



Nathaniel W. Dean House  
4718 Monona Drive  
Madison, Wisconsin

# The Blooming Grove COURIER

Newsletter of the  
*Historic Blooming Grove Historical Society*  
Serving Blooming Grove, Monona, and SE Madison, Wisconsin



MAY 2000

## Remarkable Dollhouse Gift Inspires a Victorian Afternoon Tea

The remarkable gift to the HBGHS of an elaborately furnished 10-room Victorian Doll House is reason for a special Victorian-style event at the Dean House on May 13. (The Dean House, built in 1856, provides an appropriate setting for a typical Afternoon Tea, as it is furnished in the style of the time that Queen Victoria reigned in England, 1837-1901.)

### The Gift

The gift is the work and generosity of Vern Koehler, who decorated and furnished the ten rooms thoughtfully and artistically with authentic miniature replicas of the Victorian era. In addition to carefully selecting the furnishings and accouterments, she added many personal touches of her own in the decorations and accessories. The six-foot-wide two-story house was moved into the Dean House in April and Mrs. Koehler spent several days placing each tiny detail in its proper position.

*A more complete description of the house and furnishings is found on page 3 of this issue.*

### The Event:-Victorian Tea on May 13th

To celebrate the first showing of this remarkable addition to our own Victorian-era house, HBGHS is inviting the public to join us for an elegant Afternoon Tea on Saturday, May 13. Music and linens and china will enhance the setting for the typical service of little tea-time sandwiches and sweets that marked the social events of the Yankee ancestors of many of our early settlers. Tea time will be from 2:00 to 5:00 p.m. Mrs. Koehler will be the hostess at the dollhouse that afternoon to tell about some of the details.

*(Continued on page 2)*



### Memorial Day: Ride the Trolley in the Parade

The Historic Blooming Grove Historical Society, is adding a new history related opportunity to its usual Memorial Day celebration this year. Anyone who is interested can ride the 1920 trolley-style bus in Monona's traditional Memorial Day parade. A fee of \$10 per person will be charged to pay expenses of the trolley, and proceeds will go to the Dean House maintenance fund.

There is space for 41 passengers to ride the bus and wave to the crowd from this San Francisco cable car look-alike vehicle. Patrons are encouraged to wear old world clothing. Seating will be on a first come, first seated basis. Reservations may be made by sending a check with names and phone number to Historic Blooming Grove Historical Society, PO Box 6704, Monona, WI 53716-0704. **Deadline for reservations for seat on the trolley is May 20.**

As has been the tradition, the HBGHS will be selling soft drinks, coffee and rolls from the Dean House front porch on the morning of the parade, which starts at Monona Grove High School and ends at LaFollette High School.



Other upcoming events at the Dean House include, the Society's annual meeting, with a special speaker, on June 11 (see below), and Back Porch Concerts on Thursdays at 7:00 p.m. in July, and regular Second Sunday Open House, from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. on Sundays, June 11, July 9, and Aug. 13. For more information about the Dean House and events, call Bob Bean at 222-5783.

## Victorian Tea (cont'd. from page 1)

Admission to the house and tea will be \$5 for adults and \$2.50 for children on May 13. The Board invites everyone to the event, and hopes that mothers and daughters might enter into the spirit of the occasion and enjoy "dressing up" to practice their social skills among the amenities of a gentle, era of refinement.



The Dean House will also be open on May 14 for the regular Second Sunday visits from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. No tea will be served and no charge made on that day, but donations for seeing the Doll House are invited. Guided tours of the Dean House will be offered on both days.



## HBGHS Needs Membership Chair to Computerize Our Membership Records

Our membership list could be kept much more efficiently if it could be computerized complete with additional information. We need someone with the ability to set up the system, enter the data, and keep it up to date. We are interested in obtaining a computer for use at the Dean House so members could have access to the information.

Can anyone help? Please call Robert Bean or Dick Peterson or any board member if you can volunteer (or know someone who might do so) or if you have any suggestions about a free or inexpensive used computer for use at the Dean House.

For more information about the Dean House and events, call Bob Bean at 222-5783.



## TROLLEY RESERVATION FORM

Ride the 1920 trolley style bus in the Memorial Day Parade. We have space for forty-one passengers to ride the bus and wave to the crowd from this San Francisco cable car look-alike vehicle. Patrons are encouraged to wear old world clothing if they wish.

To be included, please complete the form below and send it with your check for ten dollars per seat. Seating will be on a first come first seated basis. Riders will board on Coldspring Street at the first spot and return to the point of beginning.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Check Amount enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_\_ seats.

Make check out to Historic Blooming Grove Historical Society (or HBGHSociety) and mail it to the Society at: PO Box 6704, Monona, WI 53704-0704.

