

The Reporter

Volume 17 Issue 4 The newsletter of the Waupaca Historical Society Fall/Winter 2013

WHS Board of Directors: Dennis Lear, President; Mike Kirk, Vice President; Betty Stewart, Secretary; Bob Kessler, Treasurer, Tracy Behrendt, Gerald Chappell, Deb Fenske, Glenda Rhodes, Jerry Salan, David Trombla, Don Witt, and Marge Witt

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Hutchinson House Museum Curator: Barbara Fay Wiese
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Program and Event Committee: Dennis Lear, Julie Hintz, Gerald Chappell, Barbara Wiese, Marge Witt

The Nine Star 2013 Season of the Waupaca Historical Society



Visiting the kitchen of the Yawkey House Museum. From left to right: Jerry Chappell, Laurie Lear, and Don Witt. Photo courtesy of Jerry Chappell.

Star One on June 4, the **Enriching field trip to Wausau** to visit the Yawkey House Museum, the Woodson History Center, and the Wausau Mine Company Mother Load Eatery. Most enlightening and rewarding.

Star Two, WHS completes major repairs on its three facilities: During the summer there was continuous restoration on the Train Depot, the South porch on the Hutchinson House Museum was rebuilt and primed, the front step and side ramp on the Holly Center was re-

cemented, and a new computer-printer-software package was acquired for the Director's office in the Holly Center.

Star Three was the Sept. 14 **Cruise on Chief Waupaca Sternwheeler**. It was a treat and privilege to hear Captain and author Ron Arthur ("Concise Guide to the Historic Sites of the Waupaca Chain O' Lakes") share his personal



Photo from the ticket for WHS members to cruise the lakes - courtesy of Ron Arthur.



Ron Arthur pointing out historic sites. Photo courtesy of Jerry Chappell.

knowledge of the historic stretching waters on a perfect fall afternoon. About 25 persons sailed the lakes as Arthur reviewed the lakeside landmarks that are an integral part of Waupaca history.

Star Four was the Sept. 21 **participation of WHS's Hutchinson House Museum in the Fall O' Rama** that was re-instated at South Park this fall. Over the full day the Museum Guides led over 250 attendees of the Fall O' Rama through the Victorian artifact-filled rooms of

the HHM. Docent history lessons about the Hutchinson family and the artifacts sparked the interest of many visitors.

Star Five was the Oct. 4 **Visit to the Commandant's Quarters**. Ron Arthur negotiated a visit to the grand old building, that, arguably, is the oldest one on the Chain O' Lakes. It has been the living and meeting quarters for over 50 commandants of the Veterans' Home in King, Wisconsin. The past history, present status, and future plans for the building were covered by a representative of the Veterans' Home complex.

Star Six was the **HHM docent crew providing a history tour for 6 classes of Waupaca's fourth grade students**.

During the first two weeks in October, the WHS Director, HHM Curator, and a team of WHS guides filled each fourth grade class with two hours of information about the Hutchinson family and the artifacts that fill the Museum.

Star Seven was **WHS's hosting of the 2013 Fall Waupaca County Historical Society Think Tank**. On Oct. 19 representatives of many of the County's ten historical societies met at the Waupaca Train Depot for a delicious 'Soo Line French Toast Breakfast' prepared by Marilyn Herman, a round table discussion about the seasonal events presented by the representative of the societies

in attendance, and a tour and presentation by Mike Kirk, entitled 'Showcasing the Waupaca Depot Restoration'.



Photo of the visitors. Courtesy of Bob Kessler.



Attendees at the Waupaca County Societies Fall 2013 Think Tank. Photo courtesy of Bob Kessler.



Mike

Star Eight is the **creation of seven documents on the history of Waupaca.** The staff of the WHS newsletter, *the Reporter*, have compiled 4 three-ring-binders for the Holly Center History Library: 1) "Waupaca Doctors," 2) "Early Hospitals, the Riverside Medical Center, and ThedaCare Family Physicians," 3) Wayne Guyant's history series, "When Then Was Now," and 4) "The Waupaca Foundry." In turn, three bound documents are being completed for the Holly History Center Library: 5) An Annotated Bibliography of History Documents Containing Multi-categorical Aspects about Waupaca, Wisconsin, as Well as Single Aspects (36 documents are reviewed), 6) History Articles from the *Prime Time Supplement of the Waupaca County Post* (75 articles), and 7) History Articles from the WHS Newsletter, *the Reporter* (64 articles).

