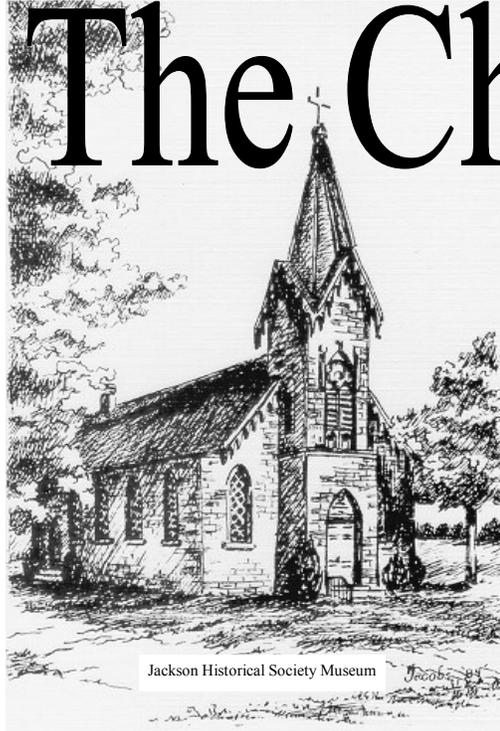


# The Church Mouse



Volume 20 Issue 2 Jackson Historical Society July 2015

## WISCONSIN RAILROADS—THE BEGINNING

In the mid 1800's, the Village of Jackson was one of several small unincorporated hamlets in the Town of Jackson serving the farm economy. In this group was Kirchhayn, Thiel's Corners, Salter, Keown, and Gumm's Corners. In fact, the Village of Jackson was not yet a village, and was not yet called Jackson. That would come later. It was called Reisville, and was named after a German farmer named Franz Reis.

Franz Reis had emigrated to the growing United States in the 1840's, settled in the Town of Jackson, and had worked hard, using his earnings to buy farmland. As land was relatively inexpensive, he was able to accumulate many acres, most of them in what would eventually become the Village of Jackson. What was needed to separate Reisville from the other hamlets, was an event, and that event was the coming of the railroad.

About 1872, the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad was seeking to build a railroad from Milwaukee to Fond du Lac and was looking to purchase the right-away necessary to do so. As a major landowner in the area, Franz Reis sold the C & NW Railroad the necessary right-away across his land, and then made a very important decision. He gave the railroad land for a depot. With the railroad not only passing through the area, but stopping at the depot, Reisville began to grow. Franz Reis built a large general store and a grain elevator. Other businesses followed. The coming of the railroad was the event that separated Reisville from the other hamlets and resulted in it becoming the Village of Jackson in 1912.



### MEMBERSHIP DUES

Your annual **\$15** dues cover a calendar year starting in **January**. The current year for your membership is shown on The Church Mouse address label to the right of the zip code.

Your dues include a subscription to the Church Mouse and help us preserve Jackson history.

### JHS MEETINGS TIMES

The Jackson Historical Society meets the 2nd Monday of every other month, Jan/Mar/May/Jul/Sep/Nov, at 7:00pm.

JHS meetings are held at 1860 Mill Road, Jackson, in our restored, Karl Groth log home. Visitors are welcome.

### JHS OFFICERS

Royal Natzke—President  
Jerry Prochnow—Vice President  
Lenore Kloehn—Treasurer  
Jim Kliese—Secretary

### BOARD MEMBERS

JHS Officers, Bonnie Embertson, Russ Hanson, and Elmer Kloehn

### GET THE LEAD OUT!

The coming of the railroad to Jackson in 1872 was later in the railroad transportation cycle that began in the 1830's, before Wisconsin was even a territory. As part of the Western Michigan Territory, lead was being mined in what would become SW Wisconsin and NW Illinois. As lead was very heavy, it was difficult and costly to transport to market. Lead in 70 pound "pigs" from the smelters, was loaded onto wagons pulled by 8-12 yoke of oxen over unimproved roads and moved to river landings for transportation to



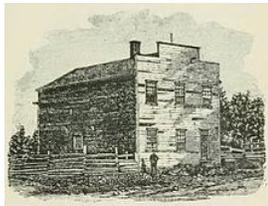
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market by boat. What was needed was a more economical way to “get the lead out”.

In 1836, the Wisconsin Territory was created and Governor Henry Dodge chose Belmont in the lead mining area as the seat of government.



