

# The Reporter

Volume 16 Issue 2 The Newsletter of the Waupaca Historical Society Spring 2012

**WHS Board of Directors:** Dennis Lear, President; Mike Kirk, Vice President; Betty Stewart, Secretary; Bob Kessler, Treasurer, Dick Bidwell, Tracy Behrendt, Gerald Chappell, Glenda Rhodes, Deb Fenske, David Trombla, Joyce Woldt, Don Writt, and Marge Writt

**WHS Director:** Julie Hintz **Hutchinson House Curator:** Barbara Fay Wiese

## QUARTERLY MEMBER MEETING COMING UP – JUNE 7th

The format for the upcoming Thursday June 7, 2012 meeting will include a special presentation 3:30- 4:30 p.m. at the Holly History and Genealogy Center by our Hutchinson House Museum curator Barbara Fay Wiese. The Hutchinson House shines a light on Waupaca's stories from the 1800s right up to today. Learn about the family whose name lives on in this house, some of its fascinating artifacts, and the many transformations the house has gone through. Members are again invited to bring your own family stories, or maybe a treasured family keepsake to share with all present. After the 'Member Share', there will be an update on upcoming projects. If interested, Members are also invited to attend the Board of Directors meeting at 5:15 p.m. the same evening. Please join us for this Quarterly Member Meeting.

## DEPOT OPEN HOUSE DURING STRAWBERRY FESTIVAL – JUNE 16<sup>TH</sup>

The Waupaca Historical Society will once again be hosting an Open House at the Waupaca Railroad Depot on Saturday, June 16<sup>th</sup>, as part of Waupaca's Strawberry Festival. The Open House will run from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Our members and their guests are invited to stop by the Depot on that date and take a look at the latest renovations. Projects completed or started over the last year include outside brick platforms, ceiling replacement, flooring replacement, and installation of a security alarm system. Historical books and Depot prints will be available for purchase. While you are at the Depot, you can also enjoy some goodies from our "Bake Sale". The Bake Sale will run from 10 a.m. until sold out. Bob Kessler, our Treasurer and Membership Chairman, along with Julie Hintz, our Director, will be staffing a special Membership Recruitment Table. If you have friends or neighbors who are not yet members of the Waupaca Historical Society, encourage them to stop by the Depot on June 16<sup>th</sup>. Our "Special Offer" – Join the Waupaca Historical Society as a **new** member and receive 18 months of membership for the price of 12 months - \$15/individual. (Sorry, this deal is only open to new members, not current members.) If you know someone who would like to become a member, but is unable to attend the Open House at the Depot on June 16<sup>th</sup>, please refer him or her to call Julie Hintz, Director, at 715-256-9980, on or before June 22<sup>nd</sup> to inquire about our "Special Offer For New Members". I hope to see you at the Depot on June 16<sup>th</sup>.

## ANTIQUÉ APPRAISAL EVENT – AUG. 9<sup>TH</sup>

The Waupaca Historical Society will once again be hosting an "Antique Appraisal Event" with guest appraiser, Mr. Mark Moran. The event, which is being held as a fundraiser, will be held on Thursday evening, Aug. 9<sup>th</sup>, at the Holly History and Genealogy Center, 321 S. Main St., Waupaca. The appraisals will begin at 5:30 p.m. The cost per item is \$20. Categories of objects that you may bring for appraisal include: fine art (paintings, prints, drawings, statues, etc.), furniture (small or medium sized), ceramics, glassware, folk art, toys, metalware, clocks, costume jewelry, advertising medium, and vintage photographs. Items that cannot be appraised include weapons (swords, guns, knives, though tableware or silverware is acceptable), coins or paper money, beanie babies, fine jewelry, precious gems, pocket and wristwatches, or musical instruments.

Questions about objects not covered in the list above can be submitted to Mr. Mark Moran in advance to determine if they are appropriate for appraisal. Mr. Moran will be doing informal appraisals and opinions of value. He will not be offering written or certified appraisals. This event is open to our members and to the public. Even if you do not wish to have an item appraised, you are welcome to come and watch the appraisals and discussion of vintage items. Audience seating will be available. For more information about the program or how to contact Mr. Moran, and to schedule your appraisal appointment, please call Julie Hintz, WHS Director at 715-256-9980.

