fairs today. With the development of 4-H clubs, and vocational agriculture and home economics education in the high schools in early twentieth century, special categories were set up for high school students and 4-H-ers.

Cahn became fair secretary in 1922, a position he held for 30 years. During those depression years, he made trips to Florida where he independently booked acts for the fair, thus saving money for the Fair Association. First and foremost in his aspirations was to turn this fair into an economic success. By any standard, he succeeded. For someone who had no visible ties to this community, someone who otherwise would have been considered an outsider because of his Jewish religious affiliations, he certainly made a lasting impression. To recognize his importance to the Kewaunee County Fair, a plaque is prominently displayed at the Maple Street entrance to the fairgrounds.



Julius Cahn. Photo from an article by George V. Gregor, "Story of Fair is Story of Cahn," published in the *Kewaunee Enterprise* (Jan. 22, 1948). Photo from KCHS photo collection.

For more information about the history of the Kewaunee County Fair, see the article on page 4 of this issue.

Author's notes —

¹For additional information, view the KCHS Heritage Marker located on the north side of the grandstand on the fairgrounds. Marker information was researched and written by Kewaunee area resident, Donna Urban.

²This house, located at 830 Main Street in Luxemburg, is now the home of the Gerald Marcelle family.

³A premium book listed the various classes in which you could show animals, various crops, canned goods, fancy work, photography, etc. Ribbons were given out by the judges. Each ribbon had a monetary value that was then paid to the participants. It was the money obtained from the advertisements included in the book that paid for the premiums paid out to the people displaying objects.

⁴In order to make decisions, some *one* or some committee had to be formed to make the decisions and see that they were carried out. That group came to be called the Fair Committee; they, in turn, organized with various titles — president,

vice president, secretary, etc. In the early days, the land and buildings were owned by the Fair Association, but today are owned by the County, which also maintains the buildings. The newest facility has display areas and a kitchen that can be rented for exhibitions. It's quite impressive and a welcome relief from the old rickety wooden buildings of the 1920s and '30s.

⁵Another KCHS Heritage Marker is located here. Land was purchased for this tribe by Jacques Vieaux to ensure their location here. However, they had no knowledge of having to pay annual taxes. When they were in arrears, the land was sold at a sheriff's sale. They were evicted and relocated to the Crandon area of Forest County.

KCHS Historical Notes

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LOYALTY EFFORTS IN KEWAUNEE COUNTY DURING WORLD WAR I

by Shirley VerBruggen

As a follow-up to Jerry Abitz' article, "Anti-German Sentiment in World War I" in the April 2014 issue of *Historical Notes* (Vol. XXVI, No. 2), this article presents an alternative perspective.

Stories of savage inhumanities committed by the Huns and threats by Germany to sink American merchant ships filled American newspapers. Then, a German U-boat sunk the *RMS Lusitania*, a British ocean liner, killing 1,128 people; 128 American lives were lost.

Meanwhile, a large number of native- and German-born people sympathized with and were extending financial aid to Germany. Pro-Germans in Kewaunee County had, very enthusiastically, shown sympathy for Germany up until the time the U.S. declared war. But the declaration of war did not cool their ardor for the Kaiser. They were sullen and outspoken. The above groups still had ties to Germany through relatives there. Likewise, they had very much perpetuated the German language and customs through various institutions and their churches, and those leaders were promoting support for Germany.

Pro-German people were so outspoken in the summer of 1917 that some loyal men realized something must be done to curb them. The Wisconsin Loyalty Legion was organized in Milwaukee. A local group, the Abraham Lincoln Chapter No. 5, was started in Kewaunee.

Soon, the chapter had over 100 members and arranged a meeting at the Bohemian Opera House. The building was packed, and pro-Germanism received its first setback. More chapters were organized. Influential local people like judges and attorneys went into the county to speak at meetings. This effort built enthusiasm and the Loyalty Legion rose to over 3,000 members.

Super-patriots were proud they were able to keep disloyal people in line and reduce pro-German fervor. They were doing their part to fight the war from the home front. They were able to get a German banker sent to Fort Oglethorpe for making seditious utterances and to oust another man who did not serve robustly enough on the County Council of Defense. They proudly created a secret system to keep many disloyal men and women in line.