1st Capitol—Belmont

With the establishment of the Wisconsin Territory, immigration was rapidly increasing and real estate sales were booming. There was record lead production and lead prices were high. Transportation of lead to market remained a problem. In the fall of 1836, the new territorial government began granting railroad charters.

### RAILROAD CHARTERS

Charters were necessary for any group wanting to build a railroad in the territory. They were a prize worthy of securing.

A charter is a grant of special rights and privileges given by a sovereign power—a king, a state, or a country—to an individual or a company. A railroad charter granted the holder rights to build a public railroad across privately owned land. In the United States, charters were given by states or territories. The charter permitted companies to be formed and shares in the company to be sold to investors to help build the railroad.

Building a railroad was a costly venture and these early companies found it difficult to raise the necessary capital required to complete the charter agreement in the time allotted in the charter. The need for railroads was there, the money to construct them was not readily available.

One of the first charters issued was for the Belmont and Dubuque Railroad to transport lead from the smelters to the Mississippi River and then by boat to St. Louis and New Orleans. This 23 mile railroad was to run parallel to a wagon road. An additional branch was to be built from Belmont to Mineral Point. Good idea, but the railroad was not built.

Another charter was issued for the La Fontaine Railroad. This railroad was to run some sixteen miles from the Village of La Fontaine at the foot of rapids on the Fox-Wisconsin River route to Winnebago City on the Northern shore of Lake Winnebago to eliminate a river portage. The railroad was not built.

In Kilbourntown (Milwaukee’s west side) a charter was requested for the Milwaukee and Mississippi Railroad. No charter was issued.

Subsequently, additional railroad charters were issued by Governor Dodge and the Territorial Legislature. Among the groups receiving charters was the Root River Rail Road Company for a railroad from Ball’s Mill on the Root River to the head of the river’s lower rapids with a privilege of extending the line to Racine, the Michigan and Rock River Railroad Company to build a railroad from Rock River at the Illinois State Line (Beloit) to a point on Lake Michigan at Southport (Kenosha), the Pekatonica and Mississippi Railroad Company for a railroad from Mineral Point to a point on the Mississippi River in Grant County. None of these railroads would be built. So ended initial attempts to bring rail transportation to Wisconsin.

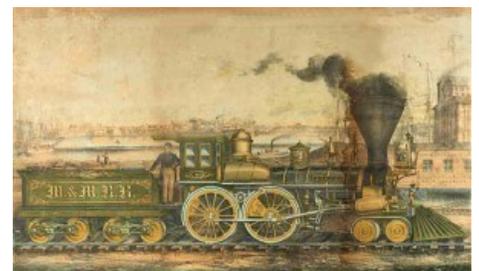
Despite additional citizen petitions for railroad charters, this would be the last charter issued for the next eight years.

### WHEAT BECOMES MORE VALUABLE THAN LEAD

By 1843, wheat production had grown to exceed lead production in value in the Wisconsin Territory. The time finally seemed right for railroads.

In the years leading up to Wisconsin becoming a state, the Territorial Legislature issued four more railroad charters. Among them was The Sheboygan and Fond du Lac Railroad, The Lake Michigan and Mississippi Railroad, The Fond du Lac and Beaver Dam Railroad, and The Milwaukee and Waukesha Railroad (formerly the Milwaukee and Mississippi Railroad). Even though many charters had been issued prior to Wisconsin statehood, the state still did not have an operating railroad. Only the Milwaukee and Waukesha would be developed into a railroad for Wisconsin. In fact, during the last session of the territorial legislature prior to statehood, its charter was amended to extend the railroad through Madison to the Mississippi River. The Milwaukee, Waukesha, and Mississippi Railroad finally had its charter and was ready to be built.

Construction on the Milwaukee, Waukesha, and Mississippi Railroad began late in 1849, the first railroad to lay tracks in the new State of Wisconsin.



Wisconsin had at long last, entered the railroad age.

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**RAILROAD’S COMPETITORS**

Transportation in the early years was often by boat or by wagon. Although cheaper and available, water transport often required portaging around rapids and roads often became impassable in bad weather or heavy use.

In the late 1830’s canals were thought to be a cost effective method of transport. In 1838, the Milwaukee and Rock River Canal was chartered. Interest was high and bonds were sold. Construction was begun in 1841 with a feeder dam across the Milwaukee River and a mile of canal dug from Chestnut Street going north. For various reasons, the project failed.

