



September 2023

How Do Shirley's Gardens Grow?

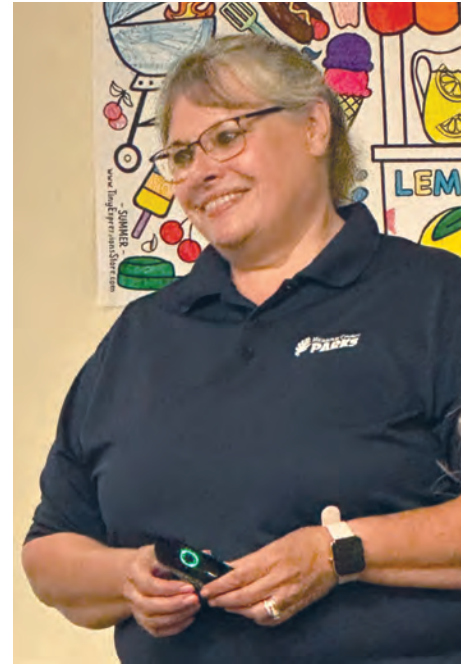
Undeterred by the hottest temperatures of the summer, nearly 40 brave individuals gathered in the air-conditioned Hunt Room on August 23rd for HCHS's third program of the year, "The History of Whitnall Park and Boerner Botanical Gardens," presented by **Shirley Dommer Walczak**, Botanical Gardens Director for Milwaukee County Parks.

Shirley traced that history to 1928-29, when **Charles B. Whitnall** purchased the 660 acres that were to become Whitnall Park. He envisioned it as a major jewel in the necklace of green parks surround-

ing Milwaukee County. Collaborating with Whitnall was **Alfred L. Boerner**, the County's landscape architect, who directed the creation, beginning in 1938, of the park's botanical gardens.

The Civilian Conservation Corps was instrumental in the park's construction. CCC Camp Whitnall was based in the park from 1933 to 1942. CCC workers planted 38,325 trees and shrubs, built eight dams, and constructed \$50,000 (nearly \$2 million today) of trails and roads, among other projects.

In the eight decades since then, the park and the botanical
(Continued on page 3)



Shirley Dommer Walczak
(Photo by Chris Schachtlie)

Ben Hunt Painting Depicts Unusual Subject Matter

On August 25th, the HCHS received a painting by **Ben Hunt** that is unlike any others currently in our collection. It is signed by Ben and dated 8/6/22, which coincides with the year he and his wife, **Laura**, moved to Hales Corners.

The painting was donated by **Arlene Salentine**. It has been in her family since **Louise Snyder**, her father-in-law's mother, purchased it. Louise was a sister to Laura (Snyder) Hunt and bought the painting from the family after Laura's death in 1974. Thanks so much, Arlene.

The painting is untitled and Arlene did not know specifically what the subject might be. The architecture of the wall and the building behind it suggests an ancient and middle eastern setting.

Ben sometimes copied other paintings that he admired. If anyone recognizes his source of inspiration for this painting, please let us know.



Ben Hunt's untitled painting from 1922

Anthropologist and Archaeologist Visit the Ben Hunt Cabin

HCHS welcomed two very distinguished visitors in August when **Dr. Sissel Schroeder**, Professor in the Department of Anthropology at UW-Madison, and **Tamara Thomsen**, Maritime Archaeologist at the Wisconsin State Historic Preservation Office, visited the Ben Hunt Cabin. The purpose of their visit was to document the dimensions of a dugout canoe carved by Ben nearly 80 years ago. The canoe is displayed next to the Cabin's eastern interior wall.

Preparation for the researchers' visit began earlier in the summer, when HCHS was contacted by the Wisconsin Historical Society (WHS) in connection with its search for existing dugout canoes in local museum and historical society collections. The goal of WHS's project is to provide analyses of canoe size, style, raw material, and age, and to show similarities and differences through time and space.

On August 14th, Sissel and Tamara joined **Randy Sannes** and **Al Strekow** at the Cabin.

The researchers began scanning the dugout from top to bottom, thereby creating a three-dimensional record of the canoe for future study. The documentation included the use of photogrammetry and handheld Light Detecting and Ranging.

