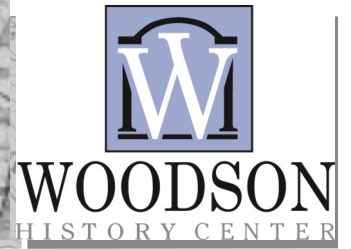




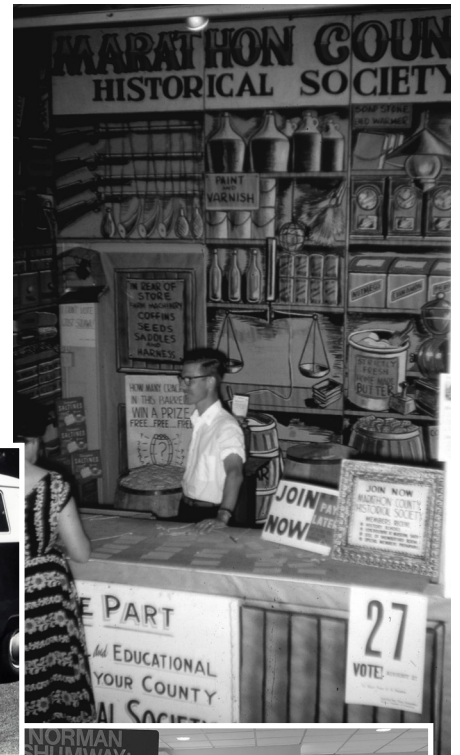
The Wanigan



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE MARATHON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY • 2020 No. 4

Thank You Members!

*Your support preserves the future of history.
We appreciate your connection with us!*



Clockwise from top left: Christmas 1983, Museum bus 1969, Wisconsin Valley Fair booth 1957, D.C. Everest History Day student exhibitors 2020, Cemetery Walk 2015, Demonstration by Ed Schoenberger at the Wausau School Forest 1969, Log Jam 1990.



FROM THE PRESIDENT

Resiliency carries us into merry holiday season



Russ Wilson

Let's acknowledge that which cannot be ignored. As I write this message, just four days before Election Day, anticipating the festivity of the holiday season, roughly half of us will be sorely distressed no matter who loses the presidential and congressional races. Perhaps you have a psychological box, closet, basement, cave, whatever, into which your worries may be banished, at least for as long as it takes to read this message. Any relief, no matter how short-lived, is welcome. So please repeat after me: We hereby banish election worries, anxiety, rage. Go thither forthwith! (I would love to add "now and forever," but ...)

But then, of course, there is COVID-19 that is causing so much death, debilitation, financial ruin, and disruption. So what poor words do I have to propose for a festive, heart-warming season? I'm no psychologist, but when I read about happiness, I see a theme that psychologists constantly champion: resiliency.

And on behalf of the board of directors here at MCHS, we are astounded, amazed, buoyed, and made hopeful, joyous, and optimistic at the resiliency our staff have shown during the pandemic. They are not merely dedicated and conscientious, but ridiculously talented and creative. When our executive committee decided on March 17 to close our doors to the public, our staff were already, right then and there, voicing ideas about how to make the best in a new, virtual world. And make the best they surely have. We are so proud of their accomplishments. They epitomize resiliency for which we could not be more thankful. Nor could we be more thankful for the continued support of you, our members, volunteers, Marathon County, the city of Wausau, and other supporters.

So here's wishing all, however virtual, masked, distanced, window-viewed, and human touchless it may be, the warmest merriest Christmas and happiest holiday season ever.

Yes, not just "as the situation may permit," but "ever"!

Russ Wilson, MCHS Board President

Welcome to our New Members

Ashley Kania

Rick Cveykus

Gifts Received

Kathy Anderson

Anonymous, via the GoodCoin Foundation

Linda Lockhart

Robert Wylie

Douglas Hosler

Marathon County Genealogical Society

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Gary Walters, Curator of the Yawkey House

Mike Bresnahan, Maintenance

Kathy Volkmann, Curator of Artifacts

Linda Forbess, Curator of Textiles

THE WANIGAN

The Wanigan is a quarterly publication sent as a benefit to members of the Marathon County Historical Society.



