



**December 2025**

**Merry Christmas & Happy Holidays!**



Once again, HCHS Board members **Katy Galewski**, **Mary Javorek**, and **Al Strekow** have installed a Christmas window display in the Hales Corners Library. This year's theme is *Advent Calendars*, featuring a private collection of calendars from 1979 to the present. The display will be in place until January, so please be sure to stop by to see it.

## **Domes Presentation Focuses on Past and Future**

On November 12th, Milwaukee Domes Alliance CEO **Krista Beall Diefenbach** and Chief Development Officer **Laura Emir** treated HCHS members and guests to a decades-spanning look at the history of Milwaukee's Mitchell Park and the creation and planned redevelopment of the park's iconic Domes.

**History:** The 61-acre Mitchell Park was one of the first parks created in Milwaukee. It soon was

*(Continued on page 2)*



**Architect's rendering of a proposed Nature Learning Center built adjacent to the Domes**

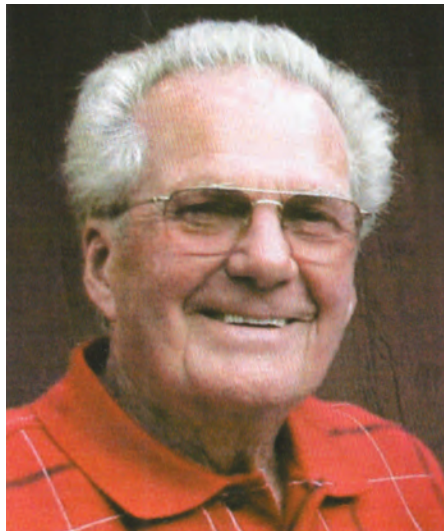


## In Memoriam

On October 20, 2025, our Society lost another long-time member when **Mel Schmidt** passed away at age 99. He was the husband of **Elaine Schmidt**, who is also a member of HCHS.

Mel and Elaine worked with HCHS to document the Schmidt family history in Hales Corners. They frequently attended HCHS programs as they lived only a couple of blocks away on Janesville Road. Mel often commented that he was the oldest resident of Hales Corners, living here since his birth.

His father, Norman, and his uncle, Ben, were early entrepreneurs in the Village, owning grocery stores and feed stores at 108th Place and Janesville



Road. Those stores and Mel's family home have been replaced by the Holz Motors car lots.

Mel was also a local businessman. He and Elaine owned Mel's Liquor store in the Hales Corners Shopping Center from 1954-1968. After that, he became a broker with Robidoux and Stefaniak Realtors.

Mel retired in 1988, but his involvement with the Hales Corners community continued. He became a charter member of the Whitnall Park Rotary Club in 1975. He served for 12 years, eventually becoming its president. Mel received a special service award, resulting from his 13 years as Commander of the Hales Corners Police Auxiliary Corps. In 2008, Mel received the Lifetime Achievement Award when he was recognized by the Village of Hales Corners for his service on the Board of Review and as an election worker for 15 years. That same year, he was also the Parade Marshall of the Hales Corners 4th of July Parade.

We at HCHS extend our sincere condolences to Elaine, Mel and Elaine's son **Todd**, and all of Mel's family.

---

*(DOMES, Continued from page 1)*

transformed into a popular destination with gardens, a boating lake, a lily pond, and walking paths. Construction of a glass conservatory, designed by Milwaukee architect Henry Koch, began in 1898 and the facility opened to the public the following year. A few years later, a sunken garden with formal flower beds also was created.

By the early 1950s, the conservatory began to show serious signs of wear, and the decision was made to demolish the building and replace it with a modern facility. In 1955, a competition to design a new conservatory was won by local

architect Donald Grieb, who proposed beehive-shaped conoidal glass domes. Construction began in 1959, and the final dome was completed in 1967. Since then, the Domes have been a popular attraction, but natural aging combined with deferred maintenance sparked a community-wide conversation in the early 2000s about the Domes' long-term viability.

After several years of discussion and debate, it was decided that the Domes were worth saving. Milwaukee County has committed \$30 million dollars to the redevelopment effort, and fundraising is underway to secure the additional \$120 million needed. Construction is expected to start in 2027-28.

**Redevelopment:** Krista shared some highlights of the plans for the Domes' renovation:

- Completely replacing the exterior glass and aluminum structure, and making extensive repairs to their concrete frames. The existing structure will be replaced with a modern system



**Laura Emir and Krista Beall Diefenbach**

(DOMES, Continued from page 2)

that closely matches Grieb's original design.

- Doubling the size of the current gift shop, and adding a boutique café offering unique beverages and grab-and-go sandwiches and snacks. Both actions will enable the Domes to generate significant additional revenue.
- Incorporating Mitchell Park into the Domes' programming. A new Nature Learning Center

will be created for dedicated education and events. The original sunken gardens will be returned to wetlands. Docents will be added to lead programs on various topics on weekends.

- Installing an interactive children's garden in an existing structure that is sometimes referred to as the "fourth dome." The garden will provide additional space in which youth and families can explore, learn, and play, with a focus on environmental understanding and advocacy.