Star Nine was the November 14 "**Sixtieth Anniversary Celebration of the Waupaca Historical Society.**" During this gala and auspicious event that was held in the Cynthia Holly Room of the Holly History and Genealogy Center, WHS members, visitors, and dignitaries recognized the volunteers of the 2013 year, enjoyed Director Julie Hintz' power point presentation of highlights of the past 60 years, toasted those years of impressive accomplishment, and indulged in delicious "celebration punch and cake."

The first acknowledgement thoughts that came to mind for Jerry Chappell for 2013 for the WHS leadership crew.

Hutchinson House Museum Curator Barbara Fay Wiese managed to cover all the weekend open houses doing so with a dwindling supply of docents, mainly because she played queen docent Miss Julia herself on many of those days. By lugging about half the artifacts from the museum out to the schools for a stimulating pre-visit warm-up, she had all the kids super excited to come to HHM for a big history lesson.

Member of the Executive Committee at large, Joyce Woldt, is stepping down from the BOD after 14 years of service and countless contributions. Thanks Joyce for your many years of service toward keeping Waupaca history alive.

Secretary Betty Stewart takes the extra time to take, type up, and distribute the minutes of the BOD meetings. Without that effort we would not have the slightest idea what we did last meeting.

Treasurer Bob Kessler keeps the record of, and keeps us informed of, all the WHS financial matters and actions and does it remarkably well. No matter what we need money for, he finds it or tells us why not. He is irreplaceable.

Vice President Mike Kirk's role seems to be more like Vice President of Facility Restoration and Repair. He oversees our many maintenance needs for the nearly 100 year old Holly Center and our 160 year old HHM and spends numerous hours on Depot restoration. WHS needs and gains from his knowledge and expertise.

President Dennis Lear stepped into ex-president Dick Bidwell's big footsteps and is doing a great job in that he is the kind of president who does half the work. Dennis asks, "What do we need? Oh. Okay, I will do that!" And he does. Dennis is ably keeping our WHS ship sailing on a straight and narrow course.

Director Julie Hintz has a part time job, but often works full time as she watches over and keeps track of all activity in the Holly Center, greeting and helping researchers, building exhibits, creating documents, covering correspondence, noting and negotiating maintenance needs, and generating ideas for the WHS yearly programs.

Halloween Train

A history experience by Mike Kirk

It was the evening of October 30, 2013. I was replacing the rotted soffit under the six foot overhang of the old Waupaca Soo Line railroad depot. It was getting late in the fall and I wanted to get as much done as I could before winter set in. It was starting to get dark and rain was steadily falling, periodically coming down hard then somewhat letting up. The overhang of the roof protected me from getting wet. The baggage room platform lights came on and illuminated my work.

The depot had been built by the Wisconsin Central in 1907 after fire destroyed the existing wooden structure. The new building was a grand design fit for Waupaca's growing tourist business. The exterior walls were of solid sandstone with a clay Spanish tile roof. Inside there were three waiting rooms, each with a large coal burning fireplace. The ceilings were thirteen feet high and the woodwork was of varnished oak. There was also a baggage room, office and two rest rooms. Over the years, thousands of people had passed through the depot seeing loved ones off on journeys, or traveling on trips of their own.

Gradually times changed and the last passenger train on the Soo Line paused at the depot in 1965. A number of years later, the new Wisconsin Central railroad took over the line through Waupaca and closed the depot which had still housed a freight agent and section crew. After that, the depot stood abandoned, vandalized, and waiting its fate.

Then in 2004, after negotiation with the railroad's new owner, the Canadian National, the Waupaca Historical Society was able to purchase the depot, leaving it on its original site beside their busy main freight line through Wisconsin. Since then, my hobby has been to work on restoring the depot. At first, people thought the badly vandalized building, in its out-of-the-way part of town, was not worth spending the time and money to save it. But as I worked on fixing it up, they could appreciate what the depot was and were excited to see what it again was becoming.

On the evening of October 30, as I was finishing the next section of the soffit, I noticed a man was looking around inside the depot. He was a rail fan passing through Waupaca who decided to stop in to see how the restoration was progressing. As we visited, I could hear the faint sound of a train whistle at the grade crossings to the east. We moved into the office with its large bay window to catch sight of the train as it passed by. By that time it had gotten completely dark outside. The rain was still falling, and the windows had steamed up. We could hear the train as it came speeding past and saw only the engine's bright lights. In the pitch dark night we could not see the engine itself nor the expected black silhouettes of following freight cars. But as we watched through the depot's bay window, much to our surprise, we saw flickering lights continuing to shine through the passing cars. We said to each other, "That is no freight train!" It looked like the lights of a passenger train speeding by. By the time we opened the door to the trackside platform and stepped out, the train had passed. When the railroad fan left and I returned to my work, I could not get out of my mind the sight of those lights on the railroad cars that had passed our depot. Was it a rail grinding or maintenance train? Since the night was the eve of Halloween, just maybe it was really the ghost of a long ago passenger train hurrying on its way through the rainy night to some far off Halloween destination.

