
DANE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER



The Dane County Historical Society Office and the Otto Schroeder Records Center are located in the lower level of the Lussier Family Heritage Building on Lake Farm Road just south of the Beltline near Lake Waubesa.

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Number 1

Josie's: Local History on the Corner

By Stef Morrill

This article is based on interviews, reminiscences and fun conversations with Joanne Schuepbach Jensen in 2009.

The building at 906 Regent Street in Madison housed Josie's Three Sisters restaurant for 43 years, most of its life. However, Josie's was not the first restaurant to occupy the building. The era of restaurants at that location began in 1941 with Jimmie's Spaghetti House. James Puccio, the first owner, was a member of the DiSalvo family that already operated a restaurant at 310 Regent Street. The family had a quarrel and Jimmie and his wife, Angeline, left to build their own restaurant. They didn't go far, only a few blocks; Jimmie built a restaurant with almost the exact same floor plan as DiSalvo's.

Puccio operated Jimmie's Spaghetti House until 1957. However in 1949, The Capital Times had run an article critical of several local restaurants. Jimmie's was one of those restaurants and its reputation never quite recovered. After advertising under a series of names, including "Jimmie's Celebrated Restaurant and Cocktail Lounge" and "Jimmie's Ace of Places," presumably to rebuild its reputation, the business was taken over by Obie Quam in 1957. After that, a series of restaurants occupied the building, including Art's Regent House (operated by Art Johnson), Carlo Castiglione's Regent House and the Tiki Beachcomber (operated by the Pellitteri family).

While this series of restaurants moved through the building at 906 Regent Street, Josie Magnasco Schuepbach was moving through a series of different restaurants herself. In the 1940s, Josie worked for DiSalvo's, the same restaurant that Jimmie Puccio left in 1941. At the time, Josie didn't drive a car, so she was picked up by the DiSalvo's at the family farm in Sun Prairie once a week; she would stay with her sisters in



Madison for five days, then return home for a couple of days off. The oldest of Josie's seven kids would take care of the younger ones in her absence.

Josie's two sisters worked alongside her at DiSalvo's, and it was here that they built their reputation as "The Three Sisters" before going out on their own. They had gotten some of their cooking knowledge from Ike Seely, who married Mary, one of the sisters. He came from

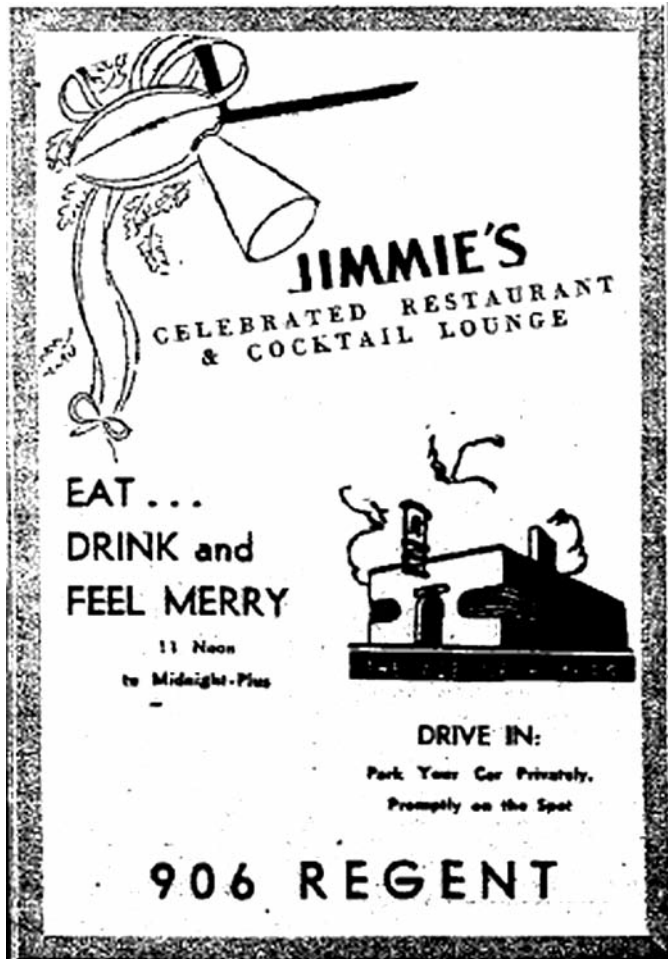
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New York, and brought with him some dishes that were innovative to the Midwest, including shrimp and slow-cook pizza. Ike died during World War II, and never got to see the great success of the three sisters that he helped to inspire.

