



## Freedom of Religion and Freedom from Religion – Three Miles Apart

by Bob Blazich, MTHS President

When the Thiensville branch of Lumen Christi Parish held their final service in late September of this year, they did more than close a long established church that was home to many people. The closing of the former St. Cecilia's Church also closed a very interesting chapter in local history.

In the mid-1800's, the Town of Mequon, which encompassed the present day Thiensville and Mequon, attracted a large number of immigrants from German speaking areas of Central Europe. In almost all cases, the force driving their decision to come to the new world was their desire to live in a land of freedom.

While the settlers who came to the Freistadt area were seeking freedom of religion, John Henry Thien and others who settled just three miles to the east of Freistadt came in search of freedom from religion.

During the early 1800's, Prussian King Frederick William III personally dictated the liturgy to be followed in all of his unified Lutheran churches. As you

might expect, many congregations, including those known as Old Lutherans, refused to follow the king's edict and experienced persecution as a result. Many members of these congregations left the region known as Pomerania for Australia and the



Original St. Cecilia's Catholic Church established in 1919.

*Story continued page 3*

### Inside This Issue . . .

- Contact Us** See Page 2
- New Members** See Page 2
- Annual Meeting 2016** See Page 2
- President's Article Continued** See Page 3
- Recent Happenings at MTHS** See Page 4
- Volunteering at MTHS** See Page 5

- MTHS Wish List** See Page 5
- Acquisitions** See Page 6
- Grant Awarded** See Page 7
- New MTHS Board Members** See Page 7
- Membership Form** See Page 7

## MT Historical Society 2016 Board of Directors

**President:** Bob Blazich  
**Vice-President:** Jennifer Hamm  
**Secretary :** Bonnie Heintskill  
**Treasurer:** Don Molyneux  
**Membership :** Mary Sayner  
**Archivist:** Bev Silldorff  
**Members:** Sam Cutler  
James Schaefer  
Paul Schreiber  
Fay Walker

**Member Emeritus:** Gordy Hinrichs

## Contact Us

**President:** Bob Blazich, rblazich@gmail.com  
262-242-4653

**Archivist:** Bev Silldorff, 262-242-3290

### Membership & Volunteer

**Chairperson:** Mary Sayner, 608-881-9935  
mcsayner@yahoo.com

**Newsletter:** Jennifer Hamm, 262-370-2232  
jenniferhamm53092@gmail.com

**Address:** 216 Green Bay Road, Suite 102  
Mequon, WI 53092

**Website:** www.mthistoricalsociety.org

**Email:** mthistory1839@gmail.com

**MTHS Phone:** 262-242-3107

## Join Us

Join today. It's easy. Memberships also make great gifts!

### Annual Membership:

Individual .....\$15  
Family.....\$20  
Contributing.....\$30  
Business.....\$80  
Sustaining .....\$100

*Tax deductible 501(c)(3) donations are appreciated.*

**Send your check to:** MTHS, 216 Green Bay Road, Suite 102, Thiensville, WI 53092. Membership form located on page 7 of this newsletter.

## New Members

2016

Adam Azzalino  
Sam Cutler, Jr.  
Linda Goseweher  
JoAnne Geist  
Kathy Hoffman  
Arline Hughes  
Kathy and Will Jones  
Amanda and David Kliber  
Victor Larsen  
Dr. Patrick Mullins  
Bill and Carol Roche  
Maureen and Robert Sievers  
Fay and Rick Walker  
Shirley Warren  
Helen and John Ward

## Railroad Presentation at 2016 Annual Meeting

The Mequon Thiensville Historical Society will hold its Annual Meeting on Sunday, October 23rd, at the Mequon City Hall Council Chambers.

1:00pm Doors open/Refreshments served  
1:30 – 1:45pm Annual Meeting  
2:00 – 3:00pm Presentation

Reid Van Sluys will present "A Railroad Comes to Ozaukee County – The Milwaukee Road in Thiensville and Mequon, 1871 – 1985".

We will also have a display of Interurban Electric Railway materials, an antique doll display, and information about the MT Historical Society endowment fund. **The event is free and open to the public.**

# Freedom of Religion and Freedom from Religion

*President's Message, Continued from page 1*

USA in search of a haven of religious and cultural freedom. The name chosen for their new settlement in the Wisconsin Territory, "Freistadt" or Free City, was chosen by the 20 families that came to the Town of Mequon in 1839.

