

# The Reporter

Volume 16 Issue 3 The Newsletter of the Waupaca Historical Society Summer 2012

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**WHS Director:** Julie Hintz **Hutchinson House Museum Curator:** Barbara Fay Wiese

## **Waupaca Yellowstone Trail Sociability Tour**

*First, Come All Yee WHS Members for a day of socializing with the Waupaca Old Time Auto Club members. Join us in celebrating the 100 year anniversary of the founding of the first highway across northern U. S. A. The plan is that at noon on Sunday September 9th you can join/park in a classic car show at the Waupaca City Square. Bring a picnic or pick up lunch at a local restaurant. At approximately 1:00 p. m. the cars will depart from City Square along the famous Yellowstone Trail to travel to the Heritage Village of the Portage County Historical Society in Plover, Wisconsin. Maps of the tour route will be given out near the bandstand at the City Square between noon and 1 p. m. on Sept. 9<sup>th</sup>, and ahead of time at our Annual Membership Meeting on Sept. 6<sup>th</sup>. The historic buildings of the Heritage Village in Plover will be open for visitation on the afternoon of the 9<sup>th</sup>. See the enclosed article to review the history of the trail and Waupaca's exciting involvement in making it a reality.*

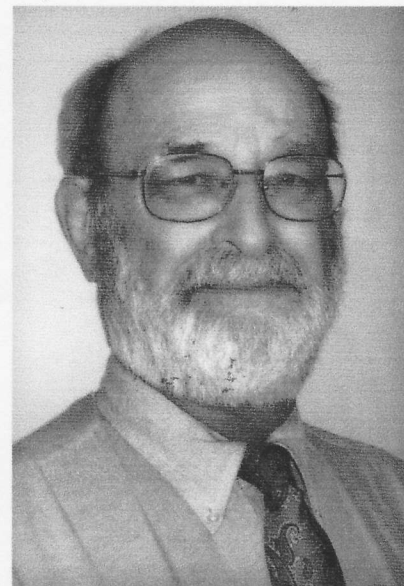
## **Annual Waupaca Historical Society Membership Meeting to be Held on September 6<sup>th</sup>**

**Second, Come All Yee WHS Members** to attend the annual membership meeting on Thursday September 6<sup>th</sup>, at 6:00 p. m. at the Holly History Center. The meeting will begin on the main floor with a special skit entitled "I Have a Question". The skit will focus on the many resources that WHS has available to our members and to the general public. A short business meeting will follow, with a report from our treasurer, and announcements of upcoming events. The highlight of the annual meeting will be a special "Pie and Cheese Social" that will be held in the lower level of the Holly History Center after the business meeting. Pies, cheese, and beverages will be furnished. Our members need only to bring themselves. Guests are always welcome, so invite a friend. See you there!

## WHS is Sponsoring Historian Wendell Nelson in the Waupaca Area 2012 Book Festival

**Third, Come All Yee WHS Members** on Saturday October 13, (time of day yet to be determined-watch for more information on our website) to the Holly History Center. Historian Wendell Nelson will show images of central Wisconsin buildings that were inspired by ancient house architectural styles from 1850-1950. Then he will show photos of remodeled houses whose styles are hard to figure out because the original features have been partially destroyed or covered up. His presentation will reveal that, if one knows American architectural history, one can engage in detective work and date any building's construction to within 20 years. People will find this interesting and fun.

Over recent years, Wendell Nelson has researched and written many articles on old houses and homesteads in the Central Wisconsin area, mostly for *the Portage County Gazette* newspaper. He already has five published for this year that involve striking events or mystery factors: "Park Ridge storybook house remains favorite of county residents" (January 27, 2012), "New Hope farmhouse is anything but plain", (March 9, 2012), "Jerome Nelson, his farm and his flour mills", (June 29, 2012.), "Nelson's house remains bit of a mystery" (July 6, 2012), and "Doomed Buena Vista house is filled with mysteries", (July 27, 2012).