Josie and her two sisters ran their first kitchen at the College Inn, located at the corner of State and Johnson in Madison. While the sisters did not own the bar, they owned the kitchen, known as "Three Sisters." This model of owning the kitchen, but not the whole bar or restaurant was common, and was the model the three sisters continued to employ for many years. The little kitchen only served sandwiches and spaghetti, and it wasn't very busy. The three sisters then moved on to Tony's Bar, run by the Urso family. Eventually, two of the sisters moved on to other kitchens; while Josie stayed at Tony's. She was still with the Urso family when they opened the Capital Hotel, but found herself out of money in 1963. Josie then got out of the restaurant business for a time, to save up some money for her next venture.

Meanwhile Josie's daughter, Joanne, had also started working in the restaurant business. As a young girl, she

started helping her mother at Fedele's by peeling potatoes. She moved up to washing dishes, working alongside an older Italian woman named Momina Carvello, who would sing in Italian throughout their shift. When her mother was ready to get back into the restaurant business, Joanne was working right by her side. Joanne would continue to work with her mother at Josie's, taking over the business in 1980 when Josie retired.

In 1964, Josie made an offer on "The Tiki" at the familiar 906 Regent Street building. Joanne recalls that the Hawaiian theme, with its thatched roofs and straw mats, had created quite a mess in the building. Josie, Joanne and the rest of the family pitched in to get the restaurant clean and ready for business. The building was back in shape in just a few months, and Josie's Three Sisters opened for business in July of 1964.

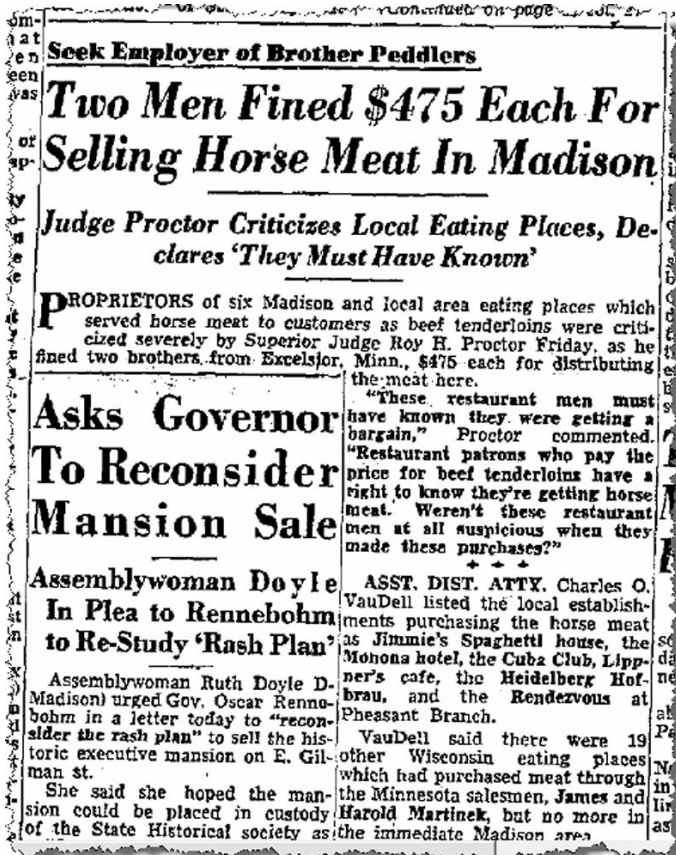
The prep kitchen at Josie's Three Sisters was located in the basement of the building. In the summer it was sweltering; in the winter it was freezing. But Josie's cooking crew still spent many happy hours in that kitchen, making tubs of spaghetti sauce two or three times a week, spending two days making 40 trays of lasagna at a time, and making 100 pounds of meatballs once or twice a week. To make the meatballs, they had some help from a custom machine built by Hobart. A



hamburger machine had been modified to make round balls instead of flat patties, allowing the meatball-making process to go much quicker.

