

**Village President**

*1 Year Term*

#	Photo	Name	Term
1		John Shelley <i>– office established –</i>	1868 - 1870
2		George Hermann Kleffler	1870 - 1871/1872
3		John Shelley	1871/1872 - 1873
4		Albert Semler	1873 - 1874
5		Christoph Eckstein	1874 - 1876
6		Leander Franklin Frisby	1876 - 1877
7		Fred H. Haase	1877 - 1879
8		George F. Hunt	1879 - 1881

9		John Reisse	1881 - 1882
10		Fred H. Haase	1882 - 1883
11		John Shelley	1883 - 1884
12		John Potter Jr. - <i>office dissolved</i> - - <i>replaced with Mayor of West Bend</i> -	1884 - 1885

#### Village President Information

##### **John Shelley -**

*(Feb. 1st, 1817 - Dec. 4th, 1886)*

Born in Manchester, PA. Graduated at Pennsylvania college at Gettysburg, and was admitted into the bar in 1840. Shelley then moved to Wisconsin 1853, residing in Milwaukee for a year before moving to the Town of West Bend. There he established a law partnership with Frederick O. Thorpe, who would later serve as the local state senator from 1862 to 1868 as a Democrat. Shelley served as the second ever Washington County Judge from 1857 to 1881. When the Village of West Bend was incorporated in 1868 he was elected as the first village president, with his tenure lasting two terms from 1868 to 1870. He returned to the office for another two terms between 1871 and 1873. Shelley left West Bend around 1884 after his fifth term as president from 1883 to 1884, to Racine and eventually Hartford where he died. He had no children.

##### **George H. Kleffler**

*(Jun. 22nd, 1826 - Jun. 3rd, 1882)*

George Hermann Kleffler was born in Rothenburg of Hesse-Cassel, Germany. He attended university at Marburg, Hesse-Cassel for three years before receiving a diploma as a surgeon. Then, in 1846, Kleffler moved to the United States, landing in New York before soon thereafter settling in Newburg. Kleffler then enlisted in the U.S. Army during the Mexican American War, and served under General Worth. Towards the end of the war Kleffler was assigned to Hospital Duty and served as a Surgeon Assistant until the end of the war. After the war, in 1848, Kleffler moved to Milwaukee where he formed a partnership with a certain Dr. Luening in the practice of medicine and surgery. In 1851 Kleffler left the partnership and

moved to the Town of Barton where he continued to practice medicine for two years. In 1852, Kleffler became the Town Clerk for Barton, a position he held for a year until 1853 when he became the Deputy Treasurer of Washington County and moved to the West Bend area. He served in that capacity until 1856. Then in 1857, Kleffler was elected Clerk of the Circuit Court, and served continuously until 1865. During that time, he also served as Justice of the Peace. Kleffler was admitted into the Wisconsin bar in 1865; and returned to the Clerk of the Circuit Court position in 1867, serving there again until 1869. Kleffler was elected as an Assemblyman to represent Northern Washington County from 1868 to 1869 as a Democrat. Kleffler was also elected District Attorney for Washington County from 1868 to 1874. Kleffler was also elected Village President of West Bend in 1870. George Kleffler married Louisa and has three children: Charles W., Camilla Thielges, and Christoph Jefferon "Jeff".

