

North Wood County Historical Society

Mansion Newsletter

Marshfield, Wisconsin

December 2020

From the President

Dear Members and friends,

With coronavirus, pretending everything is OK doesn't make it so. But with an adjustment here and a tweak there, the Society has made it through the past year. Not that the pandemic didn't impact us; our major events, the Pie and Ice Cream Social, the Carriage Display and now the Christmas Open House, were all cancelled. And while we have had visitors touring the Upham Home they have been fewer in number.



Don Schnitzler

The pandemic is not an excuse to be non-productive. So, during these days without events or visitors, our coordinator, Kim Krueger, and volunteers, Katie Strechert and Madeleine Lawler, and board member, Kris Coleman inventory the garments and textiles in the Society's collections. As they work, they assess the condition of each item, correlate its location to the original deed of gift, plan for potential exhibition, and look for the most appropriate means of storage.

Proper storage for these items presents the society with a couple of new challenges; a need for additional archival garment storage boxes and the climate-controlled space to store them. We will consider options in the New Year. In the meantime, Kim has added a video to our YouTube channel titled "Hidden Textiles, the North Wood County Historical Society 2020 Inventory" that highlights the inventory project, a few of the items found, and the need for storage materials.

Besides the ongoing inventory, the Society will begin planning for the upcoming 150th Anniversary of the City of Marshfield in 2022. Brainstorming ideas for this milestone actually started pre-Covid. Then we took a break to wait out Covid. And now, despite Covid, this needs to get going again. Twenty-five years ago, as the 125th Anniversary approached, more than 50 individuals worked to create the Marshfield History Books, and likely just as many businesses and organizations played parts in the various activities marking that celebration. We'll need a similar effort for the 150th celebration so please consider this an invitation to join us. Call the Historical Society to learn more about developing plans at 715-387-3322, or by email at nwchs@uphammansion.com. The first meeting will be held on January 6 at 4 pm at the Upham Home, and via Zoom. The Zoom meeting invitation will be shared with everyone expressing an interest in learning more about the upcoming anniversary.

One of the key individuals who helped with the 125th Anniversary was Lucille "Dolly" Kobs. She was a key participant in efforts to collect and share Marshfield history, and was both an instrumental member and leader of the North Wood County Historical Society. Dolly's recent passing leaves a void. Her commitment, along with that of her husband, Ken, provided direction during the Society's early years, and their example will serve as our guide as we go forward.

(Continued on page 2)



Upham House

NWCHS Board of Directors

President - Don Schnitzler
Vice President - Jerin Turner
Secretary - Kaylin Speth
Treasurer - Andrea Jackan
Past President - Brad Allen

Directors

Laura Ptak
Erin Howard
Nancy Sternweis
JoAnn Gougeon
Kris Coleman

Coordinator- Kim Krueger

Consulting Rosarians

Tom Ptak & Tom Stram

Tour Hours

Wednesday - 1:30 – 4:00 p.m.
Saturday - 1:30 – 4:00 p.m.
Or by appointment

Office Hours

Monday - 9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
Wednesday - 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.
Thursday - 9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Phone - 715.387.3322
Email - nwchs@uphammansion.com
Web - <http://uphammansion.com>

From the President *(Continued from page 1)*

Besides Dolly, three others longtime supporters of the society, Don Helgerson, Graham Olson, and Allan Breden also recently passed away. These were wonderful, kind, hard-working men. They will be missed by the Society and all who knew them.