A fix for the bad roads was plank roads and several were built in Wisconsin.

Plank roads were known as “Farmer’s Roads” and looked like large wooden sidewalks. They were



usually a single lane with occasional turnouts for passing. It was estimated that ten miles of plank road could be built for one mile of railroad.

The advantage of plank roads over dirt or gravel roads was recognized. They permitted horses or oxen to pull about twice the load, year around, and were strong enough to support heavy loads. Plank roads cost about \$1500/mile to build.

Although plank roads had been built elsewhere, the first plank road chartered and built in Wisconsin was by the Milwaukee and Lisbon Plank Road Company, later the

Milwaukee and Watertown Plank Road Company in 1846.

The Milwaukee and Watertown Plank road was a toll



road with a toll booth every five miles.

Today you can drive on part of the Watertown Plank Road, the main thoroughfare through Elm Grove.

Early in 1848, sixteen more plank road companies were chartered. The legislature felt that railroads could not yet be financially supported, yet better roads were needed, hence the interest in plank roads.

The effect of canals and plank roads was directly felt in the stock subscription books of chartered railroads like the Milwaukee, Waukesha and Mississippi Railroad Company. They were slowed in their efforts to raise the necessary capital to build their Railroad, pushing off their construction until after Wisconsin became a state.



The Milwaukee & Waukesha Rail Road was chartered in 1847. Before it laid its first rails in 1850, its name was changed to Milwaukee & Mississippi, and in 1851, it reached Waukesha, 20 miles west of Milwaukee. The railroad reached Madison in 1854 and Prairie du Chien, in 1857.

In 1858, the La Crosse & Milwaukee Rail Road was completed between those cities, forming a second route across Wisconsin. Reorganized in 1863 as the Milwaukee & St. Paul, in 1867 it purchased the Milwaukee & Prairie du Chien, successor to the Milwaukee & Mississippi.

The Milwaukee & St. Paul ("The Milwaukee Road") acquired the St. Paul & Chicago in 1872, which had just completed a route down the west bank of the Mississippi from St. Paul to La Crescent.

In 1873 the Milwaukee & St. Paul completed a line from Milwaukee to Chicago. A year later adding "Chicago" to its name, creating the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railway (CM&StP).

In the next few years the railroad built or bought lines from Racine to Moline, Illinois; from Chicago to Savanna, Illinois, and two lines west across southern Minnesota. The railroad reached Council Bluffs, Iowa in 1882, and reached Kansas City in 1887. In 1893, the CM&StP acquired the Milwaukee & Northern, which reached from Milwaukee into Michigan's upper peninsula.



**Labor Day**

**September 7th, 2015**

**SUCCESSFUL OPEN HOUSE  
AND BOOK SIGNING ON JUNE 16TH.**

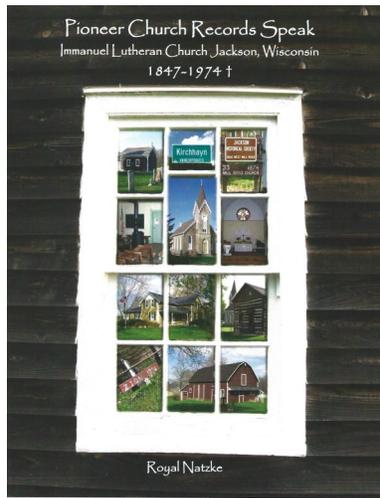
Fifty people from our area accepted the invitation to our Open House and Book Signing on June 16th. They enjoyed the many new displays of family histories, documents of all kinds, items of clothing (including a wedding dress), and farm and carpenter tools. These same artifacts can be seen at our annual Raspberry Festival on Sept. 13th.

We also had a table on which we placed tools which we could not identify - they still remain nameless. Can you identify them for us?

There were docents in each building who answered questions about the history of the building and the historical items in it.

Author Royal Natzke gave a brief introduction to our newest book, *Pioneer Church Records Speak*, and gladly signed the books purchased that night. At present, book sales are just four short of 200. The book sells for \$20.

The book contains all of Immanuel's church records translated into English, and details the challenges and struggles that our early pioneers and their churches faced in the 1840s to the 1870s. A great source of genealogical information, the book is fully indexed so it is easy to see if your family was part of Immanuel's history. Immanuel was also connected with the Lutheran churches around it, including David's Star, Trinity Pleasant Valley, Trinity Freistadt, and Zion.



Light refreshments were served.