Wendell will bring along copies of most of the ten books he has written about central Wisconsin which will include his experiences in *Clothes Make the Man*, *Clerking in a Small Town Men's Store*, his charming recall of aspects of Christmas in *Christmas Passages: Ten Memories*, and his *Dream of Years: A History of the Wisconsin Central/Soo Line/Canadian National Depots in Stevens Point, Wisconsin*

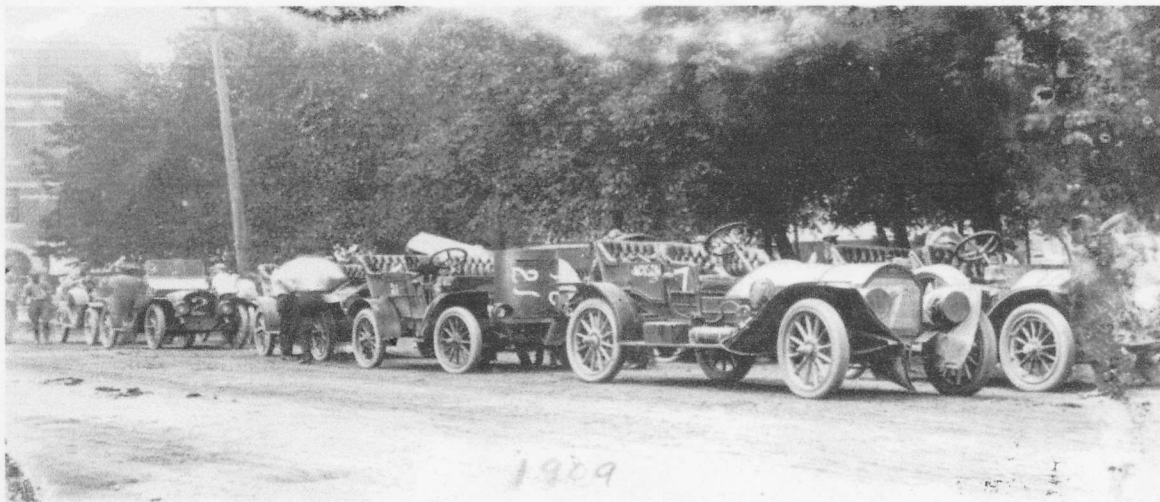
If you are a member of the Wisconsin Historical Society and/or a member of the Community and have an old house of your own or are interested in one near you, your attendance is certainly encouraged.

## **A Review of the Waupaca Area History of the Yellowstone Trail**

*Compiled by J J Johnson*

The Yellowstone Trail was the second trans-continental highway in America and the first to go through the northern tier of states. It went through eighteen counties in Wisconsin. In this area the road would eventually become known as Highway 18 and still later become designated as Highway 10.

Why the Yellowstone Trail? The route was selected because it went through the Yellowstone National Park. Established by Congress and signed into law by President Ulysses S. Grant on March 1, 1872, Yellowstone was our country's first national park. It encompassed parts of Wyoming, Idaho and Montana.



**By the 1910s, Waupaca motorists were ready to develop a section of the Yellowstone Trail.**

**Photo courtesy of the Waupaca Historical Society.**

In 1912 a group of businessmen gathered in Ispwich, South Dakota to explore ways to improve the economic status of the communities in the area. They hit upon the idea of combining the public's growing interest in the Yellowstone National Park and its growing love affair with automobiles by creating a trail that would aid travelers in reaching the park and bring tourists into towns along the way. From this meeting emerged the Yellowstone Trail Association. Their idea was to combine numerous county roads into one long highway that would span the United States from Plymouth Rock, Massachusetts to Puget Sound, Washington. The trail would follow closely along the established railroads – not only in consideration of farmers along the way but to increase the chances for help should the driver's car break down. Its advantage would be that travelers would not need to carry extra fuel, water or food as there were towns and villages that were seldom more than 25 miles apart and during the summer vacationing season the weather would be cooler for travelers than the existing Lincoln Highway.

The Association did not build or improve the roads – their contribution was in advertising and promotion. Realizing the economic advantages progressive businessmen strove fiercely to convince the Association to route the trail through their county. Cities along the route were required to contribute



\$25.00 to the Association towards its advertising efforts, put the road in good traveling condition and arrange the appropriate signage half-way between it and the city/village to either side. With no highway numbering system, the Association chose to have the trail marked with metal signs bearing a yellow circle and black arrow pointing the direction to be taken by the motorist. Between the signs the trails came to be additionally marked with hoodoos – yellow bands painted on telephone poles, rocks, trees, fence posts, etc. Cities that did not continue to contribute to the Association and seek ways to help draw people through their communities were removed and the trail re-routed.

