

The Wanigan

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE MARATHON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY • 2021 No. 2

2021 LANDMARK & ARCHITECTURAL SCAVENGER HUNT

Normally, this issue of the Wanigan would feature our Historic Preservation Month event, such as Wings Over Wausau or tours of historic homes or taverns. But this year is anything but normal, so we invite you to participate in the 2021 MCHS Scavenger Hunt of Wausau landmarks and unique architectural features. Photo clues are planted throughout the following pages. Some easy. Some difficult. All but 5 are located in the downtown Wausau area, and all of them can be found within 1 mile of downtown from 6th and Grant Street west to Marathon Park.

An entry blank is printed on page 4. First, second, and third place prizes will be awarded based on the most correct answers (or by a drawing in case of a tie). All entries must be emailed or postmarked by June 10, 2021. Gather your friends and family and enjoy your hunt!



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THOUGHTS ON REOPENING



Russ Wilson

Things are starting to look up as more and more of our population gets vaccinated. We are excited at the prospect of opening the Woodson History Center and the Yawkey House to the public. We do not have a firm date for a planned event just yet; that will come. Please rest assured that we are assessing just when and how to reopen in a manner that is safe for our members, guests, staff and directors. Like you, we will have to be patient just a little longer. In the meantime please continue to enjoy our online offerings and the Scavenger Hunt.

Russ Wilson, MCHS Board President

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WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

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THANK YOU FOR YOUR DONATIONS

From Carol Jamieson in honor of John Hattenhauer's birthday
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A special thank you to John & Sally Hattenhauer for sponsoring *The Wanigan's* color covers



The Marathon County Historical Society is supported in part by City of Wausau Room Tax Funding.

The mission of the Marathon County Historical Society is to collect, preserve, and exhibit materials related to the history of Marathon County, and to use these materials to help people learn about North Central Wisconsin, connect with their roots, and explore their own historical connections.

WHAT EXACTLY IS A WANIGAN?

By Ben Clark, Archivist / Historian

Wanigan (or sometimes *Wanagan*) has actually been used to describe a few different things, depending on when, where, and how you use it. The word itself is said to go back to a phrase used by the Ojibwa. "Waanikke" translates as "to dig a pit," and therefore the resulting pit becomes a "waanikaan." But it wasn't necessarily meant to be *a hole in the ground*, but rather a phrase that was used to refer to a sort of temporary storage.

When the European explorers, traders, and trappers traveled inland into North America, they adopted more than a few of the Native American practices, including using canoes to travel along the waterways. The rivers and lakes were not always connected, so it was necessary to carry the canoes and cargo across bits of land to the next part of the waterway (portaging). They also adopted the practice of bringing a wanigan with them. In this context the wanigan was a sort of box or container for their food, tools, and/or belongings. It was compact enough to fit into a canoe, but also had straps to be carried overland to get to the next bit of water.



Fast forward a century or so, and the waterways of Wisconsin were still being used as a vital means of transportation. The common practice for lumbering was to spend the winter cutting down trees of the Pinery which made it easier to drag the logs to the frozen riverside. Before long, the logs would be carried down river to a sawmill by the spring thaw—and it was necessary for some of the lumberjacks to travel with these logs down river to ensure they arrived at the destination.

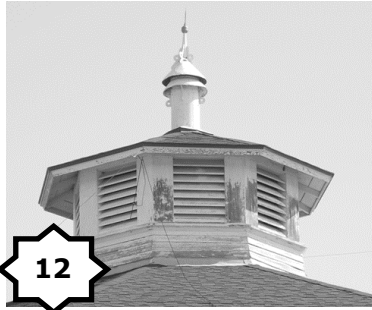


And so the wanigan made another appearance, now as a floating home for the water-bound men. It was part storage tent, part cooking hut, part bunks for sleeping. Even though a constructed cabin on a raft would certainly be more comfortable and sound than a cloth tent, they often opted for the less permanent option, because it made it far easier to ship back up to the camps for the next journey.

But by 1910 it was far easier to transport logs by railroad, especially after the damming up of the Wisconsin River. But the wanigan was one of the most iconic representations of the log drive days. And in fact, at the so-called, "Last Log Drive" of the Wisconsin River in 1912 (which was largely a photo op for the owners to relive the good old days as pictured above), a wanigan was the centerpiece of the event.



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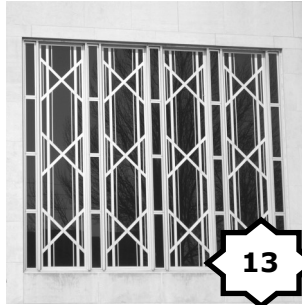
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2021 LANDMARK & ARCHITECTURAL SCAVENGER HUNT ENTRY FORM

Name: _____ Email: _____

Address: _____ Phone: _____

Include specific site, block, building &/or address in your answers.

