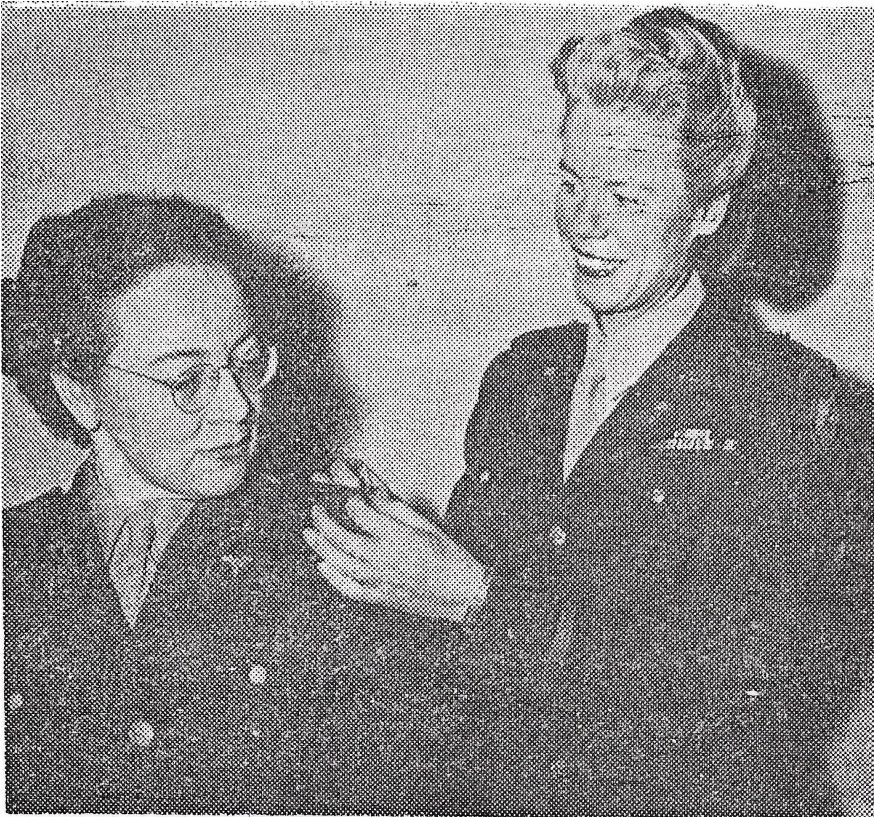


# LINDEN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## \*\*\*VETERANS DAY TRIBUTE\*\*\*

### LINDEN WOMAN HAD GROUNDBREAKING ARMY CAREER

Mary Willis was the first female aviation psychologist in what originally was the Women's Army Corp (WAC) and saw her position as an important advancement in the WW II era women's



*Captain Frances Josephs (right) commanding officer of the Brooke General Hospital WAC Detachment, pinned gold bars on Mary Willis, after Lt. Willis was sworn in as an officer.*

movement. Mary was raised on the ancestral Willis farm Southwest of Linden and graduated from Linden High School in 1924.

Mary Willis worked on intelligence tests, mechanical aptitude tests, tests of all kinds to help the military classify their personnel. She helped construct approximately 50 of the tests the Air Force used to classify them for training as pilots or bombardiers, navigators, engineers and airplane mechanics. As an accomplished linguist she also served 14 months overseas in France and Germany as a German translator.

From the January 15, 1948 *Dodgeville Chronicle*, "Her early career as an aviation psychologist began in 1942, when she worked as a civilian for the Air Force's Psychological Research and

Examining unit in Washington, D.C. and Santa Ana, California. Working with mechanical aptitude tests made her realize, she says, why she was the only woman in aviation psychology. 'Other women had sense enough to stay out.'

'In order to make a mechanical aptitude test,' she explained, 'you have to know something about mechanics, and that had never been part of my training.' Cpl. Willis, managed, however, to learn mechanics to devise a successful test.

"Even the tests are tested in the Psychological Research Unit. 'We gave them to men who had completed their training and to other known authorities,' she said. '

## MARY WILLIS, CONTINUED

'If they didn't agree on the answers, we knew the test had to be revised.' Tests also had to 'stand up under statistical criticism,' she added. 'For instance, we had to watch the number of successes and failures in mechanics schools, pilot and navigation training. If there were too many failures among the men who had taken our tests, we knew something was wrong with the tests.'