In mid-May of 1915 one of the traveling representatives for the Yellowstone Trail Association came to Waupaca to secure interest from advocates of good roads in Wisconsin. The route to the West coast had been completed and the Association planned to proceed from Minneapolis through Marshfield, Stevens Point, Amherst, Waupaca, Weyauwega, Fremont, Oshkosh, and Milwaukee then down to Chicago. The first Trail Day, when everyone along the route was asked to work to improve the roads, was set for June 7 and a relay planned for June 15. Erle Whipple of Waupaca was chosen to serve as the county representative, or "Trail Boss", and as such attended the May 25 meeting at Marshfield. The economic value to communities along the route was well recognized and at the meeting Grand Rapids, Wausau and Shawano attempted to have the route changed to their regions arguing that the roads from Stevens Point through Weyauwega had been shunned by drivers for some time as being some of the worse roads in central Wisconsin.

Some financial help could be expected from the state and there were hopes for future aid from the federal government in improving the roads. Waupaca's E.E. Browne served in Congress from 1913 to 1931 and was very conscious of the need for good roads for both cities and rural areas. As a Representative in Wisconsin Browne was chairman of the highway committee for six years and drafted the first good roads law for Wisconsin. He also drew up a resolution amending the State Constitution to allow state aid to rural districts for building and maintaining roads. Later, in his first term in Congress, Browne became a member of the newly organized highway committee. Wisconsin had one of the first State Aid Law for Highways and it served as the prototype for the federal committee's draft of the first law to provide federal aid for highways.

In the meantime each community formed its own local association. In Waupaca there was a membership fee of one dollar to belong to the association. It was hoped that in time Waupaca, Weyauwega and Fremont would join to create a county association to better coordinate work on Waupaca County's section of the Yellowstone Trail and bring large numbers of tourists into the communities.

The Yellowstone Trail appears to have entered Waupaca from the west past Chady's Corners (State Highway 54 and County Highway QQ) to Hillcrest Street (known at that time as North Fulton) and then merged into Granite Street. (Some believe that shortly after the initial route was established it was diverted from Granite Street to West Fulton Street.) It turned onto Main and proceeded to Badger where it turned south and merged into School Street until turning south onto Churchill Street. From Churchill the Trail followed Appletree Lane through the original Barnes Apple Orchard and past the Bunker Hill School which was located on the south side of what is now Highway 10.

A trail day was set up in Waupaca for Friday, July 16 but it was postponed to allow a survey of the road between Waupaca and Weyauwega and formalize plans. The Waupaca County Road Committee meeting was attended by P. H. Peterson and Sam Erickson of Farmington, John Huffcut, Ed.

Redman and Fred Gabrielson of Waupaca town, Dr. E. H. Jones and H. J. Becker of Weyauwega and D. C. Hayward of Royalton, County Highway Commissioner J. C. Knudson, J. F. Jardine, Erle Whipple, C. W. Nelson, and D. F. Burnham of the city of Waupaca and L. H. Harrington, who was very active in contacting the farmers between Waupaca and Weyauwega to arrange teams for the portion of the road that some felt needed the most attention. Farmington residents along the "trail" had already done a lot of grading under the direction of its town board. The attendees of the meeting decided to make their own inspection of the route selected but the Farmington delegates chose to not go with the group as they felt they had enough work to be done along the six miles through their town without being concerned with how other areas of the "trail" were proceeding. As it was, it took four automobiles to convey the committeemen who took part in the tour.

Concerns from the inspection arose whether to route the trail between Waupaca and Weyauwega along the "south road" through Lind Township or the "north road" through Royalton Township. The south road was shorter while the north road had a railroad crossing to contend with but had a better existing road. Leroy Harrington argued the residents along the south road would bring the road up to par once the harvests were over and a survey of the road completed but at the Waupaca Township board meeting around the middle of July Whipple suggested the route be changed to go straight east of the Royalton road to "Morey's Corners" and then turn south onto the Royalton road. Chairman Becker agreed with Whipple and the decision was made to move the route to the north road. Within days Whipple was putting up signs along the north road.

