

THE REPORTER

Waupaca Historical Society, 321 South Main Street, Waupaca, WI 54981
Open Wednesdays, 12-4, Thursdays, 10-2, Fridays, 12-4

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FALL 2018

WHS Receives Community Foundation Grant for Hutchinson House



The Waupaca Historical Society was recently awarded a \$5,000 grant to paint the exterior of the Hutchinson House from the Waupaca Area Community Foundation.

Tracy Behrendt, director, and Dennis Lear, Board president, received the award, given on October 2nd at a reception at Par 4 Resort in Waupaca. The grant monies will go directly toward painting the Hutchinson House. A generous donation from the Louise Dayton family also went toward the project.

Painting has already begun on the home and will be completed this fall.

The Waupaca Historical Society also hopes to install gutters with leaf guards on the historic home in the near future to preserve the paint and building.

American Indian history, Laura Ingalls Wilder Round Out 2018 Programs

A program on the Menominee Indian Tribe and one on a famous children's author will round out the Waupaca Historical Society's 2018 program schedule.

Mike Hoffman, a Menominee and Ottawa descendent, will present, "Menominee in Waupaca," on Thursday, Nov. 8 at 6 p.m. Hoffman is the cultural consultant and advisor to the Menominee Clans Story housed at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point. He will discuss the story of the Menominee Indian tribe in Waupaca and Wisconsin and also his ongoing efforts to preserve the tribe's history. The program will take place in the lower level of the Holly Center.

To celebrate the holidays in December, reenactor Laura Keyes will portray Laura Ingalls Wilder in "Laura Ingalls Wilder's Holiday Memories." The program will take place on Thursday, Dec. 6 at 6 p.m. in the meeting rooms at the Waupaca Area Public Library. The program is sponsored by the Waupaca Library Foundation, Donna Rickel and Wisconsin Public Service. Refreshments will be provided by the Waupaca Area Public Library.



Photo by Nicholas Cartwright

Reenactor Laura Keyes will portray Laura Ingalls Wilder on Dec. 7. Keyes will reminisce about Wilder's childhood days and bring some of her favorite gifts.

All WHS programs are free to the public, thanks to local sponsorships. Those interested can sponsor a presenter and/or refreshments, which ranges from \$50 to \$300. If interested in becoming a sponsor, please contact us today!

At the Depot

By Mike Kirk

Despite the colder and wetter weather, projects continue at the Depot. We used the lumber from the former Ware School wheelchair ramp to build a platform and ramp on the back side of the potato car and a movable stairway in the front. My goal was to get it done in time for the Soo convention tour in September. The platform is 14 feet long and the ramp about 25 feet. There was not room to make it a wheelchair accessible ramp so it is more of a service ramp.

Using photographs of the potato car in use, we had the four missing corner ladders made at a cost of \$800. They were forged and riveted just like the originals. With Lane Streck's metal-working help, we got the first two installed—one on the right front corner and one on the end. I cleaned up the inside, ran electricity and installed two florescent light fixtures. John Lehman helped me repair the back side loading door. But there is much more work to be done to restore the potato car to the way it looked when it was used by the Soo Line.

A big thank you goes to Doug Seibert for a very nice donation of HO scale model railroad rolling stock. He has also donated several other railroad items to the Depot in the past. Doug is the son of longtime Waupaca Depot agent Louis Seibert.

In September, a group of high school students cleaned up the edge of the parking lot behind the Depot and installed a railroad-tie-edged walkway for their service day. It worked out well to have them there before the Soo Line Historical & Technical Society tour held on Sept. 21.

This year's Soo Line Historical & Technical Society convention was held in Stevens Point. The convention included a bus tour to various railroad-related sites. There were two buses with a total of

about 110 convention visitors that arrived about a half hour apart. There was much interest in the Depot and the potato car. In fact, there were three feature articles about them in the Society's magazine that came out just before the convention. We served them a potato bake lunch with all the fixings and root beer floats. It was a great fundraiser for us, bringing in close to \$1,400. A huge thank you goes out to Jeff Weasner and all the other volunteers for putting on the lunch and getting a number of donations for its preparation.

The following are the donations we received for the fundraiser: The Potato Plant, Amherst (potatoes), Three Squares Restaurant, Waupaca (baking of the potatoes), Point Brewery, Stevens Point (root beer and cups), Bonnie's Bloomers (ice cream), Taylor Cheese, Weyauwega (cheese), Piggly Wiggly, Waupaca (gift card for toppings), Pick 'n Save (gift card for toppings), Culver's, Waupaca (straws), Fleet Farm, Waupaca (bottled water), McDonald's, Waupaca (bags of ice), and an anonymous donor (cardboard serving containers).