The specialties of the house at Josie's were Lasagna, the pasta and the Brociolo, a stuffed round steak. The steak would be flattened, then a stuffing of bread, onions, celery, raisins, tomatoes, and garlic was spread on top. Slices of hard boiled eggs were put on top of the

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his honest dealings with them. Joanne recalls one day at the bar when two of Blackie's regulars were talking while they were paying, and didn't notice that one of them had dropped \$20. Joanne noticed it after they left, and gave the money to Blackie to return to them. They never forgot this kindness and always said that Blackie was the most honest person they knew. Another of the well-known bartenders at Josie's was Frank Troia, who served many years behind the bar there.

There were other regulars, too. A group of men, including retired policemen, lawyers, and Jerry Hill from Hill Electric, came in every morning for coffee. They had their own key to let themselves in before the staff got to the restaurant in the morning. Jerry Hill was the keeper of the key, but he would be sure to pass it along to someone else in the group if he couldn't make it; even when he went into the hospital for surgery! They used Josie's as a second home where they could get together to talk, argue and tease each other for hours every morning. There were also a number of regulars for lunch from Meriter Hospital (then called Madison General Hospital), especially in the early days. Later, the hospital changed their lunch schedules and only allowed 30 minutes for lunch; the employees just didn't have enough time for a sit-down lunch anymore, and the lunch business at Josie's suffered as a result.

Josie's was able to keep its long-term staff as well as its long-term customers. Some of the family employees and other staff worked at Josie's through four generations. One employee, Theresa Pfeiffer, was with the family for 50 years, working at different restaurants the sisters owned along the way. They all became a family, affectionately teasing one another and enjoying their time together. The restaurant also had a lot of students working for it over the years. Working at Josie's helped many of them get through school. Joanne says she still hears from some of the former employees. One note she received from a couple that both worked at the restaurant said, "We named our dog Josie!"

The success of Josie's was truly a family endeavor. All of Joanne's daughters worked at Josie's when they were young. Each daughter started as a "salad girl" on Friday nights. Once a younger daughter was brought in to become the "salad girl," an older daughter would move up to bussing tables. The girls also washed dishes, and waited tables while in college. Joanne would fill in waiting tables, tending bar and doing whatever needed to be done on busy nights. Joanne and her husband Butch Jensen would spend Sundays at the restaurant, cleaning and repairing. They would sometimes have to paint the

Continued on page 4

stuffing, and the meat was rolled up. It would then be seared in olive oil, and boiled in tomato sauce to finish cooking. To serve, it was sliced and served with a side of sauce and peas.

After operating Josie's for a few years, the family decided to buy the houses behind the restaurant to create more parking. However as it turned out, they were not permitted to tear down the houses; so the houses remained and the family rented them to students. The restaurant eventually gained some additional parking when Park Street was widened in 1967. Before then, Josie's had not actually been at the corner of Park and Regent. There had been a gas station and a sandwich shop/bar called "The Snack Shack" (1946-1967) situated between Josie's and the corner. When the street was widened, these buildings were razed, giving Josie the opportunity to buy some additional land for parking; and giving it the familiar corner location.

Josie's was known as a place for the regulars to relax, chat, play cards, cribbage and shutbox, a gambling game. Each bartender had his own regulars. One of the bartenders with the biggest following was nicknamed Blackie. Although he had the reputation for being a little grouchy, he loved his customers, and was known for

Josie's (Continued from page 3)

basement kitchen floor, rolling on the paint with their stocking feet.

Perhaps the biggest team effort at Josie's came on football Saturdays. Josie's was one of the first restaurants to provide food outside on Badger football Saturdays. In 1972, they cooked sausages and hot dogs on a Weber grill, and sold them to football fans, along with one kind of beer. The menu quickly grew to

NOW OPEN

Three Sisters Restaurant
at our new location.

906 Regent St.

Josie would like to thank her customers for their patronage and hopes to see them soon at her new location.

Still serving our famous Italian Spaghetti and other fine foods.

NOW SERVING YOUR FAVORITE COCKTAIL

Hours: Sunday thru Thursday 4:30 to 12:30; Friday & Sat. 'til 1:45

include meatball sandwiches and five or six kinds of beer. Joanne recalls that it was a lot of work to run that outdoor stand. Friends and family would help out on football Saturdays. In fact, if any of the family came to visit on a football Saturday, they would be put to work. Joanne and Butch would arrive at Josie's at 4:00am to be ready for an 11:00am game. They would start hauling beer outside

at 5:00am. While Joanne and Butch had season tickets to the football games, they often didn't use them; they would be too tired after their busy mornings!