### **Albert Semler**

*(May. 1837 - Mar. 1890)*

Albert Semler was born in Goldbeck, Mecklenberg, Germany in 1837 before emigrating directly to the West Bend area in 1858. Semler would become a prominent and well regarded early settler of the West Bend area. When he first moved to West Bend, he worked as a clerk in James Vollmar's (an influential early businessman) store. Semler became known to be incredibly business savvy in the community and it didn't take long for him to become a partner with Vollmar for the store. He soon expanded his partnership to a woolen-mill, but outside of his partnership with Vollmar, Semler became personally influential in his own right. He operated the primary insurance agency used in the area, loaned money as a fiduciary agent for large companies, and acted as a financial advisor for half the farmers in the West Bend area. This popularity naturally led him into local politics, where in 1867, he was elected County Treasurer. Semler continued to serve and be elected in that office until in July, 1876 when Semler had just returned from attendance at the National Democratic Convention, at St. Louis, to which he was a delegate. When he returned he found the local School Commissioners waiting for him in order to receive their apportionment of the school fund, around \$4,000, which was in his hands, and should have been handed over before he left for St. Louis. Semler apologized and began traveling down to Milwaukee where he claimed he had the funds on deposit, promising to return with the required funds on the next day. After Semler had been gone for a while, suspicion began to arise and the County Clerk (and future 7th and 9th Mayor of West Bend) Joseph Ott went out to confront Semler. Semler confessed that he had been taking out countless loans for possibly years, which he was now defaulting on. Semler had been facing heavy business losses, something he had been attempting to remedy through gambling in the hope to regain his losses and save the dreaded exposure and disgrace. Ott immediately returned to West Bend, and a warrant for Semler's arrest was issued. Sheriff Miller went out to detain Semler in Milwaukee, but he had fled. Miller eventually tracked him down in Omaha where Semler was reportedly "half-insane". He was returned to West Bend on August 6th, 1876 and locked in the county jail. After an investigation by a special county committee, it was found he had lost the county around \$14,000. Semler was in the county jail for many months before the prosecution dismissed his charges under nolle prosse. After his release, Semler remained in West Bend attempting to reestablish himself, before cutting his losses in 1880 and moving to Iowa. Semler died around early March, 1890 in Council Bluffs, Iowa at the age of 52. Semler and his wife Julia Weiss had 8 children, 5 of whom survived to adulthood (Edmund, Ida, Charles, Rosa, Hattie).

**Christopher Eckstein -***(Jan. 29th, 1820 - Mar. 26th, 1888)*

Eckstein was born on January 29th, 1820 in Nuerenberg, Germany. He moved to Milwaukee and resided there until in 1851 Balthazar Goetter offered Eckstein to move to West Bend and manage the brewery he had established there in 1849. Then, in 1852, Eckstein, along with Stephen Mayer, bought the brewery from Goetter before soon after in 1854, Eckstein sold his share of the business to Stephen's brother Carl Mayer (whose son, Christopher F. Mayer, would go on to be a prominent politician in the area). After selling the brewery, Eckstein started another brewery; owning it until 1877 when he moved to Chicago to conduct a "flour, feed, and grocery store". He worked in that capacity until his death on March 26th, 1888. While Eckstein was operating his brewery, he was an involved West Bend citizen: briefly serving as president of the bank of West Bend as well as serving two terms as village president from 1874 to 1876.

**Leander F. Frisby -***(Jun. 19th, 1825 - Apr. 19, 1889)*

Leander Franklin Frisby was born in Mesopotamia Township, Trumbull County, Ohio to Lucius Frisby and Lovina Gary. Lucius and Lovina themselves were from Castleton, Vermont, and had settled in Ohio in 1817. In 1846, Frisby left Ohio and went to Wisconsin where he frequently moved from village to village all across the state, chasing employment opportunities before finally settling in Burlington, Racine County. Up until this point, Frisby had been educated in farming and agriculture, but once settled in Burlington, he began to study law, being admitted into the bar in 1850. Soon thereafter in the early 1850's, he moved to the West Bend area. In 1852, upon the division of Washington and Ozaukee county, Frisby ran his first campaign for the office of County Clerk under the Free Soil Party. Frisby lost the election for clerk, but won the election for District Attorney, and so Frisby became the first DA for the post-divided Washington County. The next year, Frisby was also elected to be the Superintendent of Schools for the Town of West Bend. In 1858, Frisby started a law firm with another prominent lawyer in Washington County named Paul A. Weil. Frisby was selected as a delegate from Wisconsin for the 1860 Republican National Convention, casting his vote for the "radical republican" U.S. Senator from New York: William Seward. Soon after, in 1861, Frisby was elected to the state legislature to represent Washington County as an Assemblyman. He held that office until 1862. Frisby continued to become both more popular at home as well as in the Republican Party in Wisconsin. In 1868, Frisby ran for Wisconsin's 4th Congressional district against Democrat Charles Eldredge. While Frisby lost this election, Frisby still received majority support in Washington County, which becomes more impressive when it's understood that Washington County was a Democrat stronghold at the time. Frisby was invited, once again, as a delegate for Wisconsin to the 1872 Republican National Convention. At the convention, Frisby cast his vote for Ulysses S. Grant. In 1873, Frisby was nominated as the Republican candidate for Wisconsin Attorney General, an election he lost but it still highlighted his growing prominence in the state's Republican party. Looking back at Frisby's local life in West Bend, in 1874, He and Paul Weil hired S. S. Barney (Barney was another prominent local citizen and lawyer, who would go on to be a U.S. Representative for Wisconsin's 4th Congressional district from 1895-1903) on as the third partner in their law firm. Frisby became West Bend's village president for a single one year term in 1876, defeating A. Babille. In 1878, Frisby was again nominated to run for the 4th Congressional district, which he narrowly lost. Frisby returned once more as a delegate to the Republican National Convention in 1880. Frisby is

