

# THE REPORTER

Waupaca Historical Society, 321 South Main Street, Waupaca, WI 54981

Open by appointment only—call or email for appointment

VOLUME 24 – NUMBER 4

Fall/Winter 2020

## “Safer at Home” Cookbooks Available for Pre-Sale

For much of 2020, the Waupaca area has stayed “safer at home.” During the pandemic, many families and individuals have made more foods and meals at home. People have used cooking and baking as ways to remain safe at home and find comfort in these uneasy times.

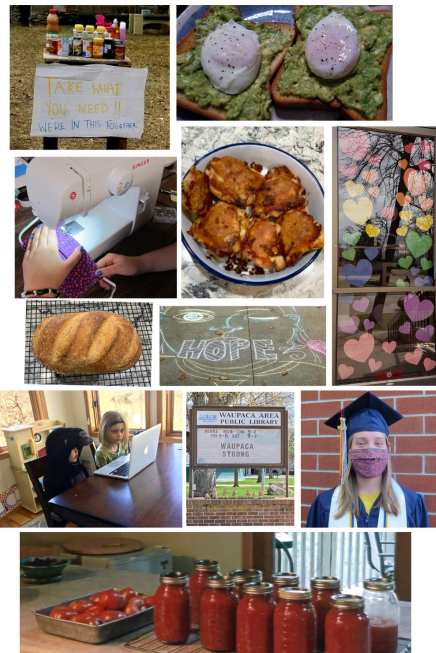
The Waupaca Area Public Library and the Waupaca Historical Society have gathered these stories and recipes to produce a Waupaca community cookbook. Local families, individuals, businesses, and organizations submitted recipes—some family favorites, others new recipes tried during the pandemic. The cookbook will serve as a time capsule, a glimpse into life during the pandemic.

Cookbooks can be pre-ordered by filling out the form found at [www.waupacahistoricalsociety.org](http://www.waupacahistoricalsociety.org) and mailing or dropping it off at the Holly Center. Cookbooks are \$10 each, and checks should be made to the Waupaca Historical Society. Cookbooks will be available after Thanksgiving.

The cookbook project is a joint fundraiser for the Historical Society and the Library. The project is sponsored by the Friends of the Library, Waupaca

### *Safer at Home in Waupaca*

RECIPES AND STORIES FROM OUR COMMUNITY  
DURING THE PANDEMIC



Rotary Club, Community First Credit Union, Waupaca Community Arts Board, Beiser Realty, BankFirst, ThedaCare, Waupaca Foundry, Udoni & Salan Realty Group, LLC, and RE/MAX Lyons Real Estate.

## WHS's Annual Giving Drive In Full Swing

Last week, our annual giving letter was mailed to our members and business partners. Each year, the Waupaca Historical Society asks you to consider the Society in your year-end charitable contributions. Every amount makes a difference as we work to preserve Waupaca's history and educate the public.

This year in particular, your contribution will help us continue to reach our members, visitors and community wherever they are—at home or in our buildings. Thank you for your continued support and we look forward to a great 2021!

## At the Depot: Thank You!

*By Mike Kirk*

We do not have our usual rental income this year due to the COVID-19 restrictions, so donations have become extra important. I especially want to thank Barbara Mendyke from Appleton, Joe Jensen from Tennessee, the Waupaca Old Time Auto Club, and Virtual Railfan for their recent donations. All monetary donations are very much appreciated, no matter what the amount. Donated labor and items are equally appreciated.

Rod Pittman is helping us put in a railroad radio. John Kedrowski of the Friends of 2713 in Stevens Point gave us two old railroad semaphore signals, which we are working on putting up. We got a nice donation of some HO model railroad cars from Bob Miller from Maryland and G scale cars from Jeffrey Damerst of the Shawmut Cars Shops in Pennsylvania. A very nice railroad waiting room bench came from the Don Westley estate as well.

Maybe you noticed many of the donations are from out of the area. Many of them are due to the broad publicity we get from Virtual Railfan.

After finishing painting the caboose this summer, I wanted to clean up the area around it. Among other items I used much of the leftover Ware School lumber and some used dock sections to make a ramp behind the caboose.

Lane Streck have been especially valuable in helping us with several projects this year. The most significant were the repairing the railing at the Holly Center and working with the Waupaca Foundry to make castings to repair the Sunny View School bell behind the Hutchinson House.

Lastly, I want to thank the Daughters of the American Revolution for their recognition of our restoration of the Waupaca Depot.

## Behind the Scenes at WHS

*By Tracy Behrendt*

With cooler temperatures here to stay, our projects at the Hutchinson House Museum have concluded for the season. The new fence, built with help from Habitat for Humanity, adds a new look to the outside of the historic home, as does the landscaping completed by volunteers Nancy and Jeff Weasner. New wood chips, donated by Faulks Bros., along with plants from both the old gardens and Turners Fresh Market will be a welcome sight next spring.

Though Waupaca's 4th-grade classes couldn't visit the Hutchinson House this year, we were able to bring the house to them! Our volunteers helped to record a video tour throughout the Hutchinson House, which the students watched at school or home. The teachers also received a traveling trunk full of artifacts, photographs of Waupaca and craft kits for the students.