**'ROLL OUT THE BARREL!**

**Volunteers give us a hand.**

Jim Matenaer smooth's out the Jackson Historical Society's lawn on a cold spring day. This will make it much easier to walk on and to mow. Jesse Seltrecht donated the use of the lawn roller. Thanks for your help.



**CORDELIA P. HARVEY  
VISITS JHS**

Jessica Michna and her friend, Cordelia P. Harvey, wife of the late Wisconsin Governor, Louis P. Harvey, visited the Jackson Historical Society Free Program on the 26th of March at the Jackson Town Hall. Area citizens were able to eavesdrop on the very interesting conversation and enjoyed cookies and coffee afterwards.

**HELP!  
VOLUNTEER  
DRIVERS  
NEEDED!**



Summer is upon us. The warmth and rain showers have the grass growing fast. Keep the society grounds looking good by volunteering to mow the lawn. Your Jackson Historical Society needs your help. If you can occasionally volunteer a couple of hours during this summer to help mow our lawn, please contact us. Call Jerry Prochnow at 262-338-8867, or Russ Hanson at 262-677-3888 and sign up. Our e-mail is [jhsheritage@sbcglobal.net](mailto:jhsheritage@sbcglobal.net).

**DONATIONS NEEDED**

The Jackson Historical Society has beautiful wedding dresses and other clothing items from the 1800's and early 1900's that we would like to display. To do so properly, we'd like to use dressmakers "dummies" or mannequins.

If you have either item and you'd like to donate it to JHS, to help us display our historic clothing, it would be appreciated.

Please call 262-677-3888 or e-mail [jhsheritage@sbcglobal.net](mailto:jhsheritage@sbcglobal.net) to donate. Thank you.



**SILENT AUCTION ITEMS**



The Jackson Historical Society's silent auction to be held during the Raspberry Festival on September 13th is our annual fund raising event. It's success relies on your donating items for it. Please check your attic, basement, and garage and see what "treasures" you have to donate to JHS. We are currently accepting donated items.

Please contact Lenore Kloehn (262) 377-2142 if you have items you wish to donate.

**NEW AT THE FESTIVAL**  
Sept. 13th, 2015



Antique Appraisal by Lee Bernard. Wondering about the value of a family heirloom? Bring it to the festival for an appraisal. Appraisal will cost \$5.00 per item or 3 items for \$10.

Also new this year will be hand woven baskets by Sandy Vorwerk. Stop by her booth.

Come see what else is new for the 2015 Raspberry Festival.

Family fun on a sunny Sunday afternoon. Join us!

**ACTION IN JACKSON PARADE**

The Action in Jackson parade featured floats, bands, and antique cars. Jerry Prochnow and his 1939 Chevy promoted the Jackson Historical Society's annual fall festival, the Raspberry Festival. Join us in September for this fun event. Thanks Jerry for the sign.



**JHS DISPLAY AT WEST BEND LIBRARY**

In 1958, a train derailment occurred on the rail line just south



of Highway 60. A large pile-up with much damage. Pictures are on display along with stories on the railroad and its effect on Jackson.

The Jackson Historical Society is open by appointment only. Call Jerry Prochnow—338-8867, or Russ Hanson 677-3888, if you'd like to pay us a visit.

**15th Annual RASPBERRY FESTIVAL**



Sunday, September 13, 2015, 12-5 PM  
JACKSON HISTORICAL SOCIETY—1860 MILL RD.

Driving , at round-about take Division Rd. SOUTH off Hwy. 60 to Mill Rd.- turn WEST to festival site. Or, take Maple Rd. SOUTH off Hwy. 60 to Mill Rd.- turn EAST to festival site. Parking area in rear.

**SERVING OUR EXCELLENT AMISH MADE RASPBERRY PIE**



**HONEY GROVE ICE CREAM**



**HONEY & HONEY PRODUCTS**

**FARM FRESH PRODUCE**

**HOT DOGS & BRATS**



**HOT BUTTERED SWEET CORN**



**FRESH RASPBERRY PIE**

**ANTIQUE APPRAISAL**

**MUSIC BY THE FESTIVAL TRIO**



**KETTLE MORAINÉ MODEL T FORD & VINTAGE CAR CLUB**

**SILENT AUCTION 12:30 - 3:30PM**

**TOUR OUR RESTORED 1850'S KARL GROTH LOG HOME AND VISIT OUR MUSEUM OF JACKSON HISTORY**

**ATTEND A CLASS IN SESSION IN OUR ONE-ROOM SCHOOLHOUSE**

**PLAN TO JOIN US FOR THIS ANNUAL EVENT OF THE JACKSON HISTORICAL SOCIETY**



### AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETIES EVENTS

RICHFIELD HISTORICAL SOCIETY September 19th & 20th, 9:00am—5:00pm, 17th Annual Thresheree. Mark your calendar. Please Contact [www.richfieldhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.richfieldhistoricalsociety.org) for more information on events and meetings.