## YOUR ATTENTION PLEASE!

- Please save your receipts from the Piggly Wiggly grocery store in Waupaca. Place them in an envelope and drop them into the book drop slot by the front door of the Holly History Center. Piggly Wiggly pays back a percentage of your purchases. This helps the Waupaca Historical Society raise much-needed funds!
- The **Hutchinson House Museum** will not be opening until Saturday, June 30<sup>th</sup>, this year, due to the Main Street road construction project. The Hutchinson House will remain closed on Strawberry Fest Saturday (June 16), but will be open on Wednesday, July 4<sup>th</sup>, from noon until 4 p.m. The Hutchinson House will be open weekends from June 30<sup>th</sup> through Sept. 30<sup>th</sup>. Stop down and take a look at the special "Quilt Exhibit" at the Hutchinson House later this summer. The museum is open on Saturdays and Sundays from 1-4 p.m.
- The 4<sup>th</sup> of July parade route has been changed due to the Main Street road construction project. Watch the local newspaper or call the Waupaca Area Chamber of Commerce for more information.
- **VOLUNTEERS WANTED FOR TRIATHLON** – The Waupaca Historical Society is looking to recruit volunteers to assist with the Waupaca Triathlon, which will be held on Saturday, August 18<sup>th</sup>. Each volunteer will be asked to work approximately 4 hours that morning. In return, our organization will receive a donation (approximately \$16 per each volunteer). If we can recruit 10 volunteers, the Waupaca Historical Society will receive \$160. Volunteers may be asked to help direct traffic or assist along the race route. All volunteers are invited to a special "Pre-Race Pizza Party" on the Wednesday before the event. For more information, please contact Bob Kessler at 715-258-9232.
- The Holly Center will be having a special exhibit about the Waupaca Masons and the Masonic Lodge. The exhibit will open by June 15<sup>th</sup> and run through Aug. 31<sup>st</sup>.
- **HELP! We'd like to borrow - but not a cup of sugar!** Hutchinson House needs QUILT RACKS TO DISPLAY FOLDED QUILTS for the exhibit in our alcove this summer. Sturdy laundry racks will be useful, too. We will need to keep the racks from mid-June through September, and would return them to you in early October. Please call Julie at 715-256-9980 or Barbara at 715-258-3996 if you can loan us a quilt rack for the summer. Thanks!



# ***The Indian Crossing Casino of Waupaca, Wisconsin***

*A history article by Ron Reynolds*

Virtually everyone who visits Waupaca's Chain O' Lakes for the first time assumes that the Indian Crossing Casino is a gambling hall. And why not, with the dozens of Indian Casinos operating throughout Wisconsin and the U. S. today?

But, having opened on July 4, 1925, Waupaca's Indian Crossing Casino was designed and operated as a dance hall. And now, eighty seven years later in the year 2012, the Casino remains as a dance hall. It never had gambling.

The Casino has a rich history. In the beginning, it catered to the Big Band Swing music of the day, which lasted through the start of Rock 'n Roll in 1953. Thus the first era of music lasted almost thirty years. And, through these years it featured many great bands and artists, such as Glenn Miller, Duke Ellington, Louis Armstrong, Jimmy Dorsey, Les Brown, Lawrence Welk and Woody Herman. These great bands performed one-night stands throughout the United



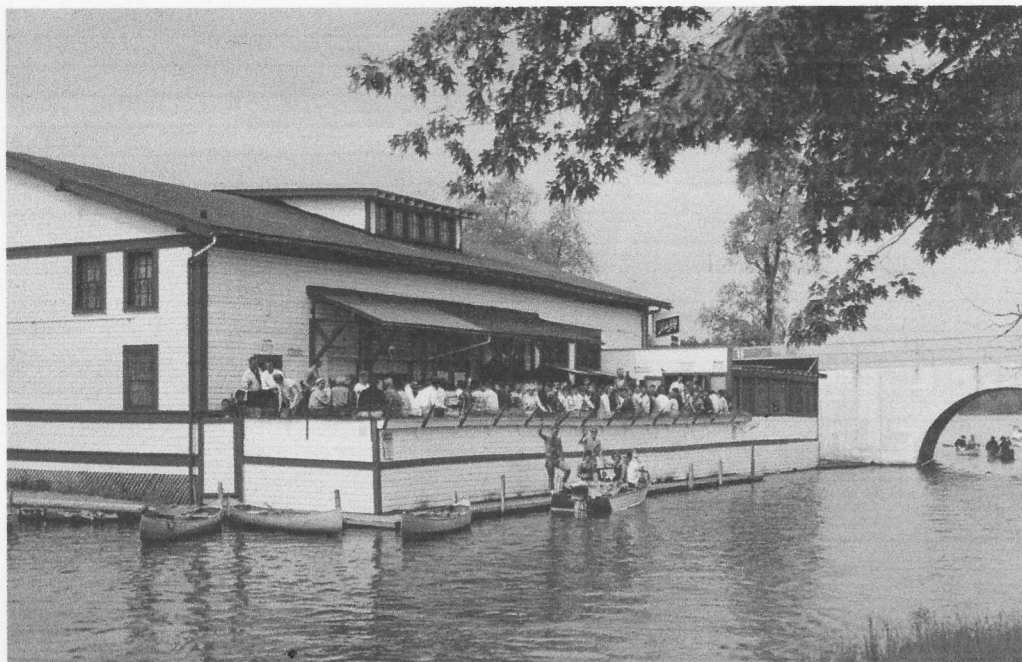
**The Casino, related buildings, and parking lot around 1950.  
Photo courtesy of WHS.**