Meanwhile work on grading and laying gravel on the Yellowstone Trail in Farmington Township was moving smoothly although they made it known that help from the men of the city of Waupaca was expected if the city businessmen expected help with their roads from the farmers. Plans for just such cooperative efforts were quickly laid out. Most merchants planned to close their stores in order to work on the roads rather than enlist a substitute to take their place. L.H. Peterson and Sam Erickson contacted farmers to arrange teams of wagons to haul the gravel, autos were arranged to take the businessmen to the work site, Whipple said he would furnish coffee and Peterson and Erickson offered to furnish milk and cream for the men's picnic dinners. Unfortunately the weather did not cooperate as by September 20<sup>th</sup> scheduled trail days had gotten rained out three times and now it was time for the farmers to take care of threshing, filling their silos for the winter and digging potatoes for market. But the township was determined to get to work on improving the roads once these necessary chores were completed.

Weyauwega also was noted for their hard work on the roads under their domain. In the October 7 newspaper article about the last road work they did for that year it was noted "last Friday morning armed with shovels, picks, hoes, rakes and every conceivable road making tool, all the able bodied men of the village set out to build the longest piece of road that has been built this season by the local road builders. When night came a full half mile of clayed and graveled road showed for their day's labor. Some of the men worked in the clay pit, some in the gravel pit and others did the leveling on the road where the material was dumped, while farmers from the surrounding countryside furnished teams and drivers. Some 350 loads of clay and gravel [were] hauled.. Shovelers in [the] gravel pit [had some] wagons loaded in a half minute."

Before road work began in 1916 a meeting was called wherein Whipple brought up other concerns in making the area more conducive to encouraging tourists to want to come through Waupaca

County, e. g., it was his suggestion that signs be placed to welcome people as they entered Waupaca and encouraging them to return as they left.

The various advertising efforts were successful for when the Wisconsin Good Roads Association released their new road maps they contained a red line designating the Yellowstone Trail. While previously the Madison to LaCrosse road had the only red line or approval the Yellowstone Trail, only the second route to be endorsed, was the first touring route to get officially red lined by the Wisconsin Good Roads Association.

As part of the promotional campaign, in May the Association issued a challenge to the Lincoln Highway Association, the only other trans-continental road system at that time, to see which could deliver a letter from the east coast to the west coast in the least amount of time. While it was younger than the Lincoln Highway Association, the Yellowstone Trail Association believed it was better organized and would thus do better in the race. But win or lose the race would generate publicity highlighting the Trail's advantages of cooler weather and more scenic panoramas (it passed not only through parts of the Yellowstone National Park but also through parts of Glacier and Mt. Rainier) to summer travelers. Certainly its roads west of Chicago were in better condition than the Lincoln Highway's roads.

In the end of June road construction began in earnest, sometimes two and three days a week. On the first Wednesday "trail day" thirty men headed out to Farmington Township with their lunch pails and shovels to the gravel pit where they were joined by twenty-two teams with drivers from the countryside. "As the carloads of men from the city passed the wagons en-route to the gravel pit a number of the farmers smiled thinking of the fun they would have with these soft-handed city slickers and their shovels. But the smiles did not last long after the work began as wagons were reportedly filled at a rate of a load a minute and farmers needed to get their teams out of the pit before his wagon was buried in the gravel." On Thursday there were sixty city men and twenty-three wagons working on the road. According to the newspapers, in these "two days 322 loads of gravel were placed on one of the sandiest roads in the vicinity." On Friday "the third crew of Waupaca business men worked on the Sheridan road, finishing up the work done there before, "making it one of the best roads" in that township.

At some point the Yellowstone Trail was returned to the original route as the newspapers reported that during the summer of 1915 Waupaca people had aided the farmers in that section "in surfacing that portion of the road between the Goldsmith farm and the Pirk bridge east of the old brick school house. With the Sheridan road completed, work again turned to the Lind section. Half the shovelers worked in the gravel pit and half worked at a clay bank, alternating the loads of material to surface the road. Despite the 92 degree heat wagons were quickly loaded - the record being thirty-five seconds - and in two days about 580 loads of material had been laid on top of the sandy road.

When the Lincoln Highway Association declined to race against the Yellowstone Trail, the Association made arrangements with the U.S. War Department to carry an official message from Plymouth Rock, Massachusetts to Seattle, Washington from whence it would be delivered to the commanding officer at Fort Lawton. The relay was set up to garner publicity of the good roads provided on the Yellowstone Trail and to prove to the War Department that in case of an emergency the trail was a viable option in getting messages, supplies or troops to the West Coast.

