



# the wanigan

The Newsletter of the Marathon County Historical Society

No.4 Autumn 2022

Children's Activities

Yawkey House Tours

# Holidays *at the* Houses

COLLECTIONS &  
THEIR STORIES

Live Music & Dance

SATURDAY  
**10**  
DECEMBER  
**2022**

10:30 AM - 4:30 PM

WOODSON HISTORY  
CENTER  
*FREE Admission*

&

YAWKEY  
HOUSE MUSEUM  
*Tickets \$5 - Last Tour at 4:00pm*

More information on page 6

# WE HAD A GRAND OLD TIME!

By Russ Wilson, MCHS Board President

They spilled out onto the sunlit sidewalk and man were they buzzing! Perfect strangers chattering to one another, "did you see . . ." "it was over there . . ." "I couldn't believe . . ." Such phrases were heard up and down 4th street. No, the Packers had not advanced to the NFC title game. These were the 550 attendees of "A Grand Old Time", a free event presented by the Marathon County Historical Society at the Grand Theater on October 9th as part of Wausau's centennial celebration.

Massive kudos to those who made this free event, which attracted people of all ages, so successful. Whose brainchild was this silent film with musical illustration? Why, of course, that person was MCHS Board member and co-owner of Janke Bookstore - Jane Janke Johnson. Jane conceived the initial event idea, promoted it and presented it with her accustomed panache. Other welcomers in period costume were Joel Gardner, Connie Heidemann, Dana Macalalad, and Kelly Zagrzebski. Alison Coady, our smiling front desk manager at the Woodson History Center, used her considerable graphic arts skills to create the promotional poster.

The "Three Bobs", stalwart MCHS volunteers, combined their knowledge of film, film repositories, Wausau history, and digitization technology to assemble the montage. Bob Wylie, author of "Wings North", obtained digitized aviation footage from the EAA. Bob Becker, who donated the Becker Communications archive to the MCHS, digitized footage of the old courthouse and dispensed his encyclopedic knowledge of Wausau history. Bob Sanders, retired forensic photographer, lent his digitization technical expertise. Quarterbacking the production process was MCHS archivist and historian, Ben Clark, who earned his B.A. in history from UW-Stevens Point and his M.A. in history with a certification in Public History from UW-Eau Claire.

The inanimate star of the show was the 1926 Wonder Kilgen Organ, which was a mainstay at the opera house that later became the Grand Theater. Some years ago John Webb (Ben Clark's grandfather) and Dan Larson restored the organ to its former glory. Musician extraordinaire, Dan Larson, composed a theme and selected published music to illustrate the silent film. Dan, costumed in the most stylish attire, accompanied the film for an hour and 15 minutes. His rendition of cleverly selected pieces gave humor and poignancy. Petula Clark's (no relation to Ben Clark that I know of) "Downtown" accompanied scenes of Wausau. Footage of the demolition of the old courthouse (yes, people remain angry about that!) was shown while "Breaking Up is Hard to Do" and "I Fall to Pieces" played.

And so the crowd spilled out buzzing. Will we see this recording on YouTube? Will Dan play a reprise? Will Ben and the Three Bobs create new historical film magic? We'll see. In the meantime, we at MCHS appreciate your continued support that makes fun, exciting events like this happen.

## THE WANIGAN PRODUCTION

Editor - Janet Klutterman      Design and Editing - Alison Coady

Photo Selection and Colorization - Ben Clark      Co-Editors and Authors - MCHS Staff

*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.*

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

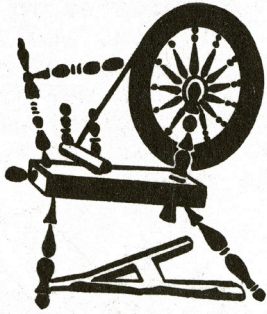


The Marathon County Historical Society is supported in part by the City of Wausau Room Tax Funding.

# CELEBRATING 70 YEARS OF HISTORY

*By Gary Gisselman, Librarian/Historian*

While we acknowledged 150 years of Wausau being a city, the Marathon County Historical Society also took notice of its seventy years of existence in 2022.



