

THE REPORTER

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

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FALL/WINTER 2016

Newest Exhibits Highlight Waupaca High School Sports, Politics

With a new season comes a new slate of exhibits at the Holly History and Genealogy Center. The newest exhibit, on the history of Waupaca High School sports, was created by the Waupaca Historical Society's intern, Ashlie Buck (see article on p. 4). The exhibit highlights Waupaca High School sports from the 19th and 20th centuries and includes both items from the WHS collection and a jersey and megaphone on loan from the Waupaca High School.

With the elections coming up, visitors can also view an exhibit entitled, "Waupaca in Politics." This exhibit highlights such political



This photograph, featured in the new exhibit about Waupaca High School sports, shows the 1899 football team with the original high school in the background.

events in Waupaca as the battle over the county seat in the 1850s and 1860s to local and state election flyers and handbills.

New items have also been added to our updated exhibit, "Keeping History Alive." This exhibit features objects recently donated to the Waupaca Historical Society.

The Waupaca Historical Society also continues to transform the upper

level of the Holly Center and create more informative exhibits for residents and visitors alike. Come see the new exhibits and learn more about Waupaca history today!

WHS' King Cottage Focuses on History of Grand Army Home in King

by Ron Arthur, WHS Board Member

On the north shore of Shadow Lake, at the southern terminus of Waupaca's Main Street, lies a small parcel of municipal land called South Park. It is the site of a popular swimming beach and two large picnic pavilions. Since 1956, it also has been home to the Hutchinson House, an 1854 frame residence relocated there to serve as a public museum and operated by the Waupaca Historical Society.

The history of Waupaca always has been linked with the history of the nearby Chain O'Lakes. And the history of the Chain is linked to the history of the Wisconsin Veterans Home, which occupies hundreds of acres of the best real estate along the shores of those 21 interconnected lakes.

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Hutchinson House Wraps Up Another Season, In Need of More Volunteers

By Barbara Fay Wiese, Hutchinson House Curator

The Hutchinson House has had a busy season again this year. Visitors came from as far away as Australia and Florida! Youngsters in the city summer rec program came for a special event. They divided into three groups and rotated between doing a photographic scavenger hunt in Hutchinson House, playing croquet on the front lawn, and creating History Quiz Machines and Leavings Dolls in King Cottage. Once again, our fantastic volunteers made the day very special for them. Marge Writt and Nancy Weasner were at the craft tables, Julie Hintz and Jan Hanke guided the scavenger hunters, and I kept the croquet mallets swinging.

We are happy to have an energetic new volunteer, Sebastian Mikkelsen, who is a student at Manawa High School. He loves all things historical, his bedroom is furnished in antiques, and he has set a project for himself to sketch historic homes and buildings in Waupaca. We are especially grateful for his youthful presence. He helped with our school tours this fall, and we were so happy for the 4th graders to see a young person with such a deep interest in history. He wore either a suit with a vest, or suspenders for the tours, which added to the ambiance of the late 1800s. Nancy Weasner, Julie Hintz, Betty Stewart, Marge Writt, Mike Homolka, Dennis Lear, Jan Hanke, and I were the other docents. Many hands make light work, and when you are in an historical house, of course, those hands have white cotton gloves on them to protect our collection! BIG thanks to each one of our volunteer docents.

Tours are for adults, too, and we presented a special tour for a group of ladies who not only saw the house, but also were able to see five extra quilts that we displayed in King Cottage, just for their viewing pleasure. If you would like a group tour for your organization or friends, please call the Holly Center and we can arrange a convenient time. Think about this over the winter—we are now closed and would be happy to arrange a time from May through October 2017.



Barbara Fay Wiese (left) gave tours at the Hutchinson House to local 4th graders this fall.



Betty Stewart and Sebastian Mikkelsen show students the upper level of the Hutchinson House.

Winter is also a good season to think about becoming a docent for next summer. Please call the Holly Center if you are interested, or leave a message on our Facebook page or website. We have updated much of the docent information and would be happy to set up a time to talk to you about the Hutchinson House, our noteworthy collection, and to answer any questions you may have about being a tour guide. Come join us!

Railroad, Holiday Programs Coming Up at Depot

The Depot will play host to several programs this fall and winter, capping off a great year for the historic railroad building. Since heat was added to the Depot earlier this year, the Waupaca Historical Society has increased programming at the Depot, hosting the annual meeting and renting the building for a variety of events.