"Cpl. Willis believes that as the result of experience and careful evaluation tests improved as the war went along. She is a firm believer in such objective tests because, 'they give a break to the good person who hasn't any pull and, to a great extent, to intelligent persons with no formal training.'

"In 1944 Cpl. Willis enlisted in the WAC. She thinks the Women's Army Air Corps is one of the most important women's movements to take place in this generation. 'And I didn't feel right working for the Army as a civilian,' she explained. Her first Army assignment was as a clinical psychologist at Fort Jackson, South Carolina. Later she served 14 months in France and Germany as a German translator."

"After her discharge from the WAC Cpl. Willis returned to the Psychological and Examining Unit of the Air Training command at Lackland Air Base, where she was head of the Test Construction Department until her recent reenlistment in the Army."

"Her goal is commission in the regular Army as psychologist. Since the Air Force does not give commissions to women in research psychology, she had to reenlist with the possibility of reaching officer's status as a clinical psychologist. Cpl. Willis admits that she has a long road to travel but believes that a

commission in the Women's Medical Specialist Corps is worth it."

Within one month after the preceding *Dodgeville Chronicle* article, Mary Willis was promoted to Second Lieutenant at Brooke Army Medical Center, at Fort Sam Houston, San Antonio, Texas. She was a remarkable trailblazer serving her country with intelligence and courage. When she graduated from Linden High School she was only thirteen, she went on to earn a doctorate degree in psychology from the University of Wisconsin in 1931 at the age of 20. Her resume after college was long and prestigious which included working for leading researchers at Columbia University; Carnegie Foundation; and American Council on Education.

Recently your editor purchased online the V-postcard (pictured) that Mary Ellis sent to her father, Preston Willis in Linden when she was starting out as a Private in Columbia, South Carolina. The message written on November 3, 1944 reveals both the boredom she was feeling at the time along with the intellectual standard of book she was reading.

The message written in pencil on the back of the card reads, "Check arrived but I don't think I'll be needing it. I'll count up my cash tonight and make sure. Looks like rain, and we are supposed to parade this afternoon. A posthumous decoration is being presented. They have promised to fill up the holes in the parade ground for us, but the Captain says she'll believe it when she sees it, she's been marching in the gully ever since she got here. Since we have to march with our heads up, holes in the parade ground are serious. I am reading Plato's Republic, having not much else to do. Mary."



## MARY WILLIS, CONTINUED

Mary's mother Jessie had died earlier in 1944, her father Preston was a well known area educator. He married Jessie Bruce in Darlington, where she was a teacher. All three are buried in the Darlington cemetery.

LHS member Catherine Hawke remembers when Mary's father was principal at Linden High School and recalls seeing a model of a suspension bridge designed by Mr. Willis, in on the classrooms.



The V in V-mail was the Victory mail campaign during WW II, military personnel had "franking privileges" to send mail free.

## SCHOOL DAYS AT LINDEN IN THE FALL OF 1911

It was back to school in the fall of 1911 for students in the Linden school district and by early October new rules had to be enforced. We learn from the school news column in the October 10, 1911 *Linden Reporter*, "All pupils bringing their dinners to school will hereafter have to eat in the High School room. One of the faculty will also eat dinner in the High School (room) so as to preserve order during the noon hour." No more food fights?.

Right below that announcement was another new regulation, "All members of the High School who come in tardy will hereafter have to stay after school." Some parents today might ask, "Maybe we should start school later?"

This was also the year the Linden High School Literary Society was formed with by-laws and officers. The organization put on a program for the entire school and community a few weeks later.

## SCHOOL DAYS , CONTINUED



*This picture postcard image was likely photographed in the springtime as evidenced by leaves just coming out, with one of the grade school classes in front. The frame building was first constructed in 1882, with the addition to the left completed in 1905. A few years after this photo was taken the building burned to the ground on January 21, 1913.*

Their program opened and closed with everyone singing, Dolly Tredinnick was the organist.

In between was a debate: "Resolved, That Lincoln was a greater man than Washington." Arguing on the negative side was Rhoda Kislingbury and Carl Gilman. Debating on the positive were Delbert Geach and Clara Crase. This was followed by a story reading done by Grace James. Harry Brickman, son of a local merchant, sang a solo. The final performance was a farce comedy with student actors: Dolly Tredinnick, William Poad, Leona Jewell, Donald Edwards, Ila Oliver and Berlyn Treloar. The picture postcard used with this article was mailed in November, 1910 long before people could send images and short text messages

with their phones. Real photo postcards were popular in the early 1900's for the same reason of sending a text and image, except it cost a penny.