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

SUMMER GARDENING

Thank You: Volunteers keep Gardens blooming!

Members of the Wausau Area Garden Club logged 75 hours working in the Yawkey House Gardens in 2020, according to volunteer Liz Brezinski. Club members have volunteered in the Gardens since 2009.

Liz herself logged more than 20 hours this year, and Joan Burk-Miller logged 30 hours. The two women were key in keeping the Gardens looking beautiful all summer long, according to Mary Forer, MCHS executive director. Liz and Joan responded to questions via email.

“My favorite part of the Gardens is the area around the fountain,” Liz said. “Our garden club is assigned to the sunken garden area, but this year Joan and I spent several hours in other parts of the garden because no one else was doing it.” Group work was limited because of COVID-19.

Joan said, “I think other than the large phlox and peonies, I have found great beauty in the hybrid verbena and salvias in the



Joan Burk-Miller (left) and Liz Brezinski pose in the Yawkey House Gardens.

area by the fountain. As they sway in the breeze and attract the Monarch butterflies, I am always mystified.” The volunteers pulled weeds, clipped faded flowers, and checked for destructive pests.

“On occasion over the years we have purchased extra plants that had not survived the winter,” Joan said. The volunteers also have “treated ant hills, sprayed for thistles hidden under large shrubs, mulched, caged the peonies each spring, and separated perennials in addition to weeding, deadheading and putting the beds to rest for the winter.”

“The little crab apple seedlings in the spring are prolific,” Liz said. “I always spend lots of my weeding time pulling out the long grasses because I think they make a formal garden look untidy. Another issue we have had to deal with recently is the invasion of jumping worms. They were abundant last year but we have not noticed as many this year.”

“For me,” Joan said, “what began as just weeding has also turned into observation of what is, and is not, going on in the gardens. Monitoring for the Red Lily Beetle that emaciated all the Asiatic lilies a few years ago, noticing what plants did and did not work around the fountain because they didn't like 'wet feet,' watching for jumping worms that showed up in 2019, are just a few.”

Joan said she has enjoyed flowers since her childhood. “My mother always had tulips, daffodils and peonies in her small garden. I remember as a child bringing my teachers a small vase of tulips each year. Being able to be a part of these beautiful gardens is not only a joy, but a privilege!” she said.

The Yawkey House Gardens serve as a unique venue for weddings, special events, and photography sessions. Call 715-842-5750, visit our website, or email info@marathoncountyhistory.org for rental and photography fees.

The Marathon County Historical Society is grateful to have the Wausau Area Garden Club members as volunteers to keep our Yawkey House Gardens looking beautiful all summer long.

VIRTUAL EVENTS

History Chats continue with people, then sports

Weekly online History Chats will continue into the new year, at 12:30 p.m. Thursdays. Each features a short presentation followed by time for audience questions on the topic. The following topics are planned:

December 3: The Honorable Louis Marchetti
December 10: Councilwoman Helen Ohm
December 17: Olai Bache-Wiig
December 24: Santa Claus Visits Marathon County

The theme will change to Winter Sports in January 2021.

January 7: Hockey
January 17: Ski Jumping
January 21: Curling
January 28: Snow Mobiles

All History Chats are livestreamed on the Historical Society's Facebook page and YouTube channel, and recorded for later viewing.

* Longer History Speaks On the Air presentations will continue in a similar format. Topics, dates, and speakers were not available at the time of this publication. Watch our website and e-newsletter for updates.



Civil War Book Club announces 2021 reading list

Professor Brett Barker will again present his Civil War Book Club in 2021, now virtually via Zoom. If you wish to be a part of the book club and to receive an invitation to participate please contact Gary Gisselman at research@marathoncountyhistory.org.

In January you will receive an invitation from Professor Barker to join the Book Club via Zoom.