On Thursday, November 10th at the Depot, local resident Doug Watson will present, "Scandinavia: A Railroad Hub," which will also include information on Waupaca and its railroad. This program will take place at 6 p.m. Refreshments will be served.

WHS will also host its annual holiday gathering, though this year with a new location and time. On Thursday, December 1st at the Depot, all are welcome to attend the gathering, which will feature a presentation by Mike Kirk on Waupaca's Electric Railway. The program will be followed by an update and tour of the Depot. Attendees are encouraged to bring a dozen of their favorite Christmas treat to share!



We'll have time to share our favorite recipes (bring a copy if you would like!).

Lastly, on Sunday, January 15th, WHS will celebrate the anniversary of the last passenger train traveling past the Waupaca Depot. The all-day event will feature hot chocolate and refreshments at the Depot, a cross-country skiing adventure to the nearby quarry and time to tour the Depot. More details will be available in the coming months.

Soo Line Potato Car Looking for New Home

The new owner of an original 1940s Soo Line potato railroad car has expressed an interest in selling the car to an interested museum.

Mike Kirk, Depot volunteer and Waupaca Historical Society Board member, recently heard about the sale and contacted the new owner. The Soo Line potato car was

built in 1948 and was previously stored in Cameron, Wisconsin. It is a 40-foot steel refrigerator car with potato loading doors and ice bunkers at each end. The new owner plans to do some restoration to the railroad car. It is the last Soo Line potato car known to be in existence.

After speaking with Kirk, the new owner noted that he would like to sell the car to a



This Soo Line potato car is looking for a new museum home.

railroad museum or museum with a railroad interest. So far, WHS appears to be the only museum mentioned to the owner.

With the railroad car being somewhat cost prohibitive for WHS at this time, the Board is looking for input from its members and Waupaca residents as to the interest and desire of having such a car displayed at the Waupaca Railroad Depot. If

acquired, the car would be displayed outside the Depot and serve as a permanent exhibit on Waupaca's potato industry.

Do you have an interest in or any comments pertaining to this acquisition? If so, call the Holly Center or send an email to director@waupacahistoricalsociety.org.

New Intern Joins WHS Staff for School Year

The Waupaca Historical Society welcomes Ashlie Buck, our intern for the fall and spring semester! We are so happy to have her enthusiasm, great interest in history and talents this coming year. In addition to assisting with daily tasks at the Holly Center, Ashlie will help to create new exhibits, promote upcoming programs and design marketing flyers, and assist with cataloguing.

Here's a little about Ashlie:

"I was born and raised in Waupaca, and my family name has been here since its earliest years. I grew up over by the Train Depot, and I've always had a passion for Waupaca's history and its historical buildings. I remember sledding down the hill in front of the Depot or taking walks with my Mom and Dad over by the old Fisher Fallgatter mill and finding myself in awe. It was moments like those that really shaped my love for old buildings. My imagination always ran wild with ghost stories, and antiques were more interesting to me than most of the modern day attractions for kids.

When I started to think about college, I looked into attending an historic preservation school in Chicago, but relocating was not feasible. I found that Fox Valley Technical College had an Interior Design program that would equip me with useful knowledge such as display layouts, textiles, and history of furniture, which I could shape into useful restoration skills someday.

While attending FVTC, I found my career path in administrative work and picked up a second program in Office Assistant. Shortly after, I found myself part of the FVTC Waupaca Regional team. I started to take a close look at the credits I was accumulating through the two programs and discovered that if I took two more classes, I would acquire a certificate in marketing as well.

The opportunity to intern with the Waupaca Historical Society came when it was time to start looking into internship sites for the Interior Design program. While my classmates were eager to get into kitchen and bath,



Ashlie Buck's first exhibit project, an exhibit on Waupaca High School sports, is on display now at the Holly Center.

flooring companies and full service design firms, I had to make my case for why the Waupaca Historical Society would fulfill the requirements for Interior Design. Needless to say, I have been given incredible tasks that involve creating exhibits, relocating collection pieces for better "flow" and also creating flyers that attract interest in certain programs the Waupaca Historical Society features to educate and inspire our community.

Now that I am a part of this incredible organization, I would love to continue my education after graduating from FVTC next December. I will be pursuing a certificate in Museum Studies and also hope to specialize in exhibits and history of furniture so I can continue to bring value to an already remarkable team of Waupaca Historical Society members.

