



# ***SPIRIT*** *of Geneva Lakes*



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NOVEMBER 2024

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### ON THE COVER

Autumn is a time of seasonal change that includes Thanksgiving, when many celebrate the harvest by sharing a meal with family or friends. Some choose to give to others by volunteering at a community dinner or by delivering meals. Regardless, this timely advice from Maya Angelou is worth sharing: "Be present in all things, and thankful for all things."

FILE PHOTO *Spirit of Geneva Lakes*



# IT'S COMIN' UP NOVEMBER EVENTS

**1, 2 Yerkes Candlelight Walk** from 6:45 to 9:30 p.m., take a nighttime stroll through more than 2,000 candles. The wild, yet manicured Olmsted landscape will be illuminated like an autumnal constellation.

Free trolley rides will be available to and from Williams Bay School. There will be fun space stations along the garden trails, and the spacey gift shop and big dome will be open inside.

The cost is \$15 for adults 19 and older, \$10 for 18 and younger. Yerkes Observatory is at 373 W. Geneva St., Williams Bay. For more information, visit [yerkesobservatory.org](http://yerkesobservatory.org).

**1, 2 Tristan Crist Magic Show** Magic, comedy and illusions in an entertaining performance starring award-winning illusionist, Tristan Crist. The Tristan Crist Magic Theatre is rated Lake Geneva's top attraction and No. 1 Show on TripAdvisor!

New illusions added every year. Come see what all the buzz is about! Large illusions, theatrical lighting, concessions, drinks, and an appearing helicopter make this Lake Geneva's premiere live performance option!

November shows are scheduled for the following dates: Nov. 1, 2, 8, 9, 15, 16, 22, 23, 27, 29, 30. The shows are in the evening but time vary (generally are either 5 or 7 p.m.)

Tickets are \$48 and can be purchased online at <https://lakegenemagic.com/>, or by calling the box office at 262-248-0505.

Tristan Crist Magic Theater is at 100 N. Edwards Blvd., Lake Geneva.

**2 Family Fun Tour** Tours begin at 10:15 a.m. Saturdays (please arrive 15 minutes early) at The Hill Valley Cheese Shop and Cheese Bar, 512 Broad St., Lake Geneva.

Up to 16 attendees in each group will take a walk throughout downtown Lake Geneva and enjoy many of the area's delicious food offerings. Along the way, hear interesting stories about history, mansions, shopping, gangsters, and of course, the Lake Geneva walking path.

Tour cost is \$79.99 per person and reservations must be made a week in advance. For more information or to make a reservation, visit [lakegenevatours.org](http://lakegenevatours.org) or call 262-470-7141.

**9, 10 Holiday Open House** Discover the "Heart of the Holidays" at the Cornerstone Shop and Gallery's biggest event of the year - the annual Holiday Open House on Nov. 9 and 10.

Get inspired for the holidays as you stroll through the Cornerstone Shop's beautifully and festively decorated rooms filled with treasures for your home, your family - and you!

Arrive early and take home a Swag Bag (while supplies last) or a beautiful gift from one of the many drawings throughout the Open House.

Chat with designers who will be delighted to share their expertise in holiday decor, stunning tablescape, and treasures that will enhance your home.

Listen to holiday music while meeting the many special guests who will be there each day.

The Shop's Holiday Open House is the perfect way to be jolly with friends and families as the holidays begin.

Cornerstone Shop & Gallery is at 214 Broad St., Lake Geneva. For more information, call 262-248-6988 or visit [cornerstonelakegeneva.com](http://cornerstonelakegeneva.com).

**15 Dance Party** If there's a Swiftie in the family, join this magical night of sing-alongs and dance parties with Shake It Off. This family-friendly Taylor Swift Tribute experience will be at 7 p.m., Friday, Nov. 15 at Geneva Stage, 244 Broad St., Lake Geneva. Tickets are \$20 and can be purchased online by visiting [genevastage.com](http://genevastage.com), under the Tickets tab.

**20 America's Pub Quiz** Grab your friends, invite that smart guy from the office, and come take a break with some great food and drink at one of Lake City Social, 111 Center St., Lake Geneva. Wednesdays at 7 p.m., and free. According to organizers, "Once you play along with America's Pub Quiz, you'll be back!"

**22 Lakeside Laughs Comedy Night** Leave your cares at the door for this evening of comedy at the Abbey Resort with amazing comedians hosted by Jose Montero. On Nov. 22, doors open at 6:30 p.m. and the show starts at 7 p.m., and organizers say guests will leave with their sides aching from laughter. Cash bar will be available, and guests must be 21 or older to attend. Tickets are \$20 plus tax and can be purchased on the website at [theabbeyresort.com](http://theabbeyresort.com) (go to the menu, then scroll down and select "Events calendar.")

**23 Ladies' Day** Round up your besties and get ready for a day of pure fun at Staller Estate Vineyard & Winery, W8896 County Highway A, Delavan. It's time to sip on delicious wine and cocktails, munch on charcuterie, enjoy candles, bouquet making, and coaster painting, and stroll through the winery, checking out a variety of vendors. The event will take place Nov. 23 and Staller is open from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. For more information visit [stallerestate.com](http://stallerestate.com).

The calendar of events is compiled from a variety of sources including area chambers of commerce and visitor bureaus and contains events available as of press time.

Dates and times may change, and events may be canceled. Please verify details and locations prior to making plans.

## THE SPIRIT

IS A PUBLICATION OF



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## THE SPIRIT

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NEW LISTING

**W5712 North Dr, Elkhorn** - Completely remodeled in 2020 with expansive views down Middle Lake on 92' of frontage you'll find this 3 Bd, 2 Bath Ranch with walk-out lower level to huge lakeside patio. As you enter you're greeted by the lake with vaulted ceilings throughout the main level and wall of sliding glass doors leading to wrap around deck. Kitchen boasting of Quartz counter tops and backsplash, Kitchen Aid SS appl, Quartz waterfall island with bar stool seating adjoining LR, and dinette. Bd and full bath with heated floors and clear glass shower complete the main level. As you enter the LL you have a beverage center with Quartz top, beverage refrig and Ice maker. Also, you'll find 2nd & 3rd BD, full bath with glass shower and laundry closet. Two 9x12 sheds one lakeside with lakeside yard leading to the pier **\$1,099,700**



NEW LISTING

**W5742 North Dr, Elkhorn** - Why go through the hassle of building when this 2023 custom built 4 Plus Bedroom, 3.5 bath two story is ready to enjoy. Situated on 75' of Middle lake frontage you'll find this open concept main level with wall of windows lakeside. Inside Kitchen offers everything the discriminating chef would demand and ultimate living and dining space with gas fireplace, custom wet-bar and deck access. Master Bdrm ensuite with breathtaking lake views offering double vanity, large tile shower and ample walk-in closet. Family room walk-out with gas fireplace, full bath, work-out room or Bdrm, 4th bdrm and screened porch. Kitchen also features large island/breakfast bar with Delkton countertops and Zline Autograph appliances. Outside fireplace and level lakefront yard by pier and storage shed. **\$1,659,700**



NEW LISTING

**W5357 Lauderdale Dr, Elkhorn** - The Iconic Lauderdale Lakes home, "The Boathouse" on Deakin Isle is situated on 192' of premier shoreline. Rebuilt in 2015 to its original 1915 Jazz Age glory, this 4 bedroom, 3.5 bath home is bursting with historical details and architectural styles. Ballroom features 1,200 sq ft with original hard rock maple floors, unique hanging Meiji era Japanese lanterns, with the original Opium Den prepped for a future hidden wine cellar. All 3 Lauderdale Lakes are visible from numerous vantage points throughout the four levels. Kitchen features custom marble countertops, farm sink, Wolf & Sub-Zero appliances. Master BR ensuite with luxury freestanding tub, full steam room, and private deck with fireplace. A finished swim basin provides access to the marquee wet boathouse w/ underwater lighting. **\$4,499,700**



NEW LISTING

**N5458 County Rd H, Elkhorn** - Welcome to an incredible country setting on 6.43 acres with water view within minutes from Elkhorn, you'll find a 3 BD, 2 Bath Ranch home zoned A-2. Living room with fireplace that features hardwood floors that flow into the dining room. Eat-in kitchen adjoined to Family Room with vaulted ceiling, fireplace and access to cement patio that leads you to 16 x 40 heated in-ground pool with storage shed. Master Bdrm suite with full bath and double closet. Also 2nd and 3rd Bdrm with full bath finish off the main level. Lower-level Rec-Room with classic bar & back bar, Large laundry room, plus ample storage & outside access. Outstanding outside features include, inground-pool, fenced Tennis/Pickle ball court, 23 x 30 Pole Barn with cement floor and 10 x 19 shed with loft. This place has it ALL! **\$469,700**