The route was divided into fourteen relay sections and the 3,489.5 miles were anticipated to be traversed in 120 hours. The seventh section, from Milwaukee to Minneapolis, was under the direction



of Waupaca's Erle Whipple. To assist in this huge endeavor he set up managers in eight sub-relay sections, Waupaca's being Walter Nelson. Depending on the distance, each sub-relay section's car had to travel thirty to seventy minutes. It was also his responsibility to provide experienced drivers with high powered cars that could average thirty miles an hour and then arrange with police departments to permit these cars to travel through their areas without drivers getting arrested for exceeding the speed limits.

To further aid the drivers, Whipple wrote: "I am planning to be in Milwaukee to receive the message and accompany it across each relay. If there are any impassable pieces of road in your immediate vicinity, you can greatly assist the Yellowstone Trail Association by having a little work done at such places. Sometimes the filling up of a bad hole in the road, or a little work at the approach of a bridge will avoid the stopping or at least the slowing down of the car, all of which tends to increase the time consumed. If there are any places where it is necessary to make a detour, full information regarding the same will be greatly appreciated by me."

Whipple's over-all responsibility would end about 5:40 when the eighth driver would pass the letter on in Minneapolis. Getting everyone along the entire Yellowstone Trail ready took longer than anticipated and the relay was postponed from September 4<sup>th</sup> to September 11<sup>th</sup>.

His first driver was to pick up the message in Milwaukee at 4:30 a.m. Wednesday morning, on the 13<sup>th</sup>. At Fremont Dr. P.J. Christofferson (in his 90 h.p. Cadillac 8) was to receive the letter at 8:15, travel through Waupaca around 8:45 and precede to Stevens Point where at 9:45 it was passed on to Arthur Clements (in a 55 h.p. Buick). Besides Whipple, Christofferson was accompanied by Stevens Point's sub-relay manager, J.L. Seeger. He actually passed through Waupaca almost two hours ahead of time and despite rain affecting road conditions was only behind the original schedule by a small amount and that was due to a freight train holding the car up at a railroad crossing. Along the route there were ups and downs in attaining the proposed time between communities but at the end of the Wisconsin portion the relay was one hour and eighteen minutes ahead of the proposed schedule. When the final dispatch was received from Seattle, the trans-continental trip had taken 121 hours, just one hour and twelve minutes behind the anticipated time and the trip was considered a rousing success.

Not wanting to lose the advantages of being part of the Yellowstone Trail, in 1917 Whipple organized a funding drive that May to continue to meet their obligations to aid in the financing of the Association's promotional activities, something that would continue over the years. (In 1918 Wisconsin began giving highways numerical designations and the Yellowstone Trail through this region was named Highway 18 with special markers placed along the route to tell travelers it was part of the Yellowstone Trail. The practice of numbering highways would not become more standard throughout the nation until 1926 when Congress passed its Federal Highway Act.) By the time the state meeting of the Yellowstone Trail Association met in 1921 Whipple's efforts were evident. Communities along the Trail were each allowed a delegate and each delegate was allowed one vote for every \$10 paid into the Association. At this meeting Waupaca was allowed 22 votes.

It wasn't until 1922 that the Yellowstone Trail was officially opened, particularly between the Twin Cities and Chicago. To publicize this fact officials in a "Yellowstone Trail car" traveled from their headquarters to the East Coast bearing letters from the Governors of Wisconsin, Minnesota, North Dakota and Montana. It stopped in Waupaca in May where the mayor arranged for the representatives to speak of future plans for the Trail to the crowds gathered around the bandstand. Encouraged representatives from Waupaca, Weyauwega and Fremont went to Madison to push for Highway 18 to

be paved in concrete. Fremont to Zittau and Weyauwega to Waupaca had already been done and good roads boosters wanted the rest of Waupaca county's Yellowstone Trail concreted as they were often considered some of the worse roads in the state due to struggles to keep the graveled roads maintained. The men were assured that Highway 18 would be one of the first projects to be paved in 1923. In fact, in 1923 this section was the only road in central Wisconsin to get Federal and State aid for roadwork.

In 1924 the newspapers reminded its readers: "The Yellowstone Trail Association is the name of an agency through which the citizens along a line across the nation pledge their faith with each other, to work in common cause for their common welfare. To take it for granted is fatal to it. To expect it to go on forever without positive action on the part of a large number of people is folly.