King Cottage (Continued from pg. 1)

The Veterans Home—known then as the Grand Army Home—was founded in 1887 based on an untested development technique called “The Cottage Plan.” Up until then, large-scale residential institutions (like poor-houses and orphanages) built massive dormitories for their residents. And all prior institutional housing for indigent war veterans permitted only the former soldiers themselves to fill the beds. If they were married, their spouses had to make their own living arrangements off the grounds.

The only planned developments to rely on single-family structures prior to 1887 were “company towns” built to serve the temporary boom-time needs of mining, construction, or manufacturing operations. These, too, were distinctly male-only operations.

But the essential elements of the Cottage Plan were to: (i) house residents in small, home-like dwellings in a bucolic setting, and (ii) allow the old soldiers’ spouses to reside with them and be full members of the institutional community. Not only did the Cottage Plan significantly enhance the quality of the veterans’ lives, it also was a brilliant innovation in institutional management. The co-habiting spouses were not only life-partners for the veterans; they also were the veteran’s primary caregiver—significantly reducing the need for professional staff.

What’s more, building cottages proved to be an extremely economical and cost-effective way to enlarge the institution’s capacity. In towns large and small around the state, the women’s auxiliaries of local chapters of the Grand Army of the Republic proved to be eager and adept fundraisers because the cost of a single cottage was comprehensible to donors on a personal scale, and each sponsoring



This birds-eye view of the Wisconsin Veterans Home in King in 1893 shows the simplicity, yet communal nature of the veterans’ cottages on Rainbow Lake.

community was able to designate a local hero to be the occupant of their town’s little cottage. The simple, no frills structures sprouted rapidly. There was no indoor plumbing and no need for meal preparation space since food service was provided in central dining halls. The grounds of the Veterans Home provided ample facilities for activities and entertainment, so the cottages were little more than sleeping quarters.

It’s difficult to comprehend from today’s perspective, but important to note that the Veterans Home in King was founded at a time when housing for war veterans was considered a distinctly temporary need. By 1887, more than 20 years had passed since the end of the Civil War. The youngest of that conflict’s combatants were already 40 years old, so it was anticipated that the need for such a facility was near its peak in 1887 and soon would diminish.

Alas, more wars followed. And by the mid-1970s, a new generation of Veterans Home administrators viewed the quaint 19th century cottages as inefficient anachronisms.

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King Cottage

(Continued from pg. 5)

The push was on to build huge institutional care facilities and the 50 or so old cottages were literally in the way. About half were marked for demolition, and a handful of those were moved first by private parties to destinations off the grounds of the Veterans Home. One of the doomed cottages was rescued by the Waupaca Historical Society and transported to South Park where it was relocated behind the Hutchinson House.

Once situated in South Park, the tiny structure became known as the “King” cottage. It’s a

name that takes some explaining. Originally, the Veterans Home was known as The Grand Army Home because it was the Grand Army of the Republic (a fraternal society of Union army Civil War veterans) that established the facility. Its grounds have always been

outside the Waupaca city limits (although it was the City that purchased the 80-acre site of the defunct Greenwood Park Hotel and donated it to the GAR to get the project started). Eventually, a small cluster of residences and businesses grew up near the Veterans Home due to the location’s proximity to the institution and the Chain O’Lakes. In the 1960s, the unincorporated community was officially designated as “King” in honor of Wisconsin-born Brigadier General Charles King, whose 70-year career in uniform is the longest in U.S. military history. The veterans’ care facility is now known as “The Wisconsin Veterans Home in King”, and thus, while it may seem at first

blush that our tiny cottage has some connection to a monarchy, it does not.

Initially, WHS utilized the King Cottage as library space. In 2001, the society acquired the old Waupaca public library and moved its collections there. Then, on Memorial Day weekend in 2016, an exhibit was installed in the King Cottage to explain the cottage and the significant role that it and others like it had played in the development of the Veterans Home and the Chain O’Lakes area.

The building itself is very small. It consists of

a single room just 20 feet long and 12 feet wide. The modesty of the structure is perhaps its most important historical attribute. Visitors can imagine living with their spouse in such a confined space. If they do, it’s likely they’ll realize



Cottages can be seen lining Milwaukee Street in about 1906 at the Wisconsin Veterans Home in King.

that such a lifestyle would revolve around activities outside the four walls of the cottage.

And it is in this connection that the King Cottage’s location in South Park is a marvelously accurate reproduction of the dwelling’s original context. The cottage’s surroundings in the park simulate the environment in which the cottage was built and occupied, and thus constitute an integral element of the exhibit.

