

## Editor's Introduction: Shakespeare in Wisconsin

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Not too long ago I read Katherine West Scheil's book *She Hath Been Reading: Women and Shakespeare Clubs in America*, which uncovers archival research in order to show us the role that Shakespeare, and literature in general, played and still plays in the social and political lives of ordinary people. Among more than 500 Shakespeare clubs meeting across the country in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, Scheil lists 12 in Wisconsin, including the Mary Arden Shakespeare Club in Superior, the Shakespeare Society of Kenosha, and the William Shakespeare Club of Marinette.

I contacted a number of local and regional historical societies in order to locate records of these clubs and received some interesting news clippings from the Cambria-Friesland Historical Society about a community service project that took place in the 1930s.

In the fall of 1936, the women of the Cambria Shakespeare Club agreed to collaborate with the Cambria Cemetery Association to collect donations to erect a Memorial Chapel. And it was about time! According to the announcement, "The need of such a structure which would provide, in addition to its ordinary function, a receiving vault, has long been realized in the community." After months of fundraising, the city gathered for the laying of the cornerstone in October 1938, a ceremony including a poetic dedication to the Shakespeare Club.

### Shakespeare Club Sponsors New Project

At the annual meeting of the Cambria Shakespeare club it was proposed to sponsor a movement toward the erection of a Memorial Chapel to be built in the Cambria Cemetery. The undertaking is one of great proportion and as such its success will depend chiefly upon the cooperation of all persons in Cambria who are interested in the improvement of our Silent City. The need of such a structure which would provide, in addition to its ordinary function, a receiving vault, has long been realized in the community, and now, although all plans have not been entirely formulated, it is hoped it will soon become a reality.

The cooperation of the Cambria Cemetery Association in the movement is already an inspiration to these women to go on to do their best, and a committee from that organization has been appointed to act in conjunction with the clubs' committee.

Practically all necessary funds will be raised through donations and in the near future letters of solicitation will be sent to out-of-town friends and calls will be made in and about the village.

## Large Crowd Present For Laying of Cornerstone

Despite the inclement weather on Sunday afternoon, people of Cambria and vicinity proved themselves loyal to fine old traditions by their presence at the ceremony of laying the cornerstone of new Memorial Chapel in Cambria Cemetery. A spirit of reverence, a deep appreciation for the memory of those in whose honor this structure is being erected, prevailed the gathering, and all fortunate enough to be present received great inspiration from the beautiful words spoken by the pastors and others on program. Mrs. J. E. Jones, chairman of the chapel committee acted as chairman of the meeting.

A musical ensemble from the Cambria Band opened the ceremonies with a hymn, and accompanied the assembly as they sang "Faith of Our Fathers", after which Rev. W. C. Rowlands of Randolph read the scripture and Rev. W. F. Goff of Fox Lake led in prayer. T. E. Williams, a pioneer of this community read the following poem, which he wrote in honor of the occasion:

"All honor and blessing ever  
To the Shakespeare Club, their aim  
And action through love and pleasure  
Is worthy of a goodly name.  
A name that will stand through ages,  
With this "Shrine" to testify  
That there is respect and sympathy  
For all, when we come to die  
Old pioneers, are here resting  
In their long and peaceful sleep,  
A rest, after a long day's labor  
And their labor has been complete.  
No more complaining, no fault finding,  
Free from pain and from disgrace,  
Such is the fate of rich and poor  
After they've entered this resting  
place.

There is no real cause of shedding  
Tears, if we could only understand  
The wise and perfect Laws of Nature  
Which we see on every hand.  
Nature demands, that all that's  
earthly

Must return again to dust,  
But God demands the Soul and Spirit,  
And God's demands are always just.

Don't we feel a sense of duty  
As we gather here today,  
To dedicate this place where stalwarts  
Are resting in their Beds of Clay.

Resting, till the Trumpet calleth  
When the graves give up their dead,  
Jesus, the life and resurrection  
Will open up each earthly bed.

There is darkness and complication  
On each side of a burying ground.  
On one side, we see life ending,  
But on the other side we find  
A glorious view of life unending  
With an open door for all mankind.  
Yes, a view of life ascending  
That blossoms on a higher plane,  
A Place, which was prepared by Jesus  
Forever blessed by His Holy Name."

After this dedication, Mrs E A Rowlands, the club's president, announced the articles deposited into the cornerstone, including a number from the Shakespeare Club plus newspapers, photographs, programs, and the dedicatory poem.

In May 1939, the Memorial Chapel was dedicated, and the Shakespeare Club received its due acknowledgement.

You'll notice that Shakespeare himself (and his *oeuvre*) is absent from this project, or at least from these accounts. As Scheil argues, "Shakespeare" seemed to be an umbrella term for a number of activities, and with more research, perhaps we can discover how the Cambria Shakespeare Club and others around the state connected Bardolotry to its community involvement.

How do you and your students connect Shakespeare to the civic life of your school and community?

Rev. M. E. Kausler gave an inspiring and challenging address which stirred the hearts of his listeners and urged them on to greater loyalty to the principals and ideals of those sturdy pioneers whose memory we honor.

Following the address the ceremony, of laying the cornerstone took place Mrs. E. A. Rowlands, president of the Shakespeare Club, which organization has sponsored the Memorial Chapel project, announced the articles to go into the cornerstone and Mrs. W. J. Sanderson, treasurer of the Chapel Committee, placed them in the box. C. J. Williams, overseer of the building, sealed the box.

The articles placed in the cornerstone, which is a gift from the Beaver Dam Monument Co., were copies of the Jubilee and Homecoming issues of The Cambria News; a history of Cambria; a history of the Shakespeare Club; an autographed copy of the Shakespeare Club program for 1938-39; a photograph of Jeff Williams who was sexton for 23 years; the names of the members of the Cemetery Association, Chapel Committee, Architect and Contractor; all donors to the fund to date; a copy of poem composed by T. E. Williams; one front page of The Milwaukee Journal and Portage Register-Democrat; the latest copy of the Cambria News and a fifty cent piece of the 1938 issue.

As the inspirational service drew to a close, the congregation sang the old Welsh hymn "Babel", after which Rev. Kausler pronounced the benediction.

## Cambria Memorial Chapel

An event long anticipated in Cambria took place on May 28th, 1939, when the Memorial Chapel was dedicated with appropriate ceremonies. Dr. G. M. Jones of Minneapolis gave the address dedicating this beautiful edifice "to the memory of those who are gone and to the service of those who are to come."

The building of the Chapel was a project of the Cambria Shakespeare Club. The original plans for the construction were begun in late '36, when the Club issued an appeal for donations. Former residents and interested friends contributed generously and after months of planning and preparation the actual work was started in September '38, and the cornerstone laid in October of the same year.

The Chapel is a shrine of which our community may well be proud. It is built in English style, faced with Lannon stone and has a slate roof. The interior is finished in Flemish oak. The beautiful stained glass windows were presented by Mrs. Robert Tarrant, in honor of her father, the late Rev. Edward Morgan. The beautiful Hammond organ was a gift of Mr. Tarrant. The flagstone walks which add to the beauty of the building were a gift of Mrs. H. F. Schemmel.