NEW PRICE

**214 N Church St, Elkhorn** - Classic Brick Two Story on Church St within walking distance to all the restaurants, Elkhorn square and Fairgrounds activities. This 4 Bedroom, 2 full bath is awaiting its new owners personal touches. Hardwood floors on main level. Situated on .50 acre lot offering a ton of outside entertaining possibilities. Spend evenings on the large covered front porch. Also you'll find a two car detached garage and 4 garden sheds. **\$274,900**



LAKE ACCESS

**33706 Fern Dr, Burlington** - Located on a corner lot you'll find this 3 BD, 2.5 Bath 1.5 Story Bohner's lake access home. Inside features include open concept with eat-in kitchen with dinette with sliding glass door to private patio with hot tub. Ktch is open to the LR, Master BD suite on 2nd floor with full bath and tile shower, large closet and sliding glass door to balcony. Family room also on 2nd floor with sliding glass door to balcony. Finished 34 x 24 Man cave garage with 10ft ceilings insulated and heated with 1/2 bath, bar and access to 14 x 20 cement patio. On the main level there's 2nd and 3rd bedroom, full bath and laundry room. Large storage shed and cement driveway. Short drive to lakefront park and beach with picnic area. Must See make your appointment today! **\$379,700**

# THE ART OF papermaking

by Sandra  
Landen Machaj  
CORRESPONDENT

## Program at Lake Geneva Public Library shares history, process

For most of us, paper is an important part of our lives. It seems to be everywhere – from paper towels and napkins in our kitchens to pages of notes and bills in the office. Paper is also what our books, letters, and even our money and important documents are created from.

According to the Wisconsin Historic Society, “Every historic speech, novel, poem, quote, and document was born on paper.”

While this was true for many generations, today not everything begins on paper. With the use of computers, all these important pieces of history may begin on the computer screen, but if it is something important, it will eventually be printed on paper. So, it may not start on paper as it did in days of old, but somehow, it does end up there.

Have you ever wondered what exactly is paper? Where does it come from? What is it made from?

To help us understand more, the Wisconsin Historic Society, in collaboration with the Lake Geneva Public Library, provided a program open to adults and children that share the history about paper and unlocked some of the secrets of papermaking.

“The program, which was held at the Lake Geneva Public Library along with this year’s History Makers Program, was a collaborative event,” shared Mallory Hanson, of the Wisconsin Historical Society. “The funds were obtained from the Institute of Museum and Library Services to fund the paper making program by Ellen Ward Packard, Community Engagement Librarian of the Lake Geneva Public Library.”



The screen is dipped in the softened fiber to create a sheet of paper.

COURTESY HEATHER KOHLMEIER/WISCONSIN HISTORICAL SOCIETY *Spirit of Geneva Lakes*

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## Review of the history

The program began in the library, with Madison-based textile artist Heather Kohlmeier sharing the history of papermaking with the group gathered there.

"Handmade paper has been made all over the world for over 2,000 years," began Kohlmeier, as she started to share the history of paper to the mixed audience of adults and children. "It was originally in China that paper was born. It was attributed that Ts'ai Lun of China invented paper."

The first question Kohlmeier tossed out to the audience was, "What is paper?"

She then went on to explain that basically, paper is a thin sheet of fiber.

In the early days, this fiber was mostly cellulose in nature made from bark or fiber. This fiber was soaked in water until it softened. The material would also be softened using a mortar and pestle to break down the fibers. The fibers would then be beaten until it would separate into filaments. Additional water would be added.

When rags were used to create paper sheets, the rags would be beaten with sticks called beaters in a procedure that was known as couching. Once the cellulose matter was sufficiently softened, screens would be placed in the mixture, and then the screen would be removed from the mixture and the water was allowed to drain out before the thin sheet of paper was removed from the screen and allowed to dry.

The creation of paper remained in China for about 500 years before it began to be produced in other countries, primarily Korea, Japan, Central Asia, and Persia. According to Kohlmeier, Japan made the better-quality paper.

One of the main uses for paper was for communication. The first attempts, using the rough papers that were produced in the early days and the rudimentary writing utensils, did not offer a polished writing surface or easily read writing.

Calligraphy was a fancy method of writing, which came from the Greek words for beauty and to write.

According to Kohlmeier, it was the development of the camel-hair brushes that required better surface papers to write more legibly. And as calligraphy became more popular, there was a greater demand for fancier paper and writing instruments.

## Learning how it's made

The process of creating paper did not arrive in Europe until the 12th century, first in Southern Italy and Spain. Later, it spread to other European countries, such as England and Holland.

Papermaking became more important as the need for more paper increased with the invention of the printing press.

With the printing press, books were no



**above:** A variety of color pigments can be added to the sheet of paper that is being created.

SANDRA  
LANDEN MACHAJ  
*Spirit of Geneva Lakes*

**at left:** To reduce the water retained in it, the sheet of paper is pressed.

COURTESY HEATHER  
KOHLMEIER/  
WISCONSIN  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
*Spirit of Geneva Lakes*



longer handwritten but could be printed at a faster rate than the handwritten books. Although most people did not know how to read at that time, with the presence of more printed materials, learning to read became more prominent.

As the means of making paper advanced, additional materials were used. Old clothing became popular in the 1300 and continued until the 1800s. The old clothing was fermented to break down the fibers, making the clothing fibers softer and increasing the quality of the paper produced. It was the European paper makers who began to create paper made from linen for a finer quality paper.

As Kohlmeier finished her history of paper, she directed the group to move outside to the patio, where she continued sharing insights into the creation of paper. As the group listened, she demonstrated the proper way to create a piece of paper, using the equipment at hand.

There were various techniques, including making sure that the fiber is well softened and spread equally through the pan. Then the screened frames are lowered into the pan, and an even spread of the mixture across the screen will produce the best sheet of paper.

The sheets were then allowed to drain the excess water before they were removed from the frames and placed on a sheet to dry. There were several methods to release the water from the sheet of paper.

One such method was the use of a press, which Kohlmeier demonstrated, placing the sheet of paper in the press much like a vise and tightening it until the water is removed. Ellen Ward Packard demonstrated another method of drying the sheet of paper by ironing it.

Color can be added to the sheets of paper using special dyes. The color can be added to create a one-tone sheet of paper, or it can be added in a design using one or several colors.

## Giving it a try

It was time for some of the visitors to try their hands at becoming papermakers. A combination of adults and children were present and given chance to create their own sheets of paper using the method that had been demonstrated.

Some seemed to do it quite easily, while others struggled, especially in taking the sheets off the screen and getting them onto the drying sheets. The screens needed to be turned upside down and gently tapped to

**top:** Ellen Ward Packard explains the process of softening rags or bark in the Hollander Beater for use in producing paper. **at right:** Color designs can be added to sheets and color dye can be used to decorate the paper.

SANDRA LANDEN MACHAJ *Spirit of Geneva Lakes*



release the paper sheet.

People gathered around the bottles of color as the decision was made as to what color to use and how to apply it. The colored papers created were all different – some with very intricate designs – and all stood around comparing their specially created sheets of paper.

Back to the history, England was making large supplies of paper by the end of the 15th century and supplied paper to the American colonies. It was in 1690 that William Rittenhouse created the first U.S. paper mill near Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Rittenhouse had been an apprentice papermaker in Holland. When he opened his mill, he used the same methods he had learned in Europe of using old rags and clothing to create paper. Since cloth was in short supply as even old clothing was repurposed, it was often difficult to have enough rags for the amount of paper they wished to produce.

Today, most paper mills are again using pulp from trees, so it may not be surprising that the Wisconsin Institute for Sustainable Technology at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point found that Wisconsin ranks first in the number of paper mills in a state. New York, Massachusetts, California, and Washington round out the rest of the top five states with the most paper mills in the country.



**above:** Ironing the sheet of paper helps to flatten it out smoothly and removes extra water that may be present.

SANDRA LANDEN MACHAJ  
*Spirit of Geneva Lakes*



**at left:** Heather Kohlmeier instructs a group about the papermaking process.

COURTESY HEATHER KOHLMEIER/WISCONSIN HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
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SANDRA LANDEN MACHAJ, Spirit of Geneva Lakes

# All aboard

Guest sit aboard a train during the recent Harvest Fest, which travels from East Troy to Elegant Farmer in Mukwonago.