Mr. and Mrs. Waupaca Historical Society: Don and Vera Duesterbeck

A history article by Jerry Chappell

The Society has had many good people in instrumental roles who have come and gone, hanging in there for a decade or two. This little history article is about two of them who came and stayed -- two whose lifetime longevity has earned them the title 'Mr. and Mrs. Waupaca Historical Society.' The chronology of their history explains why.

At the Annual Meeting (September 5, 2013) of the Waupaca Historical Society, when half a dozen members were patting Vera Duesterbeck on the back for her lifelong service to the Society, Jan Hanke asked her if she had been with the Society from its very beginning. Vera's answer was yes, she and Don had been in the initial group who gathered together in 1953 to initiate the Society. In the record books, the Duesterbecks' presence in those early years may have been overshadowed by the likes of such high performers as Tom Brown, Dr. Norman Jardine, Sophelia Kurkowski, Phillip Truesdell, and Alan Scott. But, yes, the Duesterbecks were among those who decided to purchase the Hutchinson House in 1956, have it moved up to South Park, and turn it into a museum. During the key years of renovation (1956-1962), they, like the rest of the Society pioneers, were there with their aprons and tools and made the old house presentable.

Jan Hanke's September 2013 reflections recapping what she offered at the annual meeting.

Vera and Don were members of the Waupaca Historical Society in its early stages, 1953 and thereafter. They joined the Society together and accomplished much in the following 60 years. They had a vision and a mission for the future when they learned about the sale of the Hutchinson property, approached the City Fathers to get permission to buy it, moved it in three sections, got the property in South Park, rebuilt it, developed it into a museum, and maintained it for prosperity. Vera and Don were among those who contributed a lot of "sweat equity" prior to the Hutchinson House opening in 1957 and thereafter.

When I asked Vera about the carpet-rag rugs which are still on the HHM floor, and commented on how the weaver must have been an artist at the loom to have such matching "rows", she answered, "Oh Yes, we had to sit on the floor and stich each length of carpet together by hand and had to make sure the rows matched."

When the community generously donated items to become part of the museum's possessions, the early WHS members had to quickly learn the "rules and regulations" on how to label and accession items.

Vera and Don were always willing to assist at any open house to demonstrate historic home activities such as candle making, wood carving, and apple peeling. I am sure they were also active in "labeling" items to place on display, especially in the kitchen and woodshed.

As Vera continues to be an active member of WHS, I appreciate her friendship and knowledge of all things related to the Hutchinson House and Waupaca history.

As several decades passed after the HH opening in 1957, Don remained a key carpenter and painter for the Society, while Vera helped the curators and officers like John Holzman and Wayne Guyant with the accessioning of Victorian artifacts and the showing and cleaning of the HH Museum.

Marge Witt's September 2013 reflections also following comments at the annual meeting

It was 1997 when I met both Don and Vera Duesterbeck as I signed on to help out at the Hutchinson House. Susan Porfillio (WHS president) asked me to write articles to publish in the *Waupaca County Post* as "The Hutchinson House Highlights". During these fun and busy days there was always one constant: Vera and Don.

Vera never tired of teaching candle making. She'd have a tin can with melting wax and a special string, and would dip the string about 30 times to complete one candle. Over and over she demonstrated her technique to adults, children, anybody who would listen.

The museum was open Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, and Don and Vera signed up for their days to contribute as guides. Many times when I worked with them, or needed information for my articles for the "Hutchinson House Highlights", I'd ask them questions, and they would answer. Vera had known past presidents and was familiar with WHS people like Phil and Mary Truesdell, Isabelle Salan, and John Holzman.

The Duesterbecks were chosen one year to be King and Queen of Waupaca's Home Town 4th of July parade. They sat in an open convertible and rode behind the honor guard leading the parade.

I've served on the Board of Directors of WHS with Don and Vera. He is one of the past presidents, and Vera held the position of treasurer for many, many years. She stepped down when computers became the way to take care of the finances.