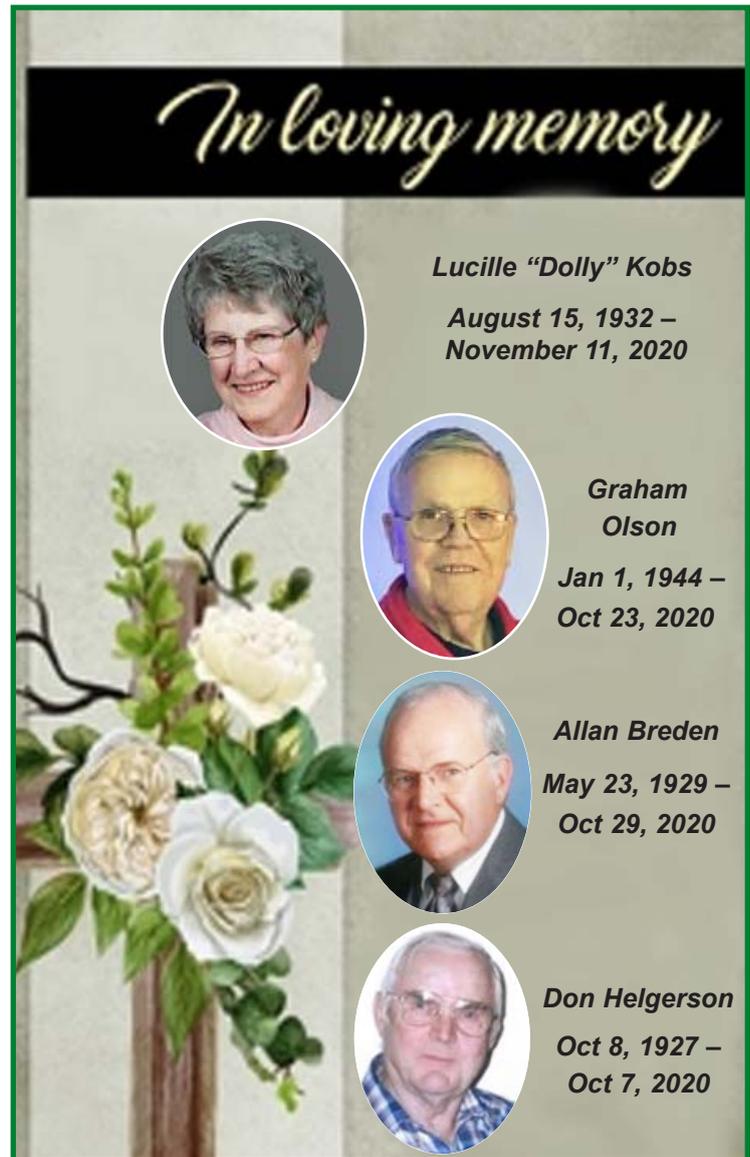
I'd also like to thank our two retiring members of the Board of Directors, Mike Meyers and Kim Krueger. The society is indebted to you for your contributions to the Society during the past six years, and look forward to your continued participation in the Society's endeavors. I'd also like to congratulate Brad Allen and Andrea Jackan on their re-election as board members and welcome Laura Ptak back to the Society's Board of Directors.

And finally, I congratulate Brad Allen, Jerin Turner, and Kaylin Speth at their election as President, Vice-President, and Secretary respectively.

I want to express my sincere appreciation to all of you for your continued support this past year. It has been my pleasure to serve as the Society's president these past two years. And if I may, a final request, that if it is within your means, to remember the Society this Christmas with a contribution, either by a 2021 annual membership, or by donation. These support the Society's efforts to care for the Upham Home, and preserve and share the community's history.

Best wishes for the holidays! Stay safe and well!

-- Schnitz



Did you know?

COMMUNITY CHRISTMAS TREE - *From The Marshfield News, 09 Dec 1915, Page 1*

Marshfield To Have Public Observance of Christ's Natal Day

Marshfield will have a community Christmas tree and all that goes with it, such as gifts, Christmas carols and other music, a Santa Claus, etc., for an appropriate public observance of this anniversary. The celebration will be under the auspices of the Eagles' lodge.

The plan is to get the largest Christmas tree that can be found and erect it at some central point on the Avenue, decorate it with electric lights, to render a program of music and have one or more Santa Clauses to distribute gifts to the kiddies.