To the south of Pomerania in the kingdom of Saxony, a wealthy young intellectual named Joachim Heinrich Thien also sought freedom. Thien was part of a community of Free Thinkers and liberals who were opposed to the oppressive coalition of feudal lords and religious leaders who brought hardship to the masses. With the US Declaration of Independence as a guide, Thien and his fellow "rebels" sought reforms that would assure their freedoms of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

Thien and his wife, Margaret, decided to follow their dreams in the US rather than stay in Saxony and face the rebellion that eventually erupted and failed in 1848. Arriving in present day Thiensville in 1842, the 27-year old Thien resolved to not support any organized religious activity in his new home. Buying 148 acres of land gave him control over the heart of the hamlet that was known as Thienville. (NOTE: The letter S was inserted in the name before the village incorporated in 1910.)

Religious services were conducted in private homes, or children were sent to Cedarburg or Mequon for religious services, but no churches were established in Thiensville at the time of its legal incorporation as a village in 1910. There is a report of a baptism being performed in the name of the United States of America performed by an official of the State of Wisconsin.

Thien erected a liberty pole outside his mill and topped it off with a Phrygian hat which was the symbol of freedom used to identify freed slaves in Roman times. This symbol of liberty appeared frequently throughout history and appeared on several US coins up to 1947. While not supporting organized religious groups in his hamlet, Thien organized a Turnerverein

for young people, a Free Thinkers Society, a singing society, a dramatic club and a farmers' club. He also organized a volunteer fire department, served as the first fire captain and donated the land for the community fire hall.

In early 1919, 80 years after the original sale of the land that is now Thiensville, a group of over 20 families applied to the Milwaukee Archdiocese for permission to establish a church in Thiensville. Later that same year, a small mission church was established on land donated by Peter and Josephine Ellenbecker. The first service in the small wooden church was held on November 22, 1919. The congregation was fully incorporated as a parish in June of 1926. The lannon stone church that still stands on the corner of Buntrock and Orchard Avenues was dedicated in June of 1940. The first full-time priest was assigned to St. Cecilia's in 1946, a school was opened in 1955 and the expanded St. Cecilia's campus as it appears today was dedicated in April of 1964.

Grace Lutheran Church, an English speaking Lutheran congregation, was dedicated in May of 1929, and Calvary Evangelical Lutheran Church held its dedication service in November or 1931. "The churchless village" was now home to three strong and growing congregations, and the long period of Thien's freedom from religion faded into history.



*Example of a Phrygian hat.*

# Recent Happenings at MTHS

*Contributed by Bonnie Heintskill*

We have enjoyed a very busy late summer at MTHS, and we are looking forward to more activities to take us through to the end of the year.

In late June, MTHS volunteers entered three Model A Fords in the Fun Before the 4th Parade while Fay Walker and Bob Blazich walked along the parade route handing our information cards to the crowd. In July, we had an MTHS display in the front lobby showcase at Weyenberg Library.

We had a very successful capital campaign this summer collecting nearly two months of rent for our new MTHS office in Thiensville. If you didn't participate in our recent campaign, it's not too late to send in your fully deductible donation.

In early September, MTHS opened our Isham Day House to several hundred visitors as part of the Taste of Mequon celebration. We featured displays from Fromm Silver Fox Farms, three Mequon farms owned by Kopps, Vogels and Gruenwalds, and former Mequon Alderman, Sam Cutler, Jr. had a display showing his proposed Mequon River Post Office and Stamp Museum to be housed in The Isham Day House on Cedarburg Road. The proposal for the Stamp Museum will go to the Mequon Common Council in November, and it is hoped that the museum will open in 2018.