Supporters of Germany were costing the U.S. war effort. The county had not filled its quota for the first Liberty Loan, bonds sold to finance the war,¹ so a speakers bureau created publicity and held public meetings. As

a result of their efforts, the 2nd Liberty Loan bond sale was 200% over goal.

Patriotic editors needed to spur the spirit of loyalty so the *Kewaunee County Press*, from its first publication in June 1918 until the close of the war, featured editorials loyal to the government and anti-German.

Patriotism and loyalty to the United States were critical to building

the confidence of soldiers, their families, and the community. Young men could not be sent to war confused about their loyalty. Almost weekly, drafted men, including sons of German mothers and fathers, were leaving for the camps. Courthouse corridors were crowded with anxious young men and their families, many of them trying to evade the draft or get service deferments. To assure the safety of the public and troops, those potentially sympathetic to Germany needed to be called in to be questioned about their loyalties.

It was important that everyone get on board to support the U.S. war effort. Young men were encouraged to not only serve when called, but to volunteer, young women to write "Dear Soldier" letters and to do Red Cross work. Everyone was asked to conserve food.² Splintered loyalism did not demonstrate shared sacrifice toward a common cause.

It was everyone's duty to wholeheartedly support America's war effort. "Pro-Germanism" could not be allowed to fester.



Image from a Google search for Liberty Loan Bonds. See full link in Sources on page 4.

Author's notes—

¹There were four issues of Liberty Loan bonds during WWI; the fifth and last was called a Victory Liberty Loan.

²Food conservation restrictions during WWI per George W. Wing: One pound of sugar could be purchased per week. Flour could only be sold if an equal amount of substitutes like cornmeal or oat flour were purchased. Conservation required three meatless days a week and two wheatless days.

(cont. on page 4)

COUNTY FAIRS

The information in this article was researched and written down by Donna Urban. See source note below.

The earliest record of a fair in Kewaunee County is from November 1860; it was held in the dancehall at the Steamboat House in Kewaunee, mostly recently the site of the Karsten Hotel, which has been renamed and now operates as the Kewaunee Hotel. Various attempts to stage a fair took place over a period of years. In 1873, the Kewaunee Agricultural Society announced its first annual fair. Land was purchased in Kewaunee and a racetrack was built but, by 1900, it was defunct. Joint Door-Kewaunee county fairs were held in Door County in the early 1900s.

Meanwhile, in the Luxemburg area, there were a number of horsemen who were interested in raising, training and racing horses. There was no place to race, but eventually

a course was laid out at Scarboro where races were held on land (now owned by Clifford Ullman).

In 1918, a group of these people proposed a fairground on the western edge of Luxemburg Village. Their friend and spokesperson seemed to be Julius Cahn, an influential resident who had his fingers in many enterprises. The first racetrack was developed and the grandstand constructed with donated labor. Materials for the latter were purchased for \$1,500. The original grandstand, of wood construction and built in two stages, was in continuous use until April 2, 1970, when it was blown down in a windstorm; a replacement was constructed shortly thereafter and still stands today.

Since 1918, the Kewaunee County Fair has been held annually, except for 1955 when it was cancelled due to the polio epidemic.

Over the years, a variety of grandstand shows and midway attractions were added. Eventually the fair was underwritten by Kewaunee County and buildings and the grandstand were replaced. Exhibits are still a part of the fair, but they, too, have changed over the years. You no longer see teams of oxen, homemade butter and shingles, earthenware made from local clay or embroidered suspenders competing for prizes at the county fair.

Sources —

Urban, Donna. Research of the Markers of Kewaunee County. Collection housed at KCHS History Center, Kewaunee, Wis.

WWI LOYALTIES

(cont. from page 3)

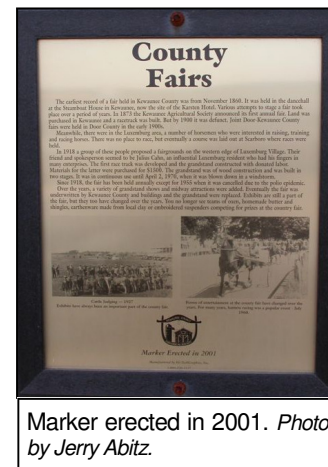
Sources —

George W. Wing, "The World's War," (unpublished, undated memoir), 41-48.

Quiren M. Groessl Collection, (AFC/2001/001/296), Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress.