credited with convincing the rest of the Wisconsin delegation to cast their vote for the dark horse candidate James Garfield, who prior to that point had only one delegate behind him, but who would go on to win the nomination. Frisby would be nominated again for Attorney General of Wisconsin in 1881, an election he finally won, serving in that capacity until 1887. Around 1883, Frisby left West Bend for Milwaukee where he practiced law with his nephew Franklin L. Frisby. Frisby died only two years after he left office in 1889 at the age of 63. Frisby married Frances Rooker in 1854 and they had 5 children. (Alice, Almah, Marion, Leander Jr., Ralph). His daughter, Dr. Almah Frisby would go on to become the first woman appointed to the University of Wisconsin Board of Regents. Frisby is the original owner of the “Frisby House” located downtown West Bend, which he built in 1865.

### **George F. Hunt -**

*(Aug. 24th, 1831 - Dec. 10, 1888)*

George F. Hunt was born to Harvey Hunt and Mary Brown on August 24th, 1831 in the town of Nichols, Tioga County, New York. Hunt attended Oswego Academy before becoming a medical student at the College of Physicians and Surgeons in New York City. There, in 1856, Hunt received his diploma as Doctor of Medicine. After that, Hunt moved to Cambria, Columbia County, Wisconsin, where he began the practice of his profession. Hunt remained in Cambria for around four years until 1860 when he settled in Barton for a few months before moving to West Bend in October of 1861. In West Bend, Hunt became one of the most well known doctors in the area. Notably, Hunt became a pension surgeon for the Bureau of Pensions from 1864-1865. He was first nominated for village president unknown to him in 1879, and would go on to defeat W. Johnson, who was strongly backed by Hunt's rival Leander F. Frisby. He represented Washington and Ozaukee County as a Democrat State Senator from 1881 to 1883. He was appointed postmaster of West Bend from 1869 to 1877. Previously, Hunt was a member of the Republican party before switching to the Democrat party in the late 1870s, most likely in response to the growing “radical” ideology growing in the Republican party under Ulysses S. Grant. Hunt had been an early editor and sponsor of the West Bend Republican, which was the only Republican newspaper in the area. He and his wife Annie Salsbury (the daughter of the prominent Barton Salisbury), whom he married on October 23rd, 1865, had one child named Frederick. Hunt suffered from a stroke in 1885 and lived in an enfeebled state until his death in 1888 at the age of 57.

### **John Reisse**

*(Aug. 5th, 1818 - Dec. 19th, 1897)*

Born in Hessen, Germany where he worked as an architect until he moved to New York City in 1844. Reisse then came to the Town of West Bend in 1847 where he ran a farm until in 1850 he moved to the unincorporated Barton community in the Town of Newark (now Town of Barton). There he ran a saloon and tailor shop before soon thereafter becoming a dealer for general merchandise. Reisse built a 70x30 feet brick general country store where he operated out of. Reisse was appointed Postmaster of the Barton community in the late 1850s and would serve in the role for 9 years. He also served 16 years as Justice of the Peace for the Town of Barton, as well as representing Barton on the Washington County Board for some years. Reisse's main employment became the manufacture of bricks where he would employ on average 18 men. Reisse moved to the Village of West Bend in 1875 where he opened another general country store. He was appointed postmaster for two years. He was elected as Justice of the Peace for the Village of West Bend for 4 years, as well as serving as the village clerk for 2 years. In 1880 he opened a saloon before he was elected Village President of West Bend in 1881.