We also received a thank-you email from the convention's organizers:

"Roger and I would like to thank you for the great job everybody did at the depot for lunch and the tours. As you know, this was the 40th annual convention and we have heard nothing but great things on how attendees enjoyed it. Other than a little windy and cool, it really went well. We had lots of folks that made comments about what they saw, the piano, potato lunch, the root beer floats, etc. It was a fun packed weekend and we were able to show-off Central Wisconsin to folks as far away as Australia...Thanks again, Gary and Roger, 2018 SLHTS co-chairs for the Friday tour buses."

Volunteers Needed for Garden Club

Love to work in the garden? We are looking for volunteers to be a part of a newly formed Hutchinson House Garden Committee. This committee will plan and work on the House gardens and also help to maintain them throughout the summer and fall.

In the past, volunteers have planted period-appropriate perennials, annuals and herbs. In 2019, the gardens will need to be cleaned out, replanted and cared for. WHS will assist in writing in fundraising for the purchase of supplies and plants for the garden.

If interested, please contact Tracy at (715) 256-9980 or director@waupacahistoricalsociety.org.

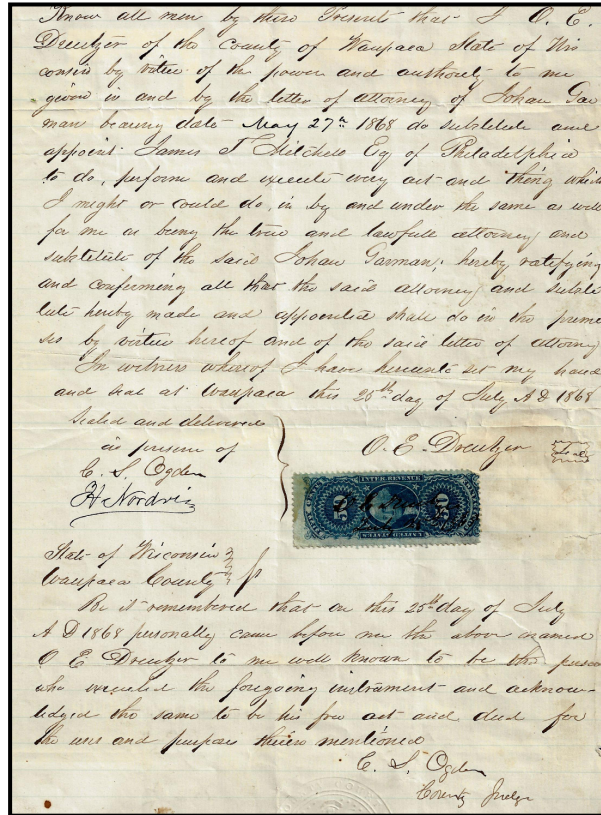


Collections Corner: Framed Legal Document

In 2018, artifact donations to WHS have doubled, meaning more cataloguing but also more uncovering of priceless historical objects. In September, Bill Handrich donated a framed legal document from 1868 (right). The document—appointing power of attorney—bears the names of three prominent Waupaca citizens and will be on display at the Holly Center. These citizens are:

Olaf E. Dreutzer (Jan. 27, 1816-Jan. 27, 1900) studied at the Naval Academy with the purpose of joining the Swedish Navy. During leaves from his studies he made trips to the United States and other countries. While staying in New Orleans, he joined the militia to fight the Seminole Indians in Florida. He continued his service in the Navy where he first felt an aptitude for the law. In 1842 he moved to the United States and settled in Plover, Portage County, in 1846. He continued to study law, which he had begun in Milwaukee, and was admitted to the bar. He moved to Ogdensburg and then in 1850 to Waupaca, practicing law in both locations. In 1854 Waupaca celebrated Dreutzer's return to Ogdensburg after a number of unpopular actions but welcomed him back over the issue of the location of the county seat in later years. In 1856 he entered into law practice with E.L. Browne. He served as county judge in 1857 and held the position until he left Waupaca in 1862 after being appointed U.S. Consul to Norway by President Lincoln. He returned to Waupaca in 1866 or 1867 and then moved to Sturgeon Bay and later Crossville, Tenn.

