

SELHS News

Newsletter of the Sterling Eureka and Laketown History Society

Volume 7, No.4

Memory Room – Cushing Community Center

December, 2013

Email selhscushing@gmail.com

Website <http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~wiselhs/>

Cushing Rural Fire Department 1963 - 50 yrs Old!

From an Interview with Bud Larson (about 10 years ago)

I can tell you the story of the Cushing Fire Department. Walter Johnson, Curtiss' father, house burned down. He called Luck Fire Department. They charged Sterling \$1200 to come out and watch the house burn down—mostly burned by the time they arrived. Dad (Stanley) was really angry at them. Charge \$1200 for getting there to watch the building at the end of burning down. Dad was really storming about it. Dad was the town chairman of Sterling then.

I told Dad “why don't you have a meeting with the people in Sterling—we could run a fire department.” “Oh no, there isn't enough of a crew here to run one.” “Well you can at least try” I said. There was a meeting and the people voted almost 100% in favor after they heard the story of what it cost for Walter Larson's fire.



Bill and Lynn Skow proudly show the Fire Truck they built for Cushing. Caption is on page 6

So Sterling went ahead. The crazy thing is that Bill Skow built the fire truck for \$1600, only just \$400 more than the bill from Luck of \$1200. So Dad said we will put up the building and so Sterling started the building. After it was going, then some of us in Laketown went to the town meeting and agreed to take 2 miles of Laketown into the Cushing fire department. That went along for many years and then they decided to go clear east to Danny Jensen's. They

wanted to come in so they could get closer service. Then the County came along and said that

since fire departments were dividing up territories we should figure it out. So now we have a territory all the way south to I, north to the Burnett Co line and all of Sterling. There is a mutual agreement with all the other fire departments that for major fires we all help out.

The fire department started with the fire truck Bill Skow built for us and a water tank truck put together. Later we got more equipment, vehicles, and EMT and first responders. Then we had to build a bigger fire department. Just a year ago there was a wing for meetings and for smaller vehicles.

Last year there were 147 ambulance runs. There is more activity on that than fire.

Bud Jensen was first fire chief. Then the guy who bought out Nicky Jensen Hardware was chief for a while. Then Larry Jensen got it. Merle Larson was voted in after Larry resigned. Merle is now. It is a

lot of work to keep everything working. I am still considered on the department. I was on because of Dad—I was 18 then. Louie Baker, Bud Jensen, Ed Olsen, -- about 8 of us originals. They gave me a plaque for 40 years. (I am 76)



Several hours after the fire that destroyed the Cushing Tavern Saturday was brought under control, volunteers were still moving equipment and stock away from the scene. Here the volunteers are carrying merchandise to the Ed Olson building just north of Goldsworth's Cushing Tavern. The sixty-four-year old building was so badly damaged by fire, it was declared a total loss. Action of the new Sterling Township fire department was credited from preventing possible further loss.

Skow then went on to build trucks for other towns too. It was a good truck. Until two years ago it was around—finally they sold it for scrap. The main fire truck now is \$170,000. Taxes come from $\frac{3}{4}$ of Laketown and Sterling. Eureka buys into it each year. We have more firemen in Cushing than most places around – we have 30 now and most are young and first responders too. There were 6 who came for me when I had heart problems.

I have 11 stents and a 4-way bypass. Keeps me from doing much with the fire department anymore. (From a tape recorded visit with Bud by Russ Hanson)

Rural Fire Department Initiated Into Action (Standard Press Jan 1964)

The fledgling Cushing Rural Fire Department proved its value Saturday morning in controlling a fire that could well have destroyed the north half of the village.

The department was alerted before 10:30 am Saturday by John Johnson who noticed flames coming from the roof of the Cushing Tavern building. The department arrived to find top area of the building in flames, but was able to contain the fire on the roof until the Luck Fire Department arrived to help.

The two fire departments were able to put out the fire on the roof but not until the entire upper half of the building had been destroyed. Tons of water was poured through the structure. The building was a total loss.

Johnson, who was among the first to notice the fire, said it broke out in the top center peak of the roof.

Fire Chief Bud Jensen said the cause of the fire had not been definitely determined, but since there was nothing in the upstairs of the building, and no chimney in the area the fire was first found, faulty wiring could have been the cause.