# the East Troy Electric Railroad

by **Sandra  
Landen Machaj**  
CORRESPONDENT

“All aboard,” the conductor of the East Troy Electric Railroad said as passengers made their way onto the train for the morning ride.

The trip from the station in East Troy to Mukwonago takes about 30 minutes. The mixed group of passengers included adults, teens, and children – some of whom had never ridden a train before. Faces lit up with excitement, and perhaps, a bit of trepidation. Older riders were enjoying a ride on the train, as many had years before when transportation for work or shopping was done by train.

With everyone seated, the train whistle blew and the train slowly moved out of the station, making its way down the track. The conductor, a volunteer with a love for the railroad, made his way down

the center of the train, checking tickets and sharing tidbits of information about the history of electric railroads and the individual cars that are now in service on the East Troy Electric Railroad.

Many of the train cars are those that served on the various railways of Wisconsin and Chicago lines. The cars have been refurbished by the East Troy Railroad Museum and are kept in safe running condition by the staff. Some of the cars are 100 years old, so riding them is truly a step into the past.

A ride on a railroad can be a pleasant and relaxing experience. The soft, gentle rocking of the train often puts people to sleep as the train makes its way. People have shared stories of when they took the train to work, they would sometimes miss

their stop because they had dozed off.

“We would have to get off the train at the stop where we woke up and take a train back to the stop we should have exited the train,” said John McAllen, of Chicago. “Sometimes I would be late to work if the return trains were not as frequent as the ones into the city.”

For Luke and Erica, two Milwaukee college students, this was an exciting weekend trip, as neither had been on a train before.

“We heard this was the first day of apple picking at the Elegant Farmer, so we decided this would be a fun weekend trip,” Luke explained. “We drove to East Troy, purchased train tickets, and are now enjoying the ride on the train. When we get to the end of the train ride, we will head to the apple orchard and pick some fresh apples to take home.”

There isn’t a bad time to ride the train but, in the winter, Christmas trains provide a special view of the season – especially if snow has fallen. Winter also requires extra work for the volunteers, as the tracks must be kept clear.

During the trip, the train stops on the tracks for a moment, as visitors learn the story of the famous Beulah Hotel. Built in the 1800s, the hotel held 250 guests, many arriving by train from Milwaukee (a 42-minute trip).

The hotel was a favorite place to get away and relax, but like the majority of buildings in the 1800s, it was built of wood – and like many of those buildings, burned down. Because of its popularity, it was not long before it was rebuilt, this time to hold 500 guests.

The new hotel included a golf course and a dock to sail boats. Alas, it was again constructed of wood and again burned down.

## Smooth operation

Since the railway is a single track, trains going in each direction need to be timed to allow for trains to pass from the other direction. One train moves to a sidetrack while the other makes its way through.

“The East Troy line of the Milwaukee Electric Railway and Light (TMER&L) Railway, the interurban rail system, was the only form of transportation in the area in 1907,” shared Jim Feyerherm, Operations Manager of the East Troy Railroad. “Today the rail line between Mukwonago and East Troy is the last remnant of that system, which once operated over 200 miles of track in southeastern Wisconsin.”

The Milwaukee Electric Railway and Light Company operated the line until 1939. After it suffered from reduced ridership due to the increase in automobile ownership and better roads, they were ready to abandon the line.

The Village of East Troy purchased 6 miles of track to keep the line open and



### above:

The dinner trains are a fine dining experience and feature gourmet meals served on white tablecloths.

COURTESY EAST TROY RAILROAD  
*Spirit of Geneva Lakes*

### at left:

Conductor Steve Thomas waits for his train to arrive at the station. Behind him is the ticket window.

SANDRA LANDEN MACHAJ  
*Spirit of Geneva Lakes*

**top right:** The front of the museum, which is in the former electric company building in East Troy. **below right:** The inside of the museum features history about the train lines as well as other railroad related items.

SANDRA LANDEN MACHAJ *Spirit of Geneva Lakes*

## Looking ahead

It's not too early to plan next year's visit to the East Troy Electric Railroad.

With a variety of rides throughout the season and special trains such as dinner and bunny trains, the railroad has released some dates for 2025. Next year's regular season will open April 26 and continue through Oct. 26. The railroad is open for rides on weekends, with days changing by the season.

In April and May, the train is only available on Saturdays. For June through August, it's open Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays, and in September and October, Saturdays and Sundays.

Special event trains for 2025 include the following:

- Bunny Trains, April 12, 13, 18, 19.
- Armed Forces Day, May 17
- Father's Day, June 15
- Milwaukee Day, June 28
- Chicago Day, July 12
- Railfan Day, Aug. 23
- Grandparents Day, Sept. 7
- Christmas Trains, Nov. 28, 29, 30; Dec. 3, 5, 6, 7, 10, 12, 13, 14, 17, 19, 20 and 21.

More events and related dates will be announced after the spring opening. Trains can also be chartered for special events.

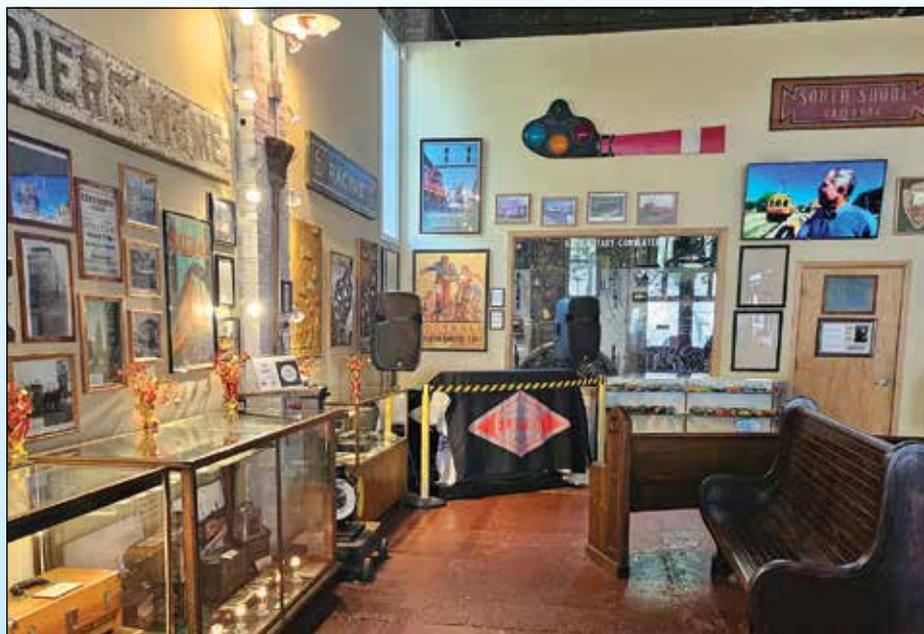
maintain a freight connection for local businesses. The Wisconsin Electric Railway Historical Society began running weekend tourist trolleys on the line, and in 1995, the East Troy Railroad Museum – a non-profit educational corporation – purchased the line from the village. It has continued to run trains on the tracks for the enjoyment of both residents and tourists and to encourage the sharing of train history.

Today, the East Troy Railroad Museum owns and runs the Railroad Museum adjacent to the tracks, where visitors can learn more about the history of the train lines.

## It takes many volunteers

"We have about 120 volunteers who work to keep this electric railroad running," said Steve Thomas, secretary and marketing chair for the railroad. "It takes a large number of people to keep the tracks and railroad cars in working order."

Both Thomas and Feyerherm said they are fortunate to have volunteers who



"passionately take care of the place." These volunteers are true train enthusiasts and want to be sure that the history here is preserved and shared with others.

The conductors dress just as they did long ago and travel through the trains to assure everything is well. They also share history of the trains and are under the rules of conductors on regular railroads, meaning they are limited in the time they can be on a train working. That restriction is in part due to the ability of the train to occasionally pick up a box car for Canadian Pacific.

## Special trains

For those who may remember traveling across country on a train, one of the highlights of the trip was a meal in the dining car. These meals were always high quality, often times better service than found at top restaurants of the day.

