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The Newsletter of the Mequon-Thiensville Historical Society

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historic times

the cheel will rise from the ashes

By Jesse Daily

In 2014, Barkha and Jesse Daily breathed new life into a historic building on the corner of Green Bay and Buntrock in the Village of Thiensville. They extensively renovated the building and it became home to their restaurant, the cheel.



The foundation of the building, however, was laid much earlier. This Queen Anne style structure was built in 1890 as the Van Alten family residence. In the 1900s Nick Wilson converted the home into The Commercial House Saloon and Hotel. Over the years it remained a tavern and restaurant.



Sunday, November 8, 2020, Jesse had just left cleaning up “the baaree” (the beer garden in the adjacent yard to the cheel) after a wonderful season. He headed over to Daily Taco to do some final touches on the place as they were expecting to open the new restaurant the following week. He got a call around 3:30pm that the cheel building was on fire. After several hours of attempts to put the fire out and potentially save the building, it was deemed a total loss, condemned and subsequently set to be razed.

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200 Green Bay Road

By Sam Cutler

In the coming weeks the stately bank building on the corner of Green Bay Road and Riverview Drive in Thiensville will fall to the wrecking ball to make way for a planned development of 16 houses, complete with 32 indoor parking spaces for the new owners. Certainly it is time for the bank to come down, having been vacant for over a decade, a victim of the financial crisis so entertainingly chronicled by Michael Lewis



in [The Big Short](#). The bank was built in 1962 as the third home for the Thiensville State Bank and was extensively renovated in 1990. From the beginning it was a landmark property on the historic old Green Bay Road.

Unfortunately, the mid-20th century bank building did not qualify to join its Queen Anne style neighbors in the Thiensville Historic District created in 1994, nor the National Historic District created in 2003. It eventually gained some official prominence in 2005, when Schreiber & Anderson included it as part of the Historic Village designation in the Town Center Plan, but now their design guidelines for redevelopment rarely see the light of day.

The real historical significance of 200 Green Bay Road has never been about architecture, but about the people who lived here. Pioneer Yankee settler John Weston purchased this corner in 1839 from the U.S. Government as part of the quarter section that became Thiensville when he sold to Joachim Heinrich Thien (who quickly “Americanized” his name to John Henry Thien). The government’s price for 200 Green Bay Road was \$2.30, made possible by their previous unholy purchase from the hundreds of Indian chiefs through the infamous Treaty of Chicago in 1833. The Native Americans received what amounted to twenty cents for this little 1.8-acre parcel of the Green Bay Trail.

The history of Thiensville took off from there, with numerous trials and tribulations; filled with saints and sinners. Some were kind, other not so nice. Some quite wise, others not so bright. The point is, the history of this place should not be so easily dismissed or downright forgotten. We need to tell stories about where we’ve come from, and how we’ve gotten to where we are today.

In the new development agreement for 200 Green Bay Road, the Village has requested that the builder construct on the corner a green space (hence the name “Village Green”?) with a bench and “the historic district plaque”. I suggest the plaque refer people to the Mequon Thiensville Historical Society, where folks will help the curious, both “newcomers” as well as “old timers”, discover why this is such a special place.

the cheel rises

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After several months of reflection and demolition, the Daily's plan to rebuild on the same location. This

resurrection will include a new restaurant on the first floor, an event and live music venue (The Phoenix Room) on the second floor and on the third floor, homage will be paid to the past and the future of the Mequon-Thiensville community.



Barkha and Jesse Daily

The Dailys thank everyone for their extended support through this tragedy and hope to be back up and running as quickly as they can. And the Mequon-Thiensville Historical Society thanks the Dailys for their commitment to the community and historical preservation,

MTHS

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Support Us

MTHS is a 501(c)(3) donor-supported organization. Your tax deductible donations are greatly appreciated.

Facebook page sparks memories

The Mequon-Thiensville Historical Society launched a Facebook Group, YOU KNOW YOU ARE FROM MEQUON THIENSVILLE IF... in August of 2019. The group has proven to be very popular and now includes over 4500 members who post pictures, questions, stories, and other things that relate to local life and history. Here are a few of the items posted recently.



MTHS was given this picture with only “1951-52 Mequon River” written on the back. Thanks to members of our Facebook group, we were able to identify Ralph Bodendorfer and Ted Klocko in the back row left and Don Rennie, Jerry (unknown last name), and Bobby Gruenwald in the front row.

Can you identify any of the others?



The Milwaukee Lakeshore & Western (later Chicago & North Western) Railroad’s Mequon depot was located just south of Mequon Road on Mequon’s east side. This picture was taken around 1900 and includes the prominent merchant Jacob Donges (third from right).



Jeff Wenzler, longtime resident of Mequon, has joined our volunteer corps as a Social Media Administrator.



The Thiensville Volunteer Fire Department took delivery of this new pumper truck in 1967. Buddy Helm (later to be Chief Helm) is at the wheel and Ed Mueller is standing. It’s possibly Tillie Gramoll of the Mequon Volunteer Fire Department in the back window, but the people who posted on Facebook weren’t sure of the person’s identity.

Can you identify him?

Society Gears Up For Oral Histories



Thanks to your support, the Mequon-Thiensville Historical Society has purchased equipment needed to record professional quality oral history interviews. We did only one during the past year due to COVID, but we are looking forward to conducting many interviews once the pandemic eases and we are able to meet safely. If you are interested in sharing your stories with us, please contact us. We look forward to building a collection of stories to share with future generations.

