

## MISSION STATEMENT

Preserving the past for future generations by collecting a unique and enduring collection of Polk County history shared with the public through programs, exhibits and research.

## MUSEUM HOURS

CURRENTLY CLOSED  
UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE

Thursday - Monday  
Noon to 4pm  
Open Memorial Day  
Weekend  
through Labor Day

## ADMISSION

No fee for admission.  
Donations appreciated.

102 Main Street

PO Box 41

Balsam Lake, WI

54810

715-485-9269

Email:

[info@polkcountymuseum.org](mailto:info@polkcountymuseum.org)

HANDICAP ACCESSIBLE  
ELEVATOR FOR ALL  
THREE FLOORS  
AIR CONDITIONED



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## COVID-19: Living Through A Historic Event

I hope this message finds you and your family well. Like all of you, COVID-19 has impacted us here at the Polk County Historical Society. These are challenging times. Polk County's history gives us examples of strength through adversity in past generations. It is time to demonstrate that strength and compassion today.

In compliance with the *Safer at Home* orders from Governor Tony Evers, our museum will not be opening on Memorial Day and the museum will remain closed until cleared by the state to do so. We will be updating our website with the latest decisions regarding our season's events and activities. So please check this site frequently. (<https://www.polkcountymuseum.org/covid19-update>)

We missed being able to host our spring school tours and are working on rescheduling our annual fundraiser, which was scheduled for June 6<sup>th</sup>. We appreciate the support of our community during these unprecedented times. We look forward to the day when we can open our museum doors and welcome you in to share our rich Polk County history. In the meantime, visit our web page, History Blog and follow us on Instagram and Facebook to be a part of our virtual museum as we are all Safer at Home!

Take care and be well,  
*Greta Palmberg*, President  
Polk County Historical Society

### ***You Can Be Part of Polk County's History for the Next Generation!***

*The Polk County Historical Society is seeking your help in documenting the impact of COVID-19 on Polk County. We are collecting your experiences during this crisis – keep a journal, write your story, draw a picture, take a photo, or collect news stories. Everyone's journey is unique, whether you're a front-line health care worker, small business owner, teacher, student, retired person, employee or an essential worker. Help us tell the COVID-19 story for future generations.*

*All contributions will be held in our archives with all rights given to the PCHS to use the materials for future exhibitions, displays, publications, or other future products. The Society reserves the right to decline any submission inappropriate to the project.*

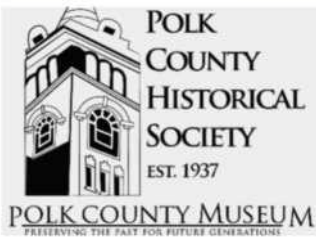
### **Email or Send Your Submission to:**

[info@polkcountymuseum.org](mailto:info@polkcountymuseum.org) or  
PO Box 41, Balsam Lake, WI 54810

Check out our  
new website!

[www.PolkCountyMuseum.org](http://www.PolkCountyMuseum.org)

Follow us on Facebook and Instagram!



## **BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

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Board President

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Board Vice President

Hilari Henke  
Treasurer

Larry Smetak  
Secretary

Ruth Mugerauer

Katie Cran

Tom Magnifici

Caroline Rediske

Scott Smith

Steve Sylvester

**Board Meetings are held the 1st Thursday of the month at the Polk County Museum during season and at the Polk County Government Center in the winter. The public is encouraged to attend!**

## **Military Room Remodel**

This winter PCHS Board Members and volunteers were busy remodeling our exhibit cabinets in the Military Room in preparation for our WWII Museum Season. Supplies for this project were funded through grants from Polk Burnett Electric's Operation Round-Up, the Fred C. and Katherine B. Anderson Foundation and private donations. New LED lighting for the room was completed by Dalles Electric. Local military expert and collector, Bob Swanson, spent many hours re-designing the military exhibits. We are grateful to all of our volunteers and funding partners for their assistance on this important project!