In memory of that time, the electric railroad offers a variety of days where a full gourmet dinner is offered in the dining car. These 2 ½ hour excursions will take you back to the days when elegant service was the norm. These special dinner trains tend

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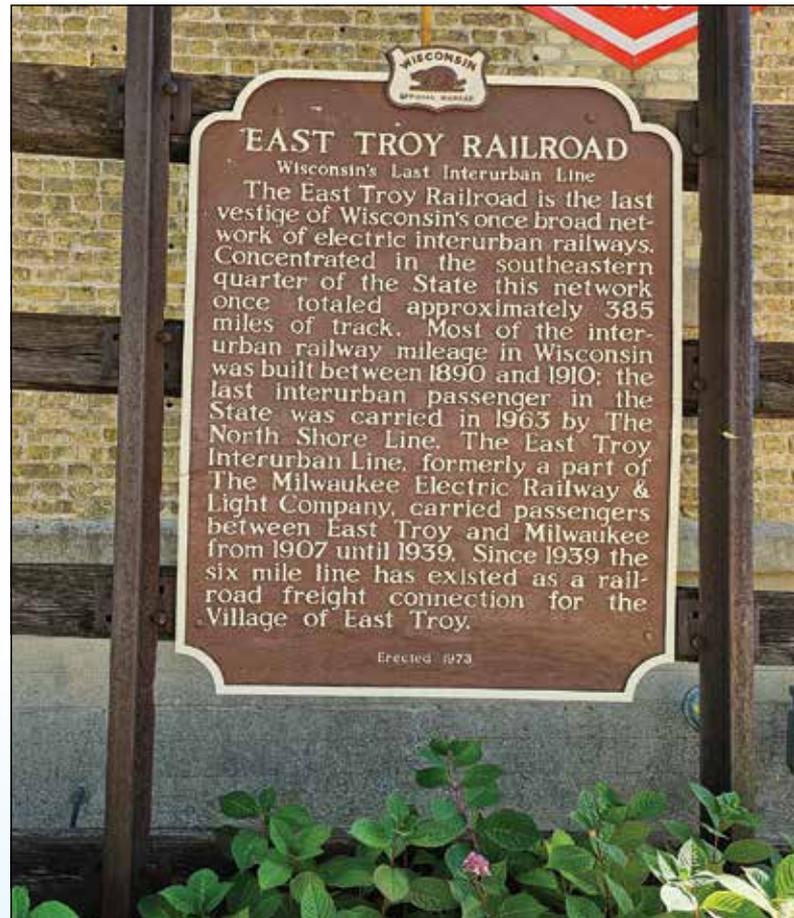
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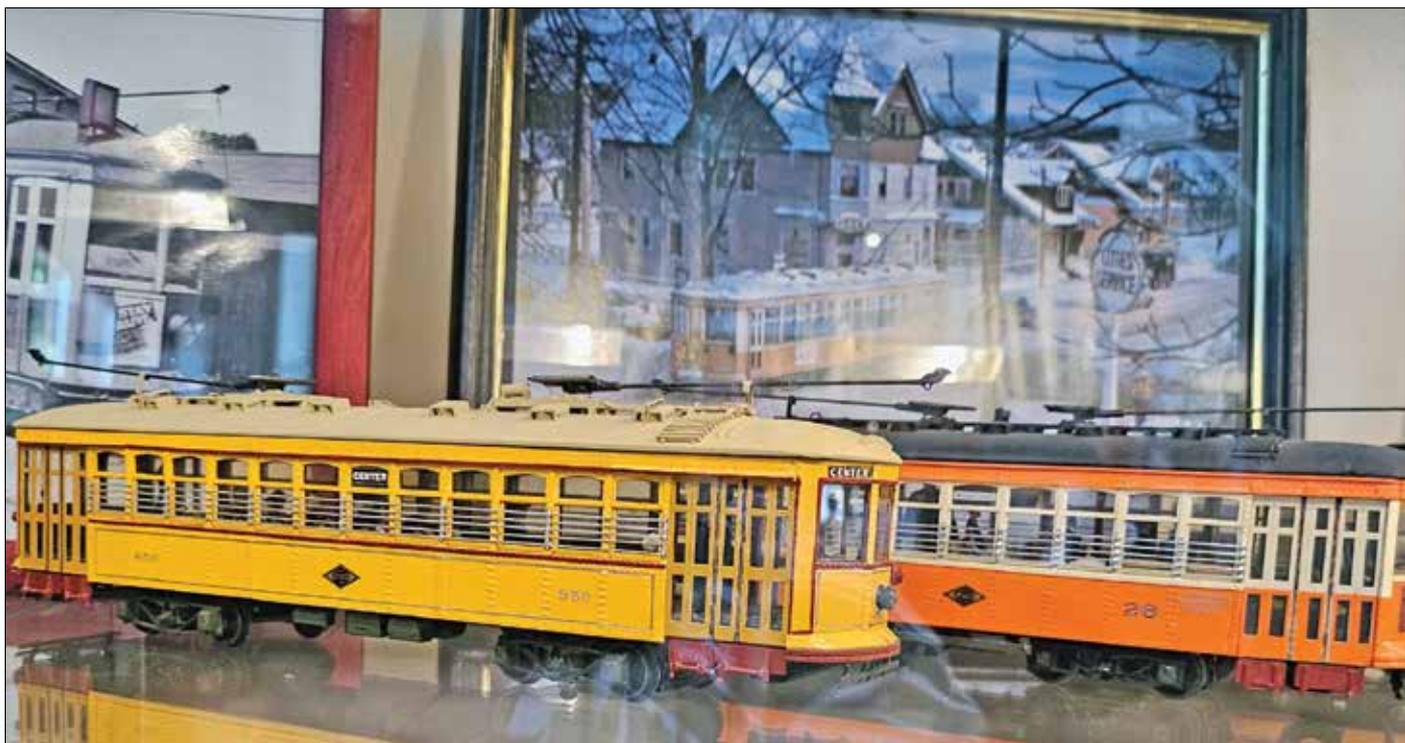
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to sell out quickly, so it is advised that you purchase your tickets for these events early in the year.

The ticket includes the cost of dinner, and there is a full cash bar available. There are also a few lunch dates and this year, there was one Sunday brunch.

A train can also be chartered for an individual excursion, either as a regular train ride or a dining car experience.

While the railroad has finished the Harvest Fest Days and closed the program for the season, there will be Christmas trains in late November and December. Check the website for the dates and see the sidebar for a sneak peek into next year's schedule.

One more stop for visitors return to the East Troy station is the J. Lauber Ice Cream Parlor – a replica of an early 1900s ice cream parlor. John Lauber opened this unique ice cream parlor 50 years ago and has continued to furnish it with items that would have been used in an ice cream parlor of those early days.

“Every malt or shake is made in an original blender that was used in the early days,” said Lauber. “Even the dishes we use are the originals, as I am always purchasing more when I see old-time drug stores with soda fountains being demolished.”

The East Troy Railroad and Museum is always looking for volunteers. Whether you would like to bring a skill you are knowledgeable about or volunteer to learn a new one, all are welcome. Call 262-642-3263 to learn more about volunteering.

For more information about the railroad, visit [www.easttroyrr.org](http://www.easttroyrr.org). To support its mission, once on the website, click on “membership.”



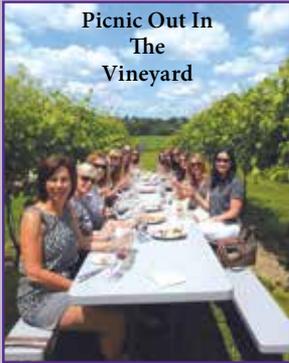
**above:** The gift shop has a number of train and railroad related items. One of the favorites of young visitors are the engineer teddy bears. **top:** Among the items on display at the museum are different types of miniature trains. **opposite:** Outside the museum is some history about the East Troy Railroad.