Stanley Jensen recalled that the large two story building was constructed about 1900. It had been a confectionery and tavern since its construction. The large hall in the upper story was often used in earlier years for community functions or dances, but many of these functions had been moved to the Cushing School. The building was purchased by Bob Goldsworthy about five years ago.

Fire Damage

Most of the furnishings in the apartment in the rear of the building and tavern fixtures and stock were saved, although badly damaged by water and smoke. Orville Goldsworthy and volunteers unselfishly sloshed through the water, and smoke to help move the furnishings out of the building. The furnishings and equipment were being saved while the fire department was pouring water on the fire.

Where's the Fire

The ironic part of Saturday's fire was that the occupants of the building were apparently the last to know that the structure was on fire. One tavern patron said that he thought it was another of Cushing's fire drills, until someone came in and said the building was on fire. Firemen were already there setting up equipment.

The Goldsworthys tentatively plan to replace the building, as it was burned beyond repair. The new building, however, will be smaller and a single story.

Cushing Rural Fire Department

The Cushing Rural Fire Department, owned by the Town of Sterling, is not yet fully established, Chief Jensen said. The department members are still in training and have only one truck at this time. Water for the fire use in Cushing now is taken from reservoirs and the creamery and under the Co-op store. Both reservoirs hold several thousands of gallons.

In Saturday's fire, the Sterling department pumped from the Co-op reservoir while Luck pumped from the creamery. Before the fire, the department only has obtained some new equipment and they plan to obtain a water truck in the near future.

The department also has a siren that will be installed in Cushing. This along with special fire phone numbers will alert the department. Any of five Cushing firemen will be called to activate the siren.

History of the Cushing Fire Department by Sam Owens (1995)

On April 1, 1963 the voters of Sterling Township authorized the formation of a volunteer fire dept. It was there after called the Cushing Rural fire Department. The firemen at that time received compensation of \$2.00 per fire.

Then on the first Tuesday of April 1967 the voters of Laketown Township voted to buy in the Cushing Rural Fire Association. They voted to separate the west 2 miles of Laketown and receive protection from Cushing. The cost to Laketown at that time was \$3701.00 which was 44.52% of Sterling's equity in the firefighting equipment of \$8313.00.

The Cushing Fire Department furnishes fire protection for 100% of Sterling Township, 3% of Laketown Township, and 49% of Eureka Township covering an area of 149 sq. miles.

The original fire hall was built on Co. Rd. H on land donated by Stanley Larson Sr. to whom we are forever grateful. Then in March of 1986 the need of a larger fire hall was brought to light. At a special meeting of the town boards of Sterling, Laketown and the fire dept., it was decided to allow the fire dept board of directors to go ahead and lay the ground work for a new fire hall.

After many hours of planning and looking at several sites it was decided to build at the present site on land purchased from Lloyd "Ike" Wilson and Floyd Nick. It was at this time that the fire dept decided to incorporate as a nonprofit organization and thus become a separate entity from the full control of the townships allowing more freedom to govern themselves.

The townships still have to appoint board members and approve financing for major purchases, but this puts the burden of repayment of any loans on the fire dept. itself and not the taxpayers. And if for any reason that the fire corporation should become insolvent, all the assets return to the townships.

The cost of the new fire hall was \$62000. The fire dept saved about \$11000 and put that towards the cost and with a \$5000 grant from the First Bank of Grantsburg. The construction of the new fire hall was able to take place. I am proud to announce that the final fire hall payment was made this April.

Some of the officers I have been able to come up with in the records are as follows. Original Fire Chief was Bud Jensen, Original Asst. Fire Chief was Louis Baker, Original Secretary - Treasurer was John Johnson. Ed C. Olson was elected Sec-Trees, on Nov 10 1964.

Allen Anderson was Fire Chief from April 26, 1973 to Sept. 6, 1976 at which time he resigned and the present Fire Chief Larry Jensen was elected. Chuck Sundquist was elected secretary-treasurer on April 26, 1973. On Jan. 10 1976 Roger Sandstrom was elected Sec-Treas. On May 2, 1977 Robert Lehman was elected Secretary- Treasurer of the Cushing Rural Fire Dept.

Robert Lehman was forced to resign this position due to failing health in May of 1986. It was at this time that Sam Owen became the first Secretary-Treasurer of the newly formed Cushing Rural Fire Corporation and still holds this position at this time.

