

STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF WISCONSIN

LOCAL HISTORY AWARD OF MERIT

1968

ALBERT KRACHT

DESCRIPTION

Two times history has chosen to make a mark at a spot along the Crawfish River in Jefferson County, Wisconsin known as Aztalan. Twice it has tried to erase the mark.

Some 800 years ago, Indians alien to the native woodland culture, built a walled ceremonial center and village that did not survive.

Seven centuries later a booming frontier village grew overnight, only a hundred yards north of the ancient Indian site. For a few brief years it basked in the prestige of being the largest and most important community in that part of the state. Today, one hundred years after, it is a country crossroads that shows no outward semblance of its once promising past.

Perhaps both villages would have long been forgotten were it not for the leadership and dedication of Albert Kracht. He was born in 1889 on the farm along the Crawfish River that included the ancient Indian site. Its historical significance was known during the boom days of the more recent village and Albert Kracht learned to treat the site with reverence as a boy. It was then that he started to preserve the Indian artifacts that he found and to add his voice to those who would have the Indian village restored.

From the time the renowned archeologist, Dr. S. A. Barrett of the Milwaukee Public Museum, began his extensive research of the site in 1919 through the time of the presentation of the site to the Wisconsin Archeological Society in 1927 and its subsequent purchase by the Conservation Department and into the present, Mr. Kracht has been a leading and prominent figure in the preservation effort. Slowly the reconstruction of stockade walls as they once surrounded the village and reconstruction of the ceremonial mounds within give promise of the ultimate realization of the dream.

When the Lake Mills-Aztalan Historical Society was organized in 1941 to establish a museum recalling the more recent village of Aztalan in the old village church, Albert Kracht became its first treasurer. He was elected president in 1947 and served in that capacity for twenty years. Today three log cabins and the community's onetime school-house are on the site, but these are not the only testimonial to the Society's activities. Year after year large turnouts at the society's monthly meetings have enjoyed the ever-changing agenda of historical programs that has given the society

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the reputation of being the best example of annual program planning in the state.

To the many adults outside the society to whose meetings Albert Kracht has spoken and to the hundreds of youngsters who have met him on field trips to Aztalan, it is difficult to separate the man from the history of Aztalan--the Indian site, the village of the 19th century, and the museum in which their story is told.

ALBERT KRACHT

Citation

For a lifetime of leadership devoted to the history and the pre-history of Aztalan, The State Historical Society is honored to present this Local History Award of Merit to Albert Kracht.

Presented at the Annual Institute for Local History at Madison, Wis on October 19, 1968.

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GREETINGS FROM AZTALAN!

Another exciting year has become history. While the snow lies deep on the museum lawn, it is pleasant to look back on the events of 1969. For the second year, two successful afternoon meetings were held in January and February. In April, a large delegation of our members attended a joint meeting with the Fort Atkinson Historical Society at the Hoard Historical Museum. Late in April, Mr. Charles H. Knox, Curator of Special Exhibits at the State Historical Society Museum, came to help us arrange an attractive grouping, "Afternoon Callers," in the Museum.

Everything was ready for Opening Day, May 1, thanks to the efforts of President Mrs. Wm. R. Wolff, Curator Albert Kracht and Custodians Mr. and Mrs. Elias Stroede. May 3 brought the first tour group of the season, 75 professional archeologists, members of the American Society for Archeology who were having their annual convention in Milwaukee. Mr. Kracht took them on a tour of the mounds before their visit to the museum. The dedication of Wisconsin Registered Landmark No. 68, commemorating Pioneer Aztalan, was held on the museum lawn on May 4. Mr. Clifford H. Townsend, president of the Albion Academy Historical Society, was the principal speaker.

On June 15, the Zickert House, the two-story log house given to the Society by Mr. and Mrs. John Zickert in 1963, was opened to the public. The restoration of the house as a farm home of the late nineteenth century was a major project which immediately proved a fascinating attraction to our many visitors.

The Third Annual Aztalan Day celebration, July 27, was, unfortunately, dampened by intermittent rain. However, between showers, we enjoyed a timely address by Mr. A. A. Zurbuch and several musical selections. In August, the annual historical bus tour, under the direction of Walter Bubbert, took members and friends on a trip to Milwaukee and featured stops at the Mitchell Park Conservatory, Milwaukee Public Museum and the Greek Orthodox Church of the Annunciation, designed by Frank Lloyd Wright.

The Museum closed October 31, after having welcomed 11,820 visitors from 41 states and 24 foreign countries. Immediately after closing, every movable exhibit was carried to storage so that the Museum could be painted in preparation for the 1970 season. The year closed with the traditional Christmas pot luck supper at the L. D. Fargo Free Public Library. The Moravian Folk Singers delighted the members and their guests with songs of the season.

