

The Reporter

Volume 18 Issue 2 The Newsletter of the Waupaca Historical Society Spring 2014

WHS Board of Directors: Dennis Lear, President; Mike Kirk, Vice President; Betty Stewart, Secretary; Bob Kessler, Treasurer, Ron Arthur, Tracy Behrendt, Gerald Chappell, J. J. Johnson Glenda Rhodes, Deb Fenske, David Trombla, Don Witt, and Marge Witt. **Director:** Julie Hintz. **HHM Curator:** Barbara Fav Wiese.

WAUPACA HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWS & UPCOMING EVENTS (by Julie Hintz)

Summer is quickly approaching, and we have some exciting things planned. We hope that you will be able to join us for some of these special events or just stop in any time for a friendly visit.

First, I'd like to introduce you to two new members on our Board of Directors: Ron Arthur and June Johnson. Some of you may know Ron as "Captain Ron", the captain of the Chief Waupaca sternwheeler that cruises on the Chain O' Lakes. Ron brings to the Board his enthusiasm for the history of the Chain O' Lakes and his talents with printing and graphics. Ron recently authored and published the book, "A Concise Guide to Historic Sites on Waupaca's Chain O' Lakes". June (who prefers to be called "J.J.") has been a member of the Waupaca Historical Society for many years and is an avid local historian and also a member of the Waupaca Area Genealogical Society. J.J. diligently researched the murder of Banker H. C. Mead that took place in Waupaca in the 1880's. She authored the book "The Headless Banker", which chronicles the murder and the trial that followed. We are excited to have both Ron & J.J. join our Board.

The Hutchinson House Museum will have a delayed opening this year. The museum will open for the summer season on Saturday June 21st. This delay is due to the construction for the new shelter building in the upper part of South Park. For 2014, the museum will be open on Saturday and Sunday afternoons from 1-4 p. m. from June 21st to August 31st. The museum will also be open on Friday the 4th of July. The new shelter building should be completed by July 1st and the upper parking lot will once again be opened. We are in desperate need of additional volunteer docents (tour guides) for the Hutchinson House Museum. Volunteers do not need to work every weekend. Even if you could volunteer just one or two days each month during June, July, and August, this would help us with our staffing needs. Please contact Barbara Fay Wiese at 715-258-3996 if you can volunteer! The Hutchinson House will remain closed if volunteer staff is not available, and this is disappointing for our out-of-town visitors.

Summer hours at the Holly History & Genealogy Center will begin on Saturday, May 31st. The Center will be open on Saturday mornings from 9 a.m. to Noon and will be staffed by volunteers from the Waupaca Area Genealogical Society. The Saturday hours will continue through the end of August. In addition to these hours, the Center is open on Wed. and Fri. afternoons, from Noon to 4 p.m., during the months of June, July, and August. (Current hours are Noon to 3 p.m. on Wednesdays and Fridays.) The wood eaves and window trim at the Holly Center will be painted sometime this summer.

Waupaca's Strawberry Festival will be held on Saturday, June 21st. We will have the Hutchinson House Museum open from 1-4 p.m. and the Waupaca Railroad Depot open from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on that Saturday. As always, admission to both of these buildings is FREE, but donations are gratefully appreciated.

The Hutchinson House Museum will be open on the afternoon of July 4th (noon to 4 p.m.). The new shelter building in upper South Park will be the site of the annual Chicken Barbeque. Come visit the Hutchinson House if you are in the park for the festivities. The Holly History Center will be closed on the afternoon of July 4th so that we can staff the Hutchinson House instead.

On July 20th we will be celebrating the 100th Anniversary of Waupaca's Carnegie Building, now known as the Holly History & Genealogy Center and the headquarters of the Waupaca Historical Society. More information about this Anniversary will be published in our summer newsletter.

On August 7th, guest speaker, June Melby, will give a presentation on the "History of Miniature Golf". We hope to follow this with a Miniature Golf Outing at Tom Thumb Golf Course. Look for more information on these two events in the summer newsletter and on our website.

The Rod & Classic Car Show is returning to South Park and will be held on Saturday, August 23rd. The Hutchinson House Museum will be open from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on that date.

The Waupaca Historical Society will hold its Annual Membership Meeting on Thursday, Sept. 4th, in the new Shelter Building in upper South Park. Join us for a picnic / potluck meal and updates about our society. Look for more information on this event later this summer.

