

DANE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER



The Dane County Historical Society Office and the Otto Schroeder Records Center are located on the lower level of the Lussier Family Heritage Center, 3101 Lake Farm Road just south of the Beltline near Lake Waubesa.

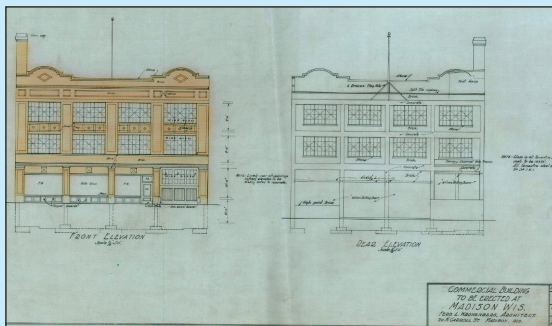
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Dane County Historical Society - 2023 Annual Appeal

A couple of years back, we asked for your help in digitizing our collections, and boy, did you all pull through. We raised over \$1800. And it made a big difference in what we have since accomplished. For one, we have digitized the Ferdinand Kronenberg Collection of 1500+ Architectural Drawings and are now doing the same for the Martin P. Schneider Architectural Drawings Collection.



And more recently, we posted the collection of The Madison Mirror on Recollection Wisconsin. Before, it was on an older website that didn't allow for keyword searches. The Madison Mirror was the student newspaper for Central High School, which closed in 1968. These will be available online very soon.

Our primary focus now is working with Historic Madison Inc. and the Madison Public Library to digitize the audio files for the 60 oral histories HMI conducted in the 1980s and 90s. These will be combined with the written transcripts HMI developed, which will be a real boon for future researchers. We look forward to a dedication ceremony to celebrate the hard work of our partner institutions and the UW-Madison student Chloe Foor, our stalwart on this project.

With your support, DCHS will continue digitizing our best collections. Our next step is to upload the audio files to Recollections Wisconsin's website, where they will be combined with the transcripts HMI developed.

We are also raising funds for an overhead scanner (\$700) to scan some of our larger format books and items. The DCHS has several scrapbooks we believe the public wants to see. For one, we have three newspaper scrapbooks compiled by Walter Scott, a local historian and avid conservationist. Scott chronicled the controversy over creating the Cherokee Marsh Conservation Park with several years of newspaper clippings.

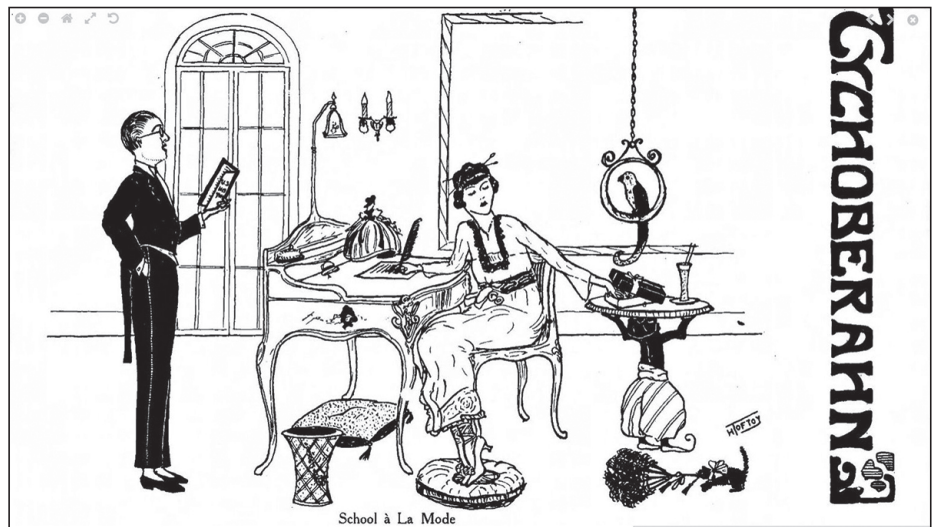
For those interested in seeing what we've digitized so far and want to check out our webpage on Recollection Wisconsin, click on the QR code to the right. For those who want to support our goals, please consider adding a gift when you renew your membership for 2024. Thank you!



