

# THE REPORTER

**Waupaca Historical Society, 321 South Main Street, Waupaca, WI 54981**  
*Open Wednesdays, 12-4, Thursdays, 10-2, Fridays, 12-4, Saturday 9-12 (through Labor Day)*

VOLUME 22 – NUMBER 3

SUMMER 2018

## All Members Invited to WHS Annual Meeting

The Waupaca Historical Society will hold its Annual Meeting on Thursday, September 6<sup>th</sup> at 5 p.m. at the historic Waupaca Depot. Members are encouraged to attend and bring a dish to pass for the potluck meal. The main dish and beverages will be provided. The potluck meal will be followed by a meeting detailing the last year's activities and finances. All members and their guests are invited to attend.

Absentee ballots for the WHS board election are available at the Holly Center.

The historic Waupaca Depot is located at 525 Oak Street on Waupaca's north side. The Depot offers both rails on the front and a wheelchair ramp in the rear for easy accessibility.



***The WHS annual meeting will take place on Thursday, September 6<sup>th</sup> at 5 p.m. at the Depot.***

## Settlers' Gardens and Hartman Creek Focus of Upcoming Programs

In Waupaca and the Chain O'Lakes area, the outdoors plays a central role in residents' and visitors' lives. The Waupaca Historical Society's upcoming programs will highlight several areas of outdoor living in the next couple months.

To round out the summer, Marilyn Herman will present, "Early Settlers' Gardens" on Thursday, August 9<sup>th</sup> at 6 p.m. at the Holly History and Genealogy Center. Herman, a local gardener, will look back at early gardens across various ethnic groups and the importance of these for the first settlers in Waupaca. Nancy and Jeff Weasner are sponsoring the refreshments for this program.

On Thursday, September 20<sup>th</sup> at 6 p.m., Jarrod Kehring, Hartman Creek State Park Superintendent, will present, "Building Hartman Creek." Kehring will talk about the history of the state park, including the land's previous life as Whispering Pines Park. Refreshments will be sponsored by the Friends of Hartman Creek State Park.

Ray Reser, director of UW-Stevens Point's Museum of Natural History, returns on Thursday, October 18<sup>th</sup> to present, "Paleo Indian Mortuary Sites: Across Waupaca County and the Upper Great Lakes." Reser will present his research on these



***Jarrod Kehring will present, "Building Hartman Creek" on September 20<sup>th</sup>. Whispering Pines Park, pictured above, once stood where the state park is today.***

10,000-year-old sites across Wisconsin and the Upper Great Lakes region.

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!

# Happenings at the Hutchinson House

By Katharine McArthur

The summer season is in full swing at the Hutchinson House Museum in South Park. We had a full house on the Fourth of July and for Strawberry Fest in June. The weekends have been relatively busy as well with a mix of in-town and out-of-town visitors.

There is still plenty of time to come see the house this season! The Hutchinson House is open Saturdays and Sundays from Memorial Day through Labor Day, from 1-4 p.m. We did a very thorough clean-up and reduced collections on display this spring. Come see the changes!

If you'd love to do more than just see the house, we are always in need of volunteers. The end of summer is a great time to get trained to docent so that you are ready to go at the start of the season next year. There is no need to memorize materials—docents are provided with guide sheets and training prior to giving tours. Spending your Saturday or Sunday afternoon



**McArthur, curator at the Hutchinson House, welcomes visitors and new volunteers. No training is needed!**

sharing your love of history is a lovely way to pass the time!

Looking forward to the fall season, the Hutchinson House will hopefully be getting a much-needed fresh coat of paint and new gutters (pending the response to the Waupaca Historical Society's recent grant application to the Waupaca Area Community Foundation). In addition to offering our school tours in September and October, we will also have some open hours this fall. The Hutchinson House Museum will be open for Fall-O-Rama on Saturday, September 15<sup>th</sup>. We also have a special event coming in October. The Waupaca Area Genealogical Society and WHS are partnering to host a cemetery walk in Lakeside

Cemetery on Saturday, October 20<sup>th</sup>. The Hutchinson House will be open for the event. Look for tickets for the tour available this fall. Come see the house in a new season!

## 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 (715) 256-9980 or [director@waupacahistoricalsociety.org](mailto:director@waupacahistoricalsociety.org). Or just stop in during open hours!