During the night of July 17, 2004, a fire ripped through Josie's. A few days after the fire, the paper reported that Josie's would reopen; Joanne hoped to be back in business by the beginning of the next football season. However, Joanne wanted to rebuild it right, with improvements in the kitchen. To rebuild with the desired improvements would have cost much more than the insurance would pay, so the decision was made to close the restaurant and sell the land. For two years after the fire, Josie's outdoor food stand on football Saturdays continued, but after the 2005 season Josie's closed completely.

The remains of the building at 906 Regent Street, along with the three houses behind it, were recently razed to make room for a multi-story apartment and retail complex. The building may be gone, but the memories that were created within its four walls will remain for the staff, the family, the regulars, and for all of the lives that Josie, Joanne, and the rest of the family touched.

Physician Obituary Database

The Ebling Library for the Health Sciences on the UW-Madison campus has created a database of obituaries of Wisconsin physicians, that it calls "WMJ Physician Obituary Database." The database is an index to obituaries printed in *Wisconsin Medical Journal* (WMJ) from 1903 until 2008. WMJ is the official publication of the State Medical Board of Wisconsin.

The screenshot shows the Ebling Library website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for Home, Get Materials, Classes & Tutorials, Research Help, Liaisons, How Do I...?, and About Us. The main heading is "HISTORICAL SERVICES". Below this, the "WMJ Physician Obituary Database" section is displayed. It includes a description of the index, instructions on how to obtain a copy, and a list of search criteria. The search results for the letter 'M' are shown, listing 549 results. A table of search results is provided below.

vol	page	name	year	place	note
68	61	Maas, David A.	1969	Madison, WI	Webster
63	37	Maas, William C.	1964	Rio, WI	
98	9	Mabini Jr., Francisco M.	1999	Hales Corners, WI	
40	128	MacArthur, D. S.	1941	La Crosse, WI	
51	224	Macauley, Evan M.	1951	Wausau, WI	
57	67	MacComack, E. A.	1957	Boulder, CO	Whitehall

The database does not contain full obituaries; it references the volume and issue of WMJ where the obituary can be found. This new database will be helpful for people researching family members who may have practiced medicine in the state during the past century.

Copies of any obituaries listed can usually be obtained by contacting the interlibrary loan department at your local public library. The public can also view the journal issues in person at Ebling Library on the UW-Madison campus. Note: Although Ebling Library is open to the public, parking is very limited, so you will want to check the library's website concerning parking.

For more information visit the "WMJ Physician Obituary Database" at: <http://ebling.library.wisc.edu/historical/obits/index.cfm>.

Introducing *Found in Wisconsin*

The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, Reference and Loan Library has released *Found in Wisconsin*. The site makes it easy for people to search for and link into online books, photographs, videos, and other resources available on the websites of libraries, historical societies and museums statewide. The database contains entries for materials that are either about Wisconsin or which were created by Wisconsin residents, authors and scholars. The site offers “one-stop shopping” for digital content and collections hosted by libraries, museums and historical societies statewide, and it offers links directly into content, regardless of which organization hosts the collection itself.

Found in Wisconsin allows you to search for individual items, or entire collections of digitized objects, such as “Images from the Kehl School of Dance - Madison,” a collection of historic photographs including posed individual and group shots of Kehl students in full costume; images of public events (such as a flag drill at Henry Vilas Park in 1911 and the "living flag" demonstration on the Capitol steps in 1900); shots of marquee advertising Kehl's Dance Troupe; the interior and exterior of the dance studio and the Capitol Bowling Alley.

Found in Wisconsin is available from the BadgerLink homepage at <http://www.badgerlink.net>. The database was created and is maintained by the staff of the Reference and Loan Library.

Users of *Found in Wisconsin* can subscribe to an RSS feed that provides updates on sites newly added to the database. You can also send a note recommending specific content that you'd like to see added, or a general recommendation for types of materials you'd like to have included in this growing collection. Users of *Found in Wisconsin* can even rate individual entries and send comments on their favorite sources!



Dane County Bookshelf



Occasionally, the Society hears about publications related to Dane County. If anyone knows of additional publications about Dane County, its history or its people, please pass them on to us. If anyone would like to donate books, town or family histories, or other publications about Dane County to the records center, please let us know.

Madison, by David Sakrisona. Arcadia Publishing, 2009-10. 127 p. Madison has a rich photographic history, much of it in the form of postcards. This volume presents more than 200 historical postcard images from the private collection of Madison resident John Powell, who has been collecting and trading postcards for more than 20 years. The images here reflect Madison's businesses, public institutions, civic life, and civic pride in the first decades of the 20th century. These images offer a unique window into the city as it was, and as it saw itself, 75 to 100 years ago.