Over the years with the changing role of fire fighters, we have had to grow with the training requirements needed to stay current with the times. The Cushing Fire Dept was the first dept in Polk County to complete the training course and become Certified Fire Fighter One.

Then with the growing demand for emergency pre-hospital medical care we became one of the first, organized First Responder in the state of Wisconsin. These are both achievements which we are very proud of, and we continue to this day to keep our certification current. We also have 5 Nationally Registered EMT's currently on our roster.

We have also grown from the 2 original fire trucks to the current 8 pieces of firefighting apparatus without a major increase in cost to the taxpayers. Actually with the increase in training and equipment, the cost to the homeowners has decreased due to the lower insurance rates that they have to pay, another accomplishment that we are proud of.

A partial list of the former fire fighters and some of the people who were instrumental in organizing the dept and to whom we owe a great deal of thanks for their efforts to help make what the department is today are: Charles Meline, Rudolph Melin, the Christopherson Brothers, Carl Borup, Roger Sandstrom, Jim Walsten, Gordon Walsten, Don Tricker, John L Ott, John H. Ott, Raymond Walsten, Lester Mattson, Art C. Swanson, John Ellefson, Ray M. Johnson, Chester Clauson, C.A. and R. Bauer, Richard Olson, Russell Gustafson, Chester Olson, Floyd Wood, Horace Wells, Leighton Brenholt, Bruce Medchill, La Verne Olson, John Johnson, Stanley "Bud" Larson, Lawrence "Bud" Jensen, Vern Doolittle, Louis Baker, Stanley Larson, Louis Harvieux, Harvey Olson, Harry Severson, Jim Christenson, Ed Olson, Loren Geo. Nelson, Floyd Nick, Ernest Swanson, Harold "Buzzy" Carlson, Nicky Jensen, Arne Erickson, Lloyd Wilson, Walter Gullickson, John P. Lundgren, Vivian Hanson, Allen Swenson, Myron Bergstrom, William Swenson, Maurice Christenson, Robert Wilson, Kenny Armstrong, Darrel "Dilly" Jensen, Roger Nigel, Jim Roush, Floyd Tretsven, Fred Kurtz, Jack Edwards, Allen Anderson, Norman Warwick, Al Peer, James Englehart, Ray "Bud" Peterson, Barry Lehman, Bob Lumsden, Robert Lehman, Clyde Hanson, Willard Swenson, Cart Mc Curdy, Donald Peterson, Dale Harvieux, Charlas Sundquist, Jeff Doolittle, Gordy Johnson.

This is probably an incomplete list as the names obtained were taken from old records and not all the records were available.

The current (1995) Cushing Fire Dept roster is as follows: Chief Larry Jensen, Asst. Chief Merle Larson, Asst.

Chief Gary Lehman, Training Officer Rick Davidsavor EMT, Medical Supply Officer Scott Jacobson EMT, Safety Officer Steve Warndahl, Secretary-Treasurer Sam Owen EMT, First Responders and Fire Fighters: Bill Lehman, Steve Tretsven, Sam Owen Jr., James Baker EMT, Matt Keenan EMT, Gary Gudmunsen, Dave Snyder, Ron Erickson, Randy McCurdy, Steve Lumsden, Jack Lundgren, Maurice

Christenson, Dean Carlson, Brian Doolittle, Tom Donaghue, Jim Lundgren, Keith Chronzy, Bud Larson, Tom Nagel, Jim Wilson, Jim Bethka, Porky Brust, Doug Lehmann, Randy Erickson. Current Fire Board of Directors are, from Laketown Bill Mattson and Randy Erickson, from Sterling Sam Owen and Steve Warndahl

REPORT OF FIRE DISTRICT MEETINGS

Cushing, Wisconsin
March 28, 1942

Dear Sir:

There has been lots of discussion on Rural Fire Protection going on the past few weeks. I thought you would like to print the minutes of the meetings that the appointed committees have had. I am sure it will be of interest to the community.

First meeting held at Cushing, Wisconsin, March 23, 1942.

Meeting called to order by Clarence Westlund. Chas. Burnstad elected chairman, Larry Leisch was elected secretary. Members present: Leonard Wallin, John Benson, Mr. Ahl, Art Vansgard and George Hansen of Laketown township; Chas. Burnstad, W. Rohwr, Chester Fisk, V. Jensen of Eureka township; Clarence Westlund, Roy Rutsch, Edgar Swanson, Larry Leisch, and Art Swanson of Sterling township.