- Tablet for historic photos (\$250)
- Digital camera (\$200)
- Map rack for storage (\$100)
- Tablet stand (\$100)
- Chalkboard slates and chalk (\$35)
- Display materials (\$25-\$100)

Looking to volunteer this year? The Waupaca Historical Society is looking for a collections volunteer to assist with cataloguing donations and objects in the collection. We are also looking for a volunteer to help make padded hangers for our collections. If you enjoy learning more about or working with historic collections, these are the perfect volunteer opportunity for you!

## Collections Corner

The Waupaca Historical Society receives numerous donations of railroad items each year. This pass from 1941-42 was used by Joseph P. Lacke, a locomotive fireman for the Minneapolis, St. Paul & Sault Ste. Marie Railway (or Soo Line).

The Soo Line purchased the Wisconsin Central Railway in 1909. The Wisconsin Central had constructed the Waupaca Depot two years earlier after a fire destroyed the earlier depot. The Soo Line operated the line until 1988, when the newly formed Wisconsin Central Limited purchased the tracks. Today Canadian National owns the track.





## Chappell Remembered for Passion for Writing, Preserving History

In July, the Waupaca Historical Society and the Waupaca community lost a friend, supporter and historian. Gerald “Jerry” Chappell, an emeritus member of the WHS Board, passed away on July 18<sup>th</sup> at ThedaCare Medical Center in Waupaca.

Chappell, an active member of WHS, wrote, “History of the Potato and Starch Industry” this year. The book, an illustrated history of potato farming and the starch factories in the city of Waupaca, was printed last month and is sold at the Holly History and Genealogy Center, the historic Waupaca Depot and the Hutchinson House Museum. In June, WHS President Dennis Lear presented Chappell with a copy of his book, thanking him for his efforts to put this history into a publication.

Chappell also has several other publications and plays on various historical topics in the research area at the Holly Center.

As Jerry’s family wrote in his obituary, “Jerry loved to indulge himself in writing projects on his computer. Whether it be short stories, plays, summaries of family events, local history topics, and even attempts at novels, Jerry kept hard at work on his computer. Many of his articles about local history and Native American lore were published in the Waupaca County Post, the Waupaca Historical Society News Letter (sic), etc.”

The Waupaca Historical Society is extremely grateful to Jerry for all of his support and volunteer work—he will be missed.



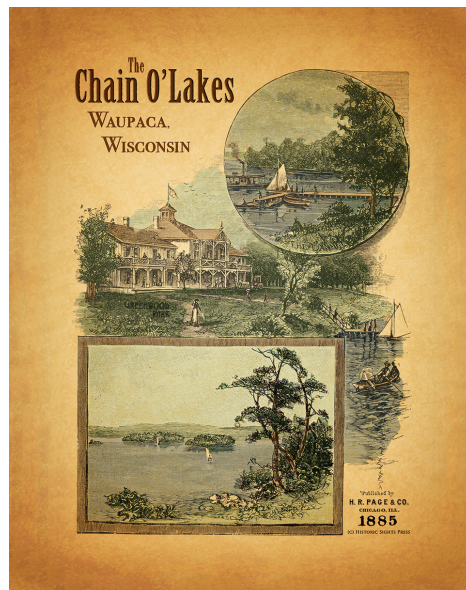
***Jerry Chappell, pictured above at right with WHS President Dennis Lear, was a great supporter, writer and publisher of Waupaca history.***

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## Special Chain O’Lakes Program To Highlight ARTicipation Week

Ron Arthur, WHS Board member and Chain O’Lakes historian, will present, “Art on the Chain: A 21st Century Perspective on Our Lakes’ Gilded Age” on Wednesday, August 15<sup>th</sup> at noon. The program will be part of ARTicipation Week, a week full of activities leading up to the Waupaca Community Arts Board’s Arts on the Square on Saturday, August 18<sup>th</sup>.

The program will take place at the Wautopia structure on display on Sessions Street in downtown Waupaca. The structure, made of



wooden pods created by local individuals and businesses, will be on display on the closed Sessions Street, off of North Main Street.

In his lunchtime program, Arthur will answer some of the mysteries regarding how the Chain’s lakes got their names, using unique digital revitalizations of maps and images recovered from the late 1800s and early 1900s. Attendees are encouraged to bring a bag lunch and enjoy the program outdoors!

## At the Depot: New Additions and News from Around Waupaca

By Mike Kirk

Summer hours are in full swing at the Depot. More and more people are learning about it and stopping by to see it. Occasionally the Depot is host to events. A large wedding reception was held there with the attendees dressed up in period clothing. WHS partnered with the Waupaca Area Public Library held a Family Fun Day in July with over 100 people attending. These events are a lot of fun, give us great publicity and help support the Depot.