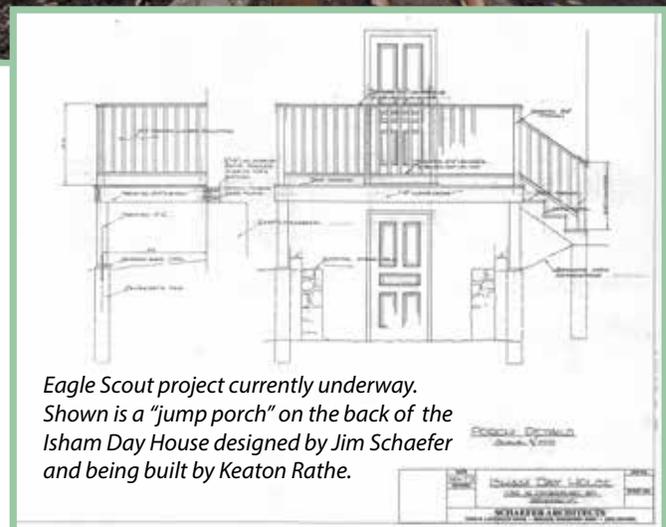
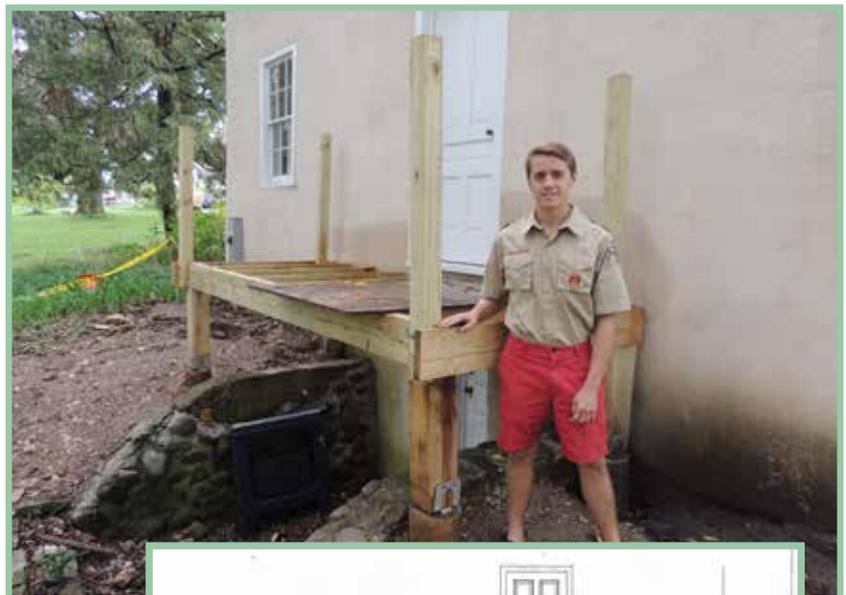
Later in September, MTHS held a grand opening Open House at our new office on Green Bay Road in Thiensville. Board members were on hand to greet the many members and friends of MTHS who attended. The event resulted in several new members and volunteers joining our society.

Eagle Scout candidate Keaton Rathe, working with the help of funds donated by his family, the Mequon-Thiensville Optimist Club and Home Depot, is building a jump porch on the back of our Isham Day House. This porch is required for fire safety, and we are very thankful to have Keaton constructing it for

us as he works his way to becoming an Eagle Scout.

Jenny Hamm is in the process of updating our website and has created a new Facebook page for the society. Please LIKE our new page on Facebook, [www.facebook.com/MTHistoricalSociety](http://www.facebook.com/MTHistoricalSociety), and keep your eye out for our new website.

Please note that our board meetings have changed from Thursday afternoons to Wednesday evenings. Future board meetings will be held on October 19, November 16 and December 14 at 7 PM in our office at 216 Green Bay Road in Thiensville.



# Volunteering, the Summer/Fall of 2016

*Contributed by Mary Sayner*

The word spread about is that the Mequon-Thiensville Historical Society is only open on Thursday afternoon from 2 to 5 p.m., but stop by the archive any morning but Friday and you will find volunteers busy working on a number of projects.

Kathy Hoffman has taken ownership of the personal and business files organizing them and placing newspaper and magazine clippings in proper folders. Judy has tackled one of 5 boxes of Mayor Eley's documents and is on the long journey organizing and preserving them. Volunteer Steve French is also assisting with the preservation of Mayor Eley's documents.

After organizing and filing and school items, Fay Walker is currently working with Bev Silldorff putting the Woman's Club materials in acid free folders and binders for future research. Jean is a new volunteer and finds clipping newspapers that date back 10 or so years, an interesting way to begin her service to MTHS.