Holger Nelson Toftoy Madison's Rocket Boy

The City of Madison has had its share of notables. Curiously, few know of Holger Nelson Toftoy, the man primarily responsible for creating the U.S. Army's missile program, which ultimately led to the establishment of NASA and our nation's space program.

Born in Illinois in 1902, Toftoy grew up with his aunt and uncle in Madison in a house on Spaight Street, which is still extant (see below). Toftoy grew up with both an artistic and technical bent. When he was 12 years old, he built a small car in his basement, using bicycle parts and a small engine he scrounged. He attended Madison's Central High School, class of 1920. The class yearbook included some of his artwork. He attended the University of Wisconsin, Madison, for two years enrolled in the ROTC program there before securing an appointment to the West Point Military Academy. While there, he scored high in rifle and pistol shooting. His artwork again adorned the 1926 yearbook. He also designed the class crest and served on the ring committee. His classmates nicknamed him "Ludy," a play on his Norwegian heritage, even though his family never ate lutefisk.



After graduating from West Point, he attended flight school at Brook Field in Texas. However, a few landing mishaps, coupled with an ill-advised stunt of flying his Curtis Jenny inverted at 100 feet over his home to wave at his newly acquired bride, led to the Army telling him that flying was not in his future. He moved on to the coastal artillery, serving in Hawaii and Panama. By the 1930s, he moved over to working with submarine mines, and with the outbreak of World War II, found himself in France in July 1944, where he was placed in charge of clearing the mines from Cherbourg harbor in Normandy.

Toftoy cont.

As a full colonel in the U.S. Army, he had a fulfilling, though largely average, military career. The late summer of 1944 would be a turning point for him. Having now transferred to the Ordnance Corps, Toftoy was assigned to form teams to round up and examine German military equipment. If you ever saw the movie "Monuments Men," you will have a sense of what they did. They traveled about the battlefield, armed with personal weapons and a "go-anywhere" identification card. They wrote intelligence summaries for everything from motorcycles to the super heavy King Tiger tank, complete with photographs and sketches. But in April 1945, he and his teams received their most challenging assignment yet. They were tasked with locating as many German V-2 missiles as they could find, along with the research scientists who created them.

Toftoy found the missiles at the Mittelwerk facility buried deep in the Harz Mountains in central Germany: his assistant, Maj. James Hamill went south into the German Alps looking for the scientists, rumored to be hunkered down in a mountain chalet. Near Obersalzberg, Hamill found Wernher von Braun and many of his fellow scientists. As for Toftoy, he located the parts to reconstruct up to 100 V-2s and a large cache of secret documents buried nearby. Strictly speaking, Toftoy was supposed to share this information directly with America's British and Soviet allies, but he disregarded these instructions, loaded everything, and shipped it to the West.

Toftoy immediately understood the value of both the missiles and the scientists and, after the war, worked passionately to get both transferred to the United States. The parts for the missiles came first, and testing began at White Sands Proving Ground in New Mexico, later renamed White Sands Missile Range (WSMR). White Sands had been established in part as a testing site for the atomic bomb program, and its remote location made it perfect for highly-sensitive missile research. With the V-2s in place, the scientists soon followed, and von Braun and most of his team were housed on the site. Toftoy realized that the best way to get these scientists to offer their best effort was to locate their families in Germany and help bring them to America.

Post-war budget constraints were holding back the Army's rocket program. Toftoy appealed directly to Congress, convincing them to move the missile program's headquarters to Redstone Arsenal in northern Alabama. Von Braun and his team and their families settled in Huntsville, birthing the American rocketry and space program. Toftoy was now at the pinnacle of his career, managing millions of dollars and top-secret research as a general officer. However, in the late 1950s, internal Army politics led to another general being placed over the Army's missile program, ultimately launching our first satellite, Explorer I. Nevertheless, Toftoy's efforts led to America's space program. Moreover, nearly every missile used by the U.S. Army, including some of the most recent, was initially developed under his watch.

After permanently receiving his second star, backdated to 1955, he took command of Aberdeen Proving Ground, MD. He retired in 1960 for recurring health reasons and passed away after a round of surgery to deal with these issues in 1967. Toftoy was known for being technically sound and a delight to work for. Managerially, he had a light touch yet could get the most out of others. Despite his remarkable career, his influence on the U.S. Army and America's space program remains unknown.