On Friday, Sept. 21<sup>st</sup>, we will be hosting two busloads from the Soo Line Historical & Technical Society convention being held in Stevens Point. We will be serving a potato bake lunch and can use help clean-up, serving food and take-down. It will be a good fundraiser and way to show off the Depot.

This summer, thanks to a generous donation from Lois and George Alfsen, Waupaca Machine installed hand railings on the portico steps of the Depot. They are a welcome addition for those needing a little help climbing stairs. Thank you to the Alfsens!

Last winter I met Don Mahoney at a model train show. Mahoney is a retired railroad telegrapher and has worked with an electronics person to develop a device called a telegraph keyer. A telegraph message is keyed into the device. It is then hooked up to a telegraph sounder and the message is played back. There are controls to set the speed and frequency that the message is played. The keyer was just the incentive I needed to complete setting up the operator's desk in the Depot bay window. The new device adds a lot to the Depot experience to hear the telegraph messages coming in seemingly across the wire.

When I went to Madison to pick up the keyer from Don, I discovered that he has quite a collection of telegraph equipment and other



railroad items, some of which are for sale. I bought a few small things to help complete the operator's desk. Much to my surprise, I also spotted a Chiclets gum machine. People who remember the Depot in the days of passenger trains have told me they remember a Chiclets machine next to the ticket window. In fact, I could see right where it had been fastened to the wall. I never expected to find one. Don's machine was a bit pricey but in excellent condition. I could not pass it up! It now hangs on the wall right where one used to be. These types of things really bring the Depot back to life!

### Mead Bank To Be Sold, Possibly Moved

We are fortunate that we have been able to save several historic buildings around Waupaca and the Chain O'Lakes. Unfortunately Waupaca continues to lose its historic structures. The Ware School building was recently demolished with the property becoming a farm field. The Waupaca Historical Society was able to save the concrete Joint School District sign as well as some Waupaca bricks. We also saved the wheelchair ramp, which we are reusing as a platform and ramp for the potato car at the Depot.

It has recently come to our attention that the Stiebs Garage on Jefferson Street is being sold. This property includes the historic Mead Bank. Since the new owner wants additional room for a used car lot, the bank building must be moved in order to save it. We are working on possible ways to save it and we are looking for all the help we can get. This is too important a part of Waupaca history to lose. If you are interested in helping in any way, please contact the Waupaca Historical Society today.



# Strong Women of Waupaca: Abigail Sessions

## Part I

By JJ Johnson

*This article is an excerpt from “Strong Women of Waupaca,” a paper available at the Holly Center.*

Abigail “Abbie” Chandler Parish was born February 17, 1829 in Randolph, Vermont, the youngest of six children born to Jacob Kimball and Abigail (Chandler) Parish. Her mother, Abigail, died two days after giving birth to Abigail. She was then raised by her step-mother, Mary Ann (Converse) Parish. Upon growing up, Abigail had a beau, Erastus Constantine (E.C.; Ed) Sessions who had been born August 19, 1823 in Randolph.

According to one report, Abbie moved to Wauwatosa, Wis., in 1848 where she stayed with friends. It is also thought that was the same year E.C. moved to Plymouth, Wis., and staked a claim.