Open discussion was carried on for two hours then after everything was pretty well gone over, Clarence Westlund made a motion that a fire district be formed, with truck based at Cushing, taking in all of Sterling, four miles of Laketown on west side and seven miles of Eureka township on west side.

Chas. Burnstad recommended that district be formed and that only six miles of Eureka be set into district, one mile east of Highway 87, the first six sections of Range 18.

Leonard Wallin recommended that four miles of Laketown on the west side be set in district, if "fair"; if not, only three miles should be set in.

Discussion was carried on as to fairness of dividing townships so everyone was treated equally.

Motion was made to have meeting at Milltown March 26, and that Luck, Milltown and Bone Lake township be asked to attend with Laketown, Sterling and Eureka. Motion carried. Meeting set for 8 o'clock at Fire Hall.

Motion was made to give the Cushing Commercial Club a vote of thanks for room for meeting and lunch.

Motion made to adjourn. Motion carried.

Second meeting at Milltown, Mar. 26, 1942.

Meeting was called to order by chairman. Minutes of last meeting were read. Further discussion started on district.

Mr. Abrahamson of the Minnesota Fire Equipment Company, talked on cost of equipment. A good piece of fire equipment all set up to go, new truck and all, will cost about \$3500 to \$4,000 apiece.

Pat Cain, Secretary of the St. Croix Valley Fire Association, gave a talk and answered questions for a while.

After discussion it seemed that the fair way was to make a district out of all the townships concerned, and then buy three fire trucks, basing one at Milltown, one at Luck and one at Cushing. This way where a township has to be divided it will be fair taxation on all concerned and each piece of equipment can be used to service the community to which it is best available by phone service, roads, etc.

Valuation of Townships

Laketown	\$ 775,890
Sterling	409,820

Caption for Front Page Newspaper Photo:

Bill Skow, North Luck, machinist, and his son Lynn are shown in the picture above with a new fire truck they just completed for the Town of Sterling.

This was the first complete fire truck that Skow has built. The Sterling truck was built from a base truck body and was Skow's own complete design.

The town of Sterling, which includes the west side of the main street business district in Cushing, is starting a new fire department. Luck serves the east side of the village, but the department is known as the Cushing Rural Fire Department Association. Future plans call for two trucks. A new fire hall, across the street from the Jensen garage, is now in the process of being built.

Bud Jensen has been elected chief of the association, with Arnie Sorenson as assistant. John Johnson is secretary, while Stanley Larson is Sterling's town chairman. Plans call for 20 to 22 men as volunteers for the department with four or more coming from an adjoining township.

The truck is equipped with a 730 gallon tank, with a gear pressure system pump. A two-section 40-foot ladder is erected on top of the truck with two hooded house reels on its side. The truck has three hose outlets with connections for 150 feet of one inch hose and one coil 400 feet long of 1.5-inch hose. The other pump, which contains a 1.5 inch outlet, is rarely used.

This association is another example of rural people making progress for the future.

River Road Ramblings --Russ Hanson

SELHS' 13th year was a good one. We contributed our efforts towards several local events including Memorial Day at Wolf Creek, the Sterling Settler's picnic 75th Anniversary, Doc Squirt Days, Cushing Fun Days, the 8th River Road Ramble and several other events.

We added many items to the museum thanks to donations from our supporters. We contributed \$500 to the Community Center for successful roof repairs.

We declared ourselves a 501(c)(3) non-profit as a distinct entity, having previously been included under the umbrella of the Polk Co Historical Society. We fall under the IRS "less than \$5000" income/sales category setup to make it easier for small non-profits to meet the IRS requirements so your donations are tax-exempt.

We hired a museum consultant and voted to spend up to \$2500 on refurbishing the museum with new display kiosks, improved posters, etc., to be worked on over the winter. We decided that as an all volunteer organization, we needed some professional advice to move forward. We have a growing collection of local items, records and photographs, and need to improve our presentation of them.

On a personal note, my spouse Margo continues to gain back her strength after a year of cancer treatment. She has licked the cancer, but it took away a lot of her stamina--barely able to chop firewood this fall. By March, we are hopeful she will be ready to carry two 5 gallon maple sap pails.