"Images for Liberty Loan Bonds," accessed May, 2014, https://www.google.com/search?q=liberty+loan+bonds&tbn=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&ei=WZ6OU8vECaG_8QGSuoC4DQ&sqi=2&ved=0CEAQsAQ&biw=1430&bih=763.


"Liberty Bonds - World War I - Google Sites," accessed May, 2014, <https://sites.google.com/site/austynandelizabethww1/home/liberty-bonds>.




Marker erected in 2001. Photo by Jerry Abitz.



THIS ISSUE'S AUTHORS...

 **Jerry Abitz** (see pages 1 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 of Green 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.

 **Arletta Bertrand** (see page 5) — Born in the Town of Lincoln (Kewaunee County), Arletta always has been interested in history and has invested hours in their family genealogy. She's the KCHS treasurer, active in the Luxemburg Legion Auxiliary, serves other organizations in a number of capacities, and volunteers at the History Center in Kewaunee. If you'd like to contact her, send an email to arlettabertrand@gmail.com.

 **Shirley VerBruggen** (see page 3) — Shirley is a descendant of a Wisconsin State Genealogical Society Pioneer Family; her ancestors made Kewaunee County their home. George W. Wing, a founder of the Kewaunee County Historical Society, was the husband of Shirley's third great Aunt Mary, making G. W. Wing Shirley's first cousin, three times removed. The anti-German propaganda and many tactics detailed in this article do not mirror her opinions. Shirley writes a weekly local history column called "Remember When" for Kewaunee County's *The County Times* newspaper. Contact her by email at sverbruggen@newrr.com. You can read her genealogy blog at <http://shirley-familytimes.blogspot.com/>.

DOES THE MANNEQUIN WEAR UNDERWEAR?

by Arletta Bertrand

Recently, while having lunch with some friends with whom I graduated from Casco High School in 1962, conversation came up of when we were young. In those days, the weekly shopping trip for us was *always* going to Algoma.

The store most remembered was Beech's, better known as the "dime store." The best place was at the back of the store; that was where the good stuff was! You could walk out with a treasure for only five cents!! My mother's Christmas present was always Blue Waltz perfume. She may even have had a bottle left when we cleaned out her house after her passing a few years ago.

Anderson Appliance was where we bought our first television from Gordon Anderson. On one of our trips to Algoma in 1955, we went to look at the TV sets. Dad said, "No, we cannot not afford it," causing four long faces on the way home because of our disappointment. When we got as far as Rio Creek, just like that, Dad said, "We're getting that TV!" He turned the car around, resulting in four happy, smiling faces.

The Majestic Theater was definitely on our list of places remembered. I still look for it whenever I go to Algoma. It scheduled all the cowboy shows and had the best popcorn around. Afterwards, it was Lindy's for an ice cream sundae.

Kohlbeck's Store also made the list. If men needed a new suit, that is where you went; ladies had their own department upstairs. Later, the Kewaunee County Historical Society rented that building and located their History Center there for several years before moving it to Kewau-

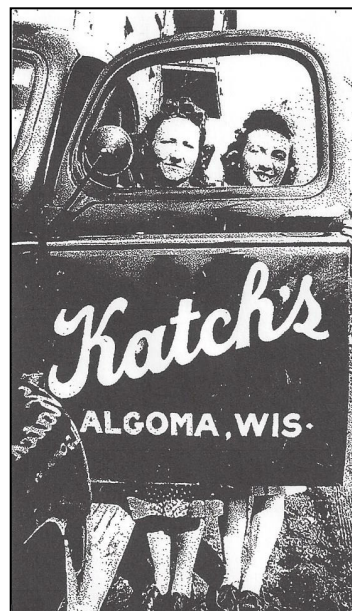
nee. While the KCHS was there, if anyone asked "Where are you located?", all you had to say was, "In the old Kohlbeck's store, next to the Hotel Stebbins." No more explanation was needed.

Everyone who lived in the Algoma area remembers Katch's Department Store. The men's department was on the first floor, and women's on the second. If you needed clothes, that was the place to go. On the second floor, next to the women's dressing room, was always a mannequin dressed very nicely.