States. Typically, they would perform in Chicago or Milwaukee, followed by Minneapolis. Since they traveled by bus or train, they would stop over in Waupaca between the big cities. Waupaca thus became rather famous for featuring these big bands of the day. In 1930, the Casino featured the Battle of the Bands, which was broadcast over WLS radio in Chicago.

And, it didn't end there. When Rock n' Roll began in the early fifties, the artists continued to travel to Waupaca's Indian Crossing Casino, although several of them traveled by plane by that time. There were such greats as the Beach Boys, Everly Brothers, Bobby Vinton, Herman Hermits, and Ricky Nelson. In fact, Nelson died in a plane crash shortly after entertaining at the Casino.

In the early years, dancing was illegal on Sundays. Folks had to quit dancing at midnight on Saturdays. During World War II, special programs for soldiers were featured, with 10 cent dances, three for 25 cents. There were also sporting events at the Casino, such as swimming races, with prizes for boys and girls.

Today, the Indian Crossing Casino is still operating. During 2011 it catered to weddings and other special events. During the summer, it features karaoke and disc jockey dancing for the teenagers on Saturday nights. It still offers food and drink. Overall, the Casino remains a key stop for tourists and local folks alike, and has become a true institution in its own right. One thing that remains unchanged however, the Casino is not a gambling hall.



The Casino porch was popular. Photo courtesy of Waupaca Historical Society

### **"The Casino"** **by Marge Witt**

There they are, dressed in Sunday's best.  
Mother's dress is printed calico,  
Dad's white shirt is starched and crisp, like crinkled leaves.  
They have come a long way to the Casino,  
and won't miss any of Tommy Dorsey's numbers,  
or Sally Rand, the fan dancer for that matter!  
There they are ... on the wooden dance floor.  
He presses his hand into the small of her back. These two swirl.  
My dream permits the senses to quicken.  
Smell the cigar smoke.  
It forces my parents to the porch.  
Where breathing of others rattles the air.  
Do you hear the band - the leader announcing the last dance of the evening?  
Knowing love waits, Dad swirls Mother one last time.  
Opening my eyes to dawn.  
Allow a few more minutes. Please.  
Return to the Casino.  
To watch them again.

## **A Review of The Waupaca Stopover for "Store Per / Big Pete", the "Paul Bunyan of the Prairies"**

*by Jerry Chappell, Waupaca Historical Society*

In his 2011 book, *Norwegian-American Paul Bunyan of the Prairies*, Peter Tjernagel Harstad offers an informative and colorful story of his great, great uncle's youth in Norway and then immigration to and life in America.

In the first five chapters, Harstad vividly describes Store Per's (meaning Big Pete's) birth, early life, and growth into manhood in the rugged mountainous farming and fishing coastline of Norway, including some of Big Pete's feats as a young man that initiated his legend as a man of extraordinary strength.

Harstad nicely describes how Store Per and his wife, Malene, realize the poor promise there was for a favorable livelihood in Norway, voyage with the Tjernagel emigrant party across the ocean to America, and then travel lakes and rivers via steamboat to arrive at the trip destination, American farmland in *Indi-landet* (Indian land) near Waupaca, Wisconsin.

Arrival at the Waupaca destination turned out to be only a Waupaca stopover for the Tjernagel emigrant party. Harstad writes: "As of Summer 1852 (relatives) Michael, Anna Marie, and daughters Dorothy and Julia Lie were newcomers to the forest near Waupaca. Very likely, they were squatters, which status was legal under the Preemption Law of 1841. They had come north from Koshkonong, flush with enthusiasm for land just coming on the market – enthusiasm communicated prematurely to family and friends in Norway. They were building a cabin, which they hoped to complete before winter. Then Anna Marie took sick."