Hello! My name is Chloe, and I am a senior at the University of Wisconsin, where I am studying History, Computer Science, and Information Science! Since January, I have had the incredible opportunity to work as a Digital Specialist with the Dane County Historical Society. In the months since then, I have spent most of my time working on digitizing two projects: the Kronenberg Architectural Drawing Collection and the Historic Madison's Oral History Project. Digitizing historical materials is time-consuming, but I am happy to share that the Ferdinand Kronenberg Project is complete! All his drawings can now be seen on the DCHS webpage on the Recollection Wisconsin website.

However, there are still more things to do for the oral history project. So far, we have converted over 60 original audio cassettes to digital audio files and developed metadata and keywords to help researchers find the digitized interviews. All the interviews also include typed transcripts. However, we must still upload them to RW's content management system. Soon, they will be accessible to everyone.

Oral history is a super important part of history because it provides a personal perspective on history's events from those who experienced it first-hand. Written sources often only get preserved if someone deems them important enough to write down and preserve; oral histories allow us to peer into people's day-to-day lives, understanding the events and topics they think important. Through oral history, we gain a more personal and subjective interpretation of history, which, if not preserved, we would lose as soon as the interviewee was no longer around. With these oral histories specifically, we can hear in a human voice about Madison in the 20th century from a mayor, a librarian, a doctor, and more!

We are close to finishing this digitization project but still need one final push! All 60 interviews have been digitized and are now available on the Dane County Historical Society's YouTube channel. The next step is to upload them to Recollection Wisconsin to make them even easier to find. The Dane County Historical Society is planning an event in collaboration with the Madison Public Library and Historic Madison to celebrate the digitization of these collections. We are excited to share these collections with you and look forward to digitizing even more collections!

Haney's Tavern Historical Marker Gets a Makeover

In September 2022, County Supervisor Dave Ripp emailed us that the Haney's Tavern historical marker needed some work. Dave had received a call from the Cross Plains Knights of Columbus that a cross support needed replacement and that Loreen Hoff, a carpenter, was willing to do it.

They asked that the marker be repainted, which we have since done. One person passing by while it was being repainted made a point of stopping by and thanking us and saying how much better it looks with a new coat of paint.

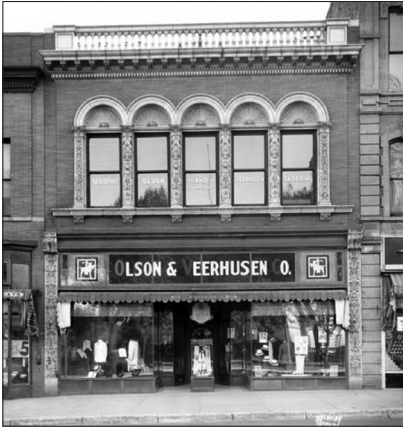


Before

This marker dates to 1973. Haney's Tavern is one of Dane County's oldest buildings. The historical marker was originally erected by Ray Virnig, President of the Cross Plains-Berry Historical Society, his son Robert, John Dallman, DCHS curator, and Eddie Hildebrand, member of the village board.



After the marker uprights & cross piece were painted by the Dane County Historical Society this past summer



1934 photo by Angus McVicar shows the exterior of the Olson and Veerhusen men's store and tailoring shop located at North Pinckney Street on Madison's Capitol Square.

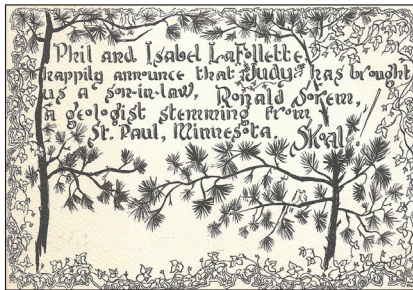
Long-time Madisonians will remember the venerable Olson and Veerhusen menswear store, North Pinckney Street on Capitol Square. The firm was founded in 1877 by T. Olson, G. R. Windon, and Herman J. Veerhusen. In 2019, family descendent Dale Veerhusen gave the Society a collection of materials from the Veerhusen family, which we have just cataloged.

