

THE REPORTER

Waupaca Historical Society, 321 South Main Street, Waupaca, WI 54981
Open Wednesdays, 12-3, Thursdays, 10-2, Fridays, 12-3

VOLUME 21 – NUMBER 4

Fall/Winter 2017

Ice Age Trail, Farm Life and World War II Featured in Upcoming Programs

Authors and a military historian headline the winter season of programs at the Waupaca Historical Society.



Melanie McManus

On Thurs., Nov. 9th, author Melanie McManus will present, “Thousand-Miler: Adventures Hiking the Ice Age Trail.” McManus hiked the entire Ice Age Trail, part of which runs through Waupaca. The

program will take place at 6 p.m. at the Holly History and

Genealogy Center. The program and refreshments are sponsored by the Waupaca County Chapter of the Ice Age Trail Alliance.

In his return to Waupaca, local author Jerry Apps will present, “Christmas on the Farm” on Thurs., Dec. 7th at 6 p.m. Apps, who grew up

in Wild Rose, will speak about winter life and holidays on the farm. This special program will take place at Trinity



Jerry Apps

Lutheran Church at 206 E. Badger Street in Waupaca. The program and refreshments are sponsored by The Bookcellar, Marge Writt and Dennis and Laurie Lear.

On Thursday, January 18th, local historian Eric Percy will present, “Remembering the Battle of the Bulge,” at 6 p.m. at the Holly Center. The Battle of the Bulge, which took place Dec. 16, 1944 through Jan. 25, 1945 was the last German offensive on the Western front in World War II. Percy will talk about the this turning point in World War II and also display World War II artifacts.

The Story of Colonel Archibald M. Mixson: A Look at a Local Soldier

By J.J. Johnson, Sue Dunbar and Bill Handrich (special thanks to Jim Gardner)

Colonel Archibald Miles Mixson served in the Mexican Border War, World War I and World War II. He later was Chief of the Wisconsin Military District and the senior instructor of the Wisconsin National Guard.

Mixson was born June 30, 1893 in Charleston, S.C., to John Brabham and Louise Henrietta Mixson. He married Mildred McRae and had two sons, Donald James, born in 1924, and James McRae, born in 1927. Mixson and Mildred later divorced.

On May 1, 1937 he married Tove Jane Andersen, daughter of John and Pamela Andersen. As a note, Tove’s parents served many years as the manager and matron of the Bethany Children’s Home in Waupaca. The Mixsons were often summer residents on the Chain O’Lakes. They had one son, Robert.

Mixson began his military career on July 4, 1916, joining the South Carolina National Guard as a sergeant.

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WHS Says Goodbye to Hutchinson House Curator

Barbara's hanging up her dress!

Created by Linda Abrahamson from an historic pattern, the dress resembles the clothing worn by a shop girl in the 1870s. Barbara asked Linda to create it soon after she began working for Waupaca Historical Society as the summer curator at Hutchinson House, over eight years ago. It has contributed to the ambience of the tour for our visitors and has served admirably over the years. Now that Barbara is moving back to Massachusetts, it will get a well-deserved retirement.

Learning about the families connected to Hutchinson House as well as the history of the house itself has been a great joy for Barbara. She developed the understanding, over the years, of how unique this historic treasure is. The last member of the Hutchinson family (Julia Hutchinson, Chester and Susannah's granddaughter) died in 1944, and other unrelated families lived in the house until 1953.

After acquiring the building and moving it to South Park, the Waupaca Historical Society put out a call to the community for furnishings from Waupaca's early settlers. Descendant families responded generously with an array of

beautiful, unusual and rare items. Everything you see in the house was donated by civic-minded members of Waupaca's founding families. So the Hutchinson House is really the *Waupaca House*, as all the early settlers and their families welcomed visitors from around the world.

Barbara knows she will miss the beautiful little classic home and its familiar furnishings.

"But most of all, I will miss the dedicated volunteers, the board members...and the fourth grade tours!" she said.

She loves working with children, but says many of the activities she created to help them enjoy their tour experience are also fun for adults.

"I like to see people have fun!" she said. "I like to see people surprise themselves by making or doing something they hadn't made or done before."

Button twirlers, scavenger hunt photos, reproductions of vintage paper dolls, leavings dolls, croquet (an Olympic sport in 1900!), and quick crazy quilts all have helped our visitors understand life in the 1850s to 1900s better.

"Well, then I've done my job!" Barbara said.



Barbara Fay Wiese, Hutchinson House curator for the last eight years, will be greatly missed by WHS staff, Board of Directors and countless visitors.

