



Newsletter

MISSION STATEMENT

The Grafton Historical Society is a non-profit 501(c)3 organization founded and operated by volunteers. We are dedicated to the preservation and sharing of Grafton area history.

GHS OFFICERS

Tom Krueger
President

Dave Antoine
Vice President

Debbie Krueger
Secretary

John Krueger
Treasurer

Nick Schanen
Director

Jim Wegner
Director

John Gassert
Director

Darrel Blank

Spring, 2024

Message from the President

After being gone for three weeks, with much of it spent in Florida, it was a wonderful delight and surprise to return to Wisconsin and its unusually warm weather in early April. Now that I am back home to reality, it's not too early to begin thinking of great summer weather in Wisconsin, and all the Village and community events that are being planned by the Chamber of Commerce and the Celebrate Grafton Committee. Events begin in May with the "53024" Zip Code Day Celebration on May 30th and continue throughout the summer and fall seasons. The Grafton Historical Society plans to again be very visible in the Grafton area with many of these events. If you happen to see any of our more active members working a fundraising event or just a Historical Society exhibit space, please stop by to say "Hi". We are always happy to answer any questions you may have about the Grafton Historical Society or Grafton history.

Regarding a more timely event, the Grafton Historical Society will be returning to its regular April timetable for holding its annual meeting. The 2024 **Annual Meeting of the Grafton Historical Society will take place on Thursday,**

April 25th at 3:30 pm – Grafton Public Library. Society members should have received earlier notice of this meeting by email in early April and it is further noticed later in this newsletter. **Of special note, there will be two (2) board positions open for nominations at this time.** Board member terms are for a period of two years and meetings are typically held on the first Thursday of each month. If you are already a member of the Society, please consider the opportunity to become more involved.

In closing, Board members Jean Steinke and Ann Murray have decided to step back from their board positions. Jean has been an active board member since April of 2019; Ann has actively served the board since May, 2022. I wish to thank both of these members for their service to the board, to the membership and for their many contributions and dedication to fulfilling the stated mission of the Grafton Historical Society.

Working to share and preserve Grafton history.

Tom Krueger
GHS President



St. Joseph Parish Celebrates 175 Years

Wisconsin had only been a state for one year when, in 1849, a small group of 24 families met in a cabin under the canopy of a growth of hardwood trees near the Milwaukee River to sign the agreement to establish a new church in Grafton.

A Need for Spiritual Guidance

In the years before, settlers had cleared the land, and homes of timber dotted the new settlement. Shelter and crops for the coming year were a necessity, but for those immigrants to a new and unfamiliar land, so was spiritual guidance. To fulfill that need, in stepped a group based at St. John's Cathedral in Milwaukee. Known as circuit riders, they braved storms, rugged terrain, and marshes with mud and mosquitoes to minister to the Grafton families. Existing



Forms of Worship Grow

During the early 1900's, church worship grew to include evening prayers, low and high Masses, missals, daily rosaries, devotions to Mary, and Corpus Christi processions.

From the 1910's to the early 1940's parish life also grew in many ways and began to extend into social activities. St. Joseph Parish sponsored a baseball and a basketball team. Young adults formed a drama club and presented plays at the Grafton High School because the parish facilities were not large enough. An annual talent show took place at Schanen's Hall and there were Christmas pageants every year.

Special Prayers during War Years

challenges grew during the summers of 1847 and 1849 when a cholera epidemic struck. People needed help and the priests ministered to them, even answering requests from dying parents to find new homes for their orphaned children.

Founding Fathers

It was in 1849 that two priests, Fr. Joseph Salzmann and Fr. Joseph Sadler guided those early Catholic families in Grafton to found their own church. In gratitude, the new church was named St. Joseph Parish.

Without a permanent structure, the new congregation turned to the Stone Block Building in Grafton to hold services. That building was finished in 1845 and it was an interesting temporary home because the new congregation shared quarters with the Ozaukee county courthouse, jail and village tavern, until a stone church could be built in 1860. A steeple with a wooden cross marked it as the new St. Joseph Parish. Just four years later, lightning struck and a resulting fire burned most of the church interior.

