

Local History Report

January 2026

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Not too much to report currently, but a few updates for the board:

1. The Kaukauna Police Department book, at long last, is in its final stages and should be completed by the end of January. Some minor edits and formatting will need to be done but expect it to be out relatively soon with proceeds benefiting the library.
2. On a related note, although I had only a very small part in the project, if you haven't picked up a copy of Carol VanBoxtel's latest book – the first Kaukauna history book geared towards children -- be sure to stop in the lobby and pick one up!
3. A few years ago, we contracted with Newspaper Archive to digitize Kaukauna newspapers 1880-1991, and I am very pleased with the results. I use this service daily. This year we are planning to move ahead with the remainder of the digitization, 1992-2018. As of this writing I am negotiating a quote but expect to move forward on this soon. My understanding is that there is an indefinite moratorium at the state level on microfilm creation, so the years 2019-current will remain unavailable. This is beyond our control.
4. In November and December, I transferred the bulk of the papers held by the Grignon Mansion to the local history room. Our dedicated volunteer staff has done an exceptional job sorting and organizing these files. This is a big achievement for the library, and a great benefit to the community. Records that are otherwise held at Green Bay and Madison (as well as many held nowhere else) can now be accessed locally.

Recent and upcoming Focus on Local History topics include:

1. Col. Henry Frambach: Civil War spy, Mormon wagon train leader, inventor, capitalist, Kaukauna's first mayor, gold prospector, and representative of the paper industry at the legendary 1893 World's Fair. (He deserves his own book.)
2. Sworth Newman: presented by Lawrence University professor emeritus Antoinette Powell, the story of a young lady who was celebrated both in Kaukauna and in Appleton's Old Third Ward.
3. Peter Reuter: Another early mayor, Reuter was active in banking and has the interesting distinction of being the father to an Appleton mayor.
4. Jacob Konkapot: America celebrates its 250th birthday this year, and Kaukauna is part of that story! Konkapot is one of two Revolutionary War veterans buried here. We'll explore his heroic battles, as well as how he came to find frontier Wisconsin home.