It was now the second week of August and water levels were low. Complications ensued for the approaching travelers when the steamboat captain attempted to navigate what was labeled the "Winnebago River". (Since there is no such river of that name, it was probably the complex of rivers and lakes leading to the lower Wolf River and then into the entrance of the west-bound Waupaca River).

Several miles (more like twelve) short of Waupaca, fallen pine trees and shallow water halted all progress. "The captain immediately ordered all the passengers on shore, their luggage as well," related one of Store Per's historian descendants. (Thus, the party was dumped in *Indi-landet* not too far east of Waupaca.)

Harstad continues, "At this point language became a barrier to understanding. Store Per and his Norwegian-speaking compatriots understood that after unloading the boat to get through the shallows, they would reload and resume the voyage. The captain understood differently and steamed off in the direction of Green Bay. When it dawned upon the party what the unscrupulous captain was up to, all they could say in a beseeching tone was 'Yes, Waupaca, Wisconsin, No?' . . .

In a predicament with little food, no shelter, and only their legs for transportation, the party . . . called a council and devised a plan. Store Per would remain in camp with the women, children, and the older people. Several able-bodied men would forage for food while others would search for the residence of Anna Marie and Michael Lie. "

Reportedly the search party traveled all day without any signs of any civilization until finding a hut in the edge of the timber. The door opened and out came Michael Lie. "Now I know that there is a living God," he reportedly asserted. "You came in time to help me because just now Maria died from Asiatic Cholera."



The next day the search party returned to the riverside immigrant camp with Michael and his two daughters.

Store Per's historian nephew Peter Gustav writes, "At camp a sorry looking group huddled waiting for something to develop. They did not have to wait long. Looking up river they spotted a flotilla of canoes manned by a goodly number of Indian warriors. Store Per then remembered the blood curdling Indian stories he as a boy had read back home in his native country. Would they slip by without incident? No, they came ashore. While the women cried and the children bawled, a struggle raged within Store Per. His first impulse was to fight them all if they should decide to molest his charges. This thought dissipated when he realized their numbers and saw their weapons."

Peder Gustav continues, "It occurred to Store Per that he could speak another universal language. He lifted the cover of his massive immigrant chest and drew forth his violin, clapped down the cover, sat down on it, and the concert was on. First he played a selection of dear old Lutheran hymns. This assured the women and children that the good Lord and his protecting angels were hovering near. The Indians moved closer, encircling the group. Our artist now started to offer music of a lighter vein, such as folksongs, love songs and finally wound up with a rollicking "*Springe Dans*." [. . .]

According to Peder Gustav, "When Store Per picked up the tempo the grim visage countenances of our Indian warriors were transformed into winning smiles. They saw at a glance what was needed here, food and shelter, of which they generously supplied both. The Indians began roasting venison and brought our friends a generous helping, which to our people tasted very good. The two groups could not communicate with each other except through their median of sign language. Of course Peder would tell them a story through his violin, whenever he deemed it necessary. This was a language they understood and fully appreciated. Two days passed during the absence of the search party." [. . .]

"In a couple of days the first of the scouting and foraging parties straggled back to camp with a span of oxen hitched to some wheels made out of disks, sawed from a proper sized log to make a wheel," wrote Peder Gustav. "This unwieldy *kubberulle* was on loan from a helpful settler. Then food and two or three more ox teams arrived with grieving Michael Lie driving one of them. The party loaded its possessions on the ox carts and trekked through the forest toward Waupaca. "

"Not only was Michael Lie's log cabin too small to accommodate the party, it was unfinished. The family they had been counting on for assistance was in dire straits, motherless, and with Julie, the younger of the two Lie girls, barely weaned," Gustav writes. "Nor was their enough room for the new arrivals in a nearby abandoned lumberman's shanty. Consequently, the men worked during a thunderstorm to construct a lean-to out of hickory saplings and Norse *aakle* – the latter being tightly woven woolen blankets, a fabric well-nigh everlasting? [. . .]

Harstad finishes what turns out to be the story of only a Waupaca stopover, rather than an arrival at a trip destination, "The question arose for the Tjernagel party, what should they do next? Given the ceaseless rain, health problems, seemingly poor soil, and all that had transpired, *Indi-landet* did not appeal to them. To think that they had traveled many thousand miles, endured all kinds of hardship, and then to find conditions like this. This, their much dreamed of goal, where they had intended to settle down and build for themselves a home. They must go someplace right soon where they could earn money. No time was wasted in

