



Sun Prairie Historical Library & Museum

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Summary of Research Collections Last Revised June 2022

This is a partial listing of research collections available at the Museum. Please submit a [Research Request Form](#) or contact the Museum (608-825-0837 or Museum@CityofSunPrairie.com) for help identifying relevant research materials. Physical access to research materials is provided at the Museum by appointment only.

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Buildings and Property

Abstracts – Land

The Museum holds abstracts on the towns of Sun Prairie, Bristol, Windsor, Burke, Medina, and York, as well as the incorporated communities of Sun Prairie and Marshall.

Buildings – Blueprints

Museum collections include blueprints and architectural drawings for Sun Prairie buildings. Many of these blueprints were located in the old Angell/Stegerwald lumberyard. Angell and Son Lumber started in the 1840s and sold to Stegerwald in 1907 after the death of Col. Angell and his son. Stegerwald was also a building contractor in the area.

Buildings – Historic

The Museum holds information about and photographs of historic Sun Prairie buildings, past and present.

Land Patents – Town of Bristol

Land patents are the documents transferring land ownership from the United States government to individuals. Jack Davison researched the land patents for the Bristol Township and organized the information by name, by section number and by date of purchase.

Land Patents – Town of Sun Prairie

Lisa Simon gathered information about the township and village of Sun Prairie in the early settlement period between 1839 and 1855.

Plat Books on Dane County

The Museum has plat books on Dane County from 1873 to 2001. Some of the books have directories which can help locate relatives and the land they owned. The collection is incomplete.

Plat Maps -- Sun Prairie

Maps of the new additions to Sun Prairie from 1860s-2008 are in the collections.

Businesses

Business Advertising

The Museum holds Sun Prairie business advertisements from the 1850s through the 2000s. This collection will always be incomplete due to the rapid expansion of the city.

Business Records 1840s-

This collection is very limited in scope and time periods. For example, it includes records of some general stores, bars, a lumberyard, gasoline station, postal books, creamery, and the Sun Prairie Canning Company. Most of these are partial records but are a wonderful source for studying everyday life in the community.

Renk Farms

Wm. F. Renk dictated a history of the farms that were purchased by the Renk family as the operations of the Renk farms increased in size and scope. This history is available at the Museum. Additional materials on the Renk farms are in the collections.

Sun Prairie Canning Factory

The Museum's collection on the history of the canning company from 1900 to 2002 is extensive. The collection includes newspapers published by the Oconomowoc Canning Company.

Sun Prairie Porcelain Company

The Museum has a large collection of products produced by the company. There is also an extensive photographic collection on the company. The collection of documents on the company is incomplete.

Events

Dedications

Dedication records of public buildings, schools, churches, businesses are in the collection. This collection is incomplete.

Festivals

Records of Sun Prairie festivals include the Sweet Corn Festival, the Sesquicentennial, Groundhog Day, Flags of Freedom, and Farmers and Merchants Industrial Fairs from 1912-1915.

Jaycee Shows

The Jaycee Shows were community productions produced each year from 1962-1970. The annual Jaycee Shows led to the formation of Sun Prairie Civic Theatre in 1970.

Midget Auto Race Programs

An incomplete collection of midget auto racing programs from the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s that can provide information about car owners and drivers at Angell Park.

Posters of Sun Prairie Events

The Museum holds hundreds of posters advertising Sun Prairie activities and events.

Sweet Corn Festival

Programs and advertisements related to the Sweet Corn Festival date from 1955 to the 2000s. The Museum also has financial materials from 1957 to 1979 that contain information on the Sweet Corn Festival and on the local business community.

Theater Posters

This collection contains posters on theatrical performances in Sun Prairie. The earliest poster dates back to the 1860s.

Theater Programs

Play programs from theatrical performances by residents of Sun Prairie. Most of the program collection is composed of high school and Civic Theatre productions.

Government

Chattel Mortgage Book

This record book is titled "Record of Chattel Mortgage for the Village of Sun Prairie, Dane County, Wisconsin. The village clerk recorded the name of the parties and the date of the chattel mortgage.

Citizens' Petitions

Emden Schey found the petitions when he purchased the 1895 City Hall building. The petitions date from the 1870s through the 1930s.