## **Contributing His Knowledge and Skills to Our WWII Project**

*The simple word "history" has to be one of the most fascinating words there is. It is who we are today and how past events both big and small had a part in molding our lives.*



My name is Bob Swanson and I grew up on a farm north of St. Croix Falls, close to the little town of Eureka. I am married and raised my family, farming close to the home where I grew up. I have served on the town board, as supervisor and chairman of Eureka Township for 16 years.

Our farm was part of a smaller pioneer settlement called "Scrub Town" which had a general store, a sawmill, and creamery and a blacksmith shop. This little town existed for 50 some years, till around 1916. I would play as a young child around the old foundations of the old forgotten buildings. I grew up in a close-knit farming neighborhood in the 1950's where everybody knew one another and worked together. There were no other young children my age living nearby and I grew up talking and visiting comfortably with the older generation. I was fascinated to hear all the stories of years ago, ranging from runaway teams of horses to which old houses in the community which were haunted. Looking back, I see that these loving neighbors who are now long gone, had a great influence on my life.

I have always been fascinated by American military history. I see that it was my mother who instilled into me my interest in history and my patriotic pride. I can remember before I even started school, my mother telling me the story of how they (my parents) had bought our farm. It was purchased from a couple that had lost their only child; a son named Hilton Peterson in World War 11. Hilton, a United States Marine had died fighting the Japanese on the Pacific island of Iwo Jima in February 1945. While listening to her stories, I was taught that in her view, our nation's flag represented all of our fallen heroes, and to have the flag ever touch the ground was a terrible dishonor to the memory of these gallant men and women who had given their lives to preserve the freedoms we enjoy today.

Hilton, although I never met him, had an influence also on my life. The same old house where I lived, the same yard I played, or the barn where I did chores had been a part of his young life also. A young boy who never had been further than 10 miles from home while growing up, was to meet his fate on a small Pacific island half a world away. Sadly, within a mile of our farm there were five young farm boys who died in World War 11.

I have been fortunate to have toured the battlefields of Europe and all over the United States. The most exciting moment was meeting and becoming close friends with the sisters of America's most decorated soldier of World War 11, Audie Murphy.

**Thank you, Bob, for all of your hard work on our Military Room remodel! – PCHS Board**



# Polk County WWII History: Did You Know

By Larry Smetak

## *Food Production on the Home Front*

Polk County had several factories involved in food production for the war effort. Centuria had a rutabaga plant, Hy-Dry Food Products. In Amery it was Lakeside Packaging. Milltown had the original Stokley Canning factory which produced peas. But in 1944 they had some unusual employees. 180 German prisoners of war made up Camp Milltown and were housed at barracks on the Stokley property and in tents across Highway 35. Prisoners were given the job of harvesting and packing area crops. By 1945, the number of prisoners increased to 325 and the camp relocated to the east end of Milltown Park near the ballfield.



The prisoners did not only work at the Stokley factory in Frederic and Milltown, but also worked at Friday Canning Company of New Richmond, the Lakeside Packaging Company in Amery and the Hy-Dry Food Products plant in Centuria. In mid-October 1945, the camp closed for the last time.

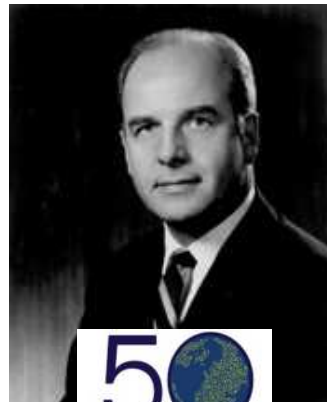
## *Women on the Assembly Line*

Recent recognition has been forthcoming in newspaper articles about two area women from Luck and St. Croix Falls, aka as "Rosie the Riveters." They performed service in war production factories in the Twin Cities (Lois Maxine Olson Cruthers with Northwest Airlines) and in California (Connie Hammar with Northrup Aircraft). Outstanding to say the least!