Donations and Memorials

January-December 2009

The following donations were given to the Dane County Historical Society in 2009. During the year we lost two friends who had given of their valuable time, effort and ideas to Dane County Historical Society over the years: David Pfankuchen and George Reinke. Many of the donations to DCHS in 2009 were memorials for Mr. Pfankuchen or Mr. Reinke.

Donations of any amount are always greatly appreciated. Thanks to everyone who has contributed to Dane County Historical Society. We depend heavily on donations for carrying out our mission to collect, preserve, and disseminate knowledge about the history of Dane County, Wisconsin.

Donations of \$1,000

Madison Central HS Fund

- Irwin and Robert Goodman

Donations of \$100 - \$500

Cataloging Fund (Foundry Collection)

- George Jacobs
(multiple donations totaling in the \$100-\$500 range)
 - In Memory of Howard B. Hippman
 - In Memory of David Pfankuchen
 - In Memory of George Reinke
 - In Memory of Rose Marie St. Louis

General Fund

- Lloyd Velicer/Sharon Mulak

Legacy Fund

- James/Sharel Hubing
- Beverly Kneebone
(multiple donations totaling in the \$100-\$500 range)
 - In Honor of Betty Barringer
 - In Honor of Bob Barringer
 - In Honor of Almyra Kneebone
 - In Honor of Cheryl Schmidt Mueller

Madison Central HS Fund

- Joanne Jensen
(multiple donations totaling in the \$100-\$500 range)
 - In Memory of Don Easland
 - In Memory of Ron Harrington (Class of 1956)
 - In Memory of Larry Kelliher
 - In Honor of Carol & Jack Marshall 50th Anniversary
 - In Honor of Dick & Sharon Nachreinder
 - In Memory of Clifford Olson (Class of 1956)
 - In Honor of Antony & Iretta Pullara 50th Anniversary
 - In Memory of Delores McCanni Vigdal (Class of 1954)

Donations up to \$99

General Fund

- Sandra Bennett
- John/Vera Dallman
- Jack Davison
- Patricia Enger
- Mabelle Ewald
- Tom Fish
- Barbara/James Furstenberg
- John/Bernice Gorman
- Gary/Marilyn Hess
- Jerome Hillebrand
- Adrienne Imilkowski
- Howard Kanetzke
- Beverly Kneebone
 - In Honor of Dean and Jan Langholff 50th Anniversary
 - In Honor of Tom & Neva Vernig 50th Anniversary
 - In Honor of Ralph Kreutzer
- David Pfankuchen
- Jack/Marilyn Schairer (Contributing Membership)
- Marge Westergard

Legacy Fund

- Anonymous
 - In Memory of George Reinke
- Joyce Ahola
 - In Memory of George Reinke
- Joyce Baer
 - In Memory of David Pfankuchen
- Delma Basthemer
 - In Memory of George Reinke
- Karen Baumann
- Linda/Chris Boultinghouse
 - In Memory of David Pfankuchen
- James/Barbara Furstenberg
 - In Memory of David Pfankuchen
- Joanne Jensen: multiple donations
 - In Memory of Bob Aagaard
 - In Memory of George Lawrence Kivlin
- Winnifred Lacy
- Sam McKay
 - In Memory of David Pfankuchen
- Gert Paulson
 - In Memory of David Pfankuchen
- Kenneth/Jane Reinke
 - In Memory of George Reinke

Madison Central HS Fund

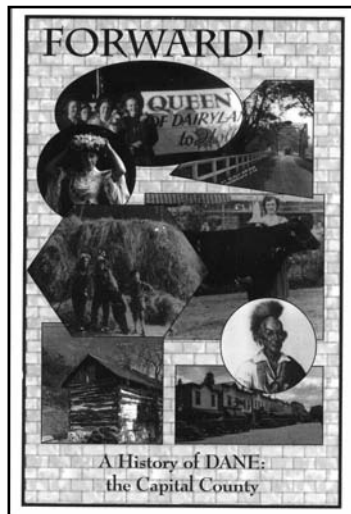
- Randall/Doris Montague

Publications

Consider ordering one of the two publications for sale by Dane County Historical Society.

These Make GREAT Gifts!