Waupaca Historical Society Wish List

The Waupaca Historical Society is thankful for in-kind donations of new or gently used items. If you are able to donate or sponsor a Wish List item, contact Tracy Behrendt, Director, at (715) 256-9980 or director@waupacahistoricalsociety.org.

Dehumidifier for Holly Center (\$250)
Mantle clock for Holly Center (\$50)
Plain muslin fabric

Polyester batting
Coffee maker, 30-cup (\$45)
Wooden hangers

News from the Depot

By Mike Kirk

As usual lately, I was asked to write a report on the Depot. Here is a short report, but I also want to write a bit about a recent WHS program and its significance to me.

There has been a significant increase in use of the Depot, both in those stopping by during our open hours and in use for events. It has been a busy time for me with my daughter's wedding and my working on my Missabe caboose. So I have not had as much time to work at the Depot as I would have liked.

Lisa's backdrop painting is progressing nicely. We have worked on some of our displays, especially the china collection. Of special interest to me has been the installation of an historic bubbler in the historic location. Woolsey Plumbing donated a nearly new water heater. We just got a large collection of railroad books from the Waupaca Area Model Railroaders, and the Waupaca Community Arts Center donated an original piece of artwork.

Recently WHS hosted a speaker from the Wisconsin Veterans Museum who talked about Wisconsin's participation in World War I. I attended the program and afterwards purchased a book titled, "The Great Adventure, A World War I Soldiers Diary," which is also available at the WHS gift shop. It was written by Harold Barrington, a local man who joined Company C and departed for the war from the Waupaca



Hans Nelson is pictured in 1917, crouching to the left of the wheel of this artillery piece.

Depot. The book is not a narrative of the great battles of the war, but is also far from a simple daily listing of short entries. It is a fascinating, highly descriptive story of a soldier's everyday life, first during training and then his daily struggle for existence amid the carnage and death of war-torn France.

The book was even more significant to me because my great-uncle Hans Nelson served with Company C. My grandfather William Milius also went to the war as a mechanic but did not leave at the same time.

I am a little bit surprised that so little has been done to remember this, the 100th anniversary of their leaving Waupaca in 1917. Reading "The Great Adventure" gave me a greater appreciation of what our veterans did for us.

Sponsor a Program in 2018 at the Waupaca Historical Society!

The Waupaca Historical Society offers free monthly programs to the public at the Holly Center or Depot. To continue to offer these great programs, we are looking for individuals and businesses to sponsor both presenters and refreshments. Would you be interested in becoming a sponsor? Contact us at director@waupacahistoricalsociety.com if interested!

Our upcoming schedule provides great opportunities:

- Thurs., Jan. 18th: "Remembering the Battle of the Bulge" with Eric Percy
- Thurs., Feb. 22nd: "Beekeeping in Waupaca" with Kent Pegorsch
- Thurs., March 15th: "Putting Down Roots: Historic Gardening in Wisconsin" with author Marcia Carmichael
- Thursday, April 12th: "Historic Homes of Waupaca" with Scott Christie

The Story of Colonel Archibald M. Mixson

(Continued from pg. 1)

He left this position on March 19, 1917 and in August accepted a commission as 1st Lieutenant in the Army Reserves. On May 21, 1918 he was commissioned a 2nd Lieutenant in the Army's 57th Infantry Regiment and stationed in the Philippines during World War I. He was later promoted to Captain.

During his furlough in the summer of 1941, the Mixson family returned to the Waupaca area from Texas where they now lived. While at their cottage on Miner Lake, Mixson received reassignment to Mindanao, an island in the Philippines and would be second in command of the region. Mixson's previous experience on the islands made him a natural choice to organize Filipino scouts on Cebu.

Once overseas, Tove received two letters from Mixson, both of which had been sent with Filipino President Manuel Quezon upon his escape from the Philippines. Mixson had made arrangements to get Quezon to Australia before an expected attack by the Japanese. As it turned out, Quezon left Manila just 30 minutes before Japanese bombers reached the islands. Following are excerpts from the letters:

"Island of Mindano, P.I., Jan. 13—I left Manila Dec. 2 and arrived in Cebu the next day. Was assigned as signal officer of Visavan-Mindanao force. Major General Sharp gave me my orders. I lived in old Fort San Pedro on the waterfront of Cebu for two weeks, found there was no signal equipment and no men, only me with my bare hands, so I went up to Manila on a bomber. Took 1½ hours. That was Saturday, Dec. 5. Saw various people on Sunday to get some kind of signal setup. Not much luck. Monday morning, Dec. 7, at 6 a.m. was called out of bed by Col. Akin and told the war had begun. Was to fly back to Cebu at once. Took off from Nicholas Field about 10 o'clock. It was bombed about half an hour later. I heard afterward the damned Japs (sic) raised hell with Clark Field up at Satensburg same morning. They destroyed everything we had there. The men who are left are down here now.