SANDRA LANDEN MACHAJ *Spirit of Geneva Lakes*

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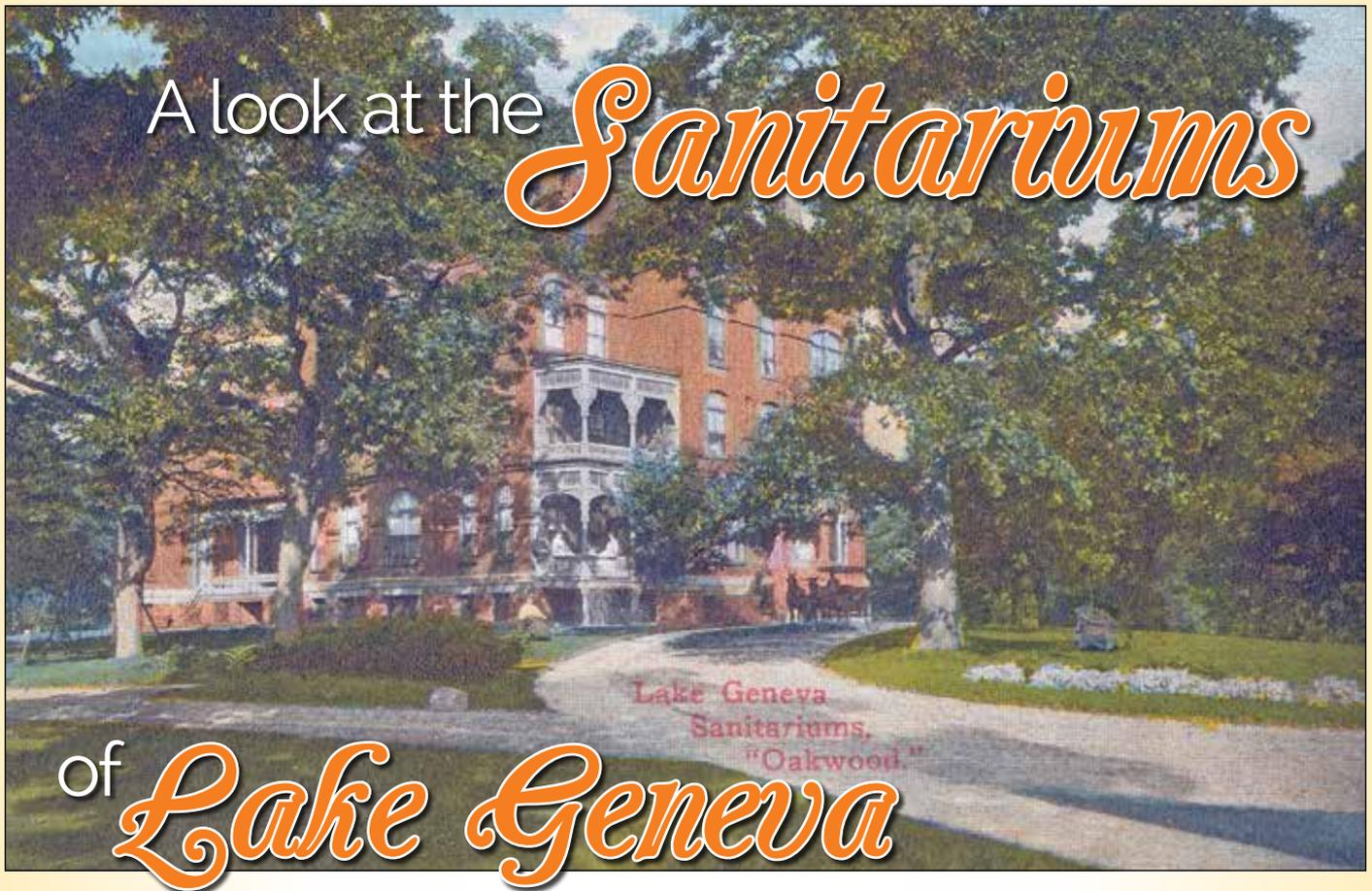
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by **Sandra Landen Machaj**  
CORRESPONDENT

When Sonja Akright first saw a postcard featuring a picture of Oakwood Sanitarium, little did she realize her fascination with this building and her curiosity of what went on in it would become a focus of her life for the next 15 years.

As a historian, Akright was surprised that there was not much information available locally, and she began her journey to uncover all that she could about the Oakwood Sanitarium and its founder, Dr. Oscar A. King.

When Akright began to research the story of Lakewood and Dr. King, she read through hundreds of pages of old newspaper articles on microfiche. She also started a family tree on Ancestry.com, which led to one member of the family contacting her and helping her navigate the genealogy of the King family. She began to collect artifacts and relics from the time, including such items as a brick from the Oakwood building and a letter on the official letterhead written by Dr. King in 1891.

In the late 1800s, Lake Geneva, then known as Geneva, was becoming the summer playground of the wealthy from the

Chicago area. Wealthy families would build “cottages,” which were large estate homes on the shore of Geneva Lake. To escape the hot and dirty air of the city, especially after the Chicago Fire of 1871, the families would come to the cottages on Geneva Lake for the summer, while the husbands would work in the city during the week and come out by train for the weekends.

At this time, there began to be more interest in treating people with mental illness. Dr. King was one of those doctors who had an interest in learning more about mind and nervous conditions. He traveled to Vienna and attended lectures given by Drs. Weiss, Lydersdorf, and Meynert. Upon his return to Chicago, Dr. King gave lectures at the Chicago College of Physicians and Surgeons - the first to do so for the medical community. He also decided to build a facility appropriate for those with mental illness and other mental and neurological diseases, such as stress, addiction, and post-partum depression. This would be a place where wealthy members of society could recover from these bouts of illness in elegant surroundings like they were used to in their own homes.

“Several towns in southern Wisconsin wanted the sanitarium and made offers

to encourage Dr. King to locate it in their community,” shared Akright, author of *The Sanitariums of Lake Geneva*. “Beloit, Janesville, Palmyra, and other communities offered Dr. King up to \$5,000 and offered building sites to help influence him to choose their communities. The smaller community of Lake Geneva could only offer \$1,500 and a nominal charge for water supply to the sanitarium building. They also offered to grade the roads to the Sanitarium. Lake Geneva was chosen because of its beauty and the ease of traveling to Chicago.”

An effort was made to make the building of Oakwood Sanitarium as fireproof as possible, something that was just beginning to be a concern after the fires in Chicago and in Peshtigo, Wisconsin, which occurred on the same day in 1871. The Peshtigo fire was known for causing the death of five times more residents than the better-known Chicago fire.

The two lowest floors of the building that would become Oakwood were constructed with granite, while the three upper floors were built with pressed brick.

### **Elegance throughout**

The interior of the sanitarium was as

**above:** Oakwood was the first sanitarium opened by Dr. King in Lake Geneva, which was then known simply as Geneva. This massive five-story building was elegant and catered to the affluent.

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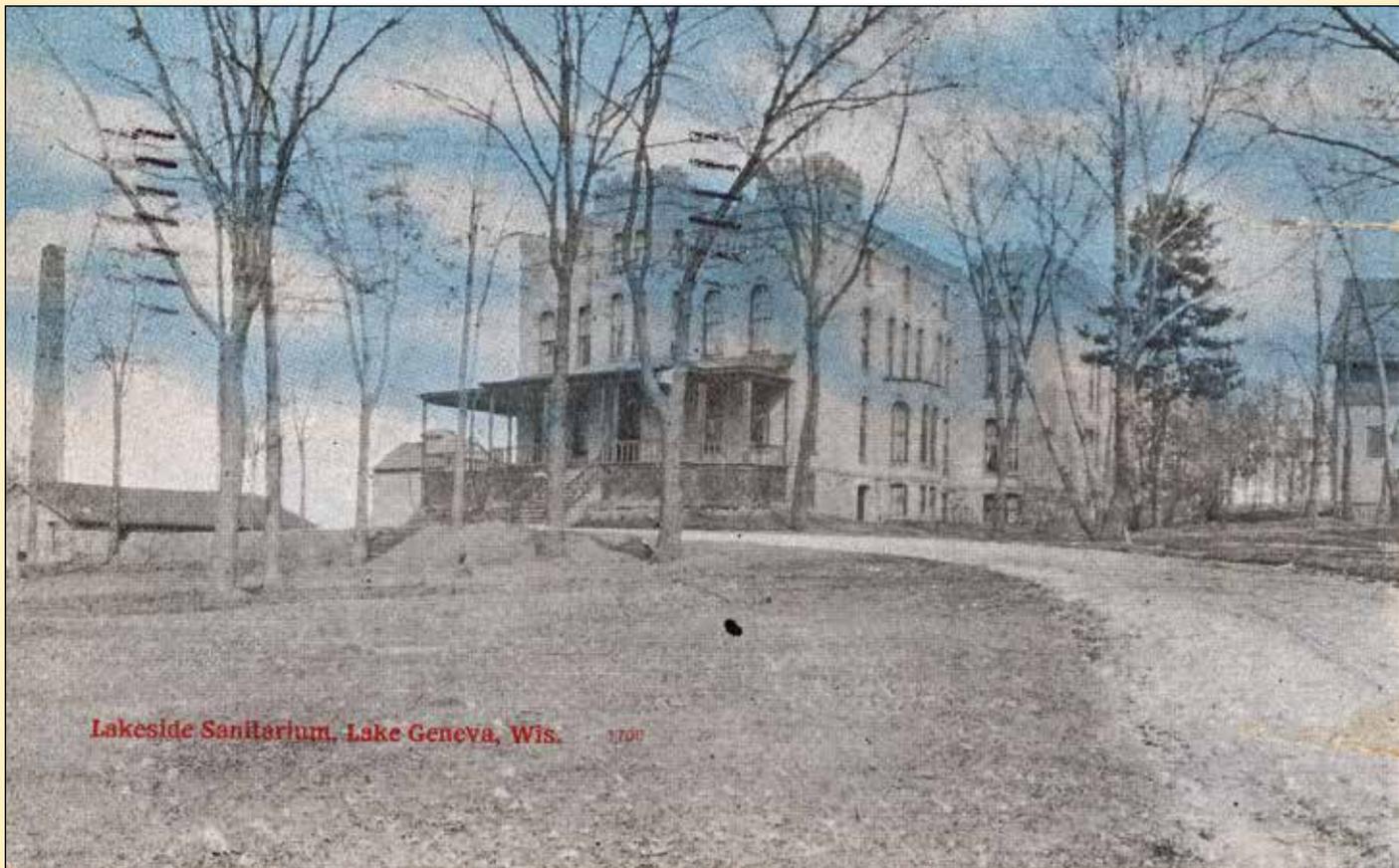
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elegant as the homes the patients owned and lived in, for the patients were not the local residents of Lake Geneva, but the wealthy, and additionally included well-known actresses and writers from Dr. King's practice in Chicago and from various cities throughout the country.

