THE MUSEUM AT HEG MEMORIAL PARK

Though the small museum building on the Heg Memorial Park grounds is only five years old, it is already filled to overflowing with items of historical interest, many of them very rare and valuable.

The park custodian, Mr. Julius Christianson, is an authority on the early history of the surrounding community and his explanations and anecdotes of old times add much to the pleasure of a visit to the museum. While he admits that he is glad to be able to turn on the electric lights to display his treasures, he is especially proud of the displays of the oil-wick lamp, candle molds, candle sticks and various other old-fashioned means of furnishing light.

One of the first items to catch the eye is a framed copy of the second issue of the Waterford Post, dated March 21, 1874, and donated to the museum by Dr. Frank Newell of Burlington, Wisconsin.
in which he took part, also a white muslin cap once worn by his mother, Sigrid Olsdatter Heg. There is also a bit of cloth from one of Colonel Heg’s coats, and a beautiful little vase which was one of his gifts to his sweetheart.

Civil war souvenirs include an old army canteen donated by Hans Narum, of Norway, Wisconsin; a uniform once worn by one of our “Boys in Blue”; and two cavalry sabers presented by Mr. Andrew Bennett of Waterford, and Mrs. Ila Parker Mahaffey of Grays Lake, Illinois.

Seven spinning wheels were noted, the oldest of which was brought across the Atlantic Ocean in 1839 by Mrs. Ole Storlie who was accidentally shot by one of the early settlers. As necessary as the spinning wheels, though not so well remembered today, were the skein winders, called in Norwegian “hespatre”. There are six of these skein winders to be seen in the Heg Memorial Museum.

A leather bound hexagon chest, hand-made, with two locks and metal bands, bears the name of Mrs. Ellen S.
As many as possible of the collections are safely locked within glass cases. In the right hand case as one enters the building is a collection of fourteen articles presented by Amanda Johnson, of Racine. Among them an unusual brass brace, an old candle mold, a valuable copper mortar and pestle, and a bible dated 1748. An old-fashioned tray and wheel, forerunner of the coffee grinder, reminds one that a cup of coffee was not always as easily prepared as it is today. Seven weight clocks, one of them over 100 years old, need only a winding to begin telling the time as faithfully as ever. Among the old Bibles we noted one from Jefferson, Wisconsin, dated 1837. A wooden violin case, donated by Mr. Alfred Nelson of North Cape, bears the date of 1826. Another valuable collection is that of 31 articles from Norway donated in 1934 by the Sondif-Jorde Laget (Southern River Society) of Milwaukee. Some of the articles included are over 200 years old. One of them is a hand-made wooden wine jar. This collection also includes several old weights, the early form of the present day scale.

Nearby is a frame containing the testament and catechism which Colonel Heg carried with him in every battle.
Runden of North Cape as donor, and is known to be over 150 years old. Two other chests brought to this country by the Storlie and Ingebritson families may be seen in one of the glass cases. A brass bed-warmer, donated by the Oaks family of Waterford, makes us appreciate our modern heating systems.

Visiting farmers usually take much interest in the tally board from the first Case threshing machine, built about 1860. This was used to keep track of the number of bushels threshed and was presented to the museum by James Witmer of the J. I. Case Company of Racine. Mr. Witmer was a member of the first Racine County Park Commission. Heg museum also possesses two single ox yokes, dating back to 1845. These are extremely rare, and are found in very few collections. One of them was once owned by Soren Simonson. The massive, solid oak grain-crusher standing near them was donated by Mr. Albert Malchine of Norway, Wisconsin. Old, wide, wooden "marsh shoes" recall the difficulty the early settlers had in harvesting their hay crops in swampy Muskego. In this section are also two crockery butter churns, from Mr. Kortendick of Waterford, and Mr. August Zukov, of Norway, Wisconsin.

Fire-arms are well represented, rifles and shot guns, both breech and muzzle-loading, and a small flint-lock revolver made in 1714. While we are on the subject of fire-arms, we also wish to call your attention to the gun and powder horn hanging on the staircase in the old log cabin. This was once the property of Mr. Samuel E. Chapman, the first white settler in the village of Waterford. It was placed in the cabin, instead of in the museum, as a reminder that the early settlers found it necessary to have a gun handy constantly, for protection against the Indians as well as for the purpose of securing food for their families.

Of particular interest because they are so closely connected with the early history of the surrounding community, are the plane and broad-axe used in the construction of the first Norwegian church in America, and donated by Hoganson Brothers of Waterford; and the press on which Editor James Denoon Reymert printed the first Norwegian newspaper in America. The first editor's picture is also on display in one of the cases, having been donated by the
An interior view of Heg Museum, showing as a centerpiece one of the uniforms worn by the "Boys in Blue", flanked by two rifles of the period, canteens, and a picture of Abraham Lincoln and a bust of Abraham Lincoln. In the right section of the picture may be seen part of a large-wheel bicycle. Two small United States flags adorn the mantel above the uniform and equipment display.

late Dr. P. Langland of Milwaukee. The white oak cradle made in 1846, and donated by Hans Bendickson of Tichigan, was, in the early days, an actual part of the furnishings of the old log cabin next to the museum. The small hand-turned, black walnut child's bed beside it was made in 1787 and was presented by descendants of Waterford's first white settler, Mr. Samuel E. Chapman.

Among the many interesting articles which bear the name of Gullick as donor are an old trunk used by the Klevin family to hold their supply of "flatbrod" and herring for their voyage to America; the oldest clock in the museum, an old candle mold, and a carder for carding wool.

Especially interesting to Racine people is the chair used in Congress by Hon. Henry Allen Cooper, Congressman for the First Congressional District of Wisconsin for 36 years, and presented by his widow after his death. Mrs. Cooper also was the donor of a bronze cannon presented to Congressman Cooper by the Philippine government in recognition of his services for the Islands, he having been chairman of the Insular Committee.

Page 57
One of the first made bicycles, with its shoulder-high front wheel, bears the name of Harry Apple, donor.

The old school desk near the entrance was a gift to the museum by Mr. Joseph Bankenbush of Racine. It came originally from the parochial school attached to the first Roman Catholic cathedral in the northwest. This cathedral was located at Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and was built in 1839 on land donated by Solomon Juneau. The desk was later used at St. Rita's school just north of Racine.

The cases in the center of the room contain many attractions for housewives and for collectors of old dishes. Heavy copper tea kettles, their fat sides burnished and gleaming until even their original owners would certainly approve of the care which they have received, hobnob with tall steins and colonial platters and pitchers.

Naturally this brief sketch has been able to mention only a few of the hundreds of articles on display which attract collectors and history lovers from all over the United States, and cause them to feel that their visit to the Heg Memorial Museum has been an interesting and worthwhile experience.

In the 1860's school was held in the basement of the old Congregational church, pictured here, while the first Waterford Graded School was being built. George Blake was the teacher at that time.

This old church, which was situated at the west end of Main street near where the present Waterford Highschool stands, was the scene of Col. Han's O. Heg's funeral. The large iron key which opened the doors of this early place of worship is on display in the Heg Memorial Park Museum.

This photo was loaned through the courtesy of Mrs. Clara Johncox, cf Waterford.