



Confluence

DIGGING IN THE STACKS AND FINDING...

By Paul Kerr

It's always exciting making discoveries. One sees a detail in a photograph never seen before though the photograph has been seen dozens of times. One finds an unlooked-for letter from Teddy Roosevelt (alas, a reproduction) at the bottom of a map drawer, a collection of buttons in a box with accompanying documentation saying they are from the 18th century or a 30-star flag mixed in with clothing in the textile room.

Argus and Beloit Weekly Outlook, the Beloit Weekly Citizen and Beloit Daily Grit, even a Beloit Deutsche Zeitung, a German newspaper of 1896. Then there are the two finds made a month ago: the *Soul City Courier* and the *East Side Bulletin*. Both papers had a short run and limited circulation but are interesting regarding the many references to Beloit, its businesses and politics.

ing hands with advertisers, getting out of her car for appointments and interviewing people on site. Of course, there were also photographs of her at her desk. Irma wrote the editorials which covered topics of discrimination, getting out the vote (Carter vs. Ford), juvenile delinquency and ,in a lighter vein, establishing a C.B. radio club called Sirius. Other articles concerned entertainment, local and national sports and sprinkled



Soul City Courier Paper Girls, (l. to r) Vickie Lockridge, Sharon Jackson, Jocklin Jackson.



Our editor, Irma Adams, shakes hands with the paper's full page advertiser, Don Gerhart of Gearhart's Inc., a company with fine color TV's and Stereo sets.

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Accidental discoveries can be exciting. One of our rewarding discoveries of late is the finding of a couple of newspapers published in Beloit.

Most of the Society's historic newspapers are bound and date from 1848—the date of statehood for Wisconsin and the representative 30th star on the flag mentioned above. There were a number of publications in town over the years: *The Journal*, *The Courier & Journal*, the *Beloit Graphic and Daily Phonograph*, the *Beloit Weekly*

The *Soul City Courier* ran for approximately one year. It started in 1976 and ran through 1977. The Society has only five issues, the first of which is dated 12 October 1976 and the last 18 January 1977. The paper was distributed to Rockford, South Beloit and Beloit. Published twice weekly, it had a circulation of 1,000 and 500 subscribers who paid \$3.60 annually. Irma Jean Adams and Ron Davis ran the paper and had offices at Suite 313 at 419 Pleasant Avenue. Irma was editor and she seemed a rather peripatetic news person, with photos shak-

throughout are advertisements of businesses from Beloit to Rockford. Irma wrote welcoming, informative and frank editorials and one can see her admirable efforts to reach and present to the African American community and the Greater Beloit community at large a different perspective on society socially and politically.

In the last issue of the *Soul City Courier* in the society's collection, on the front page, is a drawing of a stylish, attractive African American Woman with the headline: "Don't

Continued inside

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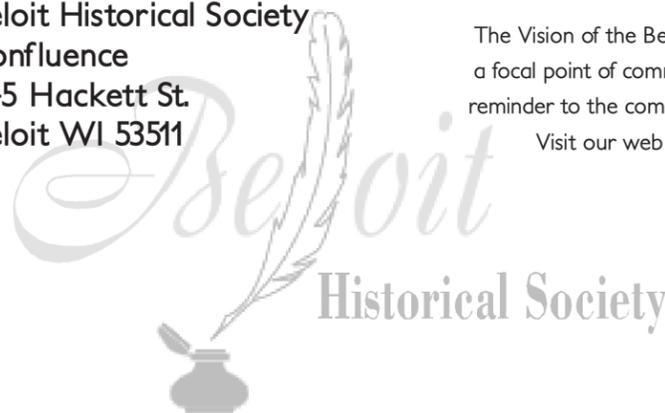
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The Vision of the Beloit Historical Society is to make history a focal point of community pride and to serve as a constant reminder to the community of its great and diverse heritage.

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Newsletter Contributors: Paul Kerr, Dwight Alton, and Sue Kurth; layout by Jen Scott.

Board meetings are the third Thursday of every month at 4:15 p.m. and are held at Lincoln Center, 845 Hackett Street.

The Newsletter, *Confluence*, is published quarterly for the membership of the Beloit Historical Society to inform readers of Society activities as well as educate them on the history of Beloit. The Beloit Historical Society manages two sites, Lincoln Center Museum with main offices at 845 Hackett St. and Hanchett-Bartlett Homestead, 2149 St. Lawrence Ave. For further information please call (608) 365-7835 or e-mail us at Pkerr@beloithistoricalsociety.com. Or see our web site at beloithistoricalsociety.com.