Officers for 1970 are: Albert Kracht, President Emeritus and Curator of the Museum; Mrs. Donald R. Schultz, President; Mrs. Wm. R. Wolff, First Vice President and Acting Corresponding Secretary; Mrs. Mary Wilson, Second Vice President; Curtis Mansfield, Recording Secretary; Mrs. W. J. Erlandson, Treasurer; Mr. and Mrs. Elias Stroede, Museum Custodians. Directors are: Mrs. Edna Alexander, Mrs. Peter Diedrich, Mrs. W. J. Erlandson, Albert Kracht, Curtis Mansfield, Mrs. Donald R. Schultz, Mrs. Mary Wilson, Mrs. Wm. R. Wolff and A. A. Zurbuch.

Many important and exciting projects are being planned for 1970 which will require the active participation of all members in order to insure their success. Annual dues are still only a dollar, so join the Society today and help preserve the Past for the Present and the Future.

CRITICISMS FROM ALABAMA!

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On June 12, the Kicker House, the two-story log house given to the Society by Mr. and Mrs. John Kicker in 1933, was opened to the public. The restoration of the house as a farm home of the late nineteenth century was a major project which immediately proved a fascinating attraction to our busy visitors.

The Third Annual Aerial Day celebration, July 27, was, unfortunately, dampened by intermittent rain. However, between showers, we enjoyed timely address by Mr. A. A. Turbush and several musical selections. In August, the annual historical bus tour, under the direction of Walter Hubbert, took members and friends on a trip to Milwaukee and featured stops at the Mitchell Park Conservatory, Milwaukee Public Museum and the Greek Orthodox Church of the Annunciation, led by Frank Lloyd Wright.

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Many important and exciting projects are being planned for 1970 which will require the active participation of all members in order to insure their success. Annual dues are still only a dollar, so join the Society today and help preserve the Past for the Present and the Future.

There are many obituaries missing to complete the families whose roots were in the Lake Mills-Aztalan area. You probably all know that when the Articles of Incorporation of this organization were set up in 1941 its purpose was "To collect and preserve the history and tradition of Lake Mills and its surrounding area, by securing books, papers, documents and relics pertaining to the same. Also to maintain a suitable place for the preservation of such manuscripts, relics, histories, biographies and samilar data." So with this in mind the Lake Mills-Aztalan Historical Society has restored the Baptist Church, and continues to work on restorations, and to maintain an orderly file, of manuscripts, newspaper clippings, scrapbooks, and files of important letters vital to the past and present.

As a beginning we had a scrap started by Mrs. English about 1900 which contained obituaries and articles of early settlers. There were also scrapbooks of Kitty Larson, the Hubbs family, Ruth Potter, Alice White, Wilbur Stiles families, Mrs. Neff, the Crumps and many others, whose help has been excellent.

Following are some of the names and dates whose obituaries are missing. Also articles concerning any of these folks would be welcome for our records.

- Miss Clara Smith
- Maurice Smith, M
- Minnie Hunzicker
- Mrs. Em. Yaeck
- Mrs. Alvin Lipke and husband
- Lydia Poutsch
- Emma Anexander
- Mrs. Bernie Engsberg
- Maude Schaefer
- Leo Wlfigram and wife
- Mrs. Ralph Seward
- Mrs. Harold Taylor
- Sam Betsold
- Ferd Kerstan
- Ed Dettman, Sr
- Mrs. Herman Setz
- David Shalden
- JohnLieret
- Oscar Hildebrandt
- Isabel Bruns and husband
- Ben Waggonner
- Lynn Faville and wife
- Joe Davis
- John Hooper
- Peter White
- Lulu Pease
- Edward Hyer
- Etta Wilson
- Chäude Wilson and wife
- Mrs Lee Wilson
- Harriet Haverkate and husband
- Elsie Schuyler
- Frank Tillotson
- Mrs. C. L. Hubbs
- Frank Markham
- Henry Micheal

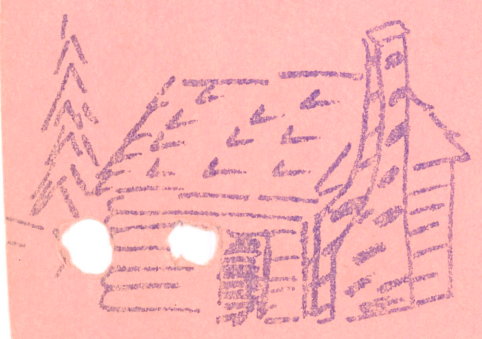
- Myrtle Stone
- Robert and Harvey Currie
- Harvey Stuelke
- Ferd Pittwitz and wife
- Otto Fischer and wife
- Ferd Bauman and wife
- Chris Gottschalk
- Louisa Woellfer
- Sara Merman
- Mr and Mrs Reinhardt
- Mr and Mrs Charles Grandall
- Mr and Mrs Frank Grandall
- Lena Krause
- Alberé Pranke
- Allen Hyer and wife
- Norman Hyer
- Frank Hyer and wife
- Albert Bohnack
- Anna Mohr
- Roy Bertram
- Arthur Breitkruets
- Mrs. Dexter Smith
- Fred Krause
- Stanley Tyler
- Mrs. Frank Whiting
- Mrs Herman Heller
- Roy Pranke
- Royal Tyler
- Ed Heimstreet, Mrs. and Bert
- Laura and Emeline Joeckel
- Howard Wollen
- Donald Mantz
- Earl Jones
- Elmer Krull
- Arnold Hahn and wife
- Fred Robish and wife

May I add we already have three big fat books full.
See what you can do to help.