And finally, Fall-O-Rama will be held in South Park on Saturday, Sept. 20th. The Hutchinson House Museum will be open from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. We might plan another Bake Sale for that day and will need donations of baked goods from our members.

I hope that you have a wonderful summer and are able to join us for some of these events!

Volunteers Wanted For the Triathlon – Saturday August 16th

Waupaca Historical Society is looking for volunteers to help direct traffic or assist along the race route approximately 3 – 4 hours that morning. In return, our organization will receive a donation of approximately \$15 - \$20 per each volunteer. All volunteers are invited to a special 'Pre-race Pizza Party' on the Wednesday before the event. For more information or to volunteer, please contact Bob Kessler at 715-258-9232 by June 6th.

WAUPACA HISTORICAL SOCIETY BUSINESS PARTNER DIRECTORY – 2014

As a member of the Waupaca Historical Society, you are encouraged to patronize the following businesses which are enrolled as “Business Partner Member” supporters of our society:

Holly Funeral Home
526 S. Main St.
Waupaca, WI 54981
715-258-4020

Niemuth’s Steak & Chop Shop
715 Redfield St.
Waupaca, WI 54981
715-258-2666

Waupaca Foundry Inc.
1955 Brunner Drive
Waupaca, WI 54981
715-258-6611

JR’s Sportsman’s Bar & Game Farm
1277 W. Fulton St.
Waupaca, WI 54981
715-258-8978

Woolsey Plumbing & Heating, Inc.
For All Your Septic and Plumbing Needs
N2852 Cty Trk QQ
Waupaca, WI 54981
715.258.8237
Bill Woolsey
Owner, Master Plumber #226748
P.O.W.T.S. Inspector
Soil Tester • P.O.W.T.S. Maintainer



Knight Barry
TITLE GROUP
Integrity. Experience. Innovation.
Shannon L Finnessy
Branch Manager
shannon@knightbarry.com
920-757-2230
Cell: 920-450-3463
Fax: 715-942-2664
Knight Barry Title Services LLC
120 W Union Street
Waupaca WI 54981
www.knightbarry.com

Alyssa Brooks, D.C.
Doctor of Chiropractic

BROOKS FAMILY CHIROPRACTIC S.C.
P: 715.258.7001 F: 715.258.7048
email: brooksalyssa@gmail.com • www.brooksfamilychiropractic.com
717 Churchill Street, Waupaca, Wisconsin

CHRISTOPHER W. JOHNSON, CIC
JOHNSON
Insurance Agency INC.
Waupaca 715 258 2133 Clintonville 715 823 2133 Oconto Falls 920 846 8118
toll free: 1 800 256 2133 • Cell 715 412 0251
chris@insureyourworld.com

Riverhill Dental Associates
Family Dentistry
701 Riverside Drive, Waupaca, WI 54981
715-258-3311
New Patients Welcome!

A Hutchinson House Highlight

By Marge Witt, Waupaca Historical Society

Do you recall the articles that I wrote for *The County Post* entitled “Hutchinson House Highlights”? There are many memories that I have of writing those articles, and of serving as a docent at the Hutchinson House Museum. One of my articles published in 2000 brought a mother and a daughter to our museum door, namely, Mary Ritchie McCain and her daughter Molly.

The original article mentioned that a Mary Ritchie McCain had previously donated a post card book. In 2000 both women read my article. They requested a visit to the museum so that they could further donate original 1908-09 newspapers and other memorabilia belonging to the family. Mary’s grandparents owned *The Waupaca Record*, one of two newspapers published in the early 1900’s.

A meeting time was arranged and Mary and Molly arrived at the museum. We sat down in the dining room of the Hutchinson House. While Mary passed along her donations, she mentioned the home location of her birth in Waupaca. Coincidentally, a docent, working there on the same day, heard the location, and interjected that she now owned the house of Mary’s birthplace!

The story doesn’t end there. Mary’s daughter, Molly, and I were friends at Oshkosh High School. We’d graduated in the class of 1966. When we parted we said that we hoped it wouldn’t be long before we’d meet again.

In the spring of 2013, Molly wrote to ask me to find some history of Waupaca from 100 years ago, telling me that her mother would be celebrating her 100th birthday in May. With the help of the home owner, I mailed her two pictures of Mary’s birthplace; one from 1946, and a more recent photo. I found interesting notes from the ‘Looking Back’ section of the *County Post* and mailed that information as well. Later, Molly mailed to The Waupaca Historical Society a rare book about Waupaca County as a ‘Thank you’.