**Fred H. Haase***(Jan. 5th, 1831 - Mar. 28th, 1908)*

Frederick H. Haase was born on January 5th, 1831 in Mecklenburg Schwerin, Germany to Henry Haase and Sophia Both. Before moving to the United States, Haase learned the brickmaker trade. Haase settled in the West Bend area on February 20th 1855. Haase became the foreman of the brickyards owned by Charles Lemke in the Town of West Bend and Richfield. After working in that position for 8 years, he became unable after a severe case of typhoid fever. At that point in 1864, he started a saloon and hotel called the Eagle Billiard Hall and Saloon. This business became what he was most known for. He acted as one of the first Justice of Peace, village trustees of the first village board for the newly incorporated Village of West Bend in 1868. He also served as Under-Sheriff for Sheriff William Strump for two years. Haase was married in 1859 to Mary Ann Schmidt and had six children (Augusta, Paulina, Gustave, Arthur, Agne, Frederick).

**John Potter Jr. -***(Dec. 25th, 1821 - Apr. 20th, 1904)*

Jonathan Potter Jr. was born to Jonathan Potter Sr. and Julia Stillwell in Madison County, New York. As a young man he moved with his parents to Genesse County and received a common education. Starting in 1841, he also acted as a clerk for a general store in the village of Alexander. Then in 1848, Potter moved to Milwaukee, where he resided for a year until in 1849 he moved to the Town of West Bend. Starting at this time, Potter became involved in the mercantile business, selling general merchandise and produce. Potter continued successfully in this capacity at the earliest in the late 1880s, but it is possible he continued after that. Potter's mercantile business would be one of the things he was most known for. Potter served as postmaster in West Bend for some time during the Taylor and Lincoln administration, as well as serving as Justice of Peace for one term. Potter was also the Superintendent for the West Bend schools for one year. Potter received significant write-in support in the West Bend village president election of 1882 against Fred Haase but ultimately lost. Potter would later run officially and win the election for village president in 1884. He served in that office for one year before the Village of West Bend was incorporated as a city and thus, the Village President position was replaced with the Mayor position. Potter went on to be immediately elected uncontested to the office of Mayor of West Bend in 1885, making him the last Village President and first Mayor of West Bend. Potter died on April 20th, 1904 John Potter Jr. was married 1848 in Alexander, New York to Mathilda Butler. They had two children together: Charles B. Potter, who married Olive Buettis, In 1881 Charles was working as a book keeper in the store of F. J. Dixon in Milwaukee. Their other child, Julia E. Potter was living at home in 1881. Julia eventually married James Campbell and they had one known son: James Potter Campbell. John Potter Jr.'s brother was Barnabas S. Potter (often referenced as B. S. Potter). Barnabas served as the third mayor of West Bend in 1887 similarly to his brother. Barnabas was also elected Assemblyman representing Washington County from 1903 to 1905.

## Miscellaneous

### **The Election of 1879 -**

This election saw Dr. George F. Hunt nominated to run for village president, which he accepted. This was something Leander F. Frisby was very opposed to, seemingly because of bad blood between the two gentlemen. Frisby began soliciting around West Bend asking people to run against Hunt. After many people turned down his offer, he eventually convinced W. Johnson to run. Frisby ran most of Johnson's campaign, traveling down to Milwaukee to get supplies. One afternoon, Hunt was addressing a crowd in one of the restaurants in the area. Hunt was expressing his aspirations for the village, but also seemed to be talking badly about Leander Frisby and his "desperate" attempt to have him lose the election. Word of this eventually made it to Frisby, who was not known to calm his temper. An hour or two later Hunt was confronted by Frisby and 5 or 6 of his friends at the restaurant. Frisby accused Hunt of packing the caucus that nominated him, which Hunt rejected. Then, as Hunt turned away dismissing the gentlemen, Frisby's friends began throwing glass bottles at Hunt. Then Frisby charged him with his cane, delivering a blow to Hunt's head. Hunt was able to force Frisby away with his own cane, but he was then ceased from behind by Frisby's friends. Then Frisby attacked Hunt with his cane as his friends held Hunt in place. Eventually Hunt was able to break Frisby's cane in two just in time for a bystander to step in and break up the fight. G. F. Hunt ended up winning the election.