Our Mysterious Nellie King Smith

Nellie was well known in the Beloit of old-late 1800s through mid 1940s. She made headlines more than once and the final one was about her death in a fire at her residence at 823 Bushnell, 21 February 1942. This was at the site of the present day location of the First Congregational Church. Her father was the well known Justice of the Peace Edward P. King. Known as "Squire" King, he, too, was popular in Beloit with more than a few stories written about him. He became one of Beloit's prominent citizens and to prove it bought the old Lucius G. Fisher home at the corner of Pleasant & Public not long after his arrival in Beloit. It was the oldest, largest and grandest home in Beloit built by Lucius in 1839. It was from here that Edward entertained. It was this ancestral home that Nellie inherited at the death of her father in 1885.

Nellie was born 14 June 1855 and appears, from photographs, to have had a sister Mary. Though one can't prove it without a lot more digging, it appears that Nellie was among the first, if not *the* first, woman real estate and insurance agent in the area. She did very well for herself. She bought up a lot of property, seemed to invest well for herself and for her son, Edward, and maintained a couple of homes. The

King home at 514 Pleasant and surrounding property—on the corner where the present day Merrill & Houston Restaurant is, and before that the Fire Station—she eventually sold to the city. It seems that transaction took ten years to complete, 1916-1926, and when complete, the city tore the home down, cleared the area of its old gardens and trees and built a parking lot. This became the free east side parking space which was a much used parking area for years and years. The Society has in its collection a photograph or two of this parking lot filled to the brim with parked Model T's. The selling price of this property was \$91,200.00.

The headlines of Nellie over the years had a theme, one could say, of mystery. It was mysterious how her son preceded her in death (1935) and her reclusive nature following his death. There is the mystery of Mr. Smith and the marriage. Then there was her death by fire, then following that mystery of her will and squabbles over it in the later 1940s. Nellie died at the age of 86, alone in a house the fire department said was locked up pretty tight when they got there. She was referred to as a "wealthy recluse" in headlines mentioning her death and as such mystery would seem appropriate as a theme for this long lived Beloit, Nellie King Smith.



Long time volunteer, **Bequest Memorials** We Elsa Fabiszak, died March of 2011 and left us a bequest in her will. We just recently heard about it and that we would receive \$7,000 from the estate. Elsa volunteered at the Beloit Historical Society from 1990-2006 and worked diligently as an accessioner. In memory of Elsa and in thanks for her generosity, the Beloit Historical Society will plant a tree in the front lawn at the Lincoln Center this spring. We extend a sincere thank you to Jeff Polkowski, Elsa's Successor Trustee.

Year-end Appeal

The End of the Year Appeal was successful, for its fourth consecutive year. The Society received contributions from 100% of the board and 106 donors and took into its account \$14,015.00, surpassing the goal.



Dr. Kurt Leichtle,

a professor at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls, will be the featured speaker on **February 15 for the Beloit Historical**

Society Lincoln Day

Dinner. His topic is "History Goes Pop: Pioneers, Cowboys, and Superheroes."

"America can be understood by looking at popular fiction, comic books, songs, movies, and television," he said. Leichtle will trace the concepts and perceptions of three character types—**pioneers, cowboys, and superheroes**—from 1800 to the present. These types change to address the needs of culture at different periods of time.

Leichtle has seen two books published: "Wisconsin Journey" (Gibbs Smith) and "Dust in the Balance: Edward Coles, Slavery, and American Culture" (Southern Illinois University Press).

The cost of the event is \$35 for BHS members and \$40 for non-members. You will be treated to a **memorable evening** that will include appetizers, wine, a buffet meal featuring chef-carved, roast beef sirloin and baked cod on rice with mushroom gravy, plus grasshopper ice cream for dessert. Reservations, with payment, are due by in advance. For more information call BHS at 365-7835.

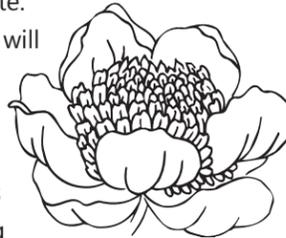
Sit back and relax on a Van Galder coach bus trip to the **Chicago Flower and Garden Show** at Navy Pier on **Thursday, March 14**. There will be no worries about traffic or parking, and guests will be dropped off conveniently right at the Navy Pier gate.

The Flower and Garden Show will feature more than **20 gardens** aimed to inspire, more than **100 vendors** selling horticultural products, experts to answer questions and culinary demonstrations featuring **34 top chefs** using homegrown ingredients.