And at the Holly Center, we have created several new exhibits and received a traveling exhibit on the 19th amendment from the National Archives. In the last year, we have also catalogued nearly 1,000 new objects into our collections, several that are now in these new exhibits. Make an appointment via phone or email today to view our new exhibits!



## Waupaca's Yuletide Trail Returns in 2020

Waupaca's Yuletide Trail will return in 2020, though this year's community event will look a little different. With the community's safety in mind, the Yuletide Trail will feature both virtual and socially distanced events both before and on December 5—but with the same holiday spirit!

The event is sponsored by the Waupaca Area Arts and Culture Network, which is made up of local organization's working together for the good of Waupaca. Each group, including the Waupaca Historical Society, is contributing in its own way to this memorable event.

This year's theme is "A Hygge Holiday." Hygge is a Danish word meaning sense of well-being and coziness at home. The Waupaca community will be able to enjoy the holiday event largely from the comforts of their homes and also support local organizations and businesses.

The Waupaca Historical Society is again selling commemorative holiday tins—this time with a hygge theme! Since the cookie walk is not possible, people can purchase pre-filled tins containing items to help feel cozy at home! Tins include candies, kits and other holiday items from 25 local businesses and organizations—and feature a special coupon book for local retailers. Enjoy discounts throughout the holiday season—AND help raise money for the Waupaca Historical Society. All proceeds support the Society, thanks to a generous sponsorship from Community First Credit Union. Quantities are limited.

Tins are \$20 and available for purchase at the Holly History and Genealogy Center, Northern Home, Community First Credit Union and the Waupaca



Chamber of Commerce/CVB.

This year's Yuletide Trail also includes a variety of virtual events. Families can pick up a free holiday-themed book at several locations and then tune in on December 5 to hear them read aloud. The Waupaca Area Public Library will also have holiday ornament kits available curbside during the holiday season.

Children can also write a letter to Santa and drop them in the Santa mailbox in the City Hall/Library lobby. Santa will visit Waupaca on December 5 and travel on a sleigh through Waupaca's neighborhoods to wave to children. Santa will end up at South Park, where children can see him from a distance.

Also on December 5, Home Made Warmth will be distributing mittens, hats and scarves to anyone who needs them on South Main Street. The Danes Hall will also be collecting gifts for Toys For Tots from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. outside the Hall.

And, to finish the Yuletide Trail event, the community can enjoy a holiday concert and reading of the Christmas Carol. The concert will broadcast on Facebook and on Waupaca FM 96.3 radio at 5:30 p.m., followed by the reading of the Christmas Carol at 6:45 p.m. online and on Waupaca FM 96.3.



# Strong Women of Waupaca: Sophelia Kurkowski

By J.J. Johnson

This article is continued from the first part of “Strong Women of Waupaca: Sophelia Kurowski,” published in the Fall 2020 newsletter.

“One night when it was getting rather late Marilyn Ware (Purchatzke) offered Miss K a ride home. Once they got in the car, they decided to go to Simpson’s first to get something to eat. Marilyn drove around the block a couple of times looking for a parking spot but the only open area was a No Parking section in front of the Rosa Theater. The theater was closed so Miss K told Marilyn to go ahead and park in front of the Rosa. When they came out of the restaurant, there was a parking ticket on the windshield. Marilyn was very embarrassed at having received her first ticket and especially in front of Miss K. Miss K saw the officer walking down the street and called out to him. When he came back, she asked him how he could give Marilyn a ticket when Marilyn was doing her a favor by taking her home, especially as the theater was closed for the evening. By the time Miss K finished talking to the officer, he went over and took the ticket back. Miss K calmly got into the car and explained that the officer was one of her former students, and she had explained it was her fault they had parked there. She had looked him right in the eye and told him to tear the ticket up – and he did.

“She also kept a small desk by hers. If someone in the class was being disruptive – or especially good – she would have that person sit at that desk. It was also used by students who were working on something special for her. In fact, she was so



MISS S. KURKOWSKI  
Librarian

respected by faculty and staff that if she had a student working on a project for her, no other teacher or staff member would bother that student to do something else or move the student to another area while they were working on one of Miss K’s projects. As a teacher, she had her students look up a new word every day. One former student remarked that from that experience she found herself looking for new words whenever she read a book

“It was said that as a child she had been injured by a horse and that one side of her face was “sunken” where the horse kicked her and that she walked with a limp. A plump, solid woman, during her teaching years she wore ankle top shoes, a dress that reached down almost to the tops of her flat-soled shoes and wore her long black hair in a tight bun. Because of her limp, staff and students alike could generally tell what her mood was at any given time. Her foot seemed to drag a little less when she was upset with the students, which she did when they did not show a love of history or thought they were not using the library as much as they should—although she never remained angry at them or anyone else for any length of time. In fact, as she affectionately came to be called “Miss K” by her students, she affectionately called her students her “bunnies.” As she entered her classroom she would frequently ask with affection how her little rabbits were that day.