One time my cousin from Green Bay was here visiting, and went along on the trip to Algoma. I was about seven, my cousin was six, and my younger sister, Karen, was five. Seeing that mannequin, our curiosity got the best of us and we wanted to know, had to know! "Does the mannequin have underwear on?" Everyone knows you give the dirty job to the youngest, so Karen was to raise the mannequin's skirt and the rest of us were to look underneath to see if it was wearing underwear. In the meantime, all the clerks were gathering around and smiling at us. It did not take long for Mom to shoo us away.

So, the big question still is, "Did the mannequin have on any underwear?" We never got to see what she had on underneath the dress. So... the question still goes unanswered.

These stores are no longer there but, to us, the Casco graduates from 1962, we still remember them. That discussion brought back many pleasant memories.



Katch's promotional photo taken in 1944. Pictured are Arvilla (Schiesser) Harmann (left) and Dorothy Mraz. Photo supplied by Diane Schaumberg of Seymour; previously published in the *Our Wisconsin* magazine, June/July 2014 issue.



A walk down memory lane! **(Above)** Katch's department store (May 9, 1979) and **(right)** the Majestic Theater (circa 1980s). Photos from KCHS photo collection.



NEWS FROM THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Report from the Trenches

KCHS WEBSITE COMMITTEE — Check out www.kewauneeountyhistory.com! The master plan for website development is one of implementation in phases. Now having some funds on hand, the committee has some resources with which to continue moving forward.



NORTHEASTERN REGIONAL CONVENTION — Manitowoc County Historical Society will host this regional convention of the local historical societies on Thursday, July 17. Regional meetings provide local history organizations with an opportunity to share ideas and work to solve common issues.

LOCAL HISTORY PRESERVATION ANNUAL CONFERENCE — This conference will be held Friday and Saturday, Oct. 24-25, in Elkhart Lake at the Osthoff Resort and Conference Center. This two-day, information-packed program draws some of the best and brightest in the field where 24 sessions and 12 workshops will be offered. Attendees will have ample opportunity to mingle with others, share ideas and make connections. Attendees also will have the opportunity to explore the era of stagecoach travel at the [Wade House](#) historic site.

2014 KCHS ANNUAL MEETING

— The Milwaukee Sokol provided us with our guest speaker, Gerald Novotny, as well as a number of display boards about the Czechs. He spoke about the Czech migration to America. Richard Dorner photographed the display boards and transcribed what each contained to add to our collection of historical facts about this important ethnic group located here in Kewaunee County.

Approximately 75 people attended this year's meeting. Following a short business meeting, a light lunch was served and visitors had a chance to tour the facilities,



Tom Schuller (left) and Gerald Novotny at this year's KCHS Annual Meeting on April 26. Photo by Arleita Bertrand.

ask questions and get an idea of what is contained in the KCHS collection.

KCHS MUSEUM — Now OPEN FOR THE 2014 SEASON!

We have all come through a progression of media on which to play our music and recall our lives in pictures. Now



we can slip a CD into a slot in the dashboard and hear a book that was recorded, our favorite music group deliver a crystal clear performance, or even relive an historical event. We own, or borrow from the library or our friends, DVDs of the latest movies so we can watch at our leisure while munching snacks from the fridge. But we do have one of the early machines used to record sound, and you can see it in the KCHS Jail Museum — a Thomas Edison phonograph! Not very portable nor easy to store, especially long-term, but it was a start.



Image from en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phonograph

These wax cylinders were commercially produced for entertainment until 1929. Thomas Edison produced his first phonograph in 1877; the wax cylinder was available in 1888. They could play for as long as three minutes. Although they would wear out after a few dozen playings, the buyer could use a mechanism which shaved the surface and new recordings could be made on them. Often the recording attachment was sold with the phonograph.

So when you visit the Jail Museum, go around the corner to the parlor, and look at the shelf behind the bride. There is our Edison with its long, black-necked trumpet speaker and the wax cylinders that it played. These cylinders are about the size of a soup can and came in a cardboard sleeve. In contrast, I've seen my son pull up a myriad of data and music on his smartphone. (I don't have one yet!) What a long way we have come, but it is interesting to see where it all started. (Information submitted by Darlene Mueller, curator)

KCHS HISTORY CENTER — Recent additions to our collection by Jerry Abitz include Anton Sisel, Slovan Shoemaker; Larry Swoboda's Recollections on the State Assembly, and Joseph Svoboda's Church Furniture, a list of blueprints listed by location of each altar, held at the UW—GB Area Research Center.