"How to" garden workshops are always popular for visitors, including the most popular of all, **How to Make Container Gardens, which participants get to take home**. Four such sessions are offered daily with a maximum of 25 participants at each session.

In addition to the horticultural show, visitors will have full access to **Navy Pier** and its 50 acres of parks, restaurants, shops, attractions and more.

The coach will leave Beloit Historical Society, 845 Hackett St., at 8 a.m. **Free rolls and coffee** will be available inside the facility from 7:30-8 a.m. Cost for the round trip is \$45 for members and \$50 for non-members. The bus is scheduled to be back in Beloit at 5 p.m. Reservations and payment can be mailed to the BHS address above by March 7.



Invite a Friend

Know someone interested in Beloit History? Give them a **free one-year membership** to the Beloit Historical Society. Email or call us (belhissoc@hotmail.com, 608-365-7835) with your name and the names and addresses of people you are recommending. We will get in touch and let them know about the many benefits the Society has to offer. We look forward to seeing you and the new members you recommend!

Welcome to our newest members!

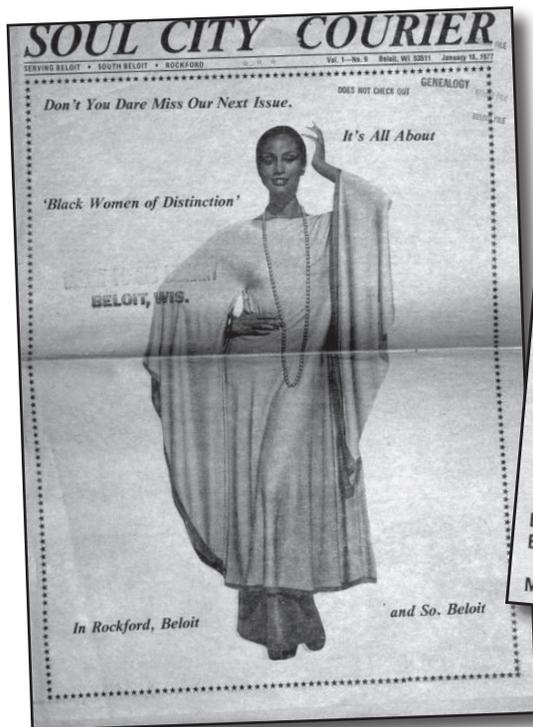
Lois Balsley, Richard W. Dexter, Teri & Don Downing, William Green, Michael & Pamela Mackey, Richard & Holly McLaughlin, John and Barbara Sabaka, Mae Sanford, Sabrina Zickert

Thank you for your support by joining us as members of the Beloit Historical Society. Your support helps with the Society's on-going mission to preserve the history and to inform the public about the rich heritage of the Greater Beloit area. It means a lot to us.

Member's Corner

DIGGING IN THE STACKS AND FINDING... *Continued from cover*

you dare miss our next issue, it's all about Black Women of distinction." Unfortunately the society doesn't have this one but it would be interesting to see it. Four years later, in 1981, Eugene Relerford started up the *Chronicle*, a like-minded newspaper and it still runs today.



In 1933 David C. Teague thought the city, the east part of it, needed a newspaper to keep its residents apprised of the goings on in good old Beloit. He called his publication the *East Side Bulletin* and he also saw his tabloid as an effective advertising medium for merchants. The Bulletin reached 1,000 homes and roughly 5,000 people. Like the Courier, it had a short run. The Society has 30 issues of this newspaper beginning with March of 1933 and ending with November of 1933. In August a Mr. Fairchild took over the publication.

The paper wanted to inform and entertain. The weekly was a mimeographed production of blue words on tan paper. All issues are in fragile condition, the first of which, 22 March 1933, speaks glowingly of Beloit downtown's Annual Spring Opening

of businesses. The best show in three years was predicted because of a general feeling that economic conditions were improving. Advertisements proliferated in this and all subsequent issues with businesses touting their wares. There was Reitler's at 417 E. Grand, the Van Wart Insurance Agency at the Strong Building, Witte's market at 169 West Grand, Optometrist Alva Snider saying that 875 people were sporting

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his eye glasses, D-X, Successor to Gasoline, now on sale at Goodall's and on and on. Then there were the personals which seemed to be a highlight of the early papers. Mr. C.W. Davis, of White Avenue, attends a meeting of the Price-Setting-Board in Janesville; Mr. & Mrs. P.R. Young, Jr., and their two children, Martha and Junior, visited relatives in Chicago; Mr. & Mrs. Fred Grutzner and daughter, Ruthie, spent Monday in Milwaukee and on and on. There were also, like in the *Soul City Courier*, editorials which dealt with a myriad concerns such as the Wisconsin Power & Light Co. wanting to do away with the buses and the need to resurface Wisconsin Avenue but should the tax payers of Beloit have to shell out \$152,000 for the project? And then this one: "Forget about needs men have for a good 5 cent cigar what about a good 5 cent glass of beer?"