Additions To The MTHS Collection Always Welcome

The MTHS archives add new items to our collection every week thanks to members of the community who realize the importance of preserving our local history. Items that you consider to be unimportant may actually have historic value and become items in our collection. The Lumen Christi church bulletins and dedication booklet were donated by longtime Thiensville resident Jeanette Barth.



Generous donors support MTHS



The MT Historical Society would like to thank two of our most recent corporate sponsors for their generous support. Gentian Financial Services of Mequon underwrote the printing cost of our 2021 MTHS Calendar, and Vertz Marketing of Mequon created our new MTHS website and is underwriting the cost of web hosting and our domain name. We thank both of these businesses for their support.

Thanks also to Nina Look and Fred Derr for donating a full year institutional subscription to Ancentry.com



The Chicago Treaty of 1833

By Bob Blazich

When we generally talk about the history of Thiensville and Mequon, we tell stories that go back to the first Yankee settlers who arrived in the mid-1830s. Of course, several indigenous groups inhabited this area prior to the arrival of Bonniwell, Weston, Turck, and others from the east. Note that I didn't say that the original residents "owned" the land because land ownership was a foreign concept to the Potawatomi, Fox, and Menominee, among others, who fished, farmed, and hunted in this area. They protected their crops and animals, but the land itself was not theirs to own. The land belonged to The Great Spirit who provided for them.



George Washington and others long promoted a policy of acculturation that required Indians to adopt behavior and practices that were compatible with those of European Americans: English as their language, Christianity, monogamous marriage, ownership of land, and abandonment of "pagan" practices. This acculturation policy failed, of course, and resulted in the push for Indian removal.

Our president from 1829 to 1837 was Andrew Jackson from Tennessee. Jackson, under pressure from southern states, drafted The Indian Removal Act of 1830 which authorized him to grant land west of the Mississippi to the indigenous people. The removal from ancestral land quickly became brutal and

included what has become known as *The Trail of Tears* that ensured the death of vast numbers of the Native American population.

White settlers from the northeastern states joined with an increasing wave of European and Scandinavian immigrants to put pressure on the US for westward expansion. This westward growth in northern territories increased rapidly when the Erie Canal opened in 1825, allowing easier access to the Great Lakes and Illinois and Michigan Territories. The Wisconsin Territory broke off from Michigan in 1836 and became a state in 1848.

The Wisconsin Territory was prime land for settlers and land speculators. When land in our area

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and by appointment.

For research assistance,
call archivist Bev Silldorff at 262-242-3107

The Chicago Treaty of 1833, continued

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was put up for sale by the US Government in 1835, it sold for \$1.25 per acre. East coast investors saw the rapid increase in land values in Ohio and Michigan and knew that Wisconsin would produce similar returns on their investment.

The Indians were always reluctant to move from their traditional lands, and clashes between Indians and settlers were frequent and sometimes violent. The US government tried to settle these disputes peacefully by buying the land, but the Indians knew nothing of private ownership of land. The conflict resulted in a meeting in Chicago, then a small village, in September of 1833. Several thousand Native Americans were in attendance including Chippewa, Potawatomi, Menomonee, and others. After 11 days of discord, the tribes signed the Treaty of Chicago which, although generally not fully understood, specified that their relocation take place prior to ratification of the treaty in 1835.

I questioned how this relocation was carried out and decided to reach out to the local Indian community for answers. I was referred to Michael LaRonge, the Tribal Historic Preservation Officer with the Forest County Potawatomi Community in Crandon, Wisconsin. He sent me an

email that included this statement, "The 1833 Treaty was just about as devastating as any other Treaty that Tribes were forced into. ... The Indian Removal Act of 1830 was specifically designed to remove all Tribes to west of the Mississippi during which forced marches were common. The Potawatomi refer to theirs as the Trail of Death. The men were forced to walk chained to the wagons that the women and children rode in, and little food or water was given during the march resulting in many deaths. A large number of the dead did not ever receive burial ceremonies, but were just left on the side of the road."

Following the ratification of The Chicago Treaty of 1833, land east of Range Line Road in what is now Mequon went up for sale in 1835 by the US Government. Land west of Range Line Road including what is now the Village of Thiensville was offered for sale in 1839 when surveying of the land was completed.

This is, of necessity, a short version of the events that led up to the creation of the Town of Mequon in 1846. I urge you to do your own research if you are interested in learning more about the people who inhabited this area prior to the 1830s and how they were relocated to make room for white settlers.

Hamm welcomed back to MTHS Board



The MT Historical Society is pleased to welcome Jenny Hamm back to our board. Jenny took several years off for family scheduling (we always stress Family first). Before taking time off, Jenny was very involved with our newsletter and website, and was very helpful with events and projects in the archives. During her absence, she laid out our annual calendar and remained one of our go-to resources as needed. We are very glad to have Jenny back with us on our board!

Mequon-Thiensville Historical Society

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VOLUNTEER!

Call Mary Sayner, Volunteer Coordinator, at 262-242-3107 for information.



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Amount Enclosed: _____ Tax deductible 501(c)(3) donations are appreciated.

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Annual Membership Levels:

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Please consider taking out a multi-year membership.

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