*Marathon County Historical Society*

The need for a county historical society grew out of a meeting of the Wausau Altrusa Club in early 1952. The idea was greeted with great eagerness that the club named a committee of Dorothea Krause, Marjorie Bump and Helen Ohm to start the process of organizing an historical society.

This group soon called for a public meeting on January 31, 1952 to further the formation of the county historical society. Thirty people attended and a committee of Mrs. J. W Coates, David Biebrauer, and Nellie Nutter and the Altrusa committee: Dorothea Krause, Marjorie Bump, and Helen Ohm. The committee was already starting to acquire photographs and interesting historical items.



Sensing this new community enthusiasm, the "Historical Society for Marathon County Committee" invited all residents of Marathon County to an organizational meeting on March 18, 1952 at the Public Service auditorium. At this meeting D.C. Everest was elected president, Charles Manson vice president, Dorothea Krause second – vice president. The 20 people who gathered discussed dues, where and when to meet, and how to proceed with securing a county museum.

An editorial in the Wausau Daily Record-Herald stated that the newly formed historical society "promises to fill a cultural void in the Wausau area."

The Historical Society received the charter from the State Historical Society in June 1952, as well as their Articles of Incorporation from the State of Wisconsin.

They soon started to collect artifacts for a possible museum, gather documents on the history of Marathon County, and to assemble photographs of the county.

One year later, on October 28, 1953 at a dinner meeting of the Society at Zion Lutheran Church Hall, Mrs. Leigh Woodson, daughter of Cyrus and Alice Yawkey, offered the use of her parent's house at 403 McIndoe Street for use as an historical museum. After acknowledging the gift of the house as the new home of the historical society, D.C Everest president of the society, expressed hope that the Marathon County Historical Society "will become the most outstanding local historical society in the state."

The years 1952 and 1953 set the foundation for the Historical Society and established what would be an outstanding presence in Wausau and Marathon County for the next seventy years.



*Above:  
A few of the images/logos used to represent the Historical Society over the years.*

# ALL DOLLED UP

By Kathy Volkmann, Curator of Artifacts

Having a mother with incredible sewing and needlework talents was a definite plus for little Mary Jane Felden (now Grabowski). After receiving a new doll for Christmas in the mid-1950s, Mary Jane's mother, Theo Felden, knitted nearly a dozen outfits for her. Two of these outfits are shown here - a ski outfit and a skating costume. The ski outfit includes pants, a sweater and a cap, along with wood skis and ski poles. Tiny red buttons decorate the sweater. The skating costume includes a dress and panties, a cap, mittens and a pair of skates. White cashmere yarn trims and decorates the pieces.



We were excited when Mary Jane donated her childhood doll and clothes to the historical society. We also received many stylish outfits sewn by her mother, an assortment of fashion accessories, and a wood wardrobe made by her father, Oscar. Several weeks later Mary Jane contacted us after finding the knitting pattern books her mother used when making the outfits. The "Mary's Dollies" title on the pattern books reflect the doll and pattern designer, Mary Hoyer. We were able to match almost all of the outfits to patterns in the books!

The doll clothes alone would have been a great addition to our artifact collection, but also receiving the original patterns was a bonus. Having these "extras" that relate to artifacts, as well as knowing the story behind the original owner/maker/user, lets us tell a more complete and interesting story when the items are displayed.

