

THE REPORTER

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

Open Wednesday-Friday, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

VOLUME 26— NUMBER 1

Winter 2022

Full Slate of Programs Scheduled for 2022

The Waupaca Historical Society has set its full program and event schedule for 2022, and there is something for everyone! 2022 marks WHS's sixth year of offering free monthly programs.

WHS begins its monthly programs with "Bethany Home of Waupaca: 125 Years of Care" on Thursday, Feb. 17 at 6 p.m. This program will tell the story of Bethany's transformation from a children's home to a retirement and nursing home today.

Several events are also planned in 2022 to take place at the Hutchinson House Museum and Depot. WHS will again partner with the Waupaca Area Public Library for potato planting and harvesting programs. The Hutchinson House will also host a Lost Arts event on Saturday, June 25, featuring arts and crafts demonstrators. The event will feature plein air painting, candlewicking, tatting, music—and more!

All monthly programs take place in the lower level of the Holly History and Genealogy Center unless noted.

- Thursday, Feb. 17, 6 p.m.: "Bethany Home of Waupaca: 125 Years of Care"
- Thursday, March 24, 6 p.m.: "Waupaca's Masonic Lodge"
- Thursday, April 21, 6 p.m.: "Prohibition in WI"
- April 29 & 30 AT THE HUTCHINSON HOUSE : Potato Planting Program with library
- Thursday, May 3, 6 p.m. AT THE DEPOT: "Player Pianos: Bringing Music to the Masses"
- Thursday, May 19 at 6 p.m.: "The Making of Pioneer Wisconsin: Voices of Early Settlers"
- Thursday, June 16, 6 p.m. AT DANES HALL: "Whispering Pines Park: Memories of How It Was"
- Saturday, June 25, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. AT THE HUTCHINSON HOUSE: Lost Arts program
- Thursday, July 14, 6 p.m.: "Door County Lighthouses"
- Saturday, July 16, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. AT THE DEPOT: Family Fun Day at the Depot with library
- Thursday, August 18, 6 p.m.: "Wisconsin's Post Office Murals"
- Saturday, Sept. 10, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. AT THE DEPOT: Potato Harvest Day with library
- Thursday, Sept. 15 at 6 p.m.: "Our 351 Sons: The Founding of Rawhide"
- Thursday, Nov. 10 at 6 p.m.: "How to Be an Indian in the 21st Century"
- Saturday, Dec. 3: Yuletide Trail



More than 100 people planted and harvested potatoes at last year's potato planting programs.

Behind the Scenes at WHS

By Tracy Behrendt, Director

As we enter a new year, the Waupaca Historical Society wants to express its sincere gratitude for our members, Business Partners and visitors in 2021. With the pandemic still raging, we've had to readjust plans, pivot to new ways of reaching our community, and also plan for the future.

2021 ended busy and eventful, highlighted by the third annual Yuletide Trail. This annual community event has turned into a wonderful way to not only bring people out to celebrate the holidays, but to also collaborate with local organizations, businesses and groups. WHS's annual cookie walk raised more than \$3,000, thanks to a sponsorship from Community First Credit Union. Thank you to those of you who purchased tins and enjoyed the festivities at the Yuletide Trail. Thank you also to all of the businesses and organizations that volunteered their time and money to offer cookies for the tins. We had 18 cookie stops this year—the most so far in our three years!

We are also thankful for all of you that donated to our annual fundraising drive. This campaign raised nearly \$9,200, all of which will go directly to support our free monthly programs and upcoming events, purchasing archival materials to preserve our collections, and several needed improvements at our buildings. We are currently adding new gutters to the Hutchinson House Museum and plan on installing a



The Waupaca Historical Society has received hundreds of object donations in the last year, all of which help us tell the Waupaca and the Chain O'Lakes story.

new roof on the Holly Center this spring. Your financial contributions will help us with both of these necessary projects and, in turn, help us preserve our historic buildings and collections. Thank you!

I also want to say thank you to all of you that have come to the Holly Center and worn masks. With small children and family members with health issues, I can't tell you how much I appreciate you keeping the Holly Center a safe place for me, our volunteers, and for our community.

Though the pandemic has been a struggle for all of us, it has also had positive impacts on WHS. Our research requests

and visits to our website and Facebook page are up. We also continue to receive a record amount of object donations (likely with everyone home more!). Many of these items are artifacts, photographs and archival materials that we do not already have in our collections—Waupaca High School baseball jerseys, a Girl Scout uniform, scrapbooks from the library when it was still located at 321 S. Main Street, programs from the Waupaca Country Club, and much more. Thank you to those who have donated to our collections and helped us tell our community's story.