Courts -- Justice

The Justice Court records date from the 1850s to 1966 and are one of the Museum's largest collections. Some of these books are not indexed. It is a time consuming and often frustrating collection to use.

Columbus Street Water Tower Board

The Columbus Water Tower Board succeeded in placing the water tower, built in 1899, in the National Registry. The records document the community's efforts to preserve a significant building that is part of the public works history of Sun Prairie.

Poll Lists

Poll lists from the Village of Sun Prairie dating from 1871 to 1946 are in this collection. The Museum also has a Register of Electors for 1873.

Resource Reports and Trade Surveys

Reports on Sun Prairie from the late 1940s through 1980s are available at the Museum.

Tax Records

Property Tax records of the village from 1868-1949. Not all of these books are indexed. It is a complete collection.

Road and Poll Tax records date from 1904-1908.

Tax Assessor's records for the City of Sun Prairie contain detailed descriptions and photographs of business and residential districts in Sun Prairie during the 1960s and 1970s. These can be most helpful in tracing the history of a particular piece of property.

History Books

History of Dane County

The books include biographical essays on Sun Prairie area residents. A caution is necessary. People had to pay for the inclusion of their family history in some of the county histories. The publication dates of the books range from the 1870s to 2000.

History of Sun Prairie

Books include the Twentieth Century Club's "History of Sun Prairie," edited in the 1920s-1930s, Peter Klein's *Shadows and Dreams, Part 1*, and Steven Hughes' Master Thesis from 1970.

History of Surrounding Communities

Histories of Marshall, Token Creek, East Bristol, Sun Prairie, DeForest, Burke Station, and Pierceville are available at the Museum. These histories are independent from the books on Dane County.

Organizations

4-H

The collection includes the Prairie Groundhog 4-H Club when it was under the direction of Tina and Eric Lenz in the 1950s and 1960s. Partial records on additional 4-H clubs from the surrounding area are also available.

Burke-Bailey Neighborhood Club

Most rural school districts had some type of parents' organization that took an active role in funding rural schools and assisting the teacher with the classes. The Burke-Bailey Neighborhood Club Records date from 1930-1937.

Churches

Records from and about local churches, including the German Methodist Church (in German), the Congregational Church, Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, Methodist Episcopal Church, St. Joseph's Congregation (East Bristol), Christian Catholic Society of Saint Peter at East Bristol, and the Baptist Church.

Colonial Club

This collection is limited but contains information on the early history of the Colonial Club. A collection of Colonial Club newsletters is also on file.

Community Organizations

Records from and about Sun Prairie organizations include the Twentieth Century Club, Jaycettes, Service League, Junior Women, Rotary, Wm. Hamilton Relief Corp., I.C. Grand Templars, Civic Theatre, Business and Professional Women, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, American Legion Post 333, Sun Prairie Garden Club, Home Social Club, Sun Prairie AARP, and the Catholic Society of Foresters. (This is a partial listing of the records available on organizations.)

Early Settlers Club

Records of the Sun Prairie organization from 1947-1976 are in the collection. The Early Settlers Club disbanded in 1976.

Lions Club

The records consist of a history of the Club produced for its golden anniversary in 1984.

Pierceville Home Circle Club

The Museum has the complete records of the club, which existed from June 1932 to January 1963.

Sun Prairie Education Association

Peter Klein gathered as many newsletters as were available that were published by this labor organization from 1984 to 1999.

Town & Country Dance Club

The Town & Country Dance Club donated a complete collection of dance programs from 1963 to 2000.

People

Artists and Sculptors

The Museum maintains an art collection of pieces by local artists. Part of the collections includes information on the local artists.

Cemeteries

The Museum has listings from most of the surrounding cemeteries. The Museum also has the burial permits for the Sun Prairie Cemetery from the 1920s-1999.

Composers

This collection has music and documents by or about composers from the Sun Prairie area, including Jennie Seltzner, Monsignor G.A. Haeusler, Harriet Davison, and M. Ellen Smith.

Directories – Church

The Museum holds directories from St. Joseph's in East Bristol, Sacred Hearts, St. Albert the Great, Bethlehem Lutheran, United Methodist, Our Saviors Lutheran in Sun Prairie, and St. Mary's in Marshall.

Directories –Telephone

The telephone directories are from the 1920s through 2007. The collection is weak prior to the 1970s. The collection cannot assist researchers in locating homes prior to 1950; there was no system of street and building numbers in the village.