The process took approximately two hours as Sissel and Tamara scanned every inch of the dugout using an iPhone and a scanner about the size of a matchbox. That information was periodically downloaded to a laptop. Through very specific settings, only the dugout appeared in the scans and the room around it was deleted.

On the day of their visit, our area experienced the largest rainfall of the summer, resulting in a total power outage at the Cabin. Fortunately, Sissel and Tamara had just finished their scans and were disconnecting their lights when the entire Cabin went dark, so none of the data was lost.

We extend our thanks to Sissel and Tamara for the opportunity to share a part of our collection

and promote the W. Ben Hunt Cabin. Sissel and Tamara will be featured speakers at the upcoming 17th Annual Local History & Historic Preservation Conference on October 18-20 in La Crosse, WI.

History of Our Dugout Canoe

Ben Hunt carved the dugout canoe from a basswood log in the spring and summer of 1944. The log, which was 25 feet long and weighed one ton, came from a tree that grew near Mud Lake. Ben cut off a 10-foot segment and used it to make a South Sea Two-Tone Log Drum. The remainder became the material for the dugout, which measured 14.5 feet long, 18.5 inches wide, and 14 inches high.

Ben did not carve the dugout by himself. One day, two teenage boys appeared at Ben's door and showed him a bow and some arrows they had made from instructions in one of his books. Ben recognized that the boys had handicraft skills and could help him work on the dugout. Because the



Sissel Schroeder

(Photo by Randy Sannes)



Tamara Thomsen

(Dugout continued from page 2)

boys lived in Milwaukee and needed to travel to Hales Corners on the Interurban, it would have been difficult for them to help Ben on a daily basis. So, Ben asked the boys' parents for permission to have them live with him and his wife, Laura, during the summer while they worked on the dugout. The parents agreed. The boys also ran errands and did chores for Ben's neighbors. Many years later, the boys returned to Hales Corners to see their dugout in the Ben Hunt Cabin.

To carve the dugout, Ben and his helpers used tools that Ben had made himself, mainly a crooked knife and a long-handled adz. The final touch was added when Ben carved his trademark initials "WBH" and the year "44" into one side of the dugout near the front.

Eventually, Ben traded the dugout to his friend **Alton Boldt** for a single-shot .22 caliber rifle. The Boldts used the dugout on a pond on their property in Muskego. In April 1998, **Wayne and Karen Boldt** donated the dugout to HCHS. It was in remarkable condition despite having been exposed to Wisconsin weather for 54 years. Only the dugout's two thwarts had rotted away and needed replacement. Thwarts function as structural cross-pieces and can be used as seats for the rowers.

The next time you visit the Cabin, be sure to take a look at our dugout canoe. In the meantime, a sample of its scan will be sent to HCHS members with computer capabilities so you can see the results.



Ben's "WBH-44" carving in the dugout



Sissel checks the laptop while Tamara continues scanning

(Gardens continued from page 1)

gardens have experienced steady growth and development. Shirley's presentation highlighted major additions through the years, including the trial garden, peony garden, rock garden, shrub mall, rose garden, daylily walk, perennial garden, herb garden, rain garden, and hosta display garden, as well as the golf course and education & visitors' center.

Shirley also highlighted several recent or upcoming accomplishments and events:

- **The Rotary Walk**, installed in 2015, is an ADA-acceptable path that has helped make the gardens accessible to individu-

als with disabilities. It is named for the Whitnall Park Rotary Club, which raised the funds needed for its construction.

- **Margie's Garden**, opened in 2022, was built and named in memory of **Margaret "Margie" Kezman**, a local teacher who passed away in 2019. It is a child-friendly space featuring a playhouse, twig hut, bug garden, large metal flower sculptures, and seasonal flowers.

- **China Lights**, the immensely popular lantern festival, opens at Boerner on September 15, 2023 and continues Tuesdays – Sundays through October 29. This is the first U.S. venue for the show, which has the theme "Nature's Glow."

- **The 50th Anniversary of the Wehr Nature Center's Visitor Center** will be celebrated in 2024. Wehr is Milwaukee County Parks' only nature preserve and education center, and has been enjoyed by adults and schoolchildren of all ages since its founding.