The collection consists of a scrapbook, newspaper clippings, and photographs that Herman Veerhusen's daughter, Vera Veerhusen Ford, collected between 1930 and 1954. The scrapbook is charmingly titled "Portraits of Some Persons We Like and Others Who Merely Amuse Us." Vera and her husband Joseph lived on an estate with extensive flower beds in Maple Bluff. Her collection, a veritable

"Who's Who of Madison," chronicles the weddings, parties, homes, and social events that were enjoyed by the town and gown communities of Madison.

A quick search of the Otto Schroeder Records and Archives Center catalog uncovered a photograph and clippings about the Olson and Veerhusen store that had been donated by Ann Waidelich. The photo of a vintage truck parked beside a 1930s airplane was curious, especially because the plane bore the sign "Cooper's Jockey Shorts."

The plane was bringing an emergency shipment of the latest menswear craze. After seeing a postcard of a European man in a bikini-style bathing suit, Cooper's designer created a Y-front brief. Cooper's advertised their innovation so cleverly that when the product hit the markets in 1935, stores everywhere experienced rushes. Marshall Fields in Chicago sold 30,000 pairs in three months.



Wedding announcement from Phil and Isabel LaFollette announcing Judy, their daughter's wedding to Ronald Sorem from the Veerhusen scrapbook.



Photo of Plane with jockey shorts delivery.

It was no different for Olson and Veerhusen. After the new product was announced in a small newspaper ad on Thursday, February 21, the stock sold out at 50 cents a pair within a few hours on Friday morning. Olson and Veerhusen immediately sent C. J. Burrowbridge, the company secretary, in an airplane to the plant in Kenosha where jockeys were manufactured. With a fresh supply, pilot Howard Morey (see sidebar for more) brought the plane back to Madison at 2 o'clock that afternoon.

Interestingly, Olson is spelled differently on the plane (Olson) and truck (Olsen). The truck uses the original Norwegian spelling, while the plane displays the word "Olson." At some point, the company adopted the alternative spelling that had become more common in America.

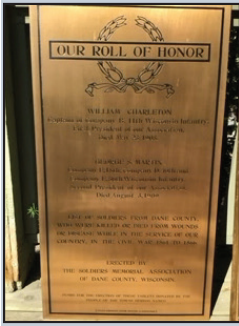
Howard A. Morey

When Olson and Veerhusen required an emergency shipment of jockey shorts, they turned to aviation pioneer Howard A. Morey. Considered to be the father of the aviation industry in Wisconsin, Morey started Pennco Airport in Madison in 1926. In 1927 he became chief pilot of Royal Airways. Royal Airways was the first local airport with permanent buildings, offering the first scheduled flights from Madison to Chicago, Sunday trips to the Wisconsin Dells, and private service to destinations across the US. Morey left Royal Airways in 1931 and founded Morey Airplane Company in 1932. That company provided a variety of services, including taxi service, general airplane repair, rides, and instructions for pilots. After managing the Madison Municipal Airport (now Dane County Regional Airport) from 1938 - 1942, Morey started the Morey Airport in Middleton. Morey's childhood home in Birchwood WI has been donated to the Birchwood Area Historical Society to preserve the memory of Howard Morey.



Howard Morey posing in an airplane that advertised Pennco Oil, his distributorship of Waco airplanes, and his flying school. Two women sit in front of him. Painted below his cockpit are the words: "Learn to fly with Morey."

Dane County Civil War Memorial Tablets



The Dane County Historical Society is raising funding to restore the 20 bronze Civil War memorial tablets it has in its possession. The tablets list the 722 names of Dane County soldiers who died during and just after the Civil War. The names are grouped by city or town.

One tablet so far has been fully restored and demonstrates what they can look like again.

Each tablet will cost \$450 to restore, so the total cost will be \$9,000. Including a pledge of \$5000 to match any incoming donations, we have received a total of \$6,875 so far.

9 of the 20 tablets have already been “adopted.” We need to raise an additional \$2,125 to restore the remaining 11 tablets. To the left are some images of tablets that need to be adopted.



If you want to see the tablets for yourself, we can bring them to your location. Or if you’d rather, feel free to visit us at our office in the Lussier Family Heritage Center in Lake Farm Park.

Contact us at danecountyhistory@gmail.com to find out more and make arrangements to see the tablets for yourself.