"The citizens of the communities served by the Yellowstone Trail must realize that all of this did not just happen; that in order to reach this prominent place it has taken consistent effort year after year; it has taken constructive plans carried out and put into effect so that they were useful; it has taken money and sacrifice; and it has taken systematic organization. These things had to be done, not on paper alone, not on the spur of the moment, not for a week or a month, but for year after year."

And Waupaca remained active in seeking tourists through its association with the Yellowstone Trail. It did not want the trail routed away from it and its stores. In 1924 the Association had changed the route, cutting off the section that ran through Neenah and Menasha, to a more direct route from Fremont to Oshkosh. Among some of the things done to encourage travelers was the placement in 1924 of a large map on the northwest corner of the courthouse square that gave travelers information regarding road conditions, construction areas, detours, etc. The map was up-dated every Saturday.

Waupaca also established a free campground adjoining South Park. A fence was built between the park and campsite that was eventually replaced with a hedge to mitigate damage to the park. It received high praise by the field representatives of the YTA who wrote "the camp was in keeping of the Waupaca slogan, Waupaca's Worth While, and felt by adding a bit to it each year it could soon become the biggest civic asset Waupaca has." But two years later the city was looking at the possibility of closing the Tourist Free Camp despite its being advertised for hundreds of miles. A local businessman noted that while on vacation in South Dakota another traveler who saw the name Waupaca on his car approached him saying "I want to meet you because you're from that town in Wisconsin where they have that wonderful camp site." The camp brought a lot of business into Waupaca and many businessmen pushed to instead charge a 50 cent fee per car. The money could pay for improvements and make the camp self-supporting. This faction apparently won out as in 1926 the park's fountain benches and electric light poles had been repainted, a four-range covered kitchen and picnic tables were added, police protection provided, with campers having access to the kitchen, clean toilet facilities and telephone service. That year's season saw the camp filled "nearly every night, many driving 25 to 50 miles extra in order to make Waupaca for the night." It is unclear at this time just when the campground was closed.



## **Quarterly Membership Meeting Offers Rich Information about the “Hutchinson House Museum: What’s it to ya?”**

**Fourth, WHS Members who did come** to the Holly Center, on June 7, 2012, were rewarded by hearing Museum Curator Barbara Fay Wiese present a stimulating review of the Hutchinson House Museum and the Hutchinson family. The following are excerpts from her message:

Back in the 1850s the Waupaca settlers knew that as a result of their work – separately and together – Waupaca, Wisconsin would become a well-established, beautifully situated community.

Hutchinson House Museum embodies that spirit of working together, supporting each other, and contributing to the community. You’ve perhaps heard that the Waupaca Historical Society purchased the house in 1956 for \$1.00. That purchase followed a tradition that had started in 1911 and progressed through 1955. For Each of six subsequent times the sale was for one dollar.

Between all those real estate exchanges, many people lived in the house – as owners, caretakers-of-relatives, boarders, or renters. Finally, in 1955, the DX Sunray Oil Company was prepared to demolish the home, which was one of the first clapboard homes built in Waupaca. This is when the Waupaca Historical Society rallied the community. Recognizing the value this home could provide as a link between Waupaca’s earliest days and its forward marching present, caring citizens contributed \$5,000 to enable the Historical Society to move the house from its Fulton Street address to its current site at South Park.

But it was just a shell, with no furnishings to indicate its earliest days. Once again, the community rallied, and in the process created a museum that tells the story of not just the Hutchinson family, but the Mumbrues, the Parishes, the Browns, and many other early Waupaca families as well, through their furniture, photographs, clothing, and household belongings.

This sturdy house holds furnishings that traveled up to Gills Landing by barge and across the state on wagons: memorabilia gathered by Waupaca citizens who traveled the world, participated in the Alaskan gold rush, and attended World Fairs; memories of wars and weddings, births, deaths, and everything between.

What’s it to ya? Today, it contributes to the education of our children with tours for fourth graders every year. On summer weekends, it tends to welcome more out-of-towners than local residents. It is waiting for YOU to cross its threshold and be whisked to another era! It is waiting for YOU to contribute your family’s stories to the great anthology of local living that the Waupaca Historical Society preserves. You are a part of Waupaca History! Let us hear about it in your own words , and add to the anthology for generations to come.

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Keeping History Alive --- and Making History



**Is that Susannah Hutchinson or Julia Hutchinson on the front porch of the Hutchinson home? No, that's WHS Museum Curator Barbara Fay Wiese beckoning tourists to visit the treasures of the house.**