Caleb Smith Ogden (August 2, 1819-Oct. 18, 1906), a native of Cannonsville, New York, moved to Plover in 1848. While engaged in a mercantile business, lumbering concerns and farming, he began to study the law. He moved to Waupaca County to enter a partnership in a saw mill with Dreutzer at what became Ogdensburg in 1854. He is credited with many firsts in that settlement, including the platting of the village which was named in his honor by R. Hopkins. In 1855 he and



Dreutzer helped to organize St. Lawrence Township. That same year their friendship fell apart, and they were the complainants in the first lawsuit recorded in Waupaca County. Ogden was admitted to the bar soon after coming to Waupaca County at the first term of circuit court held in Mukwa. He was elected district attorney in 1857 and in 1861 was elected county probate judge. He held that position for 28 years. He is also started the *Waupaca Republican* and later assisted his son, John, with the *Waupaca Post*.

Hakon Martinus Nordvi (Feb. 4, 1829-Sept. 6, 1894) immigrated to the United States in 1852 from Norway. His father planned for him to become a doctor, and he did graduate from the Department of Medicine in Copenhagen, Denmark. Upon his arrival in America, he entered the mercantile business. He settled in Waupaca in 1865 and opened his own store. Nordvi had a voracious appetite for learning and locally he was known as “the living encyclopedia” for his incredible memory and knowledge. One article noted he spoke seven languages fluently and was a scholar of Latin and Greek. He served many years as justice of the peace in Waupaca.

Wish List

The Waupaca Historical Society is thankful for in-kind donations of new or gently used items. If you can donate or sponsor a Wish List item below, please contact us at today!

- Tablet for historic photos (\$250)
- Map rack for storage (\$100)
- Tablet stand (\$100)
- Chalkboard slates and chalk (\$35)
- Display materials (\$25-\$100)

Strong Women of Waupaca: Abigail Sessions

Part II

By JJ Johnson

This article is an excerpt from "Strong Women of Waupaca," a presentation prepared for the Waupaca Area Public Library in 2016. The first part of this article appeared in the last newsletter.

By the end of December 1849 the settlement had grown to four cabins with approximately 40 families living in the area, affording Abbie Sessions with ample female companionship.

On Dec. 25, 1849 Abbie was left to tend for herself while E.C., William Hibbard and Dana Dewey took off for the long and difficult trip to Ripon for flour. Weather was freezing and food was in short supply for the men during the two to three days it took to get down as far as Strong's Landing (the settlement's name was changed to Berlin in 1850). Mr. Strong operated a tavern that also provided grocery stock. The weather being as it was, E.C. decided to buy his flour there rather than continue on to Ripon even though he had to pay \$1.25 per hundred instead of the 75 cents per hundred he would have paid in Ripon. Other items he purchased to take home were \$1 for 18 pounds of brown sugar (\$1), 16 pounds of loaf sugar (\$1), five pounds of good tea (\$1), a good pair of boots (\$3), calico fabric (4 to 5 cents per yard), gingham fabric (10 cents per yard), and a good suit of clothes (\$10), potatoes (38 cents per bushel) and pork (12 cents per pound).



In 1851, Rev. Silas Miller sold his mill and water rights on the west side of the Waupaca River to Winthrop Lord and Wilson and George Holt. They contracted with Miller to build a two-story flour mill, which they named Waupaca Star Mills. It opened on Nov. 19, 1851, but burned in October 1891.

The next big event to happen to Abbie came in the form of the Reverend Silas Miller. Rev. Miller arrived at the Falls around 1850 and was looking for land with sufficient water power to put up a saw mill. He and E.C. reached an agreement wherein Rev. Miller traded his 80 acre farm in Alto Township, Fond du Lac County, six head of cattle and a promise of 6,000 feet of lumber as soon as it could be sawed in exchange for all of the Sessions' land on the north end of The Falls. The two men went down to Fond du Lac to finalize the deal. Thankfully E.C. was able to sell the land while down there and managed to sell the cattle even before reaching Ripon on the return trip. Not only did he avoid a difficult journey driving the cattle, but he had obtained cash in a time when many settlers at The Falls were making and selling shingles for cash. Unfortunately this also meant another move for Abbie, who was now pregnant with her first child, John Orville Sessions. Her son was born Aug. 10, 1850.

While Abbie could keep in touch with her family by mail, mail service was cumbersome in the early years. Waupaca Falls did not have a post office, and mail was picked up at Oshkosh by John Vaughn. In the fall, Captain Jack picked mail up from Oshkosh and brought it up on his sailboat through the Wolf River to Gill's Landing until his boat froze up in Partridge Lake. He charged five cents each way for letters and two cents for newspapers. In 1850 E.C. had a contract to handle the mail at Waupaca. While in this position on February of 1851 he made an application to the Postmaster General to have an official post office at The Falls. When he received the reply it stated the application had to have a name, not a description such as The Falls. He then reapplied using the name Waupaca which was granted. (Note: Tomorrow River also applied for a post office with the name Waupaca but E.C.'s application arrived first and they were left to choose the name Weyauwega.) Upon the acceptance of a post office in Waupaca, David Scott was officially named its first postmaster.