Bonnie Heintskill is our super volunteer who works on every aspect of the society from keeping the computers and printers working to taking donated pictures home to scan and then enter on our computers. Jenny Hamm works mostly at home editing the newsletter, putting together the calendar that will be on sale beginning in late October, and keeping the organization focused.

Bev as archivist provides direction to the society and historical perspective as well as research help to people who seek it. Paul Schreiber, Bob Blazich, and Mary Sayner help out where needed all doing their part to make MTHS a viable organization.

The active volunteers are supported by spouses, children, and parents. This support is appreciated and necessary for a volunteer driven organization like MTHS to function smoothly.

All of the volunteers gather around when someone walks in eager to tell his/her story about life in the Mequon-Thiensville area. That's when the story of truck farming comes to light, or we hear of all the people who were employed in the fox farm operation

during the depression, or we marvel at the big storm or flood that closed down the area for days or weeks, or we learn of the dance club, choir, drama club, skating parties, card parties, picnics, ball games or fishing-hunting trips up north that used to brighten the lives of the people after the struggles of daily life years ago. Some of us also find out at this time that we have distant relatives in the area we never knew about. Volunteering is enlightening!

Most of our board members and volunteers had a hand in planning the displays at the Isham Day House for the Taste of Mequon and were active in getting the archive ready for the Open House on September 17th. (Bonnie was the vision and force that set up and took down the displays.) So many interesting people come to these events and add to the knowledge that the volunteers of the society can then share with researchers and interested citizens of the area.

Volunteering is an interesting way to contribute to the community. Become a volunteer as well as a member. It's educational and fun.

## MTHS Wish List

*MTHS is in need of the following items. Remember, your donations are tax deductible! Call us for more details.*

### **Office Supplies:**

- \* Copy/Printer paper
- \* White envelopes
- \* 2-step collapsible stool with wide steps and hand rail.
- \* Ledger Size HP Printer/Scanner/Coper/Fax - Prints up to 13" x 17" papers. Model HP7612.
- \* Seagate Backup Plus External Hard Drive 5 TB, WIFI accessibility and 200 GB cloud storage.
- \* 1st class stamps - 100
- \* Reacher/grabber
- \* 2 Sets of 932 XL B&W and 933 XLCOLOR Ink for HP 7612 Pro
- \* Hand-Held Audio Recorder

# Recent Acquisitions at the Don Sillardorff Archive

*Contributed by Archivist Bev Sillardorff (262-242-3290 or 262-242-3107)*

The Mequon-Thiensville Historical Society thrives on the generosity of donors and local organizations. Below is a list of recent acquisitions.

Terry Schoessow:

- Records regarding school district #3, 1950s to 1970s.
- Posters of Thiensville in pictures.

Suzy Geidel Egelhoff:

- 1939 postcard of the Old Mill, Thiensville, WI.

Carl Buettner

- Arrowheads and newspaper article on Thiensville's Indian dig.
- Painting of ducks crossing a street by Carl Buettner and duck crossing tee-shirt.
- Letters, 1958 image of Blume children, article on oldest Lutheran Church in area, and more.

Robert and Amy Gierach (*from Palmer and Edna Mueller Gierach Collection*)

- Plat map of Washington/Ozaukee 1873 - 1874.
- Map of Wisconsin, 1873.

Roy Wetzel

- Images of Jahn's School, class of 1918 and 1949.
- Poster of Nieman Silver Fox.
- Newspaper page from the Thiensville Reporter, 1936.

Kathy Hoffman

- 4 photos including Clara and Ruth Droege, Frieda Droege Kurz and John Kurz.
- 1959 well pump inspection and water tests on house owned by Kathy Hoffman.