The dates of the book club and the books are:

January 28: Susannah Ural, *Don't Hurry Me Down to Hades: The Civil War in the Words of Those Who Lived It*. ISBN-10: 1472809106 ISBN-13 : 978-1472809100

February 25: Stephen Oates, *Abraham Lincoln: The Man Behind the Myths*. ISBN-10: 9780060924720 ISBN-13: 978-0060924720

March 25: Nathan Kalmoe, *With Ballots and Bullets: Partisanship and Violence in the American Civil War*. ISBN-10: 1108792588 ISBN-13: 978-1108792585

April 29: Megan Kate Nelson, *The Three-Cornered War: The Union, The Confederacy, and Native Peoples in the Fight for the West*. Hardcover: ISBN-10: 1501152548 ISBN-13: 978-1501152542
Paperback (to be released Feb. 16, 2021): ISBN-10: 1501152556 ISBN-13: 978-1501152559

Landmarks group hosts virtual gingerbread contest

The Sweet Landmarks Gingerbread Contest is going virtual this year! That's right, no need to transport your creation, leaving a trail of goodies behind you. We will have virtual tours of each entry (created by each Gingerbread Architect) on the Friends of Wausau Historic Landmarks Facebook page and website.

So whip up some gingerbread, grab your bowls of sweets and treats, and begin creating! Rules for 2020 include directions for submitting a short video and photos. Complete rules and entry forms are available on the Friends of Wausau Historic Landmarks website wausauhistoricalandmarks.org and their Facebook page.

MCHS to share 'Home for the Holidays'

The Marathon County Historical Society always celebrates the winter holidays with vintage decorations and costumed narrators.

This year, rather than in-person tours in a crowded open house-style event, the celebration will include a series of videos highlighting various holiday traditions, our Home for the Holidays series. Yawkey House Museum docents will narrate short, pre-recorded stories that will be released on successive Saturdays in December. All will be available on our MCHS YouTube channel and will be linked to our website and Facebook page.

Take a break with the Historical Society each weekend from December 5 through January 2 to explore some of our favorite holiday traditions! Then enjoy a drive or walk by our houses on McIndoe during the holiday season to enjoy our lovely exterior holiday décor.



Online shopping

Our buildings are still closed, but our ONLINE Gift Shop is always open!

Visit marathoncountyhistory.org for a historic shopping spree!

We feature a large selection of books, including titles by Jerry Apps and from the Wisconsin Historical Society Press, as well as unique gift mugs, T-shirts, notecards, and more!

Order online via PayPal or email info@marathoncountyhistory.org for other payment options.

Enter coupon code MCHSMEMBER20 to claim your 10% member discount.

FROM THE CURATORS DESK

Electric Christmas lights first used in 1882

By Kathy Volkmann, Curator of Artifacts

In 1882 the first Christmas tree to be lit with electric lights was at the New York home of Edward H. Johnson, vice-president of Thomas Edison's electric company. Up to this point, the only lighting option for well-decorated Christmas trees was candles that could remain lit only for a few minutes, lest the tree start on fire.

Electric tree lighting was not practical until 1903, when the General Electric Company made pre-assembled "lighting outfits" available to the public for the first time. Electric light sets became widely available and popular in the 1920s and 1930s. The 1922 Montgomery Ward catalog shows lights that could be "used instead of candles for decorating trees and lawns." It further explained that the lights "will burn in any position and are absolutely safe. Fire danger of candles is entirely eliminated." Sets were available for city lighting current or for use with a farm lighting plant (battery powered generator). Prices ranged from \$2.65 for eight bulbs to \$10.60 for 32 bulbs.

Due to the lack of rural electrification, candle-lit Christmas trees continued to be used well into the 1940s.



Christmas Lights

that beam at night from every window

Christmas Eve, on your street and ours windows with electric candles colored bulbs clustering in Christmas trees on snow covered lawns light lancing across the white flakes, olive with glad tidings; a modern symbol of an age-old holiday.