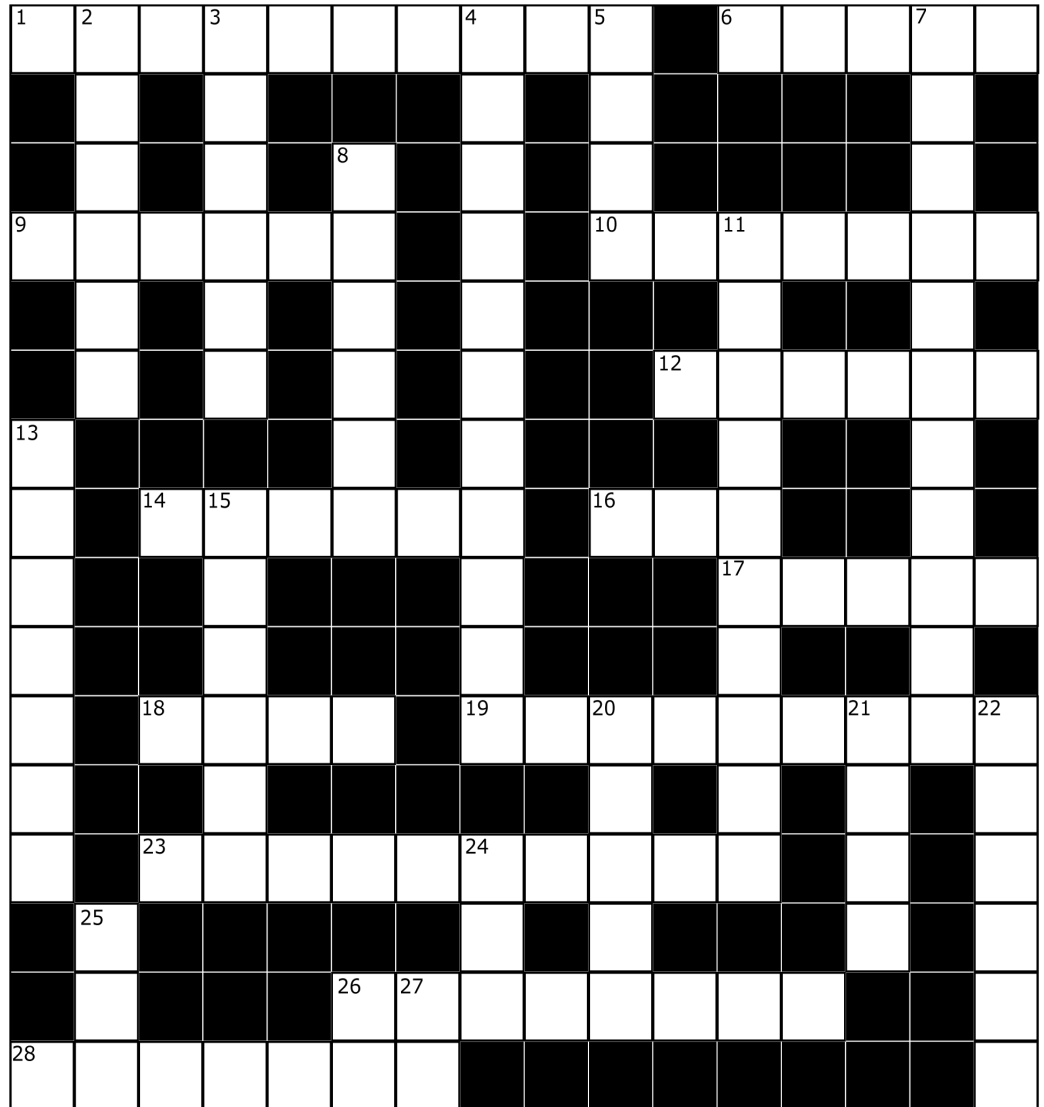
Thank you, Mary Jane, for sharing a small part of your childhood with us.

# A WINTER DAY IN WAUSAU PUZZLE

By Alison Coady, Front Desk Manager

## ACROSS

1. Popular local sledding spot
6. The Grand Theater has a large one
9. With 26 across, a swooshy sport
10. You'll need a reel, some bait, and a pole
12. What a fire provides
14. The state animal
16. Goes with 10 across, 12 down and 23 across
17. Pine trees are ever \_\_\_\_\_
18. A classic tree topper
19. The annual gingerbread contest "Sweet \_\_\_\_\_"
23. A shape formed or carved
26. Gravity assisted, with 9 across
27. Prominent family name, part of several organizations' title



## DOWN

2. Family with a grand Wausau home
3. Type of candle used in a luminary
4. Local hiking spot with seasonally appropriate name
5. Bread shape
7. Nationally recognized ski slope
8. Love it or leave it holiday drink
11. With 14 across, annual sporting event
13. Grab your blades and hit the rink
15. An upper Circle where polar bears live
20. The great \_\_\_\_\_ woods
21. See 22 down
22. 22 down + 21 down = horse drawn fun
24. Use this rope to climb the slope
25. The Grinch wanted to ruin Christmas for \_\_\_\_\_ ville
26. \_\_\_\_\_, RE, MI
27. "\_\_\_\_ top of Old Smokey"

## Answers:



## HOLIDAYS AT THE HOUSES: COLLECTIONS & THEIR STORIES



Please join us for our annual celebration of holiday traditions as the Marathon County Historical Society presents "Holidays at the Houses" on Saturday, December 10th from 10:30 am-4:30 pm.