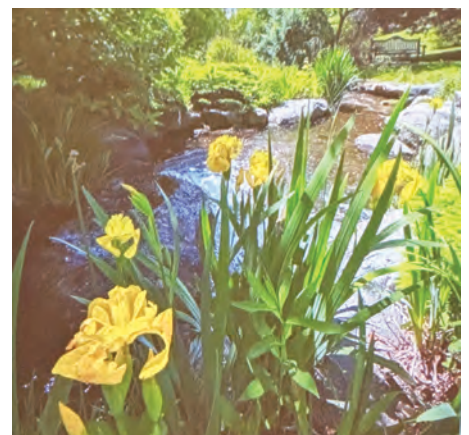


Photo by Chris Schachtlie

Card Table Advertises Village Businesses from the 1950s

A unique 1950s era card table was recently donated to HCHS by **Bill Ritzman, Sr.**, president of Ritzman Appliance, a long-time business in Hales Corners. As many people know, Bill's store is a mini-museum featuring a display of early appliances as well as clocks.

Each corner of the table displays one of the four suits of playing cards. The remaining area is divided into 28 spaces. All the spaces, including the corners, feature advertising for local businesses of the 1950s. They include: Al Lodde's Barber Shop, Al'Mar Caterers, Bert M. Ohnstad Insurance, Boggess Pharmacy, Bosch Hardware, E.W. Bosch Autos, Ed Sweeney's Silver Dollar Bar,

Gordon's Texaco Service, Hale Park, Hales Corners Auto Body, Hales Corners Beer Depot, Hales Corners Materials Corp., Heileman Bros. Paints, Holz Motors, James Godsell & Sons Real Estate, Lyle's Jewelry, John P. Herda Co., Lawrence F. Graves Real Estate, Meinzer Drugs, Mel's Liquor, Michaels Clinic, R.A. Mayer Implements, Raedisch Realtors, Inc., Ray Anderson's Sand & Gravel Co., Ritzman Appliance, Rural Co-op Services, Smith's Harmony Restaurant, State Bank Hales Corners, Streits "Do It Yourself" Shop, Theurich's Catering, Welch's Hardware, and Wm. Kilps Sons-Contractors.

Many thanks to Bill Ritzman for this wonderful donation to our Society. Bill's store is located at Highway 100 and College Avenue. Stop by to see his collection and maybe purchase an appliance or two.



Randy Sannes and Bill Ritzman pose with the card table at Ritzman Appliance

Hunt Cabin Cutout Attracts Attention

If you attended the Night Out event at Hales Corners Park on August 1st, you saw our latest promotion for next year's 100th anniversary of the Ben Hunt Cabin: a 4-foot by 7-foot blowup of an original drawing of the Cabin by Ben himself, with cutout windows for selfies fans. The idea was suggested by HCHS board member **Katy Galewski** and the blowup will continue to be used at the Cabin itself.



Riley Koenen, our youngest docent at the Cabin (Photo used with his mom's permission)

During the September Cabin opening, our newest and youngest docent, **Riley Koenen**, posed for his photo. Riley is a fifth grader and, according to his mother, **Stacy**, has been a regular visitor to the Cabin and has a keen interest in local history.



Village President Dan Besson and his wife, Diane, pose with the Cabin blowup during the Village Night Out event

(Photos by Katy Galewski)

Root, Root, Root for the Home Team

We just received this colorized photo of the 1919 Hales Corners baseball team from **Sam Schmidt**, the brother of HCHS member **Mel Schmidt**. The gray building behind the team is Meinzer's Drug Store, and just behind it, a corner of the Bosch Hotel can be seen. Sam also provided the names of seven of the players. The original black and white photo is in our collection, but only three team members were identified. We now are missing only one name; so, if anyone can identify the boy at the extreme right, please let us know. Thanks, Sam, for another great addition to our photo collection!



Hales Corners baseball team, 1919 (Top l to r) Norb Bischoff, Al Witt, Gerry Loughney, (Bottom l to r) Bill Klug, Ed Bosch, Harry Schubring, Norman Schmidt, Clem Loughney, Unknown

From the HCHS Photo Collection

The two photos below show events mentioned in *Tales of the Corners* on page six of this issue. The dedication event on the left is mentioned in

the 1933 listing and the theatrical event at right is mentioned in the 1973 listing.