Marion Thurk of Fairhope, AL

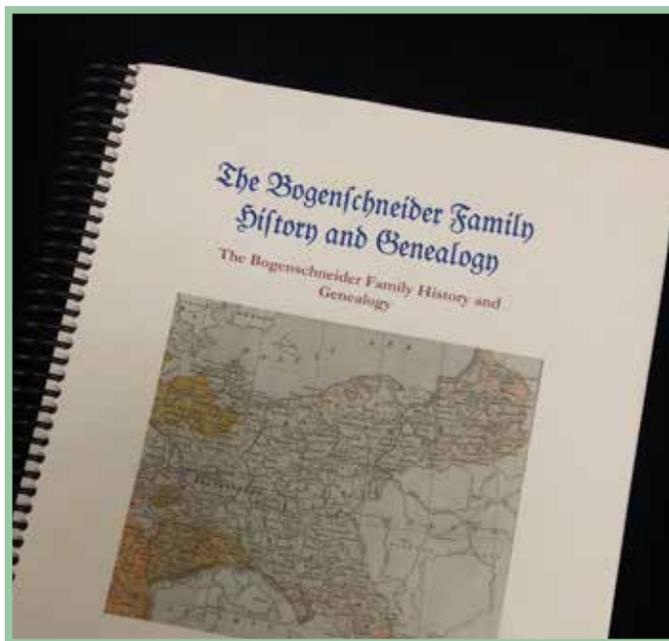
- WWII uniform belonging to her husband.
- Various books regarding WWII, Carl Wilbert's school books, and more!

Duane Bogenschneider

- Bogenschneider family history and genealogy, Vol 1.

Ozaukee County Historical Society (Gregory Wenzel, West Bend)

- Milwaukee River picture, circa 1983, by Joe Janke.



*Bogenschneider Family History and Genealogy Volume 1, donated by Duane Bogenschneider.*

Barbara Boesch Johnson

- St. Cecilia Parish documents, articles and 1961-62 class picture
- Picture of Thiensville State Bank and Thiensville High School basketball team.
- Picture of Thiensville (Grand Ave.) Grade School circa approximately 1926 or 27.
- Image of Johan Boesch farm house, circa 1890s.
- Images from Boesch picture album.
- Image of Gilbert Shoe Company.
- Edgar Boesch family records and images.

Barbara Hansen

- Hand-made victorian style doll house, fully furnished.

Jonathan Clark House

- Painting of O'Leary Farm buildings on N. Green Bay Road.

Peter Plautz

- Plautz family images and newspaper article.

## Mequon Community Foundation Grant

On September 28th, representatives of the Mequon Community Foundation (MCF) met at the MTHS to award our organization a grant of \$1,415.00 for archival storage materials.

Our collection, which includes documents dating back to the mid 1800's, must be preserved in light-blocking acid-free boxes. The grant from MCF will be used to purchase needed storage materials.

We thank MCF for their generous donation.



MCF grant awarded to MTHS on September 20th, 2016. Pictured: Steve French, MCF; Fay Walker, MTHS Board; Bob Blazich, MTHS President; Kathy Pederson, MCF President; Jim Button, MCF Board.

## Sam Cutler, Jr. Board Member Bio

Sam Cutler, Jr., is a newer member of MTHS who has brought a great deal of energy and creativity to our organization. Sam, who retired from Robert W. Baird and moved into Thiensville five years ago, previously served as a member of the City of Mequon Common Council. Sam, who was a history major in college and taught history for a time at University School Milwaukee, brings a unique and detailed understanding of the past to his work with MTHS. Sam's major project for the coming years is to create a Postal Museum and bringing a focus on the creation of the Mequon River Post Office in the Isham Day House.

## Fay Walker Board Member Bio

Long time Mequon resident Fay Walker has joined the board of MTHS. Fay has community volunteering and responsibility for her neighborhood and community in her blood. She was honored with the St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Award for Girl Scout Leadership, and has a long resume of volunteer service to the Mequon-Thiensville community. Fay served as an energetic and valued volunteer at MTHS before joining the board of the organization.