## The Victorian Dollhouse By Wanda Nelson

The Dean House has acquired a treasure house—quite literally. Vern E. Koehler, a long-time resident of Monona, has donated her exquisitely beautiful Victorian dollhouse to the Historic Blooming Grove Historical Society. The dollhouse has ten rooms, all filled with perfect Victorian miniature furniture, people, dishes, portraits, hats, and many other delightful accessories.

### History

Vern had a good friend, Nancy B. Rusch, who was interested in miniatures. Nancy would ask Vern to accompany her to meetings on miniatures and to miniature shows. Vern soon was enthralled with collecting these tiny pieces of craftsmanship. "We began going to the miniatures shows in Chicago. We would leave Madison early morning so as to get to the show when the doors opened. We would remain at the show until closing time and then return home with our treasures," Vern remembers. "The shows were something to behold—artisans from all over the world," she said.

On her third trip to Chicago, Vern found and bought her ten-rooms dollhouse. "There it was on the table—unpainted, without wallpaper and the floors were not finished, but it was beautiful," Vern says. The house was built by Jack Nash, a builder from Holland, Michigan. He called the house, "Jillian." Vern likes to think he named the house after someone he loved. Vern painted the outside of the house in the Victorian fashion—taupe on the siding, sage green on the windows and doors, mauve on the front porch and cranberry trim throughout. She wallpapered all the rooms and decorated the ceilings in the parlor and the dining room. She finished the floors throughout the house with either oak or walnut wood and tiled the kitchen floor with brick. Vern used old lace fabrics and handkerchiefs that belonged to her mother to make all the curtains for the windows. Vern's mother was a buyer and a salesperson in a large store at the turn of the century. She bought and sold china, silver, crystal and laces.

There are two leaded and stained-glass windows in the attic, done by Olde Mountain Miniatures in Fort Plain, New York. A weathervane tops the house.

### Furniture

"Now it was time to think of furnishing the rooms. I had a loved-one in mind when I furnished each room," Vern explains. The furniture in the house is either cherry, walnut, maple or pine. Many pieces are signed and dated by the craftspeople who made them.

Authentic reproductions by Warren Dick grace the kitchen. The pieces include a court cupboard (circa 1660-90), a court table, a spice cabinet, a tavern table, black chairs with hand woven seats. He also made the walnut desk table in the library and the walnut lo-boy in the studio.

Gerald Crawford designed the William and Mary game table in the library, the Hudson Valley side chair and arm chair (with hand-woven seats) and the library's step chair. Edward

Norton created the Queen Anne dressing table in the guest bedroom and the shell-top corner cupboard in the dining room. Jeff Steele constructed the rose and brown upholstered chairs in the library and J. Beal created the plum brocade sofa in the studio and the mantle clock in the library. Don Perkins made the corner chair, upholstered in crewel, that is found in the sitting room.

Christine Eisenberg designed the brass bed in the guest bedroom, the three-drawer chest in the upstairs hall, the jewelry chest with a mirror found in the master bedroom, the silk upholstered chair in the master bedroom and the Queen Anne tables with cabriole legs and pink marble tops in the dining room.

Marilyn Amundson fabricated the settee and chairs upholstered in floral satin and silk, the tea table and side tables in the sitting room, the mauve upholstered chair and chaise in the master bedroom. She also designed the celery green upholstered chair and stool in the guest bedroom and other marble top tables in the house.

The dining room table and chairs and the bird cage table in the studio were purchased in London, England.

The wicker furniture on the front porch and in the bathroom were made by Elizabeth Garrow.

There is a lady's desk with a leather top in the master bedroom, a clavichord in the sitting room and a grandfather's clock in the entrance hall, all built by Petite Maison.

### Rugs

The rugs in the guest bedroom, sitting room and the entrance hall are all handmade. The rug in the library was loomed in France. The rug in the design studio is a copy of a 16<sup>th</sup> century Oriental. The remaining rugs are copies of Aubusson.

### Accessories

Perhaps the most enjoyable and astounding pieces in this dollhouse are the diminutive accessories in every room. For example, Vern had many portraits of her family and of her husband's family painted by her good friend, Virginia Heimerl. Vern says, "She had a meticulous and artistic talent with the brush. The photographs were taken from my album to guide her as she painted." Vern's own portrait hangs in her "room"—the design studio—where Vern imagines she would spend her leisure time designing Victorian frocks and fancy hats. Several wonderfully ornate hats are displayed in the window seat of the studio.

### The Library

A portrait of Vern's husband, Robert, hangs in the library—the room she designed with her husband's interests in mind. Robert was a pilot so there is a miniature airplane on the bookshelf, a globe, and a leather valise in the room. Robert enjoyed chess so there is an ivory chess set on the game table. The two elite dueling pistols, crafted by Cliff Hass, were created for her husband. They are placed in a box with his initials on the lid and set on the desk in the library. The books in the library

have leather book covers—designs of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century. They are gold-stamped and hand finished by Roger Huet.