Presently on display are two banners from the old

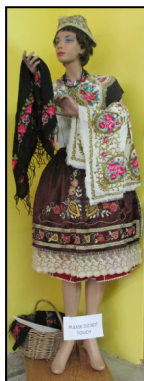


(cont. on page 7)

Report from the Trenches *(cont. from page 6)*

Slovan Hall which still stands in the Hamlet of Slovan, a center of Czech culture — one is of Emperor Charlemagne of the Holy Roman Empire; the other is of Count Albrecht von Wallenstein, a Bohemian general during the 30 Years War (1618-1648). He was assassinated in 1632 after being accused of disloyalty to the Austrian emperor.

Also on display is the costume of a Barushka dancer that, eventually, will be returned to the KCHS Museum. *(Information submitted by Richard Dörner; photos in this section on pgs. 6 and 7 also by Richard Dörner.)*



DVD AVAILABLE — St. Mary's Catholic Church in Luxemburg had their 150 Year Celebration on Saturday and Sunday, May 31-June 1. A cemetery walk was held featuring nine performers portraying their ancestors. A DVD of the event is now available for \$7 at the KCHS History Center or by contacting Arletta Bertrand (920-845-2972).

KCHS RUMMAGE SALE — We would like to thank everyone who donated to and attended our rummage sale May 16-17. This annual fundraiser brought in approx. \$600! Please keep us in mind for donations next year!

Upcoming EVENTS

Sunday, August 3 — Virtual Cemetery Walk at the St. Paul Lutheran Church, Montpelier, after the 9:30a church services in the school hall.

Sunday, August 17 — 150 Year Celebration Cemetery Walk at the St. Lawrence Catholic Church, Stangleville, 1:00-3:00p. DVDs will be available after the event at the KCHS History Center.

Saturday and Sunday, Sept. 20-21 — Ag Heritage Days at the Kewaunee County Fairgrounds in Luxemburg. KCHS will have a booth where we will be presenting items from the History Center on the Kewaunee County churches. Stop in and see our display!

Friends of the Kewaunee County Historical Society ~~ 2014 Donations ~~

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Trembl, Tony
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Zimmerman, Ethel

Friends of the Kewaunee County Historical Society

~~ 2014 Donations ~~

Thank you, one and all! The donor list on page 7 demonstrates your willingness to support our efforts, and we appreciate it more than we can express here. The County does not fund the Historical Society or any of its efforts in any way. Although many people may think we are connected to the AG Heritage Farm, we are not. It's you, just you, our donors. Your donations covered last quarter's expenses of rent, internet and phone, utilities, publishing this newsletter, and other miscellaneous expenses.

Sustaining growth and maintaining excellence does not come without cost, a cost that, frankly, increases each year. If we are to be positioned well to build on our achievements, we encourage you to consider as generous an investment in KCHS as you feel you can afford. A fully TAX-DEDUCTIBLE gift will ensure that remarkable stories like that of Julius Cahn, the Salkowski brothers, Edward Decker, and others will continue to be researched, documented, preserved and disseminated.

Other options include requesting that donations to Kewaunee County Historical Society be given "in lieu of flowers" for memorial services or special occasions; named gifts of \$1,000 or more also are available; or you can sponsor an issue of the newsletter in memory of a loved one, also for \$1,000 (by sponsoring, we will publish a short biography and picture in memory of them).

We once again have included an envelope for your convenience.

Note: The listing below is based upon donations received from March 1 through May 31, 2014.

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).

As a 501(c)(3) organization, all donations are tax-deductible.

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

~~ By mail: 1106 Colle Street, Luxemburg WI 54217 ~~ By phone: 920-845-2972 ~~

~~ By email: arletta.bertrand@gmail.com ~~

KEWAUNEE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Phone: 920-388-0369

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KEWAUNEE COUNTY JAIL MUSEUM

Courthouse Square at 613 Dodge Street
Kewaunee WI 54216
Phone: 920-388-0117

September - May by appointment.

Summer (Memorial Day through Labor Day) —

Open daily, 12:00-4:00 p.m.

KEWAUNEE COUNTY HISTORY CENTER

217 Ellis Street, Kewaunee WI 54216
Phone: 920-388-0369

Email: kchistory219@yahoo.com

Open Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays —

10:00-4:00 p.m.

Other days/times by appointment only.

If inclement weather, please call ahead.