The Freede-Eckel Post presented a plaque dedicated to the Forestry Army Conservation Corps in 1933. (Front l to r) George Weber, Rev. Richard Evans, Charles B. Whitnall, Col. A. H. Mueller, Capt. Karl Minnigerode



Scene from Teahouse of the August Moon by the Hales Corners Community Theater (Top to Bottom) Mrs. Anthony Alberte, Russel Kilps, and the goat, Lady Astor

TALES OF THE CORNERS - SEPTEMBER

From the files of the *Tri-Town News* and *Hub*

90 YEARS AGO (1933)

- Seventy Hales Corners residents are unemployed.
- Socialist politicians deliver speeches at the Labor Day Fair in Hales Corners.
- Milwaukee County Relief workers and the Civilian Conservation Corps are working on Whitnall Park. The 17th green of the golf course has been located where the Rhoder barn used to stand.
- More than 30 Hales Corners pupils attend Milwaukee high schools. The elementary school has a record-breaking enrollment of 151 students.
- The Freede-Eckel American Legion Post donates a flagpole and plaque to Whitnall Park's Forestry Army Conservation Corps camp. Charles B. Whitnall speaks at the dedication. (See page 5.)
- Frank's Country Tavern, Hales Corners, advertises Friday night fish fry for 10 cents, Saturday chicken for 15 cents, and steak lunch for 50 cents.
- To accommodate plans to widen Highway 100, the interurban tracks are slated to be moved farther east.
- Dick Schmidt is getting ready to open his beer garden at 108th Place, just around the corner from the Getz Drug Store.

80 YEARS AGO (1943)

- The first meeting of the Hales Corners Cub Scout Pack 598 is slated. The charter will be presented at the meeting.
- The Park Valley 4-H Club's war bond rally at Valley View School sells \$1,635 in bonds and stamps.
- For its September project, the Hales Corners Special Service Club contributes cakes to Milwaukee's USO.
- Frank Nelson resigns as Hales Corners air raid warden captain. In addition to his teaching duties at Hales Corners School, he has taken a job in a war industry.
- The Hales Corners Victory Harvest Festival is a big success. Lillian Molkentin is chosen as the festival's queen.
- The teaching staff at Hales Corners School includes Frank Nelson, Dorothy Krom, Sarah Mileski, Mildred Raasch, Ruby Larman, and May Luedke. Between 200 and 210 students are expected to enroll this fall.

- The Rural Co-op opens a new grocery store and meat market in Hales Corners. Paul "Swede" Schubring is in charge of the store and presides behind the meat counter.
- Meinzer Drug Store advertises Herb-Tonik for cows.

70 YEARS AGO (1953)

- A plaque is erected to mark Irvin Cobb Park. The four-acre tract of land was deeded for a park by the Cobb estate.
- The Freede-Eckel American Legion Post plans to erect a new building. The current legion site at Forest Home Avenue and Lilac Lane is for sale.
- Greendale and Hales Corners school districts approve a proposal to create a common school district along with Valley View, Willow Edge, Kneeland, and Kilbourn. The vote is advisory. The other districts need to meet regarding the issue.
- Vernon Raedisch is elected president of the Hales Corners Businessmen's Association.

60 YEARS AGO (1963)

- An open house to kick off a \$200,000 building project is slated at the EAA Museum.
- Hales Corners Auxiliary Police sell tickets for their dance at the Muskego Ballroom. The money raised will be used to purchase civil defense equipment for the Village.
- The Hales Corners Village Board passes a new fire control ordinance for the business district. Frame buildings, or buildings with brick or stone veneer are no longer allowed.
- Tryouts are held for *Who Was That Lady I Saw You With?* Donald Rosenbauer is elected president of the Hales Corners Community Theatre.
- Mrs. Jack Bond is the new president of the Hales Corners Woman's Club.

50 YEARS AGO (1973)

- The Hales Corners Community Theatre is looking for a goat and Kimonos to use for its production of *Teahouse of the August Moon*. (See page 5.)

Research by Katy Galewski

Our Society is constantly adding images of Hales Corners history to our digital collection. If you have photos that you think are of historic interest to our Village, please contact us by mail, phone, or email.

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