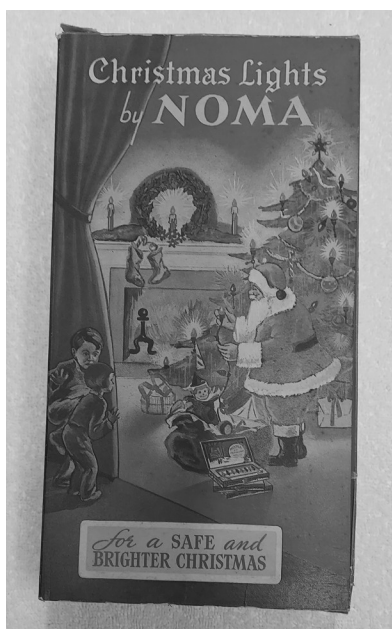
Up on the service lines the wires hum softly—singing the song of a new service—bearing the energy that spends itself in human helpfulness. The lights that glow on your Christmas tree will carry greetings to you, a message of loyalty, service and good cheer. Merry Christmas!

WISCONSIN VALLEY ELECTRIC COMPANY

*Personal
Attention*



*to Every
Customer*



Left: The box cover for an early electric light set shows a Christmas scene with the tree lit up by electricity rather than lit candles, "for a SAFE and BRIGHTER CHRISTMAS."

Right: Inside the box is a string of eight colored lights; two each are red, green, and blue, one is yellow, and one is white. Beads below each bulb help secure them to tree branches.



Holiday fun

Gathered here are some ideas for old-fashioned fun for festive occasions. Try making some decorations with household items, or playing games with found objects. Feel free to color this page!

Hometime crafts

Paper Snowflakes

Start with a square of white or colored paper. Fold paper in half. Find the midpoint of the folded edge. Mark off thirds along the open edge. Using the midpoint and one of the one-third marks as reference points, fold one side toward the front and the other side toward the back, to form a triangle that is one-sixth of your original square. Use scissors to cut off excess paper from the open end. Lightly mark with a pencil to draw designs, if desired, then cut shapes from the triangle. Carefully unfold your snowflake and hang with string.

Salt clay ornaments

1 cup all-purpose flour
 ½ cup salt
 1 teaspoon powdered alum
 ½ cup water (add few drops food coloring if desired)

Combine flour, salt, and alum in a bowl. Mix in colored water a little at a time until dough is stiff yet pliable. Knead until smooth, then use as any modeling clay. Make several colors, as desired. Roll or pat to flatten and cut shapes with cookie cutters. Roll long, narrow logs, twist or braid different colors together, and form into wreaths or canes. Before drying, poke a small hole in the top of flat shapes. Homemade clay dries in a few days, or bake at 250 degrees F until dry. Use string or narrow ribbon to hang.



Edible garland

You'll need a big batch of popped corn (day old is best), about two cups of cranberries, and a large needle threaded with strong thread. Tie a button on one end of the thread. Then push the needle through popcorn and cranberries to string them on the thread in the pattern of your choice. Hang on your tree indoors, or outside to treat the birds!

Seasonally themed games

Santa's sack

Best with four or more players. Fill a shopping bag with empty soda cans or other objects that make noise. This is Santa's sack. One person plays Santa. The other players tie blindfolds around their eyes. Everyone listens for Santa. Whoever grabs the sack first plays Santa next.

Dressing the tree

Part of the fun is creating the game! Use empty cereal boxes or heavy paper to make tree-shaped game boards and six decorations for each player. Number the decorations. Take turns tossing a die to determine which numbered decoration to add to your tree.



Marathon County Historical Society
410 McIndoe Street
Wausau, Wisconsin 54403

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Membership Matters!

Your participation makes a difference!

The Marathon County Historical Society depends on memberships and other financial donations to continue our important work of preserving local history and sharing it with the community.

Becoming a member is easy! Visit our website to donate online at www.marathoncountyhistory.org/about-us/membership, or email info@marathoncountyhistory.org to have membership materials sent to you.

If you already are a member, thank you! Please consider giving a gift membership.

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MARATHON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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.

WOODSON HISTORY CENTER YAWKEY HOUSE MUSEUM

410 McIndoe St., Wausau, WI 54403

Office: 715-842-5750 Library: 715-848-0378

Web site: www.marathoncountyhistory.org

***We are closed temporarily because of the COVID-19 virus,
but our website is always open!***