In 2016 I hope to see Molly at our 50th Class reunion.

One never knows what might happen when you become a docent for the Hutchinson House Museum, located in South Park. Please consider joining other docents, working to share Waupaca’s history. Contact Barbara Fay Wiese, Museum Curator, or WHS Director, Julie Hintz, at the Holly Center.

Two “Miss Waupaca of the Chain O’ Lakes”

By J.J. Johnson, Waupaca Historical Society

Miss Waupaca of 1956: Sandra Sue Becker

In 1952 the Chain O’ Lakes *Picture Post* announced that Sandra Sue “Sandy” Becker, the 19 year old daughter of Mr. and Mrs. J. F. Becker, as its first “Miss Picture Post”. The inspiration behind the title was to help garner publicity for the Chain O’ Lakes throughout Wisconsin. The Becker family had been summer residents on McCrossen Lake since about 1941.

As Miss Picture Post the blonde, brown-eyed Sandy created a lot of publicity for the Chain through the publication of her pictures and participation in various beauty contests in which she always placed in a prize winning position. She quickly became known as the “Golden Princess of the Chain o’ Lakes. It was estimated that between 1952 and 1956 her picture had been in more than 5 million copies of newspapers.

In 1956 Sandy was invited by the state organization of the Miss America pageant to participate in the competition to be held at Reedsburg to choose a “Miss Wisconsin” to represent the state in their Atlantic City pageant. She declined their invitation believing she had little chance of succeeding as their judges tended to choose taller girls than herself (Sandy was only 5’ ¼”). Knowing Sandy’s record of placing so well in competitions (in successive competitions she had placed first, second, third and second), the Miss America organization repeated their invitation and Sandy was prevailed upon to accept the honor. The *Waupaca County Post* and Chain O’ Lakes *Picture Post* welcomed the opportunity to promote Waupaca and the Lakes and sponsored Sandy as “Miss Waupaca Chain O’ Lakes”.

During the competition she was featured in the *Chicago Tribune* and all of the metropolitan Wisconsin newspapers. In the *Milwaukee Sentinels’* photographic display of the 10 contestants, Sandy held the number one spot and in the Friday edition of the *Milwaukee Journal* coverage of the Miss Wisconsin pageant Sandy’s photograph was the only picture used to illustrate the article. With all the coverage she received a number of the larger newspapers and wire services shortened her title to “Miss Waupaca”.

For the talent portion of the pageant Sandy, an art major at Christian College, Columbia, MO, chose to use her artistic abilities. She was first contestant to do so in the four years that the Reedsburg Lion’s Club sponsored the pageant. Dressed in a blue artist’s smock, black shorts and black tam she drew charcoal cartoons during the allotted three minutes while Emcee Jack Clossey displayed some of her oil paintings. Sandy’s cartoons reportedly brought thunderous applause while she joked and laughed with the audience to their cheers.

After the swimsuit competition Sandy was one of five contestants called back to answer questions. In response to how she would represent Wisconsin at Atlantic City she began her reply with “I’d faint and I’m about to do that right now” continuing to give an answer that displayed her wit and candor.

In the end Miss Waupaca placed a strong second, becoming the alternate Miss Wisconsin for 1956. She won a gold trophy, a \$100 scholarship and the right to participate in a nine-state competition as Wisconsin’s representative in the America’s Sweet Corn Sweetheart pageant in Hoopeston, Illinois. But before going to Illinois Sandy took part in Sturgeon Bay’s Miss Universe contest in which she won a gold trophy for earning third place.

What didn’t become known to the general public until after the Reedsburg pageant was that Sandy had contracted polio when she was in the eighth grade which had paralyzed her legs and for a long time it was

uncertain if she would have to wear braces the rest of her life in order to walk but with her indomitable spirit she was nearly 100 percent recovered.