Family Histories

The collection is extensive but incomplete. Please contact the Museum for confirmation that the family history you are searching for is part of the collection.

Memorial Cards

Memorial Cards are historically significant as popular items of Christian art. The cards are also a reliable source for birth and death dates. Some of the cards include photographs of the deceased.

Obituaries

The Museum has thousands of obituaries on file.

Sun Prairie Writers

Books and articles by local writers form the nucleus of this collection. Some of the books in this collection were based on family histories of Sun Prairie residents. The oldest books are from the 1900s. Most of these books are not about Sun Prairie but written by past or present residents.

Personal Collections

Ada Bird & Wisconsin School of Music

A collection of photographs, documents, and artifacts associated with Ada Bird, her school of music (located in Madison), and her family. The School of Music collection includes records on Ada Bird's faculty members and many of her students.

Benisch and Aldrich Collection

This is an extensive collection of obituaries, articles, and events in the eastern Dane County area. The collection was assembled from local newspapers by Norma Benisch and indexed by Monna Aldrich.

Duscheck Collection

Joe Duscheck was a local farmer in the Sun Prairie area. This collection includes legal papers and tax notices dating from the 1860s, 1870s, and 1890s.

Huber Collection

Dorothy Huber's records include collections of photographs, documents and school memorabilia from her childhood until her death in 2001.

O'Keeffe Family Collection

A collection of photographs, documents and artifacts associated with the O'Keeffe family in Sun Prairie from 1848 through the early 1900s.

Personal Papers

The collection is extensive. Large collections include personal papers of Andrew Betlach, Andrew Drunasky, the Bird family, E.E. Beers, Col. Wm. Angell, Erich & Tina Lenz, the Swain family and the Schuster family. This collection is a supplement to the family history collection.

Rattmann Collection

Harold Rattmann worked as a sign painter from 1964 through December 1984. His notebooks contain plans for the signs that he painted during this time period. His designs are a source of information on the business community.

Reimer Collection

Judy Reimer engaged in a multi-year project of photographing and documenting the city, changes in community buildings, and homes. This is a huge collection that demonstrates one woman's attempt to preserve the history of the community.

Stimson Collection

Records of Fannie Stimson when she was a student in the Sun Prairie Schools between 1900 and 1920.

Schools

High School Yearbooks & Newspapers

Sacred Hearts High School, Calvary Baptist School, and the Sun Prairie High School yearbooks are in the collection. The Sun Prairie High School yearbooks in the Museum's collection were published from 1936-1941 and from 1944 to the present. The Maroon and Gold yearbooks from 1917-1918 and 1922 are also in the collection. Sacred Hearts and Sun Prairie school newspapers from 1904 through 1932 are at the Museum. The collection is incomplete but extensive from the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s.

Rural Schools 1868-1950s

This collection is very large but does not cover the complete history of rural schools in eastern Dane County. Schools in the collection include Pierceville, Town Hall School, Burke Station, Box Elder, Triangle, Happy Valley, Sunnyside, Maple Knoll, Baker, Oak View, Gaston, Sun Prairie, and Oak Lawn.

Sun Prairie Area School District

The collection includes records from 1850 to the present. It includes School Board records, personnel directories, Alumni Association records, attendance records and an intensive collection on C.H. Bird School from the 1970s through 2001. The village of Sun Prairie had a school as early as 1841. After the rural districts closed in the 1950s and 1960s, many of the rural districts sent their students to the Sun Prairie Area School District.

Additional Research Materials

Cookbooks

Cookbooks published by Sun Prairie churches, schools, and other organizations from the late 1800s to 1990.

Greeting Cards

Greeting cards for major holidays and special events that were sent to or from Sun Prairie residents. The cards contain family information and general information on the community. The cards are also a source of popular art.

Postcards

Postcards written to or by Sun Prairie residents. Photographic postcards are in the photographic collection.

Newspapers

"The Countryman" from 1877-1949 is located at the Museum. These papers are in poor condition and are not used by the public. Microfilm of this newspaper is located at the Wisconsin Historical Society and the Sun Prairie Public Library. Two earlier papers, "The Enterprise" and "The Sun Prairie Ledger" are also available at the museum. Only a single copy of "The Occasional" from 1877 is in the Museum's collection.