- 1- _____
- 2- _____
- 3- _____
- 4- _____
- 5- _____
- 6- _____
- 7- _____
- 8- _____
- 9- _____
- 10- _____
- 11- _____

- 12- _____
- 13- _____
- 14- _____
- 15- _____
- 16- _____
- 17- _____
- 18- _____
- 19- _____
- 20- _____
- 21- _____
- 22- _____

Entries must be emailed or postmarked by June 10, 2021.
info@marathoncountyhistory.org MCHS 410 McIndoe Street Wausau, WI 54403

HISTORIC PRESERVATION IN WAUSAU

By Gary Gisselman, Librarian / Historian

There has always been a strong appreciation for the history of Marathon County and Wausau. The stellar architecture of notable architects and the notable people of our history have given us a landscape full of important houses and buildings. These buildings have stood the test of time. There were some very significant buildings that met the wrecking ball: the Alexander Stewart House on 10th Street, the Richardson Romanesque Court House on the 400 Block, First National Bank building on the 300 block of 3rd Street, the old Franklin School on Bridge Street, and the old Lincoln School on Fifth Avenue, and several blocks of houses north of Scott Street.

However, it was the razing of the D.L. Plumer House at the corner of Fifth Street and Franklin Street that caused people in the community to make an effort to save the house and prevent it from being torn down. A year long effort to raise funds to save the house did not achieve the desired goal and the house was torn down in April of 1972.

This preservation effort to prevent the razing of the Plumer house was in the context of a larger national effort to set a policy for historic preservation activities on a national, state, and local level. This desire for a common understanding on historic preservation was set in law with the passage of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. One of the key features of this law was the establishment of the National Register of Historic Places which made it national policy to identify historically significant buildings, sites, and districts according to National Register criteria. The Cyrus Yawkey House at 403 McIndoe Street, and the Hiram Stewart House at 521 Grant Street and the D.G. Jones house at 915 Grant Street are houses in Wausau that were placed on the National Register of Historic Places by the end of the 1970's.

The real work started in 1975 with the establishment of the City of Wausau Landmarks Commission by the City Council April 12, 1975 creating Chapter 2.82 of the Wausau Municipal Code. This early version of the ordinance gave the Commission authority to landmark houses and buildings in the city. A much more controversial ordinance would come later in the mid 1990's. The first issue to come before the Commission in 1975 was an effort to prevent the First Universalist Church from tearing down the Fowler Stone House at 522 Grant Street. Protests from the Wausau Historic Landmark Commission and the Wisconsin Historical Society were not able to save this George Maher designed Prairie School house from the wrecking ball and it was eventually torn down.

Continued on page 7

LANDMARK & ARCHITECTURAL SCAVENGER HUNT

Everyone is welcome to join the hunt, but clues will only be available in printed editions of The Wauigan. Additional copies will be available outside the Fulton Street entrance of the Woodson History Center.

- * Entries must be emailed or postmarked by June 10, 2021
- * The entry form is not required. An email listing your answers will be accepted. Please include your name address and phone number.
- * The decision of the judges is final.
- * First, second & third place prizes will be awarded according to the number of correct answers. (There will be a drawing in case of a tie.)

Prizes are provided by Janke Book Store, Ironbull, Downtown Grocery & MCHS

Gary Gisselman will livestream the hunt answers and brief histories of the locations on Saturday, June 11 at 2pm via Facebook and YouTube.

Winners will be announced prior to the June 16 History Chats at 12:30 pm, and will be notified by email and/or telephone that afternoon.

FROM OUR COLLECTIONS— THE PLUMER HOUSE

By Kathy Volkmann, Curator of Artifacts

During Historic Preservation Month, we typically celebrate properties that have been saved from demolition. Too many homes and buildings have been lost to the wrecking ball and, in most cases, no physical reminders of these structures remain. As a historical society we strive to preserve important artifacts from the past, and sometimes this includes architectural remnants.



The Plumer House

In 1997 we were fortunate to receive the donation of several items from the home of Daniel and Mary Jane Plumer that was razed in 1972 (shown here in photos). Built in 1890, the Richardson Romanesque-style mansion sat on a large lot near downtown Wausau. The house had an elaborate open staircase, parquet floors and beautiful stained glass windows.

After the death of Mary Jane in 1928 (Daniel died in 1920) the house had several owners, but it was eventually decided to raze the building. Realizing the architectural and historic significance of the house, a group of Wausau residents formed a "save the mansion" group in 1970. Unfortunately, this first organized attempt at historic preservation in Wausau failed and the house was demolished in 1972 to make room for a parking lot for the First Presbyterian Church.



April 1972 demolition



Luckily, some remnants of the house were salvaged and purchased by local residents. The items shown here are now in the historical society collection. They include a mosaic-style tile produced in France that has a stylized leaf design in soft shades of green, yellow and red (see page 8), a brass Art Nouveau pocket door escutcheon plate, and a brass outdoor water spigot.

It's not possible or feasible to save every old building but saving even small parts of them can help us stay connected to our past. While Wausau's first organized attempt to save a building (at least in recent times) wasn't successful, it started a wave of preservation that contributed to saving a train depot, along with numerous commercial buildings and homes that may otherwise have been demolished.