The little church repaired, the congregation continued to grow through the tumultuous years of the Civil War and the following years of rapid industrialization and increased immigration.

A New Building for a Growing Congregation

By 1897 the parish had grown to 60 families and there was a need for a new, larger church building. A new church was built, facing west on 16th Street. It had a seating capacity of 260, and was built of wood and brick with a slate roof. It was designed in the pseudo-Gothic style, very prevalent in the area in those days, with an

During the years of World War II, many young men and women of the parish entered the service. The war years brought people together and special prayer services and devotions, always well-attended, were held.

Parish Groups On the Rise

After the war, the popularity of other types of parish groups was on the rise. Many of these groups were also active in fundraising. The Holy Name Society and Christian Mothers held bazaars and chicken dinners that were highly anticipated events during the year. At times more than 1,000 chicken dinners would be served on a Sunday afternoon and evening.

Rapid Growth

By the 1950's St. Joseph Parish enjoyed its share of the growth that was happening around the nation. The baby boomer generation had appeared on the scene and suddenly St. Joseph Parish had grown from 162 families to 400. A church budget that was \$2,500 in the 1920's was now in the 1960's almost \$150,000. Within the next 20 years the parish grew to almost 1,000 households.

It was time to look to the future and a new church building. The old building was torn down in the summer of 1967, and in early 1968 ground was broken for a new church building. From September, 1966 to December, 1968 Mass was celebrated in the school gym. By Christmas Eve, 1968, Mass was held in the new church.

Expansion and Renovation

Just 40 years later, the parish needed to expand again. That renovation and expansion began on March 19, 1999, the Feast Day of St. Joseph, and ended exactly one year later. It provided a unified community between church, school and rectory, a large gathering space, and additional rooms for meetings and the school.

Could those settlers have envisioned Grafton and the church they founded 175 years later? Probably not, but they and those that founded the other early churches in Grafton, helped create the community that exists today.

elaborate interior and beautiful stained glass windows. All the stained glass windows were donated by individuals or families. The stained glass helped filter and cool the light coming into the church and also was a source of biblical teachings for the stories they portrayed.

New Pipe Organ

One of the most outstanding features of the new church was a pipe organ located in the choir loft. This music was a gift of the church to its people, because for many parishioners it was the only time and place music was ever heard

Photos: Left: The 1860 church.

Right: The church built in 1897.



Henry "Blind Lemon"

Jefferson The Father of the Texas Blues, and one of the most popular blues singers of the 1920's was born on September 24, 1893 in Couthman, Texas. Henry "Blind Lemon" Jefferson was born without his sight, the youngest of seven children, to sharecropper parents.

Street Performer in his Teens

Life was not easy for the young Jefferson, and by the time he was in his teens, he left home to become a street musician. A contemporary provided this description of the young musician's experience, *"The people on the street were rough. Men were*

Music historians believe that Jefferson's old-fashioned style and confident musicianship made it easy to market his songs. Many agree that he "opened the door" for a new generation of blues artists such as Furry Lewis, Charlie Patton and Barbecue Bob.

A Mysterious Death

Jefferson's music career came to an early end when he was only 36 years old. There is no certainty, but there are several theories about how he died. Some

hustling women and selling bottles of bootleg, and Lemon was singing for them all night...he'd start singing about eight and go on until four in the morning...mostly it would be just him sitting there and playing and singing all night. "

His Life Changes

Jefferson's life changed in the early 1910's when he travelled to Dallas and met blues musicians Lead Belly and T-Bone Walker. By the 1920's he was earning enough to support himself as a successful solo guitarist and male vocalist in the recording world.