Wealth was necessary to be a patient at Oakwood, as the monthly cost was \$500, a massive amount in the late 1800s, while an extra \$40 a month would secure the services of a private nurse. Additional charges were made for surgery, personal laundry, and barber services.

The sanitarium was completed with top of the line furnishings, English carpets produced by Wilton, popular with the wealthy of the day, beds with box springs and hair mattresses added to the luxurious feel of the rooms, and artwork by famous artists graced the walls, giving the hospital

**above:** Lakeside Sanitarium opened in 1893 and was located closer to Lake Geneva, offering patients breathtaking views. It was purchased from the Charles Minton Baker Family.

SONJA AKRIGHT COLLECTION *Spirit of Geneva Lakes*

**at right:** Sonja Akright displays her new book, *The Sanitariums of Lake Geneva*, written after researching the history of the sanitariums for about 15 years. She is a member of the Historic Preservation Committee of Lake Geneva and is on the Board of the Geneva Lake Historic Society.

SANDRA LANDEN MACHAJ *Spirit of Geneva Lakes*



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the look of a high end hotel or a private home.

Services for the patients were high-end, including fine dining - which was thought to encourage wellness. While most mental health treatments were often somewhat barbaric, Dr. King offered a program of rest, massage, and hydrotherapy, along with medication. Many of these medications are no longer in use due to their serious side effects and toxicity. One such medication was mercury, which had been used for hysteria.

Dr. King married Minerva Guernsey from Janesville in 1887. Minerva was an actress and a society lady. While she was not interested in medicine, she did plan and conduct indoor and outdoor entertainments for the patients, such as dances, picnics, baseball games, boat rides, and educational programs, according to Akright's book.

While many of the treatments were to relax patients, hydrotherapy was not as relaxing as one would think. Patients were placed in an ice bath while restrained and covered except for their heads. Then the water was changed to a warm then hot bath, sometimes almost scalding. The treatment could last for hours; other times for days. This treatment remained in use even into the 1960s at many mental facilities.

Dr. George Post ran the sanitarium during the time when Dr. King traveled back and forth to Chicago to run his medical practice and to the medical school to deliver lectures. Dr. Post married Minerva Guernsey's sister Sara Guernsey in 1891.

## Opening for surgery

With the purchase of the Walter home on the property, King opened his surgery center, where procedures for non-mental health medical problems were performed. Because there was not a hospital in the area, he allowed local physicians to use the space to treat their patients.

"Dr. King continued to research treatments for the mentally ill and did use a procedure known as trepanation - a medical practice involving the drilling or cutting holes in the skull to access the brain. The procedure was used to treat head injuries, epilepsy, and mental illness. Also used for migraine headaches," shared Akright. "It was supposed to bring back lucidity."

This procedure eventually evolved into the lobotomy, which was used for the treatment of mental illness in the 1900s but was not found to be effective in curing the mental illness.

The sanitarium was so successful that,

**above:** The display of memorabilia from the Sanitariums of Lake Geneva was curated by Akright. **at right:** This brick is thought to be from the porch of Oakwood Sanitarium. It was gifted to Akright.

SANDRA LANDEN MACHAJ *Spirit of Geneva Lakes*



in 1893, Lakeside Sanitarium opened in the building previously known as the Girl's Seminary on the lakefront. The building was known for its broad porches, sunny lawns, and a remarkable view of Geneva Lake. These patients were given more freedom and engaged in many outdoor activities, including swimming, boating, fishing, sailing, croquet, and tennis, while in winter it was sleighing, ice skating, and ice boat sailing. Indoor activities continued and included music, dancing, and reading.

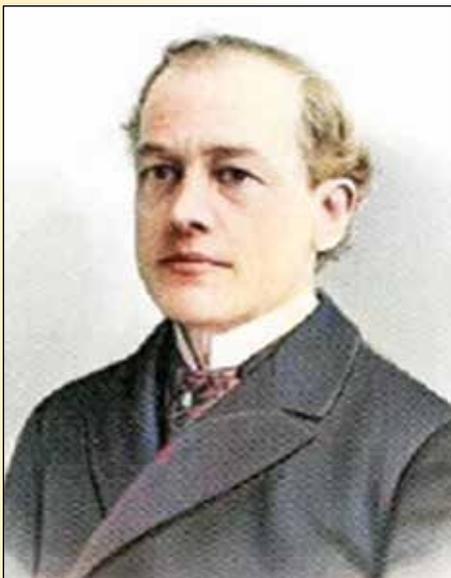
The Sanitariums also offered talk therapy, which today is the basis for many types of mental health treatment.

Adjacent to Lakeside, the Cottage opened in 1896 for the treatment of light nervous disorders that didn't require guardianship. These patients had much more freedom, sometimes to the chagrin of local residents.

## A children's sanitarium

Around the corner from the Cottage, the Oak Leigh Children's Sanitarium opened in 1903. It was the work of Dr. Mary E. Pogue. The children's sanitarium worked with children with a variety of problems, ranging from epilepsy and autism to





**above:** Dr. Oscar Augustus King was a physician extremely interested in mental health treatments. He founded the sanitariums of Lake Geneva in 1885 and remained in charge of them until his death in 1921. **at right:** After the closing of Oakwood, the building fell into disrepair and often had fires break out.

SONJA AKRIGHT COLLECTION *Spirit of Geneva Lakes*



cerebral palsy and mental disabilities.

This school was a form of early special education, as classes were given in motor and sensory training, articulation classes (today known as speech classes), math, sewing, and homemaking to meet the educational needs of these students.

Dr. King was not part of this sanitarium and Oak Leigh Sanitarium was sold at auction in 1916 after a scandal. Dr Pogue returned to Illinois, where she opened another school - The Mary E. Pogue School for Special Children in Wheaton, Illinois.

Dr. King passed away in 1921, and his widow Minerva, with the help of her brother-in-law Dr. George Post, kept the

Sanitarium open. They were only successful until 1928. The building remained empty and began to fall into disrepair. It became a favorite spot for local teenagers, transients, and inquisitive visitors entering to look for signs that the building was haunted and signs of mistreatment of the patients.

Dr. Doug Wilde, according to Akright, shared information of seeing rings on the walls in the basement that may have been used to restrain patients, perhaps ones that were waiting to be transferred to other institutions.

The Oakwood building fell into disrepair, and after several fires, the building was razed in 1959. However, the

basement remained and continued to be a playground for inquisitive teenagers in the area. Some spoke of the rooms in the basement with rings attached to the walls, supposedly to restrain patients. And of course, all spoke of the hauntings that they believed they experienced while in the building.

To learn more, The Sanitariums of Lake Geneva by Sonja Akright is available for purchase at the Geneva Lake Museum or from Amazon or Barnes and Noble.

Akright is a member of the Historic Preservation Commission of Lake Geneva and is on the Board of Directors of the Geneva Lake Museum.

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## CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF A Madrigal Feaste production

by **Sandra Landen Machaj**

CORRESPONDENT

This year marks the 50th year that the Kenosha high schools have produced the annual Ye Olde Englishe Christmase Feaste.