Our curators thank all who donated wooden hangers. Collections now has more than enough of them for the preservation of our military, police and fire uniforms.

The next step is to pad the hangers, and we are requesting donations of polyester quilt batting. (No wool or cotton, please.) If you would like to donate, please call 715-842-5750 to arrange a drop-off time, or leave it by the Fulton Street entrance to the Woodson History Center. Thank you for supporting the Marathon County Historical Society!

History Chats

Join us Thursdays at 12:30 pm for **History Chats**. Gary Gisselman and Ben Clark livestream a 20 minute presentation on Facebook

and YouTube. Programs are recorded and are available for later viewing.

June topics feature June Dairy Month

Future **History Speaks** topics will be announced at a later time.

History Speaks

at the Woodson History Center

HISTORIC PRESERVATION IN WAUSAU

Continued from page 5

This was the beginning of a concerted effort by preservationists in the city to make an effort to publicly “show off” historic architectural treasures. And fortunately there were people in the city that would be a part of the preservation movement for a long time.

One of these pioneers of historic preservation was Maryanne Norton. Maryanne Norton came to Wausau in 1974. As soon as she arrived it became her passion to present at every opportunity the rich architectural history of Wausau’s homes and buildings. Her position as librarian of the Marathon County Historical Society and her great interest in historic architecture led her to be the principal investigator and project historian for the Intensive Historic Survey of Wausau published in 1984. The project, the first of its kind in Wausau, identified significant architectural properties in the city. This would guide the work of the City of Wausau Landmark Commission for years to come. In 1984, she along with Don Aucutt would write *City in the Pinery: A Guide to Wausau’s Historic Architecture*. Maryanne was also instrumental in the movement to save the historic Milwaukee Road Depot on Grant Street. One of the many “saves” of the preservation movement in Wausau.

When Maryanne Norton left Wausau, she was succeeded by Mary Jane Hettinga who would become librarian and later director of the Marathon County Historical Society. Mary Jane continued the work of presenting programs that showcased historic buildings in the city and the county. Mary Jane would spearhead the development of programs highlighting the rural architecture of Marathon County. This would lead to the publication of “Discover Marathon County’s Agricultural Heritage: Self-guided tours of agricultural landmarks of the heart of America’s Dairyland” published to celebrate Marathon County’s 150th anniversary in 2000. Mary Jane Hettinga, along with Don Aucutt and Kathy Volkman, would form the group Friends of Wausau Historic Landmarks. This group would present programs on historic buildings as well as how to take care of your historic building. In 2007, the group would publish the finest account of this city’s landmark structures, *Wausau Beautiful: A Guide to Our Historic Architecture*. Mary Jane would also contribute her knowledge of local landmarks by writing several nomination papers for the National Register of Historic Places.

The preservation movement continued to be carried on through the City of Wausau Landmark Commission. A major revision to the City of Wausau’s Ordinance happened in 1993 to bring the ordinance in line with national historic preservation standards. The Commission would continue to landmark houses, buildings, and sites in the city and would create historic districts such as the Downtown Historic District, the Andrew Warren Historic District, the East Hill Residential Historic District, the Highland Park Historic District and the Eau Claire Addition Historic District. The local Andrew Warren Historic District and the East Hill Residential District mirrors the boundaries of those districts on the National Register of Historic Places. To explore landmarks and historical districts go to:

<https://www.wausaudevelopment.com/Planning/HistoricPreservation/LandmarksDistricts.aspx>

While the Commission and the Friends acted, there were some close calls in saving some key historic properties in the city. The 1937 addition to the old Wausau East High School, the Federal building at 317 First Street, the Milwaukee Road Depot on Grant Street, and just lately Grant School on 4th Avenue were all under threat of being razed and of disappearing from Wausau’s landscape. Thanks to people on the Commission and the Friends these buildings were saved and continue to tell the story of Wausau.

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INSIDE THIS EDITION



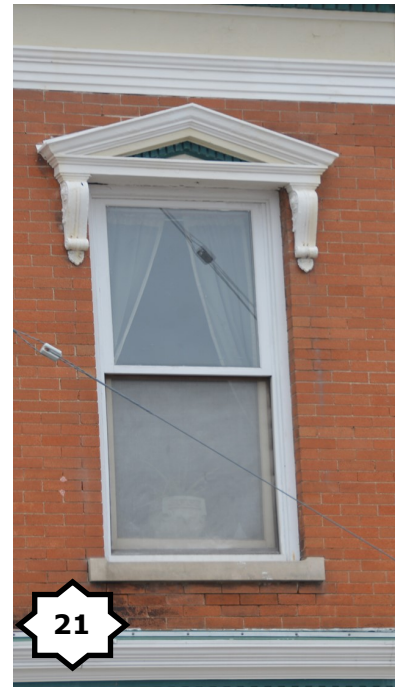
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Scavenger
Hunt prizes
provided by:



Janke
book store




**Downtown
Grocery**