### I Would Like A Mequon-Thiensville Historical Society Membership!

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Amount Enclosed: \_\_\_\_\_

*Tax deductible 501(c)(3) donations are appreciated.*

I would like the newsletter sent by  Mail  Email

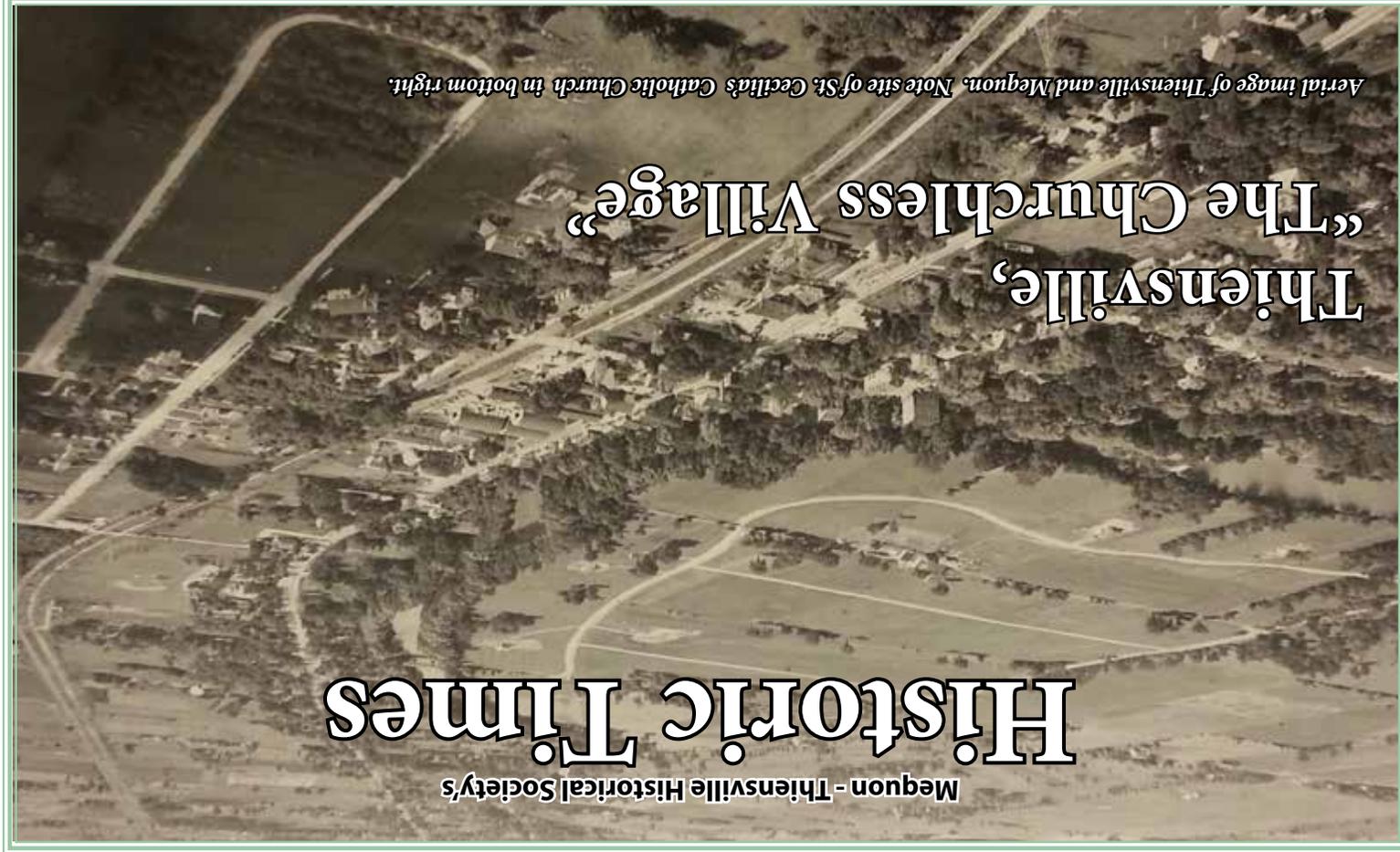
Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I am interested in volunteering for the Mequon Thiensville Historical Society  Yes  No

#### Annual Membership Levels:

- Individual .....\$15
- Family.....\$20
- Contributing.....\$30
- Business.....\$80
- Sustaining .....\$100

*Please Mail Checks to: M-T Historical Society, at 216 Green Bay Road, Suite 102, Thiensville, WI 53092.*



Aerial image of Thiensville and Mequon. Note site of St. Cecilia's Catholic Church in bottom right.

# Thiensville, "The Churchless Village"

# Historic Times

Mequon - Thiensville Historical Society's

**M-T Historical Society Annual Meeting on Sunday, October 23rd, 2016 from 1:00-3pm**  
Enjoy light refreshments. Presentation by Reid Vanslyys : "A Railroad Comes to Ozaukee County -  
The Milwaukee Road in Thiensville and Mequon, 1871 - 1985"

**SAVE THE DATE!**

**Your Renewal is Due**

**RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED**

216 Green Bay Road, Suite 102, Thiensville, WI 53092

Vol. 18 No. 4 Fall 2016

**Mequon-Thiensville Historical Society**