FORWARD! A History of Dane: the Capital County



FORWARD! traces the history of Dane County through the twentieth century. Researched and written by Allen Ruff and Tracy Will. The first published history of Dane County in nearly 100 years is replete with fascinating details and historical photographs.

412 pages; complete index, maps, photos.

\$29.95 (\$26.95 for DCHS members!!)

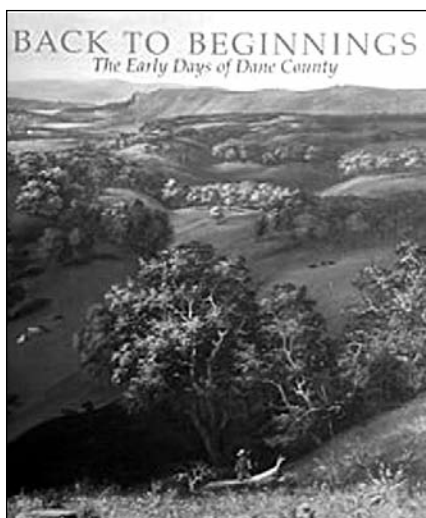
DCHC Members _____ copies @ **\$26.95** each \$ _____

OR

Non-Members _____ copies @ **\$29.95** each \$ _____

Shipping & Handling: Add \$3.00 per copy \$ _____

Back to Beginnings: The Early Days of Dane County: A Book for Children



Published by the Dane County Cultural Affairs Commission for the Wisconsin Sesquicentennial in 1998, the book highlights major developments in county history, from pre-settlement days through the Civil War. Bobbie Malone, writer; Greg Anderson, photographer
60 pages; early maps, color photographs, drawings, engravings.

\$12.00 (\$9.00 for DCHS members!!)

DCHC Members _____ copies @ **\$9.00** each \$ _____

OR

Non-Members _____ copies @ **\$12.00** each \$ _____

Shipping & Handling: Add \$3.00 per copy \$ _____

TOTAL ENCLOSED \$ _____

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3101 Lake Farm Road
Madison, WI 53711

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Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Dane County Historical Society
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Madison, WI 53711

Return Service Requested

Please check your mailing label. If it says 2009, then you have not renewed your membership in DCHS. Please renew now!! If it says COUR, you are receiving this Courtesy Copy of the newsletter as a friend of the Society

Non Profit Organization U.S. Postage Paid Madison, WI Permit No. 1
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President's Message from Mary Clark



Mary Clark

If you are reading this message, then I know that you probably love history and place as much as I do. I am a life-long resident of Dane County; having been born in Madison, just a short distance from the DCHS headquarters at the Lussier Family Heritage Center. I have been president of the Dane County Historical Society since 2005. As president, I never miss an opportunity to ask members, friends, acquaintances and sometimes even bystanders to help us preserve and promote the story of Dane County.

Dane County Historical Society has a great story and tradition itself. The society was founded in 1961, by a group of very determined and fairly prestigious local movers and shakers in the county. The charter meeting of the Dane County Historical Society was held on February 13, 1961 at the Dane County Fairgrounds. It is reported that over one hundred people attended that first meeting. Here we are almost 50 years later, and the Society's main focus remains the same.

The coming year, 2010, promises to be an exciting one for DCHS. But we need everyone's help to ensure that DCHS can continue to live up to its past and to its current mission and goals.

So ... if you are looking for somewhere to volunteer where you can share your love of history, won't you consider volunteering with the Dane County Historical Society? You can help us collect, preserve and re-tell the stories of Dane County for the next generation.

OR ... if you have papers, documents, scrapbooks, maps, photos, stories, time, effort or money to contribute, please contact us! I encourage you to thoughtfully consider the Dane County Historical Society as an important part of your charitable planning. We appreciate those who made donations in 2009. A full list of donors is included in this issue. Those donations will help us with our operating expenses and allow us to implement more projects this year.

AND ... if you have not already done so, please take a moment to renew your membership today so you can continue to enrich your life with history while supporting the programs that ensure the preservation of the story of Dane County.

The Dane County Historical Society Newsletter is published quarterly (Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter), by the Dane County Historical Society and printed by The Printing Place. Submissions are due 15 days prior to publication. Reader reviews, testimonials, flak and flattery, are also welcome. Send to: DCHS Newsletter, 3101 Lake Farm Rd. Madison, WI 53711. E-mail: dchs@danecountyhistory.org Mary Clark, President, Howard Sherpe, Editor, Dane County Historical Society