Needless to say, despite the quiet of winter, 2022 looks like it will be another busy year—one filled with more opportunities to connect our community (both online and in person) with our local history. We hope to see you all soon!

Looking Back in the *Waupaca County Post*: Carnegie's Club Room

Many visitors and residents alike remember the early days of the building now known as the Holly History and Genealogy Center. But not all are aware of its time as a restaurant.

The Holly Center, built in 1913-1914, previously housed the Waupaca Free Public Library. The library, like many around the country, was built with the help of local women's groups and a substantial grant from the Carnegie Corporation. The president of the corporation was steel magnate Andrew Carnegie, who donated nearly \$56 million to build libraries around the world.

When the library outgrew the building at 321 S. Main Street, it looked for a new space. Though the Waupaca County Courthouse was available at the time on South Main and East Fulton Streets, the improvements and repairs needed were cost prohibitive. The courthouse was torn down in 1992, and a new library and city hall was built in its place.

With the opening of the new library in 1993, the old building was purchased by Mary and Larry Gordon. They worked to get the building on the State and National Register of Historic Places.

In 1995, the *Waupaca County Post* announced that the former library was reopening as a restaurant. The article, written by Alex Riemer, ran on May 4, 1995:

Waupaca library is now Carnegie Club

"I think the building—if it had a personality—would be happy to see people in it again," remarked Mary Gordon, co-owner of the old Waupaca Carnegie Library.

"When I first bid on the building, I certainly didn't think it would turn into this," she added. She, her husband, Larry, and chef/manager Paul Letsch have built a small restaurant, called Carnegie's Club Room, in the lower level of the 1913 building on Main Street



The Waupaca Historical Society still uses the same tables and chairs from Carnegie's Club Room in its lower level.

at the south end of Waupaca's downtown business district.

"I've always wanted to restore a historic building," said Gordon, "and this was the perfect chance, when it came up for bid in 1993."

The familiar foyer to the library has been returned to the original tile floor pattern (the tiles were still under the carpet) and parts of the wooden flooring in the downstairs section has been renovated as well.

Internally, the building has new plumbing, wiring, heating and insulation. The short hallway at the end of the stairs has been partitioned into a mop room and deep-freeze compartment on the kitchen side...

Crammed into a tiny area are both a kitchen for creating anything from fettucine in wine and cream sauce to halibut steak, and a complete bakery (Letsch is a pastry chef). The only item missing is a deep fryer. "You get an oven...of french fries," Gordon noted.

"The end product looks like a reflection of my personality," Gordon said, looking around the sunlit room.

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Looking Back in the *Waupaca County Post*:

continued from p. 3

"The quality of the food is a reflection of Paul. He's a baker, a very good gourmet baker ...It was mainly Paul's advice that led me to say, 'If we're going to do this, let's do it right'...It was like kicking a snowball; my foot stuck and it caught me up and down the hill we went," Gordon chuckled.

Letsch is originally from Rhinelander and worked most recently at the Sunprint Café in Madison, he said with a sigh, after closing the club room on opening night, May 1, for the Carnegie Club. Paul, one of three chefs at Carnegie's, has been a pastry chef and baker for 18 years and is completely self-taught. He estimates that the restaurant drew about 100 patrons its first day open. "We're opening quietly on purpose. I hope to triple that this summer....

"I have quite a bit of experience starting up restaurants," Letsch said. He has started "two or three" restaurants in addition to being a seasonal pastry chef," which basically means starting two restaurants a year, one in Florida and one up here... This looked like a fine opportunity for me," he continued. "This is kind of like coming home, you know, to a small town."

"If anyone can do it, Paul can," said Gordon. "The food is his and the other chefs' and the staff here. You can't come to me and say, 'Hey, great food'... We have to give a lot of credit to the staff, the chefs and everyone, the waitresses and dishwashers. This kind of glory stuff is weird for me," Gordon emphasized.

This summer, the Gordons and Paul plan "live acoustic music on the weekends, classical, jazz, blues,



The former library sign was repurposed for Carnegie's in 1995 (photo from Waupaca County Post, 1995).

folk... We can do poetry readings, have recitals... We'll start very small and expand through the year," according to Mary Gordon.