GERMANTOWN HISTORICAL SOCIETY Saturday, August 29th, 2:00pm—8:00pm., Dheinsville Olde Time Bier Garden. Please contact the Germantown Historical Society at [germantownhistoricalsociety.org](http://germantownhistoricalsociety.org) for more information.

POMMERSCHER VEREIN FREISTADT Friday through Sunday, July 24th-26th, German Fest, Call Tim at 262-242-0724. For information on other events, Contact—[information@pommerschervereinfreistadt.org](mailto:information@pommerschervereinfreistadt.org).

WASHINGTON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY Thursday, August 13, 2015 8:45 am – 12 pm Pioneer Kids Day—Lumberjacks Contact historical society at [www.historyisfun.com](http://www.historyisfun.com) and click EVENTS for more information and other events.



The Editor welcomes comments on the newsletter. Please mail all suggestions for articles, etc., to The Church Mouse, 1921 State Road 60, Jackson, WI 53037, or phone (262) 677-3888, or e-mail [jhsheritage@sbcglobal.net](mailto:jhsheritage@sbcglobal.net). Russ Hanson, Editor

(Continued from page 2)

Now that the bridge between railroads imagined and railroads built had been crossed, the dam had burst and the flood gates opened. Pent up energy in government and private sectors was released with new charters being issued and railroad companies being formed.

#### 1850'S FORWARD—A PERIOD OF GROWTH

As the Milwaukee, Waukesha and Mississippi Railroad prepared roadbed and laid track, the Galena and Chicago Union RR made plans to turn north at Rockford and follow the Rock River into Wisconsin and Beloit, Janesville and Madison

In Wisconsin, the Madison and Beloit Railroad Co received its charter which was later amended to extend the railroad from Janesville to Lake Winnebago (Fond du Lac) by way of Fort Atkinson, Jefferson, and Watertown. The railroad's name was changed to the Rock River Valley Union Railroad Company and their charter amended again to permit building from Fond du Lac to Superior and from Janesville through Madison to St. Croix Falls.

With the Rock River Valley Union Railroad beginning construction in 1852, there were now two railroads being built in Wisconsin. The race to build more railroads in Wisconsin was heating up. Many new charters were requested and issued by the new Wisconsin government.

Some of these new railroad charters were linked to either Milwaukee or Chicago as major commercial and industrial centers. Others began in villages such as Manitowoc, Sheboygan, Racine, Monroe, and Mineral Point.

The 1850's saw new railroad charters issued for the Green Bay, Milwaukee, and Chicago Railroad, the Milwaukee and Watertown Railroad, the Milwaukee and Horicon Railroad, and the La Crosse and Milwaukee Railroad. A charter was issued for the Sheboygan and Mississippi Railroad. Manitowoc got into the game with the Manitowoc and Mississippi Railroad Co. The Racine, Janesville, and Mississippi Railroad Co. was chartered, and the Southern Wisconsin Railroad Co. got a charter to build a railroad from Milton to the Mississippi. More would follow.

Many of these chartered railroads in Wisconsin had Mississippi in their name because the great river was not only a barrier, but a goal. Getting to the Mississippi meant water transportation was available to transport goods to market. For many Wisconsin railroads, however, it also meant their ability to transport goods back to Wisconsin's Great Lakes ports for faster and less costly transport to eastern markets.

In subsequent years, many chartered railroads, for various reasons, would fail to get built. Some would be started only to fail later in the process, with their efforts being purchased and combined with another, more successful railroad. Some railroads such as the Milwaukee, Waukesha, and Mississippi Railroad would, with great difficulty, succeed. Money for railroads was raised, money was spent, and much money was lost, but overall, momentum was on the side of the railroads. Their time had come. The years after Wisconsin statehood would see railroads become, as in Jackson's case, a very important factor in their continued development, and for growth of the state. Wisconsin was moving *FORWARD*, on rails!