In 1851 the Sessions secured a claim northwest of Waupaca in what is now Farmington Township. Even though theirs was the second home in this locality, it soon became known as Sessions' Prairie and is now called Sheridan.

Continued on p. 5

Strong Women of Waupaca: Abigail Sessions (Continued from p. 4)

Though he no longer lived in The Falls, E.C. continued to hold several distinguished positions in Waupaca through 1853.

Despite the fact that the Sessions were living north of Waupaca their next three children are listed as having been born in the settlement. Edward Parish Sessions was born Dec. 20, 1853; Abbie Chandler Sessions, Jr. was born June 27, 1856; and Charles Dana Sessions born July 21, 1857.

From 1854 to Feb. 14, 1859, E.C. was involved in 21 land transactions. One of these, completed on Aug. 13, 1855, transferred a section of land to the Waupaca Cemetery Association. This land is the original section of Waupaca's Lakeside Memorial Park Cemetery, which was called Oak Hill Cemetery. Prior to 1855, people living in the area (who did not have a family plot on their land) used the Methodist cemetery just outside of town. These burials were located in the area of Badger, Washington, and Franklin Streets. Attempts were made to move the remains from this area to Oak Hill Cemetery. Not all were immediately found, though, as families buried their loved ones in areas they thought the departed would have liked rather than in a systematic layout. Some burials were not marked as numerous early families could either not afford markers or had wooden markers that were never replaced. Still others no longer had family in the area to see that their remains were moved.

The Parish family was very close knit and being away from them was hard on Abbie. She enjoyed a reunion with some of her family when her sisters, Mary Ann and Hannah (Anna) moved to Waupaca in 1855. Mary Ann and Anna started a Select School to teach the "Arts," and while they did have some students, their time as teachers ended after their marriages. On March 4, 1856, Mary Ann married E.L. Browne and Anna married George Lord in their cousin Chester Hutchinson's fancy house, now known as the Hutchinson House Museum. The event had additional excitement in the settlement as the wedding was presided over by a "real bishop" rather than a local minister.

Sadly, just over a year later, little Abbie Sessions died on Sept. 14, 1856 at the age of 11 weeks and two days, leaving her mother anguished over the loss of her only daughter. Thankfully friends and family were near to see her through this trying time.

When Abbie and E.C. moved to Sessions' Prairie E.C. planted apple trees and they picked their first apples in the fall of 1856. However, E.C. was not content to remain on this growing homestead. He got caught up with gold fever and on a spring day of 1858 he and the Steele brothers, William and Robert, headed out for Pike's Peak, Col., leaving Abbie to care for the farm and children. While en route the men were convinced they would have a

better opportunity if they headed out to California. They changed course and wintered on a ranch about 10 miles west of Amadee, Lassen County, Nevada.

While E.C. was gone Abbie and her sisters were reunited with another sister, Ellen (Nellie), who had come out to the now village of Waupaca for a visit. While there, Nellie became attracted to Anna's brother-in-law Winthrop Lord and the two were married on Nov. 25, 1858. While missing E.C., these were happy times for Abbie.

Abbie's parents and her sister Caroline (Carrie) also came to

Waupaca in 1858. Carrie met and fell in love with F.F. Wheeler. They returned to Vermont to be married but then returned to Waupaca where F.F. studied law with his brother-in-law E.L. Browne and, after passing the bar, went into practice with him. All of their children were born in Waupaca.

Another sister, Jane (Jennie), came for a visit in 1859. She seemed frail to her family and, upon her return to Vermont, died from tuberculosis. Meanwhile E.C. and the Steele brothers mined along the Feather River, a tributary of the Sacramento River in northern California, for a couple years. Then, in 1861, they made arrangements for their families to join them in Nevada where they had decided to make their homes.



The Hutchinson House, now in South Park, was previously located at the corner of Franklin and Fulton Streets.