### The Kitchen

The kitchen houses miniature reproductions of the court cupboard, table and spice cabinet found at the Winterthur Museum in Delaware. The china reproductions consist of "Delft" for the kitchen and pieces of Haviland and Staffordshire throughout the house. Vern tiled the service table with "Children at Play" Victorian tiles.

### Silver, Porcelain, Crystal, and China

In every room there are astoundingly tiny pieces of silver—a comb brush and mirror set in the guest room, a sterling silver Monteith bowl in the dining room, a Rothwell silver inkwell in the guest bedroom, and a brass inkwell in the library. Silver candle sticks, from Birmingham, England, with real wax candles decorate the bedrooms.

There are china covered bowls and a Queen-crested tray with a sugar bowl and cover, a creamer and a teapot in the dining room. Hand-painted porcelain heirloom pieces are placed in the upstairs hall and in the guest bedroom. Porcelain figurines grace the shelves and table tops in many of the rooms. Crystal chandeliers glitter from the ceilings.

### Mannequins

One of the features of the house that help you imagine who the women were who might have lived in such opulence are the mannequins—all dressed in Victorian costume. They all have elaborate hairstyles (made from real hair, according to Vern) and intricately designed clothing. Even the English maid has ruffles and lace on her uniform.

### Fabrics

The house is filled with silks, satins, laces, and velvet. Bed coverings are embroidered in French knots and the laces are embroidered as well. The chairs in the dining room are upholstered in "Old Rose Velvet" that came from London, England. Petit point and crewel work beautify chair seats. Even the dining room has pink silk on the walls. In the bathroom, Vern has placed tiny terrycloth towels over the end of the cast-iron, claw-footed bathtub and has hung hand-embroidered towels that await her guests.

### Christmas All Year Round

"I love Christmas and I have two Christmas trees that I leave up all year in my dollhouse," Vern says. Her trees are decorated with handmade and hand-painted tin ornaments, tinsel, paper chain garland, glass ornaments and tiny bulbs. Under the tree she has placed a set of blocks, a rocking horse, a clown, and a pewter doll.

### Vern's Favorite Things

The dollhouse is so full of treasures that it is hard to take it all in. One treasure is the one-of-a-kind porcelain doll that rests on the chaise lounge in the sitting room. Another treasure is the pink velvet book of Vern's own poetry in miniature made by her friend, Nancy. The fireplaces with their

marble mantles and hand-painted fire screens are unique. There are two umbrella stands—one antique gold and the other black—in which Vern lovingly places tiny gold-tipped canes.

As you watch Vern spend hours and hours placing all her treasures in the house, you can't help but think that while she knows every piece and remembers exactly where she acquired it and where it goes, her favorite room is the design studio. That is where all her hats and a tiny beaded purse can be viewed. That is where there are tiny fashion designs drawn in pencil and displayed on a tiny easel. When asked what is her favorite thing in the house, she smiles and says, "I think my favorite things are the hats. Have you looked closely at this beaded one?"

Our treasured Dean House is now home to another treasured house indeed.



## More About Tea as a Social Event

"Afternoon tea is a pleasantly nostalgic and remarkably enduring custom," writes Sharon O'Connor in her book, *Afternoon Tea Serenade*. "Teatime can be simple or sumptuous; a relaxing interlude at the end of a hectic day or an elegant occasion to celebrate a wedding announcement. ... Listening to beautiful chamber music during teatime creates a mood of grace and elegance." (Her recording of a selection of appropriate chamber music will add to the ambiance at the Dean House event.)

Afternoon tea was invented in England in 1840, when Anna, the seventh duchess of Bedford, grew tired of the "sinking feeling" she experienced every afternoon around four o'clock. ... She asked that a tray of tea, bread and butter, and cake be brought to her room. This soon became a daily habit with her and she began inviting friends to join her. ... Queen Victoria loved tea parties and popularized the drinking of tea with a slice of lemon, a custom she brought home from the Russian court where she had been visiting her eldest daughter. With the accumulation of industrial wealth, upper-class Victorians commissioned china, silver, and glassware for their afternoon tea services. ... Afternoon tea soon became a national pastime indulged in by all social classes. Farmhouse teas were substantial family meals that included pots of strong black tea, buttered slices of home-baked bread, ham, meat pies, cheese and scones spread with homemade jam and clotted cream.

In America, colonists did their best to copy the tea-drinking customs of their relatives in Holland and England. As the New Englanders migrated to Wisconsin, they brought the customs with them, but gradually the regularity of Afternoon Tea disappeared and only special social events continued until about a generation ago.