Miss Waupaca of 1957: Judy Steele

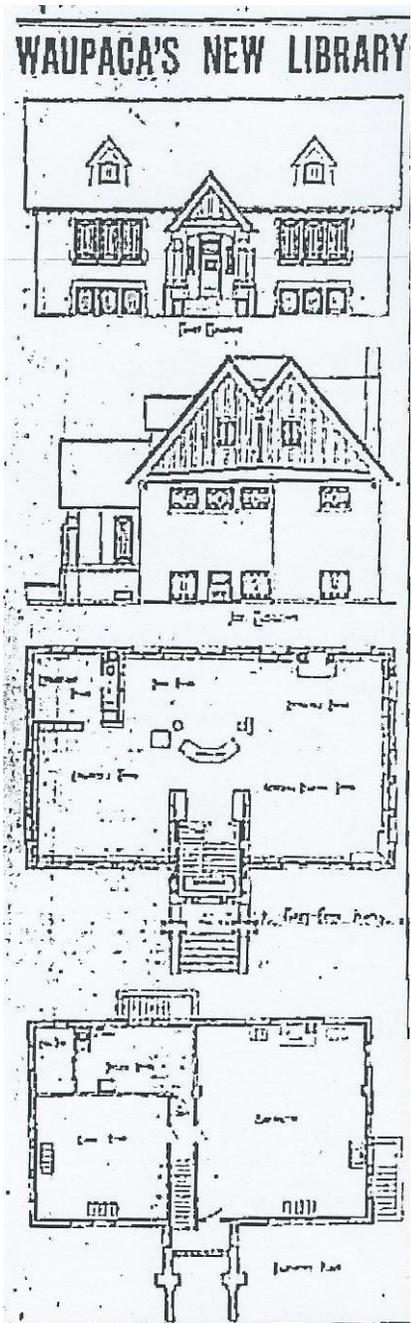
Judy Steele, the 19-year-old daughter of Leo D. Steele, grew up spending her summers at the family's lake home on Round Lake. From 1953 through 1956 she served as the hostess in Waupaca County's booth at the *Milwaukee Sentinel's* sports show. Judy was one of the most photogenic women at Waupaca's Chain O' Lakes and in Milwaukee she had made numerous television appearances besides being in demand as a photographer's model, even posing for a number of color magazine advertisements. In 1954 she was named the Chain O' Lakes' Miss Picture Post.

In 1957 she was named Miss Chain O' Lakes which also provided her a position as the receptionist of the *Picture Post's* office in the Indian Village business center which was located across from the Indian Crossing Casino. While serving in her position as Miss Chain O' Lakes Judy received an invitation to participate in a pageant held at Fish Creek, Door County, to become Wisconsin's representative in the Miss Universe contest to be held at Long Beach, California. The pageant was sponsored by the Door County Chamber of Commerce and Judy was one of the first contestants to ever be invited to participate by the sponsors. Part of the reason for her invitation was also because that January she had placed second in the Miss Wisconsin Press Photographer contest that had been held in Milwaukee. The Chain O' Lakes Chamber of Commerce agreed to sponsor Judy in the pageant, knowing she would generate a lot of publicity for the Chain O' Lakes. At the Miss Universe pageant Judy placed third, receiving a trophy for her accomplishment.

Not long after that pageant, Judy was sponsored by the Chain O' Lakes *Picture Post* to participate in the Miss Wisconsin pageant in Reedsburg. This made a second, consecutive year that a Miss Waupaca would enter the pageant, whose winner would move on to represent Wisconsin in the Miss America pageant at Atlantic City. Once again Judy provided a lot of publicity for the Chain, even appearing on WBAY-TV. When the *Milwaukee Journal* printed photos of the contestants Judy's photograph was a two-column, full length picture while all the other contestants just received a one-column head and shoulder photograph of themselves in the paper.

Judy was a Jayne Mansfield look-alike so during the talent division of the competition she chose to do a comedy skit that was written especially for her in which she impersonated Jayne Mansfield. The skit received thunderous applause from the judges and audience alike. In the end the contest was so close that three contestants ended up in a three-way tie which required a special session to determine the winner. While Judy was ultimately given third place the local paper proudly announced that the Chain o' Lakes beauties never failed to place in any of the top level beauty contests in which they participated.

Shortly after the Miss Wisconsin pageant, Judy was selected as "Miss Coastguard Reserve" in Milwaukee.



Floor plans for the new Waupaca Carnegie Library
Waupaca Record Leader, October 22, 1913.



The new Waupaca Carnegie Library.



Waupaca Carnegie Library somewhere along the 100-year way.

Waupaca Historical Society
321 South Main Street
Waupaca, WI 54981

Keeping History Alive

Forthcoming – A History Guide in the Making.

Hold your horses and hang on to your hats! It's in the last stages of compilation – *An Annotated Bibliography of History Books About Waupaca, Wisconsin*. Soon WHS will offer you a text that reviews, compiles, and leads you to 31 books that tell about the development of Waupaca's government and departments, churches, social clubs and organizations, prominent people, and businesses and buildings.