

The Stone Stable is an artifact from Whitewater's earliest history. Located behind the First English Lutheran Church, it was removed and reassembled next to the Whitewater Historical Society's Depot Museum of Local History in 2007. The historical society is charged with its interpretation to the public.

When the Stone Stable was moved, it had an interior outfitted with stalls, suggesting it was used as a horse barn in its most recent history. But, its stone construction suggests it was built for a much heavier, perhaps industrial, use.

Old fire insurance maps dating to the early 1900s showed that the building was part of the lot attached to the house at 404 Center Street. This house was actually built between 1912 and 1924, but it replaced an older house on this site, a house that dated back to the 1850s. Tax assessment records for the period between 1849 and 1851, the earliest years these records are available, showed that a man named N. Combs paid the taxes on this property during those years. A deed search revealed that while Combs paid the taxes on this property in 1849, he actually did not get a deed for the parcel until 1850. Records also show that Combs owned the lot facing Main Street, where the church is now located, as well.

According to the *Early Annals of Whitewater*, in 1845, Nelson Coombs (sic), a wagon-maker, came to Whitewater and shortly thereafter, built a small house (not extant) on Lot 3, Block 5 of Whitewater's original plat, the lot that faces Main Street at the site of the church. In 1847, Combs also built a house on Lot 3, Block 11, the lot with the current address of 404 Center Street. Because the deeds do not show that Combs actually owned these lots, but paid taxes on them, suggests that he had an arrangement with the actual land owner to improve these lots, perhaps as part of a land contract agreement. In 1852, Combs sold both parcels of land and moved away.

Investigating further into the *Early Annals of Whitewater* revealed a reference that shed further light on the stone stable history. The reference stated, "George Dann started the first cooper shop in 1845 on Fourth Street, back of the Baptist Church. From this site, the business was transferred, after a year or two, to the east side of the creek near the residence since known as the George Dann place." The location of the stone stable before it was moved to its current spot near the depot was near Fourth Street between Main and Center Streets behind the Baptist Church, now the First English Lutheran Church, the eventual owner of the stone stable. When the *Annals* were printed in 1906, the church was still used by the Baptists, who had built it in the 1880s.

The result of this research is that the stone stable was likely built c.1845, either by George Dann or Nelson Combs to use as a cooper shop or wagon shop. Around 1847, Dann, who may have owned or leased the building, left the site and Combs may have taken it over until 1852, when Combs left Whitewater.

After Combs, the stone stable was sold along with the house at 404 Center Street to Alexander Graham, one of Whitewater's pioneer businessmen. Graham died in 1866. After Graham, the house at 404 Center Street, along with the stone stable, was owned by Mrs. Susan Webster and H. N. Inman. Around this time, according to *Sanborn-Perris Fire Insurance Maps*, a frame-

constructed addition was made to the west wall of the stone building and two large partial barns with overhangs were built immediately east of the stable. According to records, these barns were owned by 12 different people and who may have used the structure to house horses and carriages while attending the nearby Congregational Church. Between 1892 and 1904, an annex was built between one of the barns and the stable. All of the additions to the stable and the barns were gone by 1924.

Joseph E. Fuller acquired the house and stable in 1902. He was the owner who replaced the old house at 404 Center Street with a newer home. Fuller died in 1950. It is likely the First English Lutheran Church acquired the stone stable when they developed their parking lot behind the building. The lots on Main and Center Street were fairly long, so the church may have purchased back portions of lots on Center Street for the purposes of creating a parking area. (A recently published post card on Facebook shows a house right behind the church where a parking lot was located.) The church retained the stone stable for many years, using it for a living nativity at Christmas. It was only around 2005 that, due to a desire to put on an addition on the church, the stable had to be removed for additional parking space.

At that time, a community effort was organized to save the building. It was taken apart piece by piece and stored until funds could be raised for reconstruction and an appropriate site acquired. It was felt that the best place for the building would be near the depot so that the Whitewater Historical Society could use and interpret the building. In 2007, the stable was successfully reconstructed and is an artifact that is officially owned by the City of Whitewater, but maintained and interpreted by the Whitewater Historical Society.

When the building was rebuilt on its new and current site, as much of the existing materials were used. A new roof had to be built, but it was completed in a historic manner with wood shingles. It was not ever determined when the wooden components of the building were constructed, including the entry doors and window coverings. After around 10 years, the Whitewater Historical Society determined that the exterior wooden components of the building were deteriorated and should be replaced. It was decided to replace most of the components with similar components, but that the large entry door was not in keeping with doors on such buildings originally. It was decided to replace this door with a replica double door. In the summer of 2016, the window coverings and doors were replaced and replica period cast iron hardware was used for these enclosures.

### **Significance**

The Stone Stable is historically significant for local history because it is a rare resource related to pioneer industrial activities. The earliest industrial activities in Whitewater, except for the large grist mill, were housed in small utilitarian shops. Most of these buildings were of frame construction and after they were no longer needed, they were converted to sheds and/or were demolished. This building is the only pioneer-era industrial shop building that has been identified in Whitewater.

Although the industrial uses of the building were short-lived, it exists as a representative of this type of pioneer-era building. Early industries and shops were important in Whitewater as many

of these shops became larger industries. In fact, George Dann's cooperage became an important small industry in the community after it moved out of this building. Other buildings making wagons and agricultural equipment were early locations of the Winchester and Partridge Manufacturing Company, one of two large industries in 19<sup>th</sup> century Whitewater.

The stone stable's preservation was due to its stone construction, its adaptability as a horse barn or carriage house, and the desire of the First English Lutheran Church to preserve it. When the church needed to dispose of the building, the church members made a concerted effort to move it rather than demolish it. Therefore, it was disassembled and components were stored until an appropriate place could be found to reconstruct it.

In 2007, on the anniversary of the Whitewater Homecoming of 1907, it was determined that the stone stable should be restored near the Whitewater Historical Society's depot museum, similar to the way the Halverson Log Cabin was moved to the university campus in 1907. A community-wide effort was made to do this and it was completed as part of the 2007 anniversary celebration.

This reconstruction effort was also significant in Whitewater history because it represents a community effort to commemorate pioneer history and architecture. The Halverson Log Cabin is listed in the National Register of Historic Places, in part, because it represents the 1907 effort to commemorate Whitewater history. The Stone Stable is another example, completed 100 years later, but with the same intent.

For its association with pioneer-era industrial history and as a fine and rare example of early industrial architecture in Whitewater, and for its association with the community-wide effort of Whitewater citizens to commemorate an important aspect of local history, this building is historically significant and eligible as a Whitewater landmark.