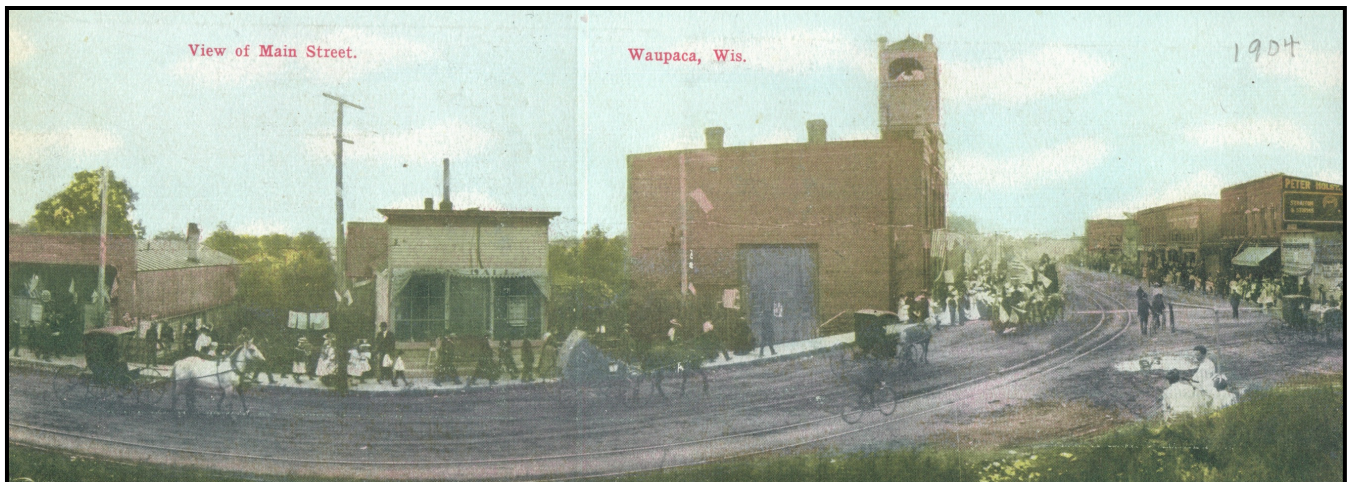
Like many Eastern people, E.C. had heard of the Indian lands that were to be opened to settlers once negotiations between the Menomonee Nation and the U.S. government were completed. On June 4, 1849, Sessions left from Sheboygan with Joseph Hibbard, William Hibbard, Martin Burnham and William Pratt to look for land that would have adequate water power to run grist and lumber mills. The Hibbards were brothers, E.C. was a cousin to the Hibbards, Burnham was a second cousin of those three, and Pratt was Joseph Hibbard’s brother-in-law. Together they comprised a group locally known as the Five Vermonters, the first known white men to arrive at The Falls or Waupacca Falls as it came to be called. They arrived at The Falls on June 9, 1849. Only the Hibbard brothers and E.C. chose to stake claims to settle on these lands. E.C. claimed four “Forties” on June 15, 1849 in what later became the Bartlett Section in the village of

Waupaca and a third “Forty” was located in what became part of the Third Ward. With their claims staked, the Vermonters headed back to Sheboygan to get supplies and materials needed to erect cabins. Pratt, not being enamored of the wild land, and Burnham, deciding to be part of the California gold rush, both left after helping the others build their cabins. William Mumbroe made the preliminary survey between August 12<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> of 1849.

That fall, along with other men who had decided to move to the region, they put up four cabins and began construction of a mill dam. E.C. chose to build his cabin on the rocky hill at the head of what is now Main Street. It was an 11-foot-by-15-foot structure (some sources say the cabin was only 12 feet by 13 feet) built of logs with the cracks filled with a mixture of mud and bark. It had a half window in the rear for light. The roof and floor were comprised of bark and a blanket served for a door. Once completed, E.C. returned to marry Abbie on September 13<sup>th</sup> at her aunt’s home in Wauwatosa. The newylweds returned to the cabin at the Falls and made it their first home.

The couple left on the first stagecoach leaving for Fond du Lac from whence they took a steamboat up to Oshkosh. At Oshkosh, E.C. was able to charter a schooner to head up the Wolf River. This vessel was maneuvered by two men and could carry from three to four tons of freight and had a rowboat attached to the back of the vessel. They left the city in the mid-afternoon. There was enough wind that it was expected that the couple would reach Butte des Morts or Winneconne before nightfall.

**Continued on p. 6**



***This panoramic view of North Main Street and Water Street would have been taken approximately where E. C. Sessions built his cabin upon settling near The Falls.***

## **Strong Women of Waupaca: Abigail Sessions**

(Continued from p. 5)

But when the wind died down, they were left sitting just halfway to their destination. The crew carried poles for such occasions, but they were too short to reach the bottom. Eventually the crew was able to tie up to a log raft they spotted lying along the water's bank.

Abbie spent her first night of married life stranded on the open boat with only a single cover for a bed, in the company of the two crewmen and what was described as "a cold, unsympathetic moon looking squarely down upon them."

With the dawn came a welcomed breeze and the schooner was again able to continue on its way through Lake Butte des Morts. The going was arduous but they eventually reached the open river. Continuing up the river, they came to the cabin of a Mumbroe family at Winneconne just as the sun was going down. The Mumbroes welcomed the couple and offered not only good company within the wilderness but a place where Abigail and E.C. could get a good night's sleep.