They will also continue landscaping and restoring the building's exterior. "This has to be done slowly," said Gordon.

The former library has been nominated to the National Register of Historic Places. "You can't sandblast a historic building; you have to clean by hand," she pointed out.

The Monday Night Club, Waupaca's second women's club, commissioned the library in the late 19th century. The Waupaca Free Public Library was erected in 1913-1914 with \$10,000 from the Carnegie Corporation.

"The vast majority of libraries built in the U.S. in that time were due to the fund-raising and spearheading of women's clubs," related Gordon, who researched Carnegie libraries when she and Larry nominated it to the Historic Register. Pages from women's magazines of 1913 and 1914—the years the Waupaca Free Public Library was built—are inset in the restaurant's tables.

"When this place was built, this is what people were into," said Gordon. "You can read the ads, you can read the editorials on world peace and women's suffrage," she explained, pointing out a 1913 piece on the woman's role outside the home.

The upper floor of the building is still under construction. In time, she said, it will house an art gallery.

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At the Depot: Winter Work and Open House

By Mike Kirk



We held a one-day holiday open house at the Depot on December 18. Jeff Weasner did a nice job decorating with a Christmas tree, stockings above the fireplace, and getting the Christmas train running on the G-scale layout in the basement. We had about 20 people attend the event. We have also had visitors throughout the fall and winter, stopping by when

they see us there or just parking to watch the trains. We have also received some nice donations, which help with increasing costs and prices. The heating bill alone is around \$200 per month, so all donations make a difference! Thank you also to Mark Stange for taking the initiative to plow snow at the Depot.

With the colder weather, it has been time to stay inside and work on the HO layout in the basement. Much of the bench work is up and the installation of the road bed and track is underway.

With the help of Julia Champion, we have filmed some short Depot videos. Currently I have some on my MBAKirk YouTube channel and on the “Waupaca wis soo line depot and CN railroad history” Facebook page. It’s a great way to connect with the Depot!

Tell Your Story and Help WHS Preserve Local History

The Waupaca Historical Society is collecting memories and stories from the COVID-19 pandemic. And we would love to have yours!

These collections will be preserved at the Holly Center to help future generations understand this

time in Waupaca, our state and our country. You can find the survey at www.waupacahistoricalsociety.org on the main page. You can also request one via email at director@waupacahistoricalsociety.org or by mail by calling (715) 256-9980.

Looking Back in the *Waupaca County Post*:

continued from p. 4

“My original intention for this building was probably an art gallery, which is probably because I’m a frustrated artist,” Gordon explained. “I’m in awe of artists.” (The Club Room features a rotating display of pieces by local artists, most of which are for sale.)

“Natives of the town hold the building in very high esteem, which is common for Carnegie libraries,” Gordon stated. “We wanted to do something that people could still enjoy. In fact I still call it the library. It’ll be years before I call it ‘the restaurant’ or

‘Carnegie’s’ or something like that,” she said. “I think the historical buildings in Waupaca are wonderful. People should restore them and use them.”

The Monday Night Club, she explained, originally intended the building as a social venue as well as a library.

“They had teas here, speaking contests, social gatherings,” she said. “People can come here and use the building again for what it was originally intended – a gathering place.”

WHS to Partner on Whispering Pines Park Project

The mention of Whispering Pines Park, a tourist park located in what is now Hartman Creek State Park, brings back many fond memories. Whispering Pines was a much-loved spot for daytrips, picnics or just a walk along the lake. For nearly 45 years, Christ and Emma Hyldgaard opened up their property to visitors at no charge, maintained the grounds, and created a local tourist attraction. In 1975, after Emma's death, the park was willed to the state and everything on the grounds was sold. In 1977, Whispering Pines reopened as part of Hartman Creek State Park and returned to its natural state.

Last year, the Friends of Hartman Creek State Park, a nonprofit group that helps maintain and improve the

state park, approached the Waupaca Historical Society with a plan to rehabilitate the state park area that was Whispering Pines Park. This project would include removing vegetation, creating ADA hiking trails and viewing areas, uncovering remaining pieces of Whispering Pines, and adding interpretive signs.

Over the next two years, volunteers will be needed for collecting brush, thinning white pine with hand tools, assisting with invasive plant removal and installing future interpretive signs. Work will likely begin in spring 2022. If you are interested in volunteering your time or resources, contact the

Waupaca Historical Society at director@waupacahistoricalsociety.org.

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

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