The Woodson History Center and Yawkey House Museum will be decorated for the holidays, and visitors will experience the season with live entertainment, children's activities, model railroad open house, refreshments and the Sweet Landmarks Gingerbread Contest.

This year we will feature holiday collections and their stories. Trains, a Christmas village, ornaments, an ethnic/cultural display, vintage holiday items from the historical society's own collection. Much appreciation is extended to the Leigh Woodson Yawkey Art Museum for displaying Leigh's prized Dorothy Doughty porcelain birds during the Yawkey House tour.

Admission to the Woodson History Center is always free. Guided tours of the Yawkey House Museum will feature festive reenactors highlighting several family collections, as well as, touring the exquisite house itself. The last tour leaves the Woodson History Center at 4 pm. Tickets for the tour are \$5.

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### *Join us for the* **CIVIL WAR BOOK CLUB**

The Civil War Book Club is back for another year of history, reading, and fun! Join us at 7:00pm at the Woodson History Center (410 McIndoe St.) on the fourth Thursday of each month to discuss that month's book and the history connected to it.

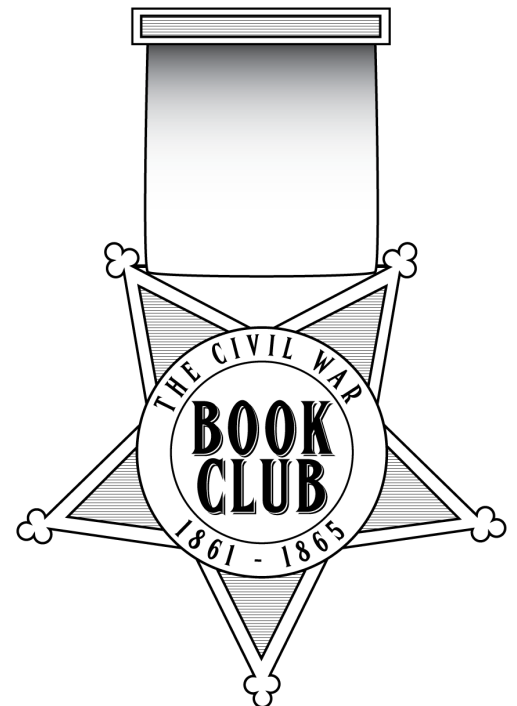
On January 27, we will discuss "The War Before the War: Fugitive Slaves and the Struggle for America's Soul from the Revolution to the Civil War" by Andrew Delbanco. (ISBN 978-0735224131)

On February 23, we will discuss "Robert E. Lee and Me: A Southerner's Reckoning with the Myth of the Lost Cause" by Ty Seidule. (ISBN 978-1250239280)

On March 30, we will discuss "The Immortal Irishman: The Irish Revolutionary Who Became an American Hero" by Timothy Egan. (ISBN 978-0544944831)

And finally, on April 27, we will discuss a returning classic from the 2007 CW Book Club: "Fire Within: A Civil War Narrative from Wisconsin" by Kerry Trask. (ISBN 978-0873385879)

All books are available at Janke Bookstore. For questions, please contact Gary Gisselman at 715-842-5750.



## THANK YOU DONORS!

Wausau Downtown Airport  
*in honor of Bob Wylie*

Mary Jane Hettinga  
*in memory of Gerald Feldbruegge*

Robert S. Hagge Foundation  
*in support of the museums*

Lois Steffenhagen  
*in memory of LaVern Machel*

## Come visit us at WINTER FEST

Wausau Events presents Winter Fest with outdoor activities like ice carvings and ice skating. Indoor activities in the Grand Theater's Great Hall will include free hot cocoa & cookies, and more. We'll be there too! We will be doing a children's craft and showing a winter sports video presentation.