"The worst of all is the infernal blackout at night. While in Cebu the Japs (sic) came over several times and finally bombed some of the

tanks which were near. On Dec. 15 moved to a new command post up in the hills of Cebu where tunnels were dug so we could hole up when it rained, as it did most every day. The mud was awful. I had to build 16 miles of telephone line using baling wire and coke bottles for insulators on bamboo poles. I only take time out for sleep, averaging about six hours. On Jan. 2 I left Cebu on a small ship and made a night run to the Island of Mindanao which we are fixing to hold. We have lost Davao in the south but held all the rest."

"We get daily visits from the Jap (sic) bombers now on Davao. Day before yesterday they bombed a camp at Malayholay, killing a dozen and wounding 30. A flight of 16 was over this morning but went on north. Probably be back and drop what they have left. We are located in a dugout just finished. It is 100 feet long by 15 feet wide with 16 feet of earth on top of the roof, which is 12 by 15 inch timber. Only the biggest stuff will ever get us. Am writing under gas lamp as it is always dark. Have my radio switchboard at one end. The ground above is planted as a pineapple field. I sleep in a Filipino shack about a mile down the road. Have plenty of food and it may last two more months.

"March 23—This letter will go out on the plane tomorrow night which will take Quezon and Co., out to Australia. On Jan. 5 got the news that I had been made a full colonel on Dec. 24. I am third ranking colonel in all the islands outside of Luzon. On Jan. 6 I was made deputy chief of staff of the Visayan-Mindanao forces. Have gone all over the islands on various duties. Live with five others in a little native shack. We had quite an exciting four days here while MacArthur's party was going through on the way to Australia. The last few days have been quite busy with the party of President Quezon who is on his way out. I was sent to a place called (censored), dirty little hole, to meet him and his party.

"If the Nips (sic) decide to come here I have a Garand rifle with which I hope to get a few."

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The Story of Colonel Archibald M. Mixson

(Continued from pg. 4)

“Always get the news from KGEJ, San Francisco, also from London. Most of it isn’t good anyway, just bragging about how many tanks and planes, etc., for next year, and lots of people are dying right here this year.”

According to records from Robert Hudson, “Col. Archibald M. Mixson was with the Visayan Mindanao Force in the Philippine Southern Command and surrendered there. He was taken to Capas, in the province of Tarlac where all high ranking officers were kept.” The Associated Press later reported that Mixson and the other prisoners were transferred from a camp on Formosa Island, Taiwan, to Mukden in Manchukuo (formerly Manchuria, now China) in November—likely in fear of an invasion by Allied Forces.

On July 2, 1942 the Waupaca Post reported Mrs. Mixson was back in Waupaca with her parents. The War Department had notified her that Col. Mixson was reported missing. Knowing the situation in the Philippines, the hopes were that he had been captured by the Japanese. Tove eventually moved into the Neil Hotel in Waupaca to await further news.

According to Hudson’s records, “On Sept 21st, 1942 [Mixson] boarded the hell ship ‘Lima Maru’ in Manila and was taken to Mukden, China and eventually two other POW camps in Shirakawa and Karenko.” It wasn’t until late January 1943 that Tove received another telegram from the War Department, informing her that Mixson was a prisoner on Formosa Island. It had been 10 months since she had heard from her husband.

On March 29, 1943 Col. Mixson was allowed to send a broadcast on a shortwave radio from Tokyo, Japan. It is not known if Tove heard the broadcast; however, she soon began receiving correspondences from across the country who had heard him. The Waupaca Post reported the



Photo provided by Robert L. Hudson

Colonel Archibald Mixson served at Camp Casisang on Mindanao Island. Mixson is pictured in the front row (seated), fifth from the left.

broadcast as being: “Quote to my wife, Jane Mixson. To send you this message by radio broadcast is a very special privilege for which I am grateful. I have been also permitted to send you a letter and am hoping to receive one from you, since your last was dated nearly a year ago. Do not worry about me as I am in good health and well treated by the Japanese.”

Mrs. Mixson’s middle name was likely used in the broadcast to either make the message more understandable or as an attempt to let her know he unable to speak openly.

At the end of August 1943, Tove received a “prisoner of war” postcard from Col. Mixson. It was dated Feb. 20, 1943 and reported that he was interned on Taiwan. He reported that his health was excellent and that he was “working at gardening for exercise,” a standard message sent home by prisoners to ensure their message would pass the Japanese censors.