“For the most part she was described as being cheery and optimistic. But while she was angry, her face was described as turning purple.

**Continued on pg. 5**

## Sophelia Kurkowski: Part II

continued from p. 4

"Fellow faculty member Al Schlatter often related one run-in he had with Miss K. While Miss K was teaching a class in his room, he oversaw a study hall in "her" library.

"During the Christmas season, Sophie's students would decorate Christmas trees like other countries around the world did. There was one tree in the library covered with candy canes. One student must have taken one cane while I was helping another student. After the period was over, Mr. Lorenz, another Social Studies teacher, and I were standing in the hallway outside of my room. Sophie came up to me and started to chew me out. Somehow she knew one cane was missing. I had to do some fast thinking, so I interrupted Sophie and told her how nice her hair looked and what a pretty dress she was wearing. Luckily she forgot about the candy cane and walked away. Mr. Lorenz almost fell over laughing about my close shave."

"Miss K loved her students as much as they loved her. Roger Cate once recalled that during class one March, Miss K was giving the class a quiz. When he came to the question, "What important event

happened on this date?" he wrote that it was his birthday. When she saw his answer, she asked him if it really was his birthday and, when he responded that it was, she went over to him and gave him a brand new #2 yellow pencil remarking, "This is the best I can do on such short notice."

"This incident aside, one student complained that she gave him a "C" and another student an "A" even though they had the same test scores. Her response was that the other student always responded in class and he did not—even when he knew the answer. She went on to lecture the student that it was his right and privilege in a democracy to speak up.

"On another occasion a student skipped school one day to go spear fishing with her boyfriend. She was found out and her punishment was to help Miss K in the library after school. Miss K had her scrape gum from the underside of the library tables but the student recalled that she didn't mind the punishment as it gave her a chance to spend time with Miss K. It was also the last time she ever skipped school."

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Ms. Kurkowski advised the Library Cadets at Waupaca High School, pictured here in 1941 in the Waupaca High School library.

## Sophelia Kurkowski: Part II

continued from p. 5

"Miss K was a member of both the UW-Stevens Point Woman's Club and the Waupaca Woman's Club. She belonged to the Altar Societies of St. Mary's Catholic Church in Waupaca and St. James' church in Amherst. She was a charter member of the Waupaca Historical Society and held various offices in that Society. She was an ardent traveler and frequent speaker at numerous organizations and churches.

"When the *Waupaca County Post* ran an article naming the top people to Waupaca's Honor Roll for 1938, Miss K, as Waupaca High School's librarian, was one of only two women mentioned (the other being Estelle Jung, the county nurse) and hers was the first name on the list. The *Post* selected her for her passionate interest in the reading habits of the students, her ability in selecting the best current books to add to the shelves, and for her vivid classroom personality.

"During World War II, Miss K not only discussed with the students the significance of the various battles but encouraged students to correspond to the soldiers so that none of the soldiers would go without mail from home. Her Junior Historians group maintained a map of what was happening along with lining the second-floor hallway with posters that she had the students keep updated with the addresses of those in service from the Waupaca area. She had them create a World War II index card file, which is now the property of the Waupaca Historical Society. On the posters, gold stars and a World War II commemorative flag were tearfully placed beside the names of those who had lost their lives while serving their country. She even spearheaded an effort by students to collect old silk stockings, which were needed for war use.

"Likewise, her classroom and library were filled with posters, pictures, newspaper clippings and any other

interesting items she came across. Students often came to these areas early in order to have ample time to read everything. She did not just teach her students to become enthusiastic about American history but taught them to give respect, learn patience, embrace a pride in their heritage and to give unfailing loyalty to the school, city and country.

"At a 1946 Parent-Teacher Association, Mrs. F.S. Bailey presented a script on the history of Waupaca's Parent-Teacher Association, the information for which had been researched by Miss K. A big project planned and directed by Miss K was in 1948 for the Wisconsin Centennial. It was sponsored by the Junior Chapter of the Wisconsin State Historical Society and the Waupaca Chain O' Lakes History Club. For the event, Sophia planned and directed a Centennial Style Show captioned "From The Old To The New Look." Clothing styles in Waupaca over the previous 100 years were presented with models taken from her junior and freshman classes of American History. Each model was carefully selected for the period he or she was to represent. The program began with "Princess Waupaca" and demonstrated styles through 1949. In the process of preparing for the style show, the Chain O' Lakes Junior Historians uncovered a lot of the area's older history.

"In 1953 Miss K's American History class won the American Heritage Award for State and Local History Research. It was also the year that the Waupaca Historical Society held its first official meeting. Sophia was chairman of the program committee and had several of her American History students present a number of skits depicting life in early Waupaca. After the presentations the Society was formed and officers elected – Miss K being voted in as the Society's first vice president."

**To be continued next newsletter!**



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## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

All programs are held at the Holly History and Genealogy Center, 321 S. Main St., unless otherwise noted.

*Due to COVID-19, the Waupaca Historical Society has cancelled its fall programs. We have rescheduled many of these programs for 2021. Please check out our Facebook page for more information:*

<https://www.facebook.com/waupacahistoricalsociety>

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