Don enlarged our garden space at the museum and dug the holes for new fence posts, while Vera stood nearby observing and guiding. The vegetable garden is still a wonderful area for all to enjoy.

Vera's small gifts will not be forgotten. She knew we needed hangers, so she donated padded hangers for garments. We have benefited greatly from their large and small gifts of 'contribution time' thoughtfully given, and for the "little details" they took care of.

Thank you Don and Vera

Don was elected president of the Waupaca Historical Society in 1972, while Vera assumed the new secretary position (previously it was a combined secretary-treasurer position).

The Waupaca Historical Society was deeply involved in preparing for the National Bicentennial Celebration in the 1975- 1976 period and the Duesterbecks' key job was to create, letter, and paint plaques for 18 historic Waupaca sites (e. g., The Danes Home, St. Mark's Episcopal Church, and the Fisher-Fallgatter Mill).

In a nearly back-to-back effort, In 1977 Don and Vera helped make additions to the newly acquired Heritage House and they carved out and painted 130 plaques for wall memorials of pioneer Waupaca families.

Through the decades, Don and Vera were always very much involved in coordinating the social hours and arranging for speakers. While Vera took over the financial coordinating of WHS during the 1985-2005 period, Don managed the minutes and correspondence of the Society as secretary for '90 through '98.



The Duesterbecks and Guyants play acting as WHS hosted the regional convention.



Don woodworking. Photo courtesy of Julie Hintz.

Through the years of the 1980s - 2000's, from Memorial Day Weekend to Labor Day Weekend, Don and Vera continued to give history lessons as docents in the Hutchinson House Museum, and when it was time to clean, repaint, repair, upkeep the flower garden, and prepare for exhibits and



Vera candle making. Photo courtesy of Jerry Chappell.

special events, they were first in line in work clothes and gloves in hand. During the years that the Heritage House served as the WHS History and Genealogical Center, and thereafter when it was shifted to the Holly-Carnegie Library Building, they chipped in their share of service hours.

Modified to pertain to both Don and Vera, the following is a tribute presented for Vera at the .Annual Meeting of the Waupaca Historical Society (September 5, 2013) by Jerry Chappell.

A Tribute to Dedicated Historians

"Their contributions throughout six decades is no mystery, for their outstanding service is recorded in the annuals of history.

The historians who have earned our upmost respect, are none other than Don and Vera Duesterbeck.

For sixty years they attended almost every WHS meeting, always with a smile and a special greeting.

Gladly serving WHS, countless times they were the one; negotiating for a program presentation, serving as social coordinators, or doing the needed leg work to get something done.

As soul mates, hundreds of times they served as a Hutchinson House Museum guides, giving visitors great history rides.

When it was time to play-act history scenes, Vera and Don were the best of the teams.

It was Don and Vera that stood tall, when they carved out plaques for the 'Memorial Wall'.

When it was time to make signs for historic sites, it was Vera and Don that gave the significant pioneer buildings their rights.

Many times with a wood carving knife and candle makers, their demo exhibits were outstanding shakers.

But the heart of their long-time service to WHS that was their measurer, was that of being, for Don a secretary, and for Vera a treasurer.

For over a dozen years, without being contrary, Don did all the duties of a dutiful secretary.

For 18 years as treasurer, Vera gathered our money, paid the bills, and kept our hands out of the tills. Because their consistent contributions, year after year, have so personified the WHS mission, keeping history alive, like no other peer of notoriety, they have earned the title Mr. and Mrs. Waupaca Historical Society. Thanks Don and Vera for a job well done!



Don demonstrating - Vera supervising. Photo courtesy of Julie Hintz.

**Waupaca Historical Society
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Keeping History Alive. . . . and Making History

Wanted Vintage Sterling Silver

The Holly History Center will be displaying a special exhibit of vintage sterling silver during the winter months. Sterling silver artifacts from the Hutchinson House Museum will be on display, along with a collection of Sterling Silver dishware from the Soo Line Dining Cars that was recently donated to the Waupaca Depot. We could use additional items for this special exhibit, however. So if you have a unique item or any vintage sterling silver jewelry, and wouldn't mind temporarily loaning the items for display, then please contact Julie Hintz at 715-256-9980 or bring the items to the Holly History Center on Wednesday, Dec. 4th or Friday, Dec. 6th. All items will be placed in locked display cases and protected by our security alarm system. Some items that would compliment our exhibit are "sterling silver" piggy banks, combs or brush sets, hand mirrors, hatpins, brooches, rings or other jewelry, candlesticks, music boxes, and decorative trays.