The strain of advertisements, editorials, information and comments remain consistent through these 30 issues. The *East Side Bulletin* —Teague & Fairchild — informed and entertained and along with Irma & Ron and their *Soul City Courier*, give us a wonderful look at Beloit and a rewarding discovery.

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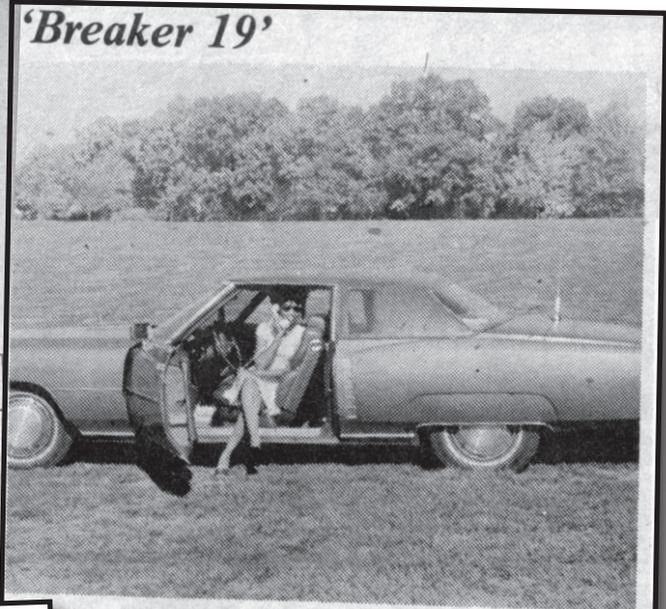
THE EAST SIDE BULLETIN

Vol. 1 - No. 1 PUBLISHED BY DAVID C. TEAGUE Telephone 3796 or 4657 March 22, 1933

- ANNOUNCEMENT -

The EAST SIDE BULLETIN is a weekly newspaper designed to keep residents of Beloit's east side well informed on current local trends and happenings which affect them or which are of interest to them particularly, and to provide a compact and effective advertising medium for merchants desiring the patronage of east side residents. The EAST SIDE BULLETIN has no political or sectarian affiliations, but is devoted solely to the interests of its readers.

It is the purpose of the publisher to distribute a copy of the EAST SIDE BULLETIN without charge, once a week to each of the slightly more than 1,000 homes in the area bounded on the south by Bushnell street, on the north by Keeler avenue, on the west by College avenue, and on the east by Milwaukee road. Between 3,000 and 5,000 people, the population of Beloit's better residential district, will thus read each issue of the EAST SIDE BULLETIN.



'Breaker 19'

Our editor takes a break from her daily chores and talks with a good C.B. buddy.

Soul City Courier is aware that there are many brothers and sisters out there with C.B. radios. We will sponsor a C.B. club that will cover Rockford, Beloit and So. Beloit. Club news and activities will be published regularly in the Soul City Courier under the column "The Soul City C.B. Report". We are also looking for someone to write this column.

If you are interested in helping us start this club simply drop a line to:

*Soul City C.B. Club
419 Pleasant Street
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The League of Minority Business

Leon Davidson, owner of the Socialite Club kept the meeting moving along at a very informal yet precise pace. Ms. Lilly Mae Brown of Brown's Beauty Nook meticulously recorded the minutes of the meeting. Mildred Hyde of the Beloit Urgan League was explaining the technicalities involved in hiring an Executive Director to operate the day to day business of the League.



In group discussion the topics were: How do we increase the number of Black Businesses? How do we make the current businesses more profitable? Those were just a few of the many concerns that arise out of the League of Minority Businesses.

It all started as a result of a group of Black Businessmen informally getting together and discussing certain problems that were common and unique to small and Black businesses. Out of

ness, inter-community trade and a higher degree of professionalism that will allow minority business to become

dent; Bobbie Wilson, Mr. B's Sanitation, vice president; Lilly Mae Brown, secretary; and Robert Whitley of

the League meets the second Thursday of each month 7:00 p.m. in the Wisconsin Power & Light Company

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