---

## Bodus House Reaches a 100-Year Milestone

**Edward Bodus** was a baker with a business on Muskego Avenue in Milwaukee. He and his wife, **Alice**, built their home at 5645 S. 108th Street in 1925, intending to commute to his bakery in the city. The Starck Brothers built this Colonial Revival style home with Italian and Mediterranean features. A two-car garage was built on the north side of the property. Later, it was replaced by a wing that resembled the south side of the house. Inside, the home featured a conservatory with a fountain, a downstairs bar, and a bowling alley.

HCHS records state that Edward died in 1979, but there is no information on Alice. It is assumed that the house remained in the family until 1987, when **Dave and Barb Weis** bought it for her floral business, **Barb's Green House Florist**, and his dental offices. Barb has been there ever since, and she has maintained a tradition of excellence with a team of knowledgeable, imaginative, professional designers who have more than 100 years of combined experience.



*Bodus House, 1925*



*Alice and Edward Bodus, 1940s*



*Parlor and Conservatory, 1940s*



*Bodus House and Garage, 1970s*



*Barb's Green House Florist, 2020s*



## The Hunt Cabin Was Warm and Toasty at the Tree Lighting

After 39 years of faithful service, the furnace in the Ben Hunt Cabin finally came to its end. There had been a few warnings during the past couple of years that its demise was approaching.

**Randy Sannes** solicited estimates from local furnace suppliers, and **Hales Corners Heating & Air Conditioning** was selected to install the new furnace. That must have been a once-in-a-lifetime experience for them, as it's rare to work within a building more than 100 years old, let alone a log cabin. In addition, access to the basement of the Cabin is through a small trap door, and down a straight ladder. Once in the basement, there is no room to stand up, so all the installation work had to be done on hands

and knees. Thanks to the installers' hard work, the Cabin was nice and warm for visitors during the Village Christmas Tree Lighting.



## 92-Year-Old Certificate Discovered in Hartland!

About a month ago, we received an email from **Bridget Gibley**, Adult Services Librarian at the Hartland Public Library. She had discovered a Wisconsin Young People's Reading Circle certificate in their collection that was issued in 1933 to **Lloyd Conrad**, a Hales Corners resident. How it ended up in Hartland is a mystery. Bridget felt it should be added to our historic collection, and she dropped it off at our library.

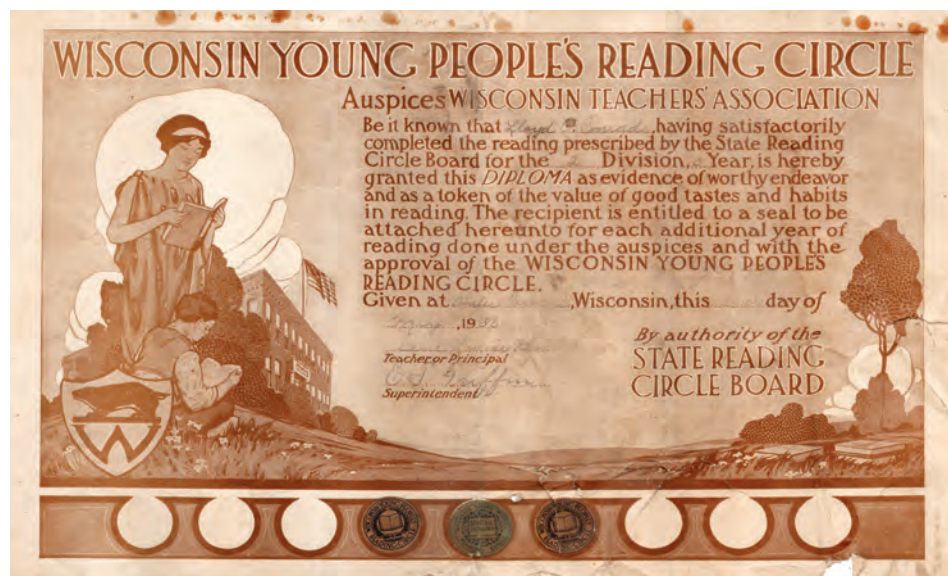
The Reading Circle concept was promoted by the Wisconsin Teachers' Association to encourage students' reading efforts. Voluntary reading above and beyond regular school assignments was acknowledged by affixing small gold seals in the empty spaces at the bottom of the certificate. Lloyd apparently earned three of those seals.

Lloyd C. Conrad (1924-2015)

would have been nine years old when he received the certificate. He grew up on a farm on the southeast corner of Highway 100 and Layton Avenue. He married **Audrey Esch** (1929-2021) in 1949 and they remained on that farm all their lives. Known as "Pomona Farm," it contained a fruit orchard of more than 500 trees. In the 1960s, the State Department of Transportation laid

claim to the orchards in order to build the Hale Interchange, leaving the Conrads with only 75 trees.

In spite of that, Lloyd and Audrey continued to sell apples at roadside stands in the Village. In addition, he became a mail carrier at the Hales Corners Post Office and Audrey worked as a gardener at Boerner Botanical Gardens.