The original program was the work of Kurt Chalgren, director of the Tremper High School Choir, as a way to show off the talents of his students and to celebrate the holiday season in a unique way. The first Christmas Feaste was held at the Elks Club in Kenosha. As the number of people attending and students participating increased, the program moved to St. Mark's Catholic Church, and then finally to Tremper High School (8560 26th Avenue, Kenosha), where it continues to be presented today.

All three of the Kenosha high schools – Tremper, Bradford, and Indian Trail – are now active participants in the yearly production, with each school providing cast members that range from singers and musicians to jesters and serving lads and wenches. All are there to ensure each guest

has a memorable experience.

In honor of the 50th anniversary, an additional event has been added at the Stella Hotel and Ballroom – formerly the Elks Hall – 5706 8th St., Kenosha. It will be a private party for alumni of the event, with slide shows and a chance to reminisce.

The alumni party is planned for Nov. 21. More information can be found at [www.feaste.org](http://www.feaste.org).

### Preparing for the 50th

Production begins for the Madrigal holiday event in the spring of each year, as music is selected and participants audition for parts.

“This year, it is even more difficult,” said John Choi, choir director at Indian Trail and the current choir director of the event. “We are going through all the songs we have done over the years and picking out the favorites to sing this year in memory of the ones that have been the favorites in past years.”

Choi also mentioned this is the first year the event will be without co-chair Polly



**above:** Madrigal Feaste guests are treated to a variety of entertainment throughout the program.

**at right:** Upon arriving, the Beefeater guards the door that takes guests inside. There they will be transported back in time to Medieval Days, and enjoy dancing, singing, and a marvelous dinner.

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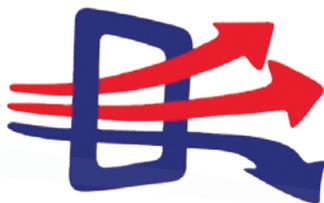
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Amborn, who retired in the past year after working for years with John and Emily Armbrecht of Bradford. New Tremper director Rachael Schrobilgin has joined the Armbrechts as they carry on the tradition.

The choir directors from the three schools participating in the Feaste are very busy working with the singers and pairing the right songs with the right singers. Once the singers for each song are chosen, practice begins in earnest.

“There are rehearsals for singers from all three schools every Monday and Thursday from 6:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. from September until the Feaste (in December),” shared Choi. “The singers participate in a weekend retreat to work on their performances. Advisors are chosen to work individually with each act.”

According to Choi, because this is the 50th anniversary, everyone is working even harder than normal.

“There will be a different processional this year, bringing back the old form of a

processional that we have used in the past,” he said. “Another special treat will be the return of fencers to the show.”

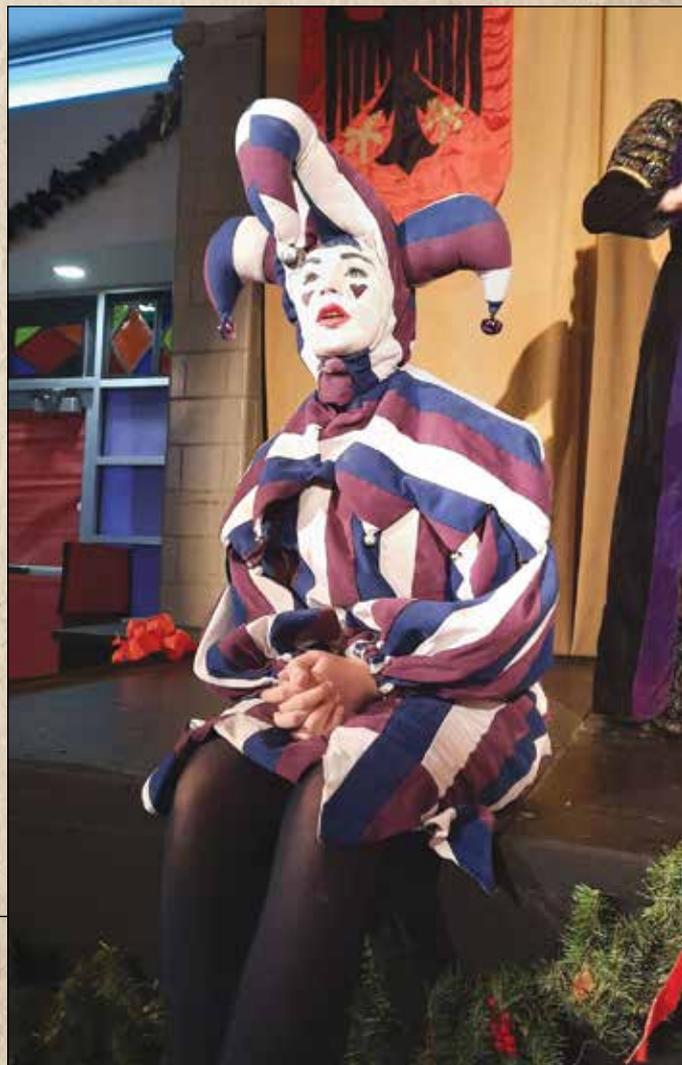
### Relying on volunteers

Many helpers also make the event special. Brian Lynch and his wife, Laura Bothe, are traditionally in charge of the jesters for the show.

“My wife was a jester back when she was in high school here and our two children also served as jesters,” said Lynch, who will be Lord High Chancellor at this year’s event. “The year we had both children in high school, all four of us were on the stage at the same time. It was a really great experience.”

The jesters are an entertaining group, as they perform on stage and then often come to the diners to steal some bread – which can be an unbelievable amount.

“No, it isn’t just the quality, although it is very good,” said Lynch. “It is also because that is the only item they can eat due to the white makeup on their face.”



**above:** Prior to the meal, the boar’s head is carried through the crowd. The boar’s head – which is not real – is a symbol of prosperity and peace. **at right:** Jestors are seen throughout the event, having fun, tumbling, and begging for food.

COURTESY JEANNE KOSTRO *Spirit of Geneva Lakes*



Steaming cups of soup are served followed by platters of meats, vegetables, and potatoes.

COURTESY JEANNE KOSTRO *Spirit of Geneva Lakes*

Anything else would smear their makeup and add color to their faces.”

Learning the jester’s parts are always difficult for those who are new to the show, but with the help of returning jesters and Bothe’s teaching (as well as that of her daughter), the performance comes together from September on forward.

It isn’t only the performers that must be ready and have their parts perfect. Costumes are an important part of the whole Madrigal Feaste event and they too must be perfect. The costumes are all hand made by volunteer seamstresses who work under the direction of Heather Miles.

Each year, the costumes are dry

cleaned after the performance and then carefully stored away for the next year’s performance. In the fall of the year, they are again taken out and inspected for damage and repaired as needed.

Since there is a change in who will wear the costume each year, they need to be tried on and then adjusted for that person to look their best at the performance. New costumes are always being added due to replacement or additional characters.

Miles has been in charge of the costumes for many years, but her involvement with the program goes back to when she was in high school. She said volunteers spend countless hours perfecting the

costumes, while other volunteers work to transform the cafeteria into a medieval castle.

Families often seem to stay with the program as volunteers even after they leave school, such as Laura Bothe has done along with her entire family.

“We have a family now involved that has two grandchildren, so they are the third generation to be involved,” Choi said. “The two grandchildren are cousins and attend

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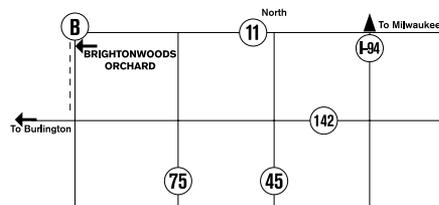
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different schools, one at Tremper and the other at Indian Trail. Both are singers.”

## A special meal

While the show is being prepared, so is the menu for the Feaste. Sophisticatering has been a well-known and respected catering company providing food for occasions large and small in Kenosha and the surrounding area for many years.

Owners Annette and Matt Flynn are known for providing the best possible food, and everything is made from scratch in-house. Breads and rolls are baked the day of the event, soups are made in-house, and quality meats are used.

When the Flynn's took over cooking the Feaste twenty years ago, it truly became a feast – not just a dinner.

“Over the years, we have had to make some minor changes to some of our foods served, but they have mostly been minor changes,” Annette explained. “Some were brought about because of complaints of allergies, such as when we served a crab spread as an appetizer. Another appetizer we served was a homemade liver pate. That was chosen because it was a favorite in the time period of the Madrigal Feaste.