Two Sun Prairie Historical Organizations Merge

On February 2, 2023, while the rest of the City was celebrating Groundhog Day, Sun Prairie Historical Restorations (Crosse House) signed paperwork to merge with the Sun Prairie Historical Society. All Sun Prairie Historical Restorations (SPHRI) assets, including the Dr. Charles G. Crosse house, were transferred to the Sun Prairie Historical Society (SPHSI). The merger came with SPHRI’s dissolution, effective the same date.

The Crosse House’s land was transferred from Sun Prairie Utilities, a City of Sun Prairie entity, to SPHRI in January 2023. The remainder of the block is being demolished following the 2018 gas leak explosion on the corner. The Crosse House suffered only minor damage, mostly to windows and cracks in the plaster walls.



In October 2022, the SPHRI was awarded a \$25,000 America Rescue Plan Act grant to upgrade the House and the Society before December 2024. Then, a Facade Improvement Grant grant from the City of Sun Prairie enabled the Historical Society to build a new porch. The old porch was in poor condition, and safety was a factor. Now, the trim work needs painting, and volunteers are needed to help.

The Sun Prairie Historical Society recently acquired the Suburban Studio Photographic Collection, which includes 250 shoebox-size boxes of negatives, prints, and slides. It is currently housed at the Crosse House. Fortunately, the collection includes a directory that describes the subject of thousands of photos contained in the collection. While most photos are portraits, some are of local events and gatherings. The initial reason for accepting this donation after the Sun Prairie Museum turned it down was to digitize the entire collection and to return items to those in the collection.

The Historical Society is interested in having educational, historical, and other events at the Crosse House. They also allow small groups interested in renting (about 40-50 seating spaces). This provides an additional income to the non-profit Society because membership dues, donations, and fundraisers solely support it. Membership is a reasonable \$20 per year, with family memberships \$25 per year. There are also Sponsorship levels available as well.

SPSHI seeks individuals interested in preserving, learning, and sharing area history and welcomes new members! Committee and Board positions and fun ways to volunteer are available.

Dane County Historical Society 2024 MEMBERSHIP FORM

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

☐ Renewing Member

☐ New Member

Levels of Membership (check only ONE)

<input type="checkbox"/> Student, w/valid student ID	\$15.00	<input type="checkbox"/> Aldo Leopold	\$100.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Individual Membership	\$25.00	<input type="checkbox"/> Thornton Wilder	\$250.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Family Membership	\$40.00	<input type="checkbox"/> Eston Hemings Jefferson	\$500.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Business/Professional Membership	\$50.00	<input type="checkbox"/> Belle LaFollette	\$1,000.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Golden Membership	\$50.00	<input type="checkbox"/> Frank Lloyd Wright	\$2,500.00

I am enclosing an extra donation of \$ _____ in addition to my membership.

If you would like to designate your gift to a specific use other than our general fund, please let us know here:

Donations to DCHS in memory of loved ones are an excellent way to help our non-profit 501(c)(3) organization.

**Make checks payable to & mail to:
Dane County Historical Society
3101 Lake Farm Road
Madison, WI 53711**

Please answer the following questions by checking the appropriate boxes.

How would like to receive the newsletter: ☐ Mail ☐ E-mail

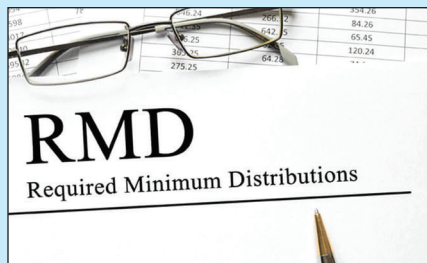
Would you like to receive an email reminder about special events?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Dane County Historical Society
3101 Lake Farm Rd.
Madison, WI 53711

Address Service Requested

Required Minimum Distributions



A great way to save taxes and support the Dane County Historical Society is by donating your Required Minimum Distributions. Required Minimum Distributions (RMDs) are minimum amounts that IRA, Inherited IRA, and some retirement plan account owners must withdraw annually starting with the year you reach age 72. You avoid paying taxes on the withdrawal by donating your RMD directly to a 501(c)3, such as the Dane County Historical Society. If you want to learn more, please contact us at danecountyhistory@gmail.com.