## *Famous Governor and Senator*

Captain Gaylord Nelson of Clear Lake served in the U.S. Army during 46 months of World War II and was a first lieutenant during the Okinawa campaign. His wife, Carrie also served in Okinawa as a Lieutenant and army nurse. Gaylord and his wife, Carrie Lee, were featured in a chapter of Tom Brokaw's bestseller, *The Greatest Generation*. Nelson would later serve as state senator, Wisconsin Governor and U.S. Senator, when in 1970 he founded Earth Day. This April 22, Earth Day will celebrate 50 years!



# WWII

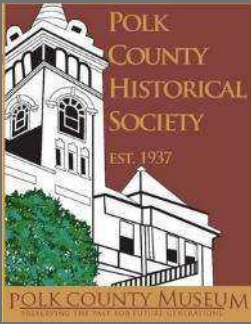
75<sup>TH</sup> YEAR  
OF VICTORY  
1945 - 2020



Board Members work on the remodeling project: Tom Magnafici and Caroline Rediske with special helper, Steve Rediske



Larry Smetak, Board Member



## Membership

*Please consider joining or renewing your membership to the Polk County Historical Society!*

Individual: \$15.00  
 Family Annual: \$25.00  
 Patron Annual: \$50.00

**Your membership is important to the success and future of the Polk County Historical Society!**

# Why is museum membership important?

- **The Polk County Museum is a non-profit organization which relies on gifts, grants, donations and annual memberships for its financial stability.**
- **Membership dues at the Museum are unrestricted, which means they support our annual operating costs and are not restricted to a specific program or fund.**  
 This is important to distinguish, because much of the Museum's other funding, such as grants and major gifts, frequently is restricted to specific projects and doesn't cover our day-to-day operating costs.
- **Membership is an invaluable cultural component to the Polk County community.**  
 Not only do memberships provide significant financial support for our museum to operate on, it allows us to continue to offer FREE admission into the museum and offer free educational events and activities to schools, organizations, and our Polk County community.

# How do I join or renew my membership?

To become a member or renew your membership:

- ❖ Click on our "Donate" button on our website ([polkcountymuseum.org](http://polkcountymuseum.org)) to sign up for membership
- ❖ OR Mail membership dues to:  
 Polk County Historical Society  
 PO Box 41, Balsam Lake, WI  
 54810

## Museum Highlight

Collecting photos, news clippings and original artifacts for our WWII exhibit has kept us busy this winter. One of our exciting finds was information about the Polk County's Chapter of the American Red Cross. Women on the home front worked hard collecting items and knitting items to ship overseas to soldiers and European citizens who were severely impacted by the war.

One box in our archives contained a photo (top right) of some of the Polk County women sorting and packing garments for families in England. The box also contained War Relief pamphlets, Red Cross pins, knitting instructions for garments, and a knitted man's sweater all ready for shipping.

These items and more will be part of a special museum display on the WWII home front war efforts in Polk County.



### Report Of War Relief Production

Of Polk County Chapter Of The American Red Cross For The Year May 1, 1943 to May 19, 1944

Yarn Received: 200 lbs. olive drab		Quota Shipped	
Garments			
Gloves, (pairs)	75		84
Helmets	64		66
Sleeveless sweaters	175		221
Wristlets, (pairs)	12		12
100 Lbs. Navy Blue		Quota Shipped	
Garments			
Helmets	32		32
Gloves, (pairs)	32		32
Turtle neck sweaters	61		62
Watchcaps	22		22

We also had a quota of 432 soldier's kit bags. We shipped 475 kit bags with the following contents: small soap box and soap, playing cards, cigarettes, shoe polishing cloth, pencil, envelopes, paper tablet, pkg. candy drops, pair shoe laces, razor blades, small pocket size humorous or detective book, sewing case containing one darning and one sewing needle, three safety pins, thread, 15 buttons, three each for shirt, trousers, mackinaw, raincoat and underwear.