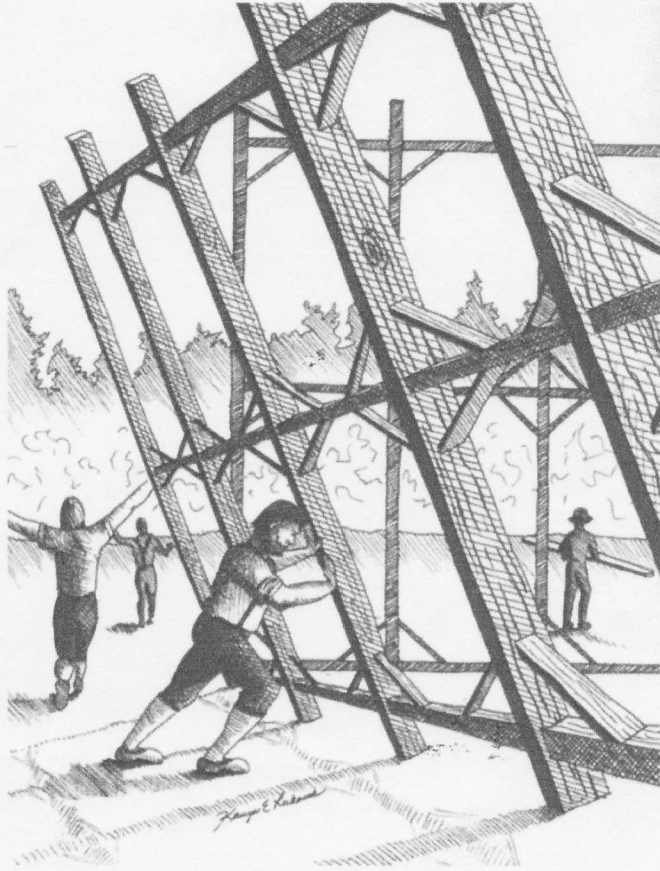
agreeing to go to Koshkonong, 130 miles to the south. Michael Lie had recently lived there, and he knew the way, and within the limits of their modest means, relatives who lived there could extend help."

In the following chapters, Peter T. Harstad describes the 1857 home building and family life (with daughter Helga and son Christen Johan) of Store Per mostly on a "promised land" prairie homestead near Story City, Iowa.

Harstad offers a number of accounts of Store Per's temperament and prowess, e. g., as told by Peder Gustav, "All heavy dimension lumber in those days was hewn out of logs found in the timber. This was cut and mortised together where a barn was to be built, the framework was made ready into sections, and then a dozen or sixteen men were invited to the barn raising, and each section was raised and securely fastened. In this case, however, one of the sections was not secured sufficiently before the men let go of it. The natural result was that it started to come down. The people got panic stricken and started to scurry away from the terribly heavy section that it had taken sixteen men to raise; Per, however, had full control of his senses and the rest of his body as well, and knowing that if that thing was allowed to come down, someone would certainly get killed. He braced himself to meet it and held it all alone, and in his easy going, well-calculated way of speaking said: "Don't get scared fellows, I've got it."

Final chapter nine, DEATH OF STORE PER, reports the early demise of our hero at age 37 while engaged in a necessary farm-based task. His life is reviewed, including the sad loss of four of his children, and what happens to his wife, daughter, and farm thereafter is disclosed.

Needless to say, This "Big Pete Story" belongs in the library of all historians. WHS members can order a copy from Jackpine Press at 16787 Tr., Lakeville, MN, 55044 for \$14.95 including shipping and handling charges.



**Store Per saving the barn.**  
Photo courtesy of illustrator Karyn E. Lukesek.

Waupaca Historical Society  
321 South Main Street  
Waupaca, WI 54981

### Keeping History Alive and Making History



Dear Waupaca Historical Society Members

The Waupaca Historical Society will be holding a **Benefit Bake Sale** at the Waupaca Railroad Depot on Saturday, June 16<sup>th</sup>, during Waupaca's Strawberry Festival. We are asking our members to donate baked goods items for this sale. We suggest cookies, muffins, nut breads, bars, brownies or snack mix. Please wrap your items in ziplock bags or paper plates covered with plastic wrap and mark them with a fair price (use 25 cent increments only). For cookies or bars, please place at least 6 items in one package. Nut breads should be wrapped individually. Muffins can be wrapped individually or grouped 4/package. Snack-sized ziplock bags work well for snack mixes, such as, chex mix or "puppy chow".

Please drop off your baked goods at the home of Marge Witt, 434 Center Street in Waupaca, on Friday, June 15<sup>th</sup>, between Noon and 6 p.m., or bring them to the Depot on Saturday morning, June 16<sup>th</sup>, between 9 and 10 a.m.

Your help is greatly appreciated.