The message on the back of the 1910 card was penned only by the first name of Steve. He wrote to R. E. Balliette in Lodi the following, "Hello Ralph. Well, how does it feel to be at home? Nothing doing here, not even a dance last night. I was with Gertrude Lamb last night, what you know about that? George Hillary was with Ruby."

A century from now will any of our text messages and images be shared in the Linden Historical Society newsletter ?

## **CHRISTMAS PAST: CHURCH SO CROWDED SANTA COULDN'T GET IN THE DOOR**

A Linden Christmas tradition has always included a large celebration at the local church. Both the Methodist Episcopal and Primitive Methodist churches celebrated with decorations, a large tree and presents for the kids. In December, 1886 just the local observances were not enough to satisfy Linden residents and despite inclement weather horses were hitched up for a trip to Cobb.

The Linden News correspondent in the December 30, 1886 *Dodgeville Chronicle* reported, "Christmas day was ushered in with a snow storm and it continued all day, but still it did not prevent the boys and girls from having a good time. All the cutters and sleighs in town were hired, and in the evening the horses were all headed in the direction of Cobb, where they took in the entertainment and Christmas tree held in the M. E. church of that place. The entertainment gotten up by Miss S. Thomas and Mr. James Goldthorpe (from Linden) was very good, consisting of Christmas exercises, recitations, and select readings, after which Santa Claus was called for, but on account of the church being so crowded it was impossible for him to get through to distribute his candy. The church was so crowded that all available standing room was taken."



## **THE YEAR THE REAL SANTA APPEARED IN LINDEN**

Every year in Linden Christmas celebrations a church member would dress up as Santa, we can only imagine given limited budgets how convincing someone might be.

It seems when the two local Methodist churches recognized Christmas they would have a friendly rivalry as to which one could out-do the other.

In 1883, the Primitive Methodist church achieved a real scoop or coup when they claimed that the one and only Santa Claus himself would appear at their celebration.

From the Linden correspondent in the *Mineral Point Democrat*, of December 21, 1883 we learn, "The only original Santa Claus will appear in person at the P.M. church on Christmas day. There will also be a Jacob's ladder and other attractions."



## SANTA, CONTINUED

The Jacob's ladder is an old testament biblical reference to a stairway to heaven on which angels would ascend and descend. Not sure how that worked out, but hey, if they could get the real Santa to blow into town then I guess anything was possible.

The same correspondent gave equal coverage to the M. E. church and stated, "The M. E. people will do their full share toward celebrating Christmas in a becoming manner. In addition to an immense tree with its usual attractions, Christmas anniversary services will be held."

We learn from that same correspondent that a quartette of Linden miners turned up a Christmas time bonanza. "Alfred Spargo, Billy Tamblyn, Sam Wearing and Charles Hill, who have been prospecting on Wm. Jewell's land, two miles east of this village, have struck a good sheet of mineral (lead) and black jack (zinc)."

## UPCYCLING IN LINDEN

Larry Dale and Mandy Schultz took possession of this wooden gas pump replica that will have a place in the future renovation at Larry's auto repair and convenience store. Joe Steffes, on the left, is the rural mailman for Linden rural and some village residents ,made this for Larry Dale. Joe has a hobby of restoring old gas pumps but also in his spare time made this replica for Larry and Mandy. The Mobil gas signs reflect an earlier era when Larry Sr., ran

the place. Lumber used is recycled from an old Refrigerated semi trailer, which makes this pump solid but also heavy. The old dials show a time when gas was 27 cents a gallon, remember those days? Inside are shelves which make this piece functional as well.