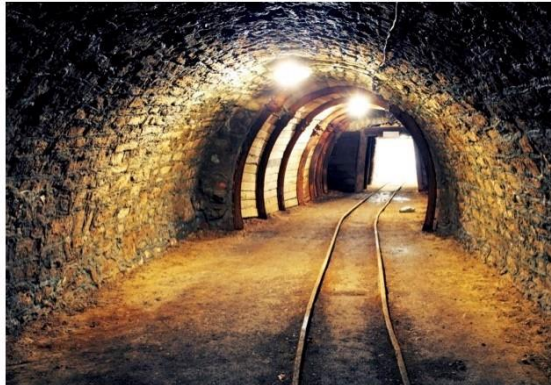
Between 1926 and 1929, Jefferson's hit "Long Lonesome Blues" song would see sales in six figures. During those years, Jefferson recorded 100 tracks and 43 records, all but one on the Paramount label. In 1927 he released his classic song, a haunting melody, titled, "See That My Grave Is Kept Clean."

report that he died from a heart attack after becoming disoriented in a snowstorm. Others believe he suffered a heart attack after being attacked by a dog. Yet others say that a jealous lover put poison in his coffee, or that he died while being robbed.

What is certain is that this blues artist from a small town in Texas, changed the world of music forever.

He is buried at Blind Lemon Memorial Cemetery. His grave site is kept clean by a special cemetery committee.

Blind Lemon Jefferson is honored with a "key" on Grafton's Paramount Plaza Walk of Fame.



**THE GRAFTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY
PRESENTS:**

The Underground Railroad in Wisconsin

As enslaved people sought freedom in Canada in the mid-1800's, many passed through Wisconsin on our own Underground Railroad. At least 100 escapees found freedom on a path through Wisconsin.



Dave Warren is an Underground Railroad expert from the Milton House, the last certified Underground Railroad Station in Wisconsin. He tells the story of the Underground Railroad, and the gripping event that put Wisconsin front and center in the nation's fight over abolishing slavery.

Sponsoring
Partner:



**Thursday,
May 2nd**

**6:00 p.m.
Rose Harms
Legion Post
1540 13th Avenue
Grafton**

**Free and open to the
public.**

**Refreshments and
Cash Bar**

**GRAFTON HISTORICAL
SOCIETY**

P.O. Box 481
Grafton, WI 53024

Website:
www.graftonareahistory.org

Email:
info@graftonareahistory.org



Thursday, April 25th, 3:30 p.m.

Grafton Public Library,

Lower Level Meeting Room

You're invited to the Grafton Historical Society Annual Meeting. It will include a recap of GHS activity over the last year, initiatives, and vision for the future, and election of board members and officers. Current board members up for re-election include Dave Antoine, John Krueger and Jim Wegner.

In addition, there are two board positions open for nominations at this time. Board member terms are for a period of two years. If interested in a board position, you are encouraged to attend the annual meeting and/or contact Tom Krueger, president.

A regular membership meeting will immediately follow the annual meeting. To find out more about what's going on at the Grafton Historical Society and where committee help is needed, please consider attending the April 25th meeting.

THANK YOU



Many thanks to Bank Five Nine

Board members Dave Antoine, John Krueger and Tom Krueger accept a check for \$500 from Josh Branham, branch manager at Bank Five Nine in Grafton. The check represents a continuing commitment by Bank Five Nine to support the GHS historical programming offered free to the community.



**Record Crowd Hears Stories of
Lake Michigan Shipwrecks**

More than 150 people attended the Grafton Historical Society's February presentation on Lake Michigan shipwrecks. James Heinz, a retired underwater diving expert, entertained the audience with stories of a ghost ship, Lake Michigan's own Titanic and a gunboat from the Spanish American War. Thanks to everyone who joined us that evening!

SCENES FROM THE PAST

Enjoy a "scene from the past" contributed to the News Graphic newspaper by the Grafton Historical Society each month. The scenes are featured in the fourth Tuesday of the month edition. It's a part of our mission to share Grafton area history. If you have a vintage photo that you would like to share, please contact us at:

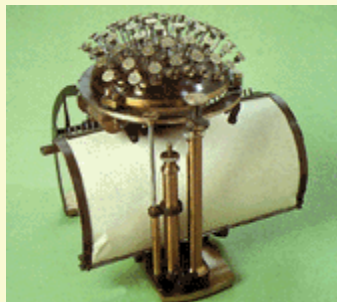
info@graftonareahistory.org.

DO YOU KNOW?

With this issue we'd like to continue our "Mystery Item" feature. If you have an idea what this item might be contact us

at: info@graftonareahistory.org.