My mother, Alberta Hanson, passed away at home in her sleep October 25th. At just shy of 92 years old, she was still active and living on her own at the farm when her heart just slowed to a stop. She was a very avid supporter of both SELHS and the Luck museum, having given many items to display. As we sort out 72 years of memories from the Hanson home on Evergreen, we have several boxes of items "suitable for the museum." Margo and I are planning on living in the home this winter rather than heading to Pine Island--both to try it out as a place to live and to continue sorting and cleaning out the big farm house. Stop by for coffee if you are in the area.

Dad was on the Sterling Town Board during 1962-1964 when the Cushing Fire Department was underway. Many fervent discussions were held during the planning including a 150 gallon per minute pump vs one that did 300 gpm. Stanley Larson solved it "We only have 750 gallons of water on the truck. We can be a 2 1/2 minute fire department or 5 minute one. I think we would look better spraying the buildings for 5 minutes!"

**Elected Officers and Board Members
Sterling Eureka and Laketown Historical
Society from 2013**

Chair - Russ Hanson

2558 Evergreen Av, Cushing, WI 54006
(715) 488-2776 (507-356-8877 Jan-Feb)
russhanson@grantsburgtelcom.net

Vice-chair - Mark Johnson

2601 240th Ave
St Croix Falls WI 54024

Secretary/Treasurer - Donna Blair

2677 240th Av
St Croix Falls WI 54024

Emeritus Chair – Marcie Marquardt

quietmeadows@lakeland.ws

Executive Board Members –NEEDED!

George Laier, Russ and Dottie Adams,
Marlys Hedberg, Joan Swanson,
Justin Swanson, Marcie Marquardt. Volunteer to
join us!

Order a book from SELHS

Postage included in price

\$13 A History of Making Maple Syrup
\$18 St Croix River Road Ramblings 2010
\$18 River Road Ramblings 2011
\$18 The St Croix River Road
\$18 History of Cushing Wisconsin I
\$18 Stories of the Trade River Valley I
\$18 Stories of the Trade River Valley II
Check to SELHS, Box 731, Cushing, WI
54006

All profits go to SELHS to preserve local
history. Or go to Amazon.com and order.

Meetings are the 3rd Thursday of each
month at 7:00 pm at the Cushing
Community Center Back Entrance
No Meetings December, January and
February, March

Wanted! You as a volunteer for the
Sterling Eureka and Laketown Historical
Society! A little time and a lot of fun!

The Polk County Genealogical society is at
the Luck Museum Monday of each month
from noon until 3 pm. They will help you do
research on your family history. No charge
and no appointment needed. Email us at
polkgen@gmail.com and check our website at
www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~wipolk/

*Do you have an email address? If so, send it
to SELHSCUSHING@GMAIL.COM and we
will keep you up-to-date on what is happening
with regular releases and send our
newsletters directly and in color!*

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the Sterling
Old Settlers
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book of the 75
years of Sterling
Picnics.
Full Color \$23
Black/White \$13
Postage included
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Check to SELHS
Box 731
Cushing WI
54006
Wonderful
Collection!*

*Memberships are due each June. We depend on your
membership and contributions and book sales for our
operating funds, so be generous!*

*Make a check to SELHS and send it to
SELHS
Box 731 Cushing, WI 54006*

*Christmas Party Tentatively set for Thursday, January 15th
at the Pizzeria in Dresser Wisconsin Noon Order your
own lunch.*

Projects for 2014

*Ceiling tile replacement/painting
Museum Refurbishment
Continue work on the Historic Signs
1960s Den Display (Thanks to the Wilson Family for
the 1960s TV/Stereo Console!)
Regular Open Hours for the Museum*

Sterling Eureka and Laketown Membership Form

Send completed form to

SELHS.
P.O. BOX 731
Cushing WI 54006
(LOOK AT THE
DATE AFTER
YOUR NAME
On mailing label
For the last time you
Joined (i.e. 2011)

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Annual Membership Levels

<i>Individual</i>	<i>Student</i>	<i>Life (ind or couple)</i>
\$10.00	\$5.00	\$100.00

All memberships in excess of \$10 as well as any additional donations to the SEL Historical Society are fully deductible.



Christmas Party – Thursday
January 16th Noon Potluck
at the Wolf Creek Methodist
Church. Lunch, program,
and tour of the historic
building! Free, open to the
public! See you there!

Cushing, WI 54006

Box 731

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