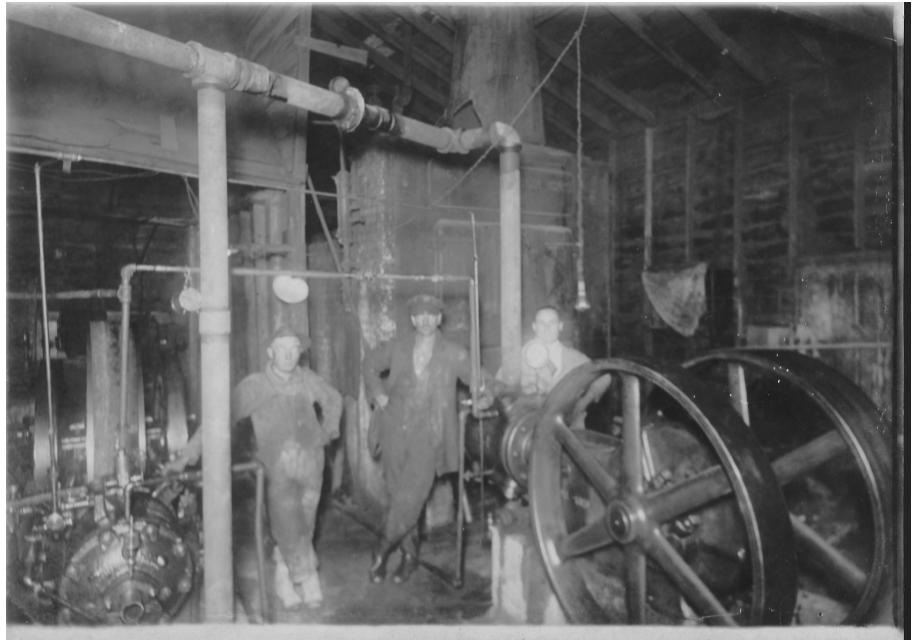
# ACQUISITIONS TO THE ARCHIVES

LHS member Sharon Scanlan recently donated three photos to our archives.

This one may be the interior of the Dark Horse mine in the village of Linden.

The November 23, 1906 *Southwestern Wisconsin* newspaper of Linden reported:

"Water was started (to drain) from the shaft of the Dark Horse mine yesterday, they have installed a new outfit of machinery, they have a 22 h.p. Weber gasoline engine, an 8x8 Ingersoll-Rand compressor and a Baby Pump Rig,



built expressly for this company, and an 8 inch pump, the engine room is on the west side of the shaft house and the cleaning room is on the east side, the larger per cent of this ore will be cleaned by hand. This machinery was furnished and set up by the Galena Iron Works." The Dark Horse mine was located on Valley Street on the property of Nick Tredinnick. The original 15 shareholders were all from the area: Platt Whitman, John Wall, Bert Harker, O. A. Eastman, Harley Mills, Nicholas Tredinnick, Ed Tredinnick, Arch Tredinnick, Nels Hillery, George Alton, Byron Alton, V.E. Cushman, J. N. Vial, Jake Fecht and Frank Fecht. The Dark Horse would be sold to the Optimo mining company headquartered in Indianapolis, Indiana and the Dark Horse became Optimo #1.



Coleman Baker, right, of Montpelier, Vermont visited Linden on October 1, to learn more of his Richards-Baker family history from LHS vice-president Randy Baker. An all day rain prevented cemetery visits but an entire morning was used by Coleman and Randy going over family histories in the conference room of the Linden village hall.

Coleman's ancestor, Nicholas Richards was a Cornish Miner who worked for the Linden Mining Company and then farmed. His daughter, Mary, married W.H. Baker of Linden.

---

**\*\*\* PHOTO AND DOCUMENT DONATIONS ALWAYS APPRECIATED \*\*\***

---

If you have any photos or documents on Linden area history we would love to make a copy for our archives. Photos and documents can be scanned and returned to you if desired. Contact either the President or Vice-President listed below. Membership in the Linden Historical Society is \$10 per year, lifetime membership \$100. Make check payable to Linden Historical Society and send to Treasurer Robin Lindner.

### **HOW TO CONTACT US**

---

President & Newsletter editor:

Jim Jewell, 2073 Sunny Slope Road, Mineral Point, WI 53565. Phone: (608) 623-2772

Email: [minerjim7@gmail.com](mailto:minerjim7@gmail.com)

Vice-President:

Randy Baker, 2212 Sunny Slope Road, Mineral Point, WI 53565, Phone: (608) 574-4067

Treasurer:

Robin Lindner, 3465 Sinbad Road, Dodgeville, WI 53533

Secretary:

Florence Wasley, 415 W. Chapel St. Dodgeville, WI 53533

Board member:

Lisa Springer, 2776 Wearne Rd., Mineral Point, WI 53565, Phone: (608) 341-8686

### **LINDEN HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

2073 Sunny Slope Road

Mineral Point, WI 53565