“However, it was not enjoyed by many modern day eaters, as they often did not know what it was,” she added.

The Feaste is served in a combination of ways. The plated salad is on the table and is available about an hour before the program begins. It is served with three choices of dressing and the fresh bread and rolls.

Once everyone has had a chance to enjoy their salad, all the honored guests are seated, and some of the entertainment has begun, the serving wenches appear with steaming beef barley soup and ladle it into small bowls to be served to the guests.

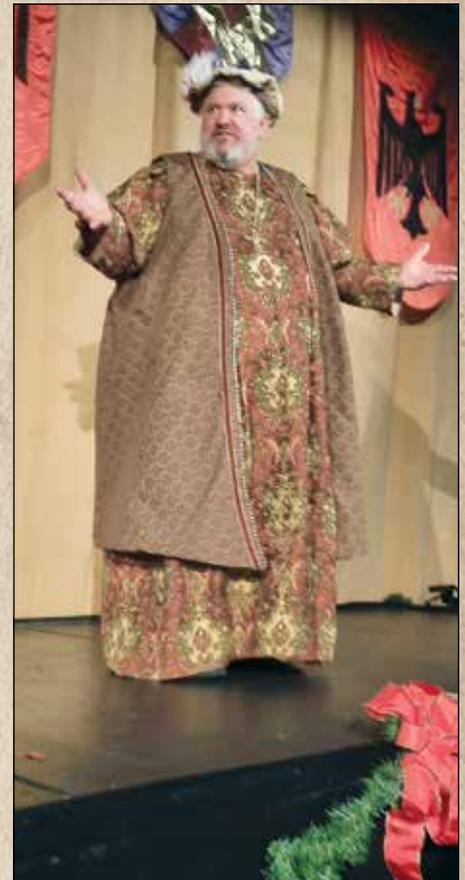
“A tradition of the Madrigal times is to serve hot Wassail in the holiday season,” Annette said. “It is a drink made with apple cider and spices and very warming on a cold winter day. So, of course, we too have Wassail for the season.”

The rest of the Feaste is served family style, with large platters of pork, chicken, Yukon gold potatoes (often in a dill sauce), green beans, and carrots. Figgy pudding is brought to the table to end the meal.

Figgy pudding is a traditional English Christmas dessert, which may vary by who is creating it. According to Annette, the Figgy pudding is a special bread pudding made using steam and a convection oven create a special texture and taste.

According to Annette, this year’s menu will probably be similar or the same as in past years. But in these times when prices continue to rise and items are not always available, change may be necessary.

“We do hope to ‘bling up’ the event in honor of the 50 years, adding some gold highlights,” she said. “New food items on



**above:**  
The Lord of the Manor welcomes his guests.  
**above left:**  
Throughout the event, entertainment – including the singing of seasonal songs – adds to the festiveness.  
**at left:**  
The tables are beautifully dressed with white tablecloths, cloth napkins and red candles for the occasion. Salads are plated and in place when the guests arrive.

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Throughout the event the court jesters are present. Keep an eye on them and guard your bread, for they will likely try to steal it.

COURTESY JEANNE KOSTRO *Spirit of Geneva Lakes*

the menu may depend on availability and cost.”

Performances for this year's Madrigal Feast will be Friday and Saturday, Dec. 6 and 7, opening at 6 p.m. with the show starting at about 6:50 p.m. On Sunday, Dec. 8, an afternoon performance will begin at 2 p.m.

Tickets go on sale at the beginning of November and must be purchased ahead of time. Tickets are \$42 per person and can be purchased online at [www.feaste.org](http://www.feaste.org). For more information, call 262-359-2200.



**Information  
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change. Please  
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**LOCAL FOLKS RESTAURANT & PUB** • 39601 60th St. (Slades Corners), Burlington. **262-539-3200**. Open 6am every morning! B, L, D, \$, FF, ☿

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**GINO'S EAST OF CHICAGO** • 300 Wrigley Dr., Lake Geneva. **262-248-2525**. [www.ginoseastlakegeneva.com](http://www.ginoseastlakegeneva.com). Chicago's original deep dish pizza, Italian sandwiches, salads and entrees. L, D, \$-\$\$\$ ☿

**WATERFRONT PUB & GRILL** • 408 State Rd. 50, Delavan, WI. **262-728-4700**. Open Daily 11 a.m. Closed Wed. L, D, FF, ☿

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**Key**

B: Breakfast L: Lunch D: Dinner NC: No credit cards accepted \$: Mostly under \$10 \$\$: Mostly under \$20 GF: Gluten free  
\$\$\$: Mostly under \$30 FF: Fish Fry ☎: Reservations requested ☿: Alcohol served ☎: Kids menu SR: Senior menu

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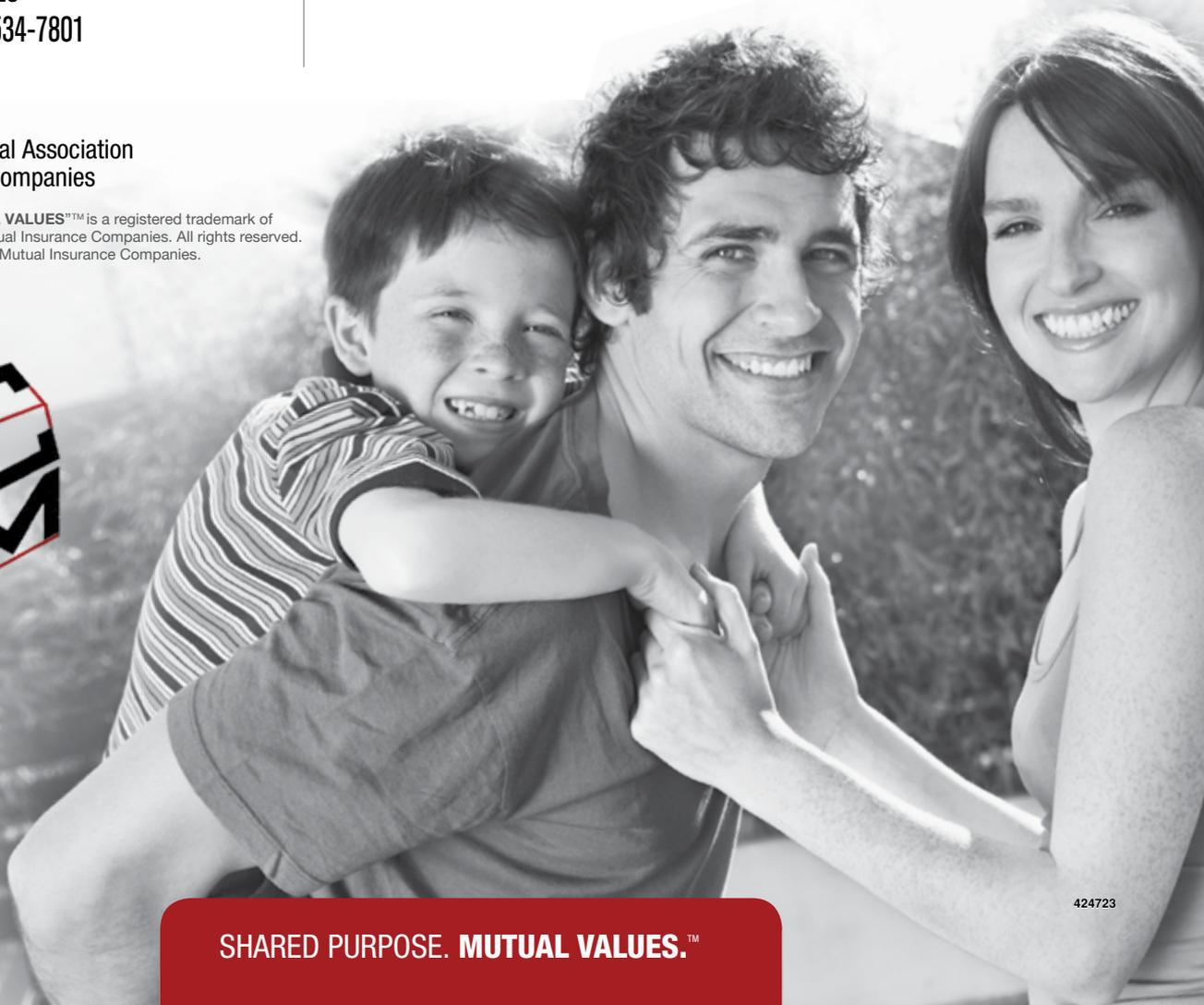
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