Continued on p. 6

Strong Women of Waupaca: Abigail Sessions (Continued from p. 5)

On May 1, 1861 Abbie with her three boys, the oldest of which was just now 11 years old, and Esther Steele with her three children (Sophia, Alex and Minnie) left Waupaca with their belongings packed into two covered wagons that were pulled by two yoke of oxen. Jule Cody, Lon Harris and two other men were hired to escort the small caravan to Salt Lake City, Utah. They planned to travel towards Council Bluffs, Iowa where they would cross the river and continue on to Omaha, Nebraska. From there they were to travel up the north side of the Platte River to Sweetwater Valley, Nebraska where they cut over to Fort Bridger, Wyoming, over the Rocky Mountains and down to Salt Lake where Mr. Steele was to meet them and take them the rest of the way to their new homes.

Throughout the trip the men stood guard against possible Indian attacks. When the caravan reached the Plains along the North Platte River, the group sent the children out to gather buffalo chips with which to build their campfires and do their cooking.

Abbie managed through all the discomforts. But when her best ox got sick from drinking alkaline water and died, she momentarily broke down and “cried as if her heart would break.” With only one ox to pull the wagon, Abbie was left with no recourse but to throw many of her precious keepsakes to lighten the load. The children also had to walk as much as they could to spare the remaining ox. Their bare feet became chapped and sore. It was with great relief that the small group reached Salt Lake City where Mr. Steele was not only waiting but had an extra ox. He also eased their minds in regards to possible attacks as he reported that the Indians in the area were peaceful – at least in 1861 there were no hostilities in process.

The party continued their journey, passing through the Humboldt Valley and Carson Sink on their way to Silver City, Nevada. Along the way Mr. Steele chopped up onions and added salt, making the children line up and eat them in order to prevent scurvy. In later years the story would be told that these were some of the strongest onions they had ever eaten – so strong that they brought tears to the children’s eyes. The travelers reached their destination on Oct. 20, 1861 after 173 long and wearisome days on the trail.

E.C. quickly erected a two-room house at Glendale Crossing to see the family through the winter. The following spring, they moved to Virginia City where their daughter Anna Caroline Sessions was born on March 14, 1863. Still

recovering from giving birth and caring for her family, Abbie once again packed up their belongings and began another journey on April 18, 1863. E.C. had mined enough gold that he was able to move his family on to Truckee Meadows, California, where he bought a cattle ranch.

But Abbie was still not able to put down roots. In the fall of 1864, E.C. became the county commissioner for Washoe County, Nevada and moved his family to the county seat at Washoe City. Their daughter Elizabeth (Celia) was born in Washoe City on Jan. 14, 1865. The Sessions now had their home in Washoe City and their ranch in California. Not one to let moss grow under his feet, E.C. started a milk business in Reno that his son Edward operated for two and a half years. In their home near Reno, Abbie gave birth to Frank Kimball on Nov. 8, 1868.

When E.C. took Abbie back for a family visit to Vermont in 1869, they took three of their children—Charles, Carrie and Celia—and left Orville and Edward to help the hired hand run the ranch and dairy business. The boys did so well that when they returned they gave the boys eight cows with which to start their own cattle ranch.

They also returned with Abbie’s sister Betsey (Bessie) Adeline Kidder Parish. Bessie married Charles Eastman on August 1, 1870 and settled in Reno near the Sessions. The occasion helped to ease the pain of the passing of Abigail’s son Frank on March 16, 1870. Abbie would give birth to one more child, Albert Hebard, on Oct. 1, 1872. In 1875, her brother Mark moved to Reno, bringing more family to Abbie.

The Sessions moved permanently into Reno, Nevada in 1888. In 1899 they returned to Waupaca for a short visit with Abbie’s sisters. E.C. died in Reno on August 26, 1900. Abbie died March 3, 1913 in Reno.

Perhaps their lives could be summed up with the following remarks from E.C.’s obituary:

“The hardships they endured, the dangers they braved, the industry, patience and perseverance they exhibited, indicated them of no ordinary mould. They succeeded in making a comfortable home, and started the little village which under their influence and their successors has grown to be one of the most flourishing and attractive little cities in the state. He devoted much time and money to mining, with the varying successes and reverses usually attendant upon that calling.”

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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.

Thurs., Nov. 8th, 6 p.m.	“Menominee in Waupaca” with Mike Hoffmann
Thurs., Dec. 6th, 6 p.m.	“Laura Ingalls Wilder’s Christmas Memories” with reenactor Laura Keyes (<i>at the Waupaca Area Public Library</i>)
Thurs., Jan. 17th, 6 p.m.	“Doing Your Bit: Movie-Going During the Great War with Dr. Leslie DeBauche, UW-Stevens Point
Thurs., Feb. 21st, 6 p.m.	“Fill ‘Er Up: The Glory Days of Wisconsin Gas Stations” with Jim Draeger

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