ANOTHER DECADE 1971-1981

LAKE MILLS - Azalan

Historical Society



Inc.

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LAKE MILLS-AZTALAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.
ANOTHER DECADE -- 1971-1981
Evelyn Cobb

W. J. Erlandson, in his account of the Lake Mills-Aztalan Historical Society's "First Thirty Years" -- 1941-1971 -- speaks of the future and what it will hold for the Society. In the closing paragraphs he hints of future projects, both considered by the Society and the State of Wisconsin, for further development of Aztalan State Park. Some of these plans have come to fruition -- some have not; others, not envisioned 10 years ago, have materialized.

The decade from 1971-1981 has seen many changes. Time marches on and there are those who are no longer with us, new members have been welcomed, worthwhile projects have been undertaken and completed. Always, there are those who give of their time and talents to carry on the work of the Society. This dedication and zeal is our assurance that the future will be in good hands.

Mentioned by Mr. Erlandson in his review of the Society's "First Thirty Years" was the observation tower which was at that time well-advanced in construction on the Museum grounds. The 40 foot tower, which gives visitors a breath-taking view of a portion of the beautiful Crawfish River Valley, was memorialized as the Albert Kracht Observation Tower as special ceremonies held on September 11, 1971. This honoring was particularly gratifying to Mr. Kracht for he dearly loved every inch of the Aztalan site. His family and friends were happy that he received this recognition at that time, for on July 21, 1974, at age 85, he passed to his eternal rest following an apparent heart attack. A charter member of the Lake Mills-Aztalan Historical Society, Inc. he had served as President and was President Emeritus at the time of his passing. He was a founder of the Aztalan Museum and was Curator from the beginning. In 1968 he was honored by the Wisconsin State Historical Society for his leadership and devotion to Local History. Internment was in Rock Lake Cemetery, Lake Mills. Read at the November 15, 1974 annual meeting of the Historical Society was this tribute to him:

"In the months that have passed since Albert Kracht's sudden death, our Historical Society has missed him more than words can tell."

"For Albert was always a tower of strength in this society ever since it was organized in 1941. He was treasurer the first eight years, then president for nearly two decades, and curator of the Aztalan Museum for 32 years. It was a token of our joy in his leadership that we built the Albert Kracht Memorial Tower, and dedicated it while he was still with us."

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"Truly a great character, Albert was honest, dependable, sincere and friendly, a humble, unaffected man respected and honored by his community and his church, as well as this society. There was no room for pettiness in his heart. No worthwhile task was beneath him. Even as president of this group he continued to make coffee for our meetings."

Board of Directors Officers elected at the November 18, 1974 meeting were: Karl Magnussen, President; Edythe Wolff, 1st Vice-president; Phyllis Sillman, 2nd Vice-president; Meta Behling, Recording Secretary; Marjorie Zurbuch, Treasurer; Edythe Wolff, Curator; Mr. and Mrs. Elias Stroede, Custodians; with Mrs. W. J. Erlandson appointed Corresponding Secretary by President Karl Magnussen.

Suggested by Marge Zurbuch at a Board of Directors' meeting on January 29, 1975 as requested by Richard Grant, was this: that a picket fence enclose all the Society buildings to keep non-payers from the cabins and tower, and that a log building be erected by the admittance gate. Grant offered to draw a plan. At a March 5 Board meeting there was further discussion as to this proposition. At a Board meeting on April 7, 1975 members were unanimous in voting to install a fence for the museum grounds and to erect an admissions building. This proposal was taken to the Society members at the April 18 meeting, and they okayed same -- the erection of a log admittance building (14 x 18), and construction of a red cedar fence, all to be engineered by Loren Soter.

Noted at the June 20, 1975 meeting was a certificate shown by Karl Magnussen. This document, signed by Governor Lucey, designated the Society's Museum property as a National Registered Landmark site.

At Aztalan Day, June 27, 1975 the admissions building and souvenir building was dedicated with a special ribbon-cutting ceremony. Larry Wiedenfeld, on behalf of the Aztalan Town Board, congratulated the Society members who volunteered help and worked on this project.

In 1975 admission fees were raised to \$1.00 for adults, 25¢ for children and 10¢ each for school groups. Senior citizens in groups would be admitted free, or for whatever they might wish to contribute.

At the April 22, 1976 meeting of the Society memorial tributes were made to Ruth Potter and Jane Diedrich, both long-time and active members in the Society. This is the tribute afforded them:

"During the past calendar month of this Bicentennial year, death has removed from our world two women who in earlier years served this society faithfully and well."