When the building was relocated to South Park in 1975, a porch was added to the eastern side of the structure. To get a good sense of what it was like to live in the cottage circa 1900, visitors are encouraged to step out onto that elevated porch.

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King Cottage

(Continued from pg. 6)

Dominating the view is Shadow Lake, a picturesque and tranquil body of water free from speedboats and significant shoreline development. While less than half the size of Rainbow Lake on the Chain, this lakeside perspective is much more similar to the cottage's surroundings 100 years ago than the modern manifestation of Rainbow Lake itself.

Moreover, the public grounds and park's communal structures—while comprised of modern materials—are faithful to the sense of social participation essential to cottage life at the Veterans Home. Even the outhouse positioned just a few steps north of the King Cottage is an authentic touch.



The King Cottage sits behind the Hutchinson House in South Park and is open to visitors during the summer.

In many respects, the contemporary vitality of South Park better demonstrates the Cottage Plan than the Cottage District at the Veterans Home that's on the National Register of Historic Places. As of 2016, when our King Cottage exhibit opened, the Veterans Home district contained just 20 surviving cottages, none of which is either in use as housing or open to the public for viewing.

Moreover, the State of Wisconsin has announced plans to demolish all but two or three of those cottages in the near future.

Our new exhibit in the King Cottage is entitled, "America's First Retirement

Community." It is a simple exhibit designed to provide a conceptual framework within which to consider the building and grounds beneath visitors' feet. But the title asserts a claim to originality. How do we know for certain that it's true?

Other historians considering the question have identified a few other potential candidates, foremost among them being the William Enston Home in Charleston, S.C. This 1889 "model community" of 24 two-story brick cottages built on a nondescript eight-acre parcel within the City of Charleston is on the National Register. It was funded by a bequest from a single benefactor, and specifically designated to provide housing exclusively for the indigent elderly (i.e. men and women aged 45 and older) to "make old age comfortable."

There is some ambiguity regarding the dates of construction and first occupancy of any of the structures at the William Enston Home, but it appears to have occurred about two years after the 1887 occupancy by the first residents at the Grand Army Home.

Moreover, the William Enston Home never possessed several important characteristics essential to the contemporary notion of a "retirement community." Because the bequest required the City of Charleston to provide an eight-acre site within the city limits, all available locations were relatively undesirable. And all the duplex residences were laid out in a municipal grid.

In contrast, the Grand Army Home's spectacular waterfront location is completely consistent with modern conceptions of a desirable site for a retirement community. The Chain O'Lakes, the Amusement Hall on the grounds, and various other features also generated a sense of community absent from the William Enston Home.

And we hope you'll visit the society's King Cottage again and again, take time to study the details in our exhibit, and spend some quality time in South Park imagining a cottage retirement at the dawn of the 20th century.

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Interested in volunteering? Contact the Waupaca Historical Society today! We have many opportunities for volunteers, including cataloguing collections, serving as a tour guide and helping at the Waupaca Railroad Depot. Come volunteer with us today!

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The Waupaca Historical Society is a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organization. Its mission is to preserve, advance and disseminate knowledge of the history of the Waupaca area. The Waupaca Historical Society owns and operates the Holly History and Genealogy Center located at 321 S. Main Street, the Hutchinson House Museum and King Cottage located in South Park, and the Waupaca Train Depot located at 525 Oak Street.

Thank you for your support. We hope that you will come and enjoy the displays and resources at the Holly History and Genealogy Center and visit the Hutchinson House Museum, King Cottage and Waupaca Depot with your family and friends. Please check our website for our open days and times.

WAUPACA HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP/DONATION FORM

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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.

Thurs., Nov. 3, 5:15 p.m.	Board of Directors Meeting (open to the public)
Thurs., Nov. 10, 6 p.m.	“Scandinavia: A Railroad Hub” with Doug Watson at the Waupaca Railroad Depot (525 Oak Street, Waupaca)
Thurs., Dec. 1, 6 p.m.	Christmas Party at the Waupaca Railroad Depot (525 Oak Street, Waupaca)—bring a dozen of your favorite Christmas treat to share!
Thurs., Jan. 5, 5:15 p.m.	Board of Directors Meeting (open to the public)
Sun., Jan. 15, all day	Waupaca Railroad Depot open for anniversary of last passenger train service—hot chocolate, skiing to the Quarry and more!
February 2017	Railroad brunch at the Depot (tentative)
Thurs., March 23rd, 6 p.m.	Cordelia Harvey, Angel in a Gray Bonnet (by Jessica Michna)