However, they were not the only guests enjoying the Mumbroes' hospitality. Thankfully Captain David Scott and Ambrose Gard were there and offered to help crew the schooner with hopes that if they left by dawn Abigail and the men would reach the settlement of Little River by the end of the day. Winds plagued the party and it took a great effort on all the men's part to get through Lake Winneconne and around the Indian pay grounds of Lake Poygan. It was just past mid-day before they finally reached the beginning of the Wolf River.

Abbie, of course, was anxious to see the journey end and settle in her new home, and it was decided that the travelers would make better time using the rowboat. Gard took the steersman position while Scott and Sessions paddled. Abbie was placed on a rocking chair situated in the middle of the boat. Finally, just before dusk, the travelers reached the Little River landing located only a couple miles from the settlement. This distance, through timber in the dark, was probably the most difficult part for Abbie. One section—that was described as being several rods in width and several inches deep of water—required the men to carry her over the section. Thus it was very late before they finally reached the settlement for the night.

Morning found the party with another five miles of travel on foot to reach the Chandler settlement. It was a short but pleasant visit for Abbie, being again among women and children with some of the comforts of life she had been accustomed to

enjoying. The group then left on the last leg of their journey and Abbie finally arrived at her new home.

While many settlers had been coming into the area around The Falls, Abbie was only the second white woman to move here. And, though the U.S. treaty with the Menominee Indians had been signed in 1848, details were not completed. As a result, early settlers were in violation of the law. E.C. and the Hibbards had actually staked their claims several months before the government survey had been made. The Sessions and others were frequently talked to and even threatened by the Indian agent in an effort to get them to leave the area. His words fell on deaf ears.

Abbie and E.C. were often referred to as having created a "city of refuge for the destitute" and for not ever turning away a hungry wayfarer, perhaps in appreciation for the kindnesses they experienced on their trip through the wilderness to their home. It was noted also that no wayfarer left the Sessions house "unprovided for." The two were strong Christians and "exemplified fidelity and faith in their upright life and daily conversation." They held with the motto that, "In as much as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren ye have done it unto me." According to one source these words were even written on the door to their home in Nevada.

Supplies were still hard to come by and sometimes ran low. In October 1849, Abbie informed E.C. that they were almost out of flour and it had reached a point that something would need to be done. The settlement women had been reduced to passing a coffee mill from home to home to let each family grind enough grain to last until the coffee mill made it around again. About this time, Dana Dewey arrived in the settlement and had stopped over at the Sessions home. Hearing of the situation, and after grinding three hoppers of wheat and noting the difficulty of the job, he made a number of attempts to find ways to grind larger quantities of corn or wheat. Finally the men took a block of oak about two feet long and used a pair of compasses to mark a circle. By use of a chisel and fire, Dewey and E.C. burned a hole large enough to hold a peck of grain. They then made a pestle of hickory three feet long and about five inches in diameter. With these tools, Dewey managed to keep a supply of flour until the marshy ground south of the settlement froze solid. Settlers could then haul their grain via oxen and wagon to Ripon, the nearest place with a grist mill.



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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.

<b>Thurs., August 9<sup>th</sup>, 6 p.m.</b>	“Early Settlers’ Gardens” with Marilyn Herman
<b>Wed., Aug. 15<sup>th</sup>, Noon</b>	“Art on the Chain: A 21st Century Perspective on Our Lakes’ Gilded Age” with Ron Arthur (at Wautopia structure on Sessions St.)
<b>Thurs., Sept. 20<sup>th</sup>, 6 p.m.</b>	“Building Hartman Creek” with Jarrod Kehring
<b>Thurs., Oct. 18<sup>th</sup>, 6 p.m.</b>	“Paleo Indian Mortuary Sites Across Waupaca County and the Upper Great Lakes” with Ray Reser
<b>Thurs., Nov. 8<sup>th</sup>, 6 p.m.</b>	“Menominee in Waupaca” with Mike Hoffman

### Staff:

**Director:** Tracy Behrendt **Hutchinson House Curator:** Katharine McArthur  
**Maintenance Staff:** Jeff Weasner and Linda Kirk

### Board of Directors:

**President:** Dennis Lear; **Vice President/Depot Coordinator:** Mike Kirk; **Secretary:** Betty Stewart; **Treasurer:** Dave Trombla; **Board Members:** Marge Writt, Ron Arthur, Nancy and Jeff Weasner, Kent Pegorsch, Ashlie Buck, J.J. Johnson, Brian Godfrey  
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