Then, in mid-September, Tove received a letter dated November 1942. In it, Mixson stated he had been held on the island of Formosa since the Philippines fell to the Japanese. He indicated he was with a number of old friends and was being treated well. Ironically he asked that she send vitamins, thread, sugar and cocoa.

Continued on p. 6

The Story of Colonel Archibald M. Mixson

(Continued from pg. 5)

Tove had sent a box with these items to New York some time earlier for shipment on the Swedish liner *Gripsholm*, which was scheduled to meet up with a Japanese ship for exchange of prisoners. Hopes that the Colonel might be on the liner were soon met with disappointment.

Tove also sent Mixson a food package in August 1943. It wasn't until December 1944 that she learned in a letter (dated May 15 from Formosa in Taiwan) that he had not only received her package but had also received one from the American Red Cross. Mixson was also receiving mail from Tove, who was permitted by the War Department to write 24 words each month to her husband.

In February 1945 Col. Mixson was among 177 American prisoners transferred from the Formosa prison camp to Manchukuo. It appears that it was from Manchukuo that Mixson was liberated by American parachute units.

On Aug. 19, 1945 he wrote his first uncensored letter to Tove since being taken prisoner. He wrote from the Hoten prison camp near Mukden: "At last the day of freedom has arrived, and I can write a letter which will not have to satisfy a Jap (sic) censor. All letters in the past had to be written so as to appear uncensored, but had to be correct or they would be thrown away. I was standing by the grave of one of our first friends, Col. Marshall, who was given the Masonic burial service (as was his wish) when an American plane arrived from China and was fired on. Six men jumped out and after several hours and a nasty time succeeded in convincing the Nips (sic) that the war was over. They brought a radio set and made contact with Wedemeyer back in China. More planes are coming tomorrow, and perhaps I'll be flown out. This much I'll say, the Nips (sic) are the most bestial savages the world has ever known. When I wrote you the card in '43, I said I was working for my health, but I was working as a slave in the fields, and getting three cups of rice and a little thin soup a day. I weighed 128 lbs. The Russians are expected here any hour, but so far they have not arrived. Technically we are still prisoners. At last we

are eating the Red Cross food. Before, they kept most of it for themselves."

Mixson had been a prisoner at Mukden, Manchuria for three and a half years. After first returning to the Philippines, he sailed home from Manila on Sept. 27, 1945 on the *USS Howze*. He landed in San Francisco in October. Tove, who awaited his return in Waupaca, received a phone call from him on Oct. 15 from Oakland, Calif. Mixson indicated he was being checked over at a hospital but was feeling fine. His son, James, a private at Camp Fannin, Texas, was granted an emergency furlough to spend time with his father. On Oct. 25, Mixson arrived in Appleton from an Army hospital in Illinois where he was met by Tove and their son Robert. After a 21-day furlough, Mixson reported to a rest camp in Miami, Florida for 90 days. At the end of his time in Florida, Mixson returned to active duty.

Before leaving for Florida, Mixson spoke to groups in Appleton and Waupaca about his experiences. After telling of his assignment to organize the Filipino scouts on Cebu, he related the difficulties establishing communications on the island. Of his years as a prisoner, he spoke of his transport in the closely packed steamers, the "coolie" work he was forced to do on limited rations, the cruel treatment and his liberation by American parachute teams.

In 1947 Waupaca's National Guard unit, Anti-Tank Company, 32nd Division was reactivated and a ceremony was held on July 14, 1947 at the Waupaca Armory. According to the Waupaca Post, Mixson spoke at the event, detailing his experiences during World War II. He also "emphasized the splendid record of National Guard men during the war," adding, "There will be only two regular Army divisions in the United States for some years to come...so responsibility for national defense must lie with the Guard." He stressed that "the organization of National Guard Units were vital to America's defense."

Mixson died June 4, 1964 in a hospital in Madison, Wis. Services were held in Madison on June 8. He was buried in Arlington National Cemetery.

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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. 9th, 6 p.m.	“Thousand-Miler: Adventures Hiking the Ice Age Trail” with author Melanie McManus
Thurs., Dec. 7th, 6 p.m.	“Christmas on the Farm” with author Jerry Apps (at Trinity Lutheran Church, 206 E. Badger Street, Waupaca)
Thurs., Jan. 18th, 6 p.m.	“Remembering the Battle of the Bulge” with Eric Percy
Thurs., Feb. 22nd, 6 p.m.	“Beekeeping in Waupaca” with Kent Pegorsch
Thurs., March 15th, 6 p.m.	“Putting Down Roots: Historic Gardening in Wisconsin” with author Marcia Carmichael

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