If you have an item that you need help identifying and would like to submit it for a future newsletter edition, we'd be happy to include it.



DID YOU KNOW?

If you said that this **Mystery Item** from the last issue of our Newsletter was an early

Antiseptic Sprayer

you were right!

Following the principles of the pioneer in germ theory and antiseptics Joseph Lister, this early antiseptic sprayer was used to sterilize areas in hospitals, especially operating rooms.



Dine to Donate



*Fundraiser to Support the "Crummy the Caboose" Restoration
Project at Ozaukee County Pioneer Village*



Thursday, May 2
4:30-8:30PM
The Pasta Shoppe

323 N Franklin St, Port Washington, WI
www.portpastashoppe.com



*15% of sales for "Dine-in" orders during this event will help support
our efforts to complete our caboose restoration.
Have a delicious dinner while supporting a great restoration project!*



The Ozaukee County Historical Society is Honored to Present

Roland De Wolk

*Author of "American Disruptor:
The Scandalous Life of Leland Stanford"*

The Ozaukee County Historical Society is honored to have Roland De Wolk, author of "American Disruptor: The Scandalous Life of Leland Stanford" as their speaker at the May 6th quarterly meeting to be held at the historic court house in Port Washington. There will be a brief reception to meet Roland De Wolk at 6:30 pm, a few announcements by the Ozaukee County Historical Society at 7:00 pm and the fascinating presentation about Leland Stanford at 7:15 pm. The event is free and open to the public.



PORT WASHINGTON HISTORIC COURTHOUSE

MONDAY, MAY 6TH

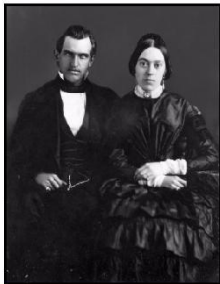
FREE ADMISSION!

6:30pm Meet & Greet Reception featuring beer tasting by the Fermentorium of Cedarburg, other refreshments and appetizers

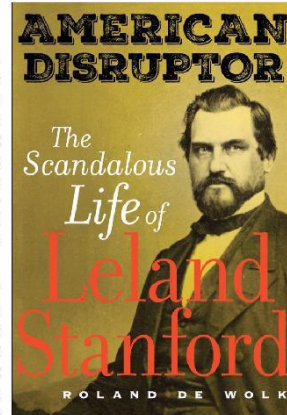
7:00pm OCHS Announcements • 7:15pm Leland Stanford Presentation

About Our Guest Speaker

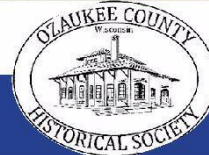
The story of Leland Stanford begins in Albany, New York, a feckless youth who dodged hard work every chance he got and moved to Port Washington, WI in 1848. Having studied law in New York and passed the state bar of Wisconsin, he set up a small law practice on Franklin Street. He got involved in the politics of the day and stayed a prominent figure in the city until a fire destroyed his office in 1852. He then started his journey west and became one of the most important figures in the building of the transcontinental railroad, which altered American life forever. His life was met with intrigue, failures, success, love and loss. He eventually became one of the most powerful and wealthiest men in the nation. The death of his adolescent son prompted him to build Stanford University as a memorial. The school became the birthplace and incubator of the Silicon Valley.



Roland De Wolk, holds a degree in history from the University of California, Berkeley. He spent many years as a print, online and broadcast journalist, cofounded the first university online journalism site in the nation as a Senior Lecturer at San Francisco State University's journalism department. That background kept him on track to research the life of Leland Stanford, one of the Central Pacific Railroads' "Big Four." Roland spent time at the Port Washington Historical Society and the Ozaukee County Historical Society as he gathered valuable material for his book on Leland Stanford, published in 2019.



A sincere thank you to our sponsors: O'Neil, Cannon, Hollman, Dejong and Laing, SC., The Port Hotel, the Port Washington Historical Society and the Fermentorium.





We're happy to report that the GHS membership is growing! This year we have already registered many new individual, family and lifetime memberships.

If you are not already a member, we invite you to join us to Discover, Preserve, and Share Grafton history.

<http://www.graftonareahistory.org>

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