## Hotel Dreyfuss Hosted a Holiday Party for Children in 1916

One of our prized possessions at the Hales Corners Historical Society is a souvenir booklet from the Hotel Dreyfuss. On December 7, 1916, **Alex B. Uhrig** held a birthday party for more than 30 children of Hales Corners at the hotel. We have no other information on Mr. Uhrig but assume it was his birthday that was being celebrated. Photos were taken by **Roland A. Wiepking** of

the adults and children who attended. As it was near Christmas, the rooms were decorated with Christmas trees and the opening song was "Stille Nacht, Heilige Nacht" (Silent Night, Holy Night). Mr. Uhrig was thanked by the children with a presentation of flowers. The children played a number of games and prizes were awarded to the winners.



*Birthday party (Alex Uhrig possibly at the head of the table), 1916*



*Children who attended the birthday party and Polo, the dog, 1916*

## First HCHS Christmas Open House Was Held in 2003

For several years beginning in 2003, HCHS sponsored Christmas Houses in early December as holiday open house events and fundraisers. The first of them was held at the Lawson House, a bungalow built for **Claus and Martha Lawson** in 1914. They originally were Society-only events, but on some occasions were shared with the Friends of the Pool. Four of the houses were depicted on a series of Christmas ornaments (*see inset*) and sold as collectibles.



*Bedroom of the Lawson House at Christmas, 2003*



*Mannequins in period costumes decorated the Christmas tree with popcorn, 2003*

## TALES OF THE CORNERS - DECEMBER From the files of the *Tri-Town News* and *Hub*

### 90 YEARS AGO (1935)

- The ringing of the bell at Emanuel United Church announces time for the annual community Christmas tree celebration near the Triangle. Santa Claus has bags of goodies for all the children.
- Despite the cold weather, the Hales Corners Fair is still well attended. Apple cider is 25 cents a gallon, potatoes are 75 cents a bushel, and hickory nuts are 75 cents per bushel.
- The Dreyfuss family holds a reunion at the Hales Corners home of Mary Dreyfuss.
- First through fourth graders at Hales Corners School hold a Christmas program for their parents. A play and carols are included.

### 80 YEARS AGO (1945)

- Hales Corners Senior Girl Scouts make drawstring bags, fill them with things that are difficult to find in war-torn countries, and send them to needy children in France.
- The Freede-Eckle unit of the American Legion distributes toys to children of servicemen in the community.
- Whitnall Park Garden Club members make Christmas wreaths for the veterans' hospitals and the USO.
- The Hales Corners Businessmen's Association announces plans to place the community Christmas tree in the center of Hales Corners. They also vote to donate money to the Hales Corners Parent-Teacher Association for the school Christmas party.
- Emanuel United Church holds its first postwar father-son banquet.
- Froemming Brothers Greenhouses at 92nd Street and Grange Avenue sell Christmas bundles of pine, balsam, and spruce for 50 cents to \$2.00.
- Hales Corners eighth graders take a field trip to Mitchell Airport, the Art Institute, the Milwaukee County Courthouse, and the Safety building.
- Delores Giese, Hales Corners, is winner of the 4-H contest for the best garden in the state and is a guest on Chicago's WLS *National Barn Dance* radio show.

### 70 YEARS AGO (1955)

- The telephone company announces "GArden 5" (425), a new prefix for area telephone numbers.
- The annual Hales Corners dinner dance is held at the Circus Room of the Wisconsin Hotel with more than 225 people attending. Proceeds will be used to support the new Community Youth Recreation League.

- A Holiday Tea, the kick-off for the new Hales Corners Woman's Club, is attended by more than 225 women.
- Santa Claus visits the Harmony Restaurant with gifts for children.

### 60 YEARS AGO (1965)

- Santa Claus is available at the north end of the Hales Corners Shopping Center each evening and Saturdays.
- The Hales Corners Lions Club opens its annual Christmas tree lot.
- St. Mary's Catholic Church holds its third annual "La Posada" (the re-enactment of Joseph and Mary searching for a room).
- A party is held for retiring engineer Donald Webster, who held the post since 1952.
- The Hales Corners budget is adopted following a public hearing. It provides for a property tax levy of \$68,860, equal to \$3.11 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation. That's a \$1.29 increase.

### 50 YEARS AGO (1975)

- Thousands of shoppers converge on Southridge shopping center on the Friday after Thanksgiving. Police turn away cars from the filled 7,000 car parking lot.
- Ed Sweeney announces his retirement from the Silver Dollar Bar (now The Hale House). He started the business in 1946.



**HAPPY HOLIDAYS  
FROM THE HALES CORNERS  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY!**



### HALES CORNERS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

5885 South 116th Street, Hales Corners, WI 53130

- 414-529-6150, Ext. 24 • [info@HalesCornersHistory.com](mailto:info@HalesCornersHistory.com)
- [www.HalesCornersHistory.com](http://www.HalesCornersHistory.com)
- [www.facebook.com/HalesCornersHistory](https://www.facebook.com/HalesCornersHistory)

**Editorial:** Al Strekow, Ruth Strekow

**Research:** Katy Galewski

**Design:** Al Strekow