TEA COZIES were created to prevent pots of tea from cooling too quickly. They first appeared in the 1860s, and the Victorian flair for embellishment resulted in tea cozies adorned with embroidery and beadwork. A cozy can keep a pot of tea hot for up to an hour, but the tea leaves should be removed.

Tea at the Dean House will be served with the elegant accouterments of the Victorian era, but with the aim of providing a relaxing respite and an opportunity to view the miniature version of the upper-class Victorian house.

Come! And bring your friends and neighbors.



## Back Porch Concerts Are Coming

Summer means Back Porch Concerts at the Dean House and summer 2000 will bring another series. The schedule of entertainers for the six Sundays in mid-summer is being planned and will be announced in June. Keep your Thursday evenings for the pleasant fresh air sunset time musicales this summer.

Chair Dick Peterson is seeking new groups to add to the returning favorites. If you can suggest such talent call him at 222-7814.



## Monona History Is Selling

The HBGHS publication of Monona's history, "Monona in the Making", is continuing to sell well. It will continue to be available for purchase (@\$20) at Dean House events, and at the Artisan Gift Shop, the Monona Bait and Ice Cream Shop, The Monona City Hall, the Monona Public Library, the Olbrich Gardens Gift Shop, and the State Historical Society Gift Shop on the square. Copies may be ordered by mail (@\$25.00) from HBGHS, PO Box 6704, Monona, WI 53716-0704.

There will be more about the book's anecdotes in the next *Courier*.

### Historic Blooming Grove Historical Society

#### Officers

President: Jim Stickels	221-1324
Vice-president: Allen Burling	221-1361
Secretary: Alice Schuller	222-6851
Treasurer: Dick Peterson	222-7814

#### Board Members

Jean Dent	Bill Rider and Marie Rider
Catherine Gedko	Don Taylor and Judy Taylor
Dorothy Haines	Helen Wentland
Mike Jackson	Helen Cattell
Kathleen Montgomery	C. Anne Wellman, past president

#### Dean House Manager

Robert Bean 222-5783

### MISSION STATEMENT

*The Historic Blooming Grove Historical Society will preserve and advance the culture and history of the Blooming Grove, Monona and Southeast Madison area. To fulfill this purpose the Dean House will be used as a center for cultural events and local history study. It is the hope that the Dean House will become a living testimony to the pioneer spirit fostering our American heritage and contributing to our own growth as a community.*

*The Blooming Grove Courier is published periodically by the Historic Blooming Grove Historical Society, PO Box 6704 Monona, WI 53716-0704. Editor Dorothy Haines, 221-1948.*

P.O. Box 6704  
Monona, WI 53716-0704



## Advance Notice: Annual Meeting June 11

### Ann Waidefich To Be Speaker

Put another date on your calendar:

The HBGHS Annual Meeting will be held Sunday, June 11, at 5:00 p.m. Speaker of the evening will be Ann Waidefich, past president of Historic Madison, who will show selected photos from the McVicar-Stein collection recently purchased for the State Historical Society. Her program will follow the social hour at 5:00 p.m. and potluck dinner at 6:00 p.m. The public is invited.

As this date is the Second Sunday, the Dean House owners will be offering tours of the house, beginning at 2:00 p.m.

For the potluck families/persons with last names beginning with A-F are asked to bring a hot dish, G-O bring a salad and P-Z bring dessert, in order to assure a well-rounded repast.



## Important Business:

### ELECTION, BY-LAWS VOTE, DUES RENEWAL

Important Society business is part of the annual meeting: election, by-laws vote, and membership renewal.

The nominating committee is looking for new board members to put on the slate for election. The Society needs new, fresh, directors (young with fresh ideas or elderly with more knowledge about the history). Please submit names of possible candidates to President Jim Stickels.

A change in the by-laws, providing for a membership dues change, has been proposed, and should be voted on by the membership. The membership will be asked to approve a change in the By-Laws, Article II, Section 2, Classification and Dues, as follows:

- a. Membership classification shall be established by the board of directors.
- b. The annual dues shall be established by the board of directors.

It is membership renewal time. Treasurer Dick Peterson will be on hand to receive dues payments.

### MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION/RENEWAL

Historic Blooming Grove Historical Society  
c/o Richard Peterson, Treasurer  
PO Box 6704  
Monona, WI 53716-0704

Check is enclosed for:

\_\_\_\_\_ contribution for Dean House restoration/maintenance;

\_\_\_\_\_ membership at \_\_\_\_\_ \$10/yr individual

\_\_\_\_\_ \$15/yr family, \_\_\_\_\_ sustaining (\$25-\$100)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

HBGHS is a tax-exempt non-profit organization