## Come and see HISTORICAL ARTSPECTIVE: 150 YEARS OF WAUSAU

This year we will be once again collaborating with Wausau's Center for the Visual Arts for a short-term exhibit meshing art and history. We took part in a collaborative exhibit with the CVA back in 2019, and it was so successful that we agreed to do it again in 2022, this time with a preference for Wausau-themed objects to take part in the Sesquicentennial Celebrations for the City of Wausau.

Our curators and archivists have pulled out a variety of objects from storage, which will be displayed at the CVA along with the artwork inspired by our objects, produced by some of the talented artists from the area.

The exhibit will remain up through the 23rd of December in the Caroline S. Mark Gallery. The CVA is open Wednesday-Fridays, 10:00-4:00 and Saturdays 12:00-4:00.

## Miss History Chats this week? WATCH US ON PUBLIC ACCESS!

Our History Chats programs will now be broadcast on public access television! Tune in to channel 980 to watch.

## Join us online for HISTORY CHATS & HISTORY SPEAKS - LIVE!



*History Chats are 20 minute presentations that are livestreamed on YouTube and Facebook every Thursday at 12:30pm. All programs are recorded and can be viewed later.*

### Upcoming History Chats . . .

November is all about Wausau's neighborhoods. On the 3rd, 10th, 17th and 24th, our historians will chat about some neighborhoods you know, and some you don't.

December is going to be another installment of "People You Should Know". Learn about an interesting person each week - Dec 1, 8, 15, 22 and 29.



*History Speaks is a 1-hour program presented by a guest speaker each month at 2pm at the Woodson History Center, as well as livestreamed on our YouTube and Facebook.*

### Upcoming History Speaks . . .

**Nov. 12:** The Dick Bong Story - Ace of Aces presented by Michael O'Connor

More History Speaks programs are on their way in the new year!

*History Chats and History Speaks are co-hosted by the Marathon County Public Library.*

## WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

Kristine Weirauch, Debby Kasmarchek,  
Honeysuckle Creek Photography,  
Barb Lowe

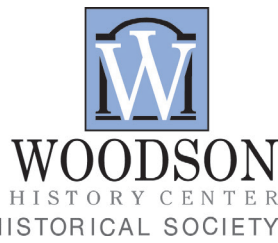
## Update! OUR HOLIDAY HOURS

As winter draws near, please note our holiday hours. The Yawkey House Museum and Woodson History Center will be closed on Nov 24th, Dec 24-25th, and Dec 31st- Jan 1st.

## Hear cozy tales at STORYTIME AT THE MUSEUM

Our Storytime in the Garden has been moved indoors for the Fall and Winter as Storytime at the Museum. We'll enjoy a couple storybooks followed by a children's craft.

Storytimes will be held at the Woodson History Center (410 McIndoe St.) at 1pm on Thursday, November 10th, and January 12th.



Marathon County Historical Society  
 410 McIndoe Street  
 Wausau, WI 54403  
 715-842-5750  
[www.marathoncountyhistory.org](http://www.marathoncountyhistory.org)

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*Return Service Requested*

**CALENDAR OF EVENTS** *AT A GLANCE*

- Nov 3, 10, 17, 24: History Chats  
*12:30pm Online on Youtube and Facebook*
- Nov 10: Storytime at the Museum  
*1pm at Woodson History Center*
- Nov 12: History Speaks  
*2pm at Woodson History Center*
- Dec 1, 8, 15, 22, 29: History Chats  
*12:30pm Online on Youtube and Facebook*
- Dec 10: Holidays at the Houses  
*10:30am at Woodson History Center*
- Jan 5, 12, 19, 26: History Chats  
*12:30pm Online on Youtube and Facebook*
- Jan 12: Storytime at the Museum  
*1pm at Woodson History Center*

**PHOTOS FROM . . .**

**VOICES FROM THE PAST**



*Living History at*  
**CEMETERY TOURS**

A moody September day was the backdrop for our annual cemetery tours. Despite the rain and the clouds, we welcomed over 250 guests to travel back in time to meet the people who built Wausau into a city. A big thank you to all our reenactors, tour guides, and volunteers. All of your hard work made the tours a success! If you attended the tours - thank you! We couldn't make events like these happen without all of your generous support.