Christmas night has been decided upon for the exercises, to begin about 5:30 o'clock, and the tree will probably be located in the center of the street between the Blodgett Hotel and Tiffault-Kamps Store. Tickets will be distributed to all the school children of the city, good for gift, and those children too young to attend school may get their gifts through application of their parents. This plan was decided upon to avoid confusion. Mr. Strauss stated that all the goods that enter into the gifts will be of "Made in Marshfield" product. Robert Connor has kindly offered to furnish the Christmas tree. You can bet your last dollar it will be a dandy if Bob provides it.

Forest Fires of 1894 Left Lives Charred

By Kaylin Speth

An exceptionally dry spell in August 1894 resulted in forest fires that threatened Wisconsin towns with destruction and covered the skies with dense smoke. "Forest fires continue to rage in this vicinity and unless we get rain soon the whole country will be burned over," stated the Wood County Reporter on August 23.

Wood County, Wisconsin wouldn't be left untouched. Forest fires surrounded Pittsville for several days, and with no way to fight it, the wooden town was expected to be wiped out. "The people of the little city turned out en masse and fought the advancing flames with all their might," stated the Aug. 9 account in *The Marshfield News*. At last, the Grand Rapids fire department was summoned by telegraph to lend aid and the fire was brought under control. Three houses were destroyed, but the loss was "not serious."

Vesper wasn't as lucky. The *Marshfield* newspaper reported Aug. 30 that the entire town had been razed by fire two days before. "The rush and roar is described as being most terrible, licking up everything before it like so much tinder. To fight it was useless." The saw mill, planing mill, 9 million feet of lumber, and 17 houses were lost within an hour.

Fire threatened the Olsen family farm, which was located in the Town of Rock south of Hwy 10 on what is today Cty Hwy B. Mettine Nielsen and Hans Jacob Olsen, from the island of Langeland, Denmark bought the farm for \$125 in 1885, which included a two-room frame house, small log barn, horse, and cow.

Their daughter Anna Olsen Hansen Kroyer was born Feb. 2, 1886 in Wisconsin. The oldest of six children, Anna wrote down many of her memories including an account of the forest fire of August 1894, transcribed as written below by her granddaughter Linda Hansen Kappell.

"...after the loger's were through they left the tree tops and branches laying where they fell and after a few years when they were dry and the weather was dry they would end up in a big forest fire. I remember several, but one in perticular in Aug of 1894. It was a very dry season and for day's a Southwest wind had blown in our direction. My folks loaded most all their belongings on the wagon and placed it under the Yellow River Bridge. There were two other wagons there repercenting two other families.

The air was dry and full of smoke one evening Father cut down several big birch trees across the road, so the bark wouldn't fly and start fires on our side of the road. The fire was coming very close, that night we all slept outside. Next morning Father send me west to try to get help. I was 8 years old then, I wasn't able to find help as no one dared to leave their own. Mother helped fight fire all forenoon to try to keep it from crossing the road. That noon we ate a haisty lunch, then Father send Mother and us children down accross the river and 3/4 mile east to friends to try there to get help. While crossing the river I noticed Father had the horses harnesed and tied there so he could make a quick getaway with them if he had to.



**Anna's father was left alone to fight the fire headed for his home-
stead (above). The fire crossed the road in different places, it
burned over all the ground around the buildings, but the buildings
were left standing.**

When we arrived at our friends home, we learned the men around there had all gone to fight another fire, so was unable to get help till after dark. That left Father all alone that afternoon. The fire crossed the road in different places, it burned over all the ground around the buildings But the buildings were left standing. How Father managed to save them, I will never know. But God must have been with him. When help did arrive about 7 or 8 p.m. the fire had reached the river and about burned it self out. Then the rain came, the men stayed with my Father that night to see that no fires sprung up around the buildings. The next year while we in school, a lady came

(Continued on page 5)



Anna Olsen Hansen Kroyer was born Feb. 2, 1886 in Wisconsin. She remarried after her husband died. She was a very strong, independent woman and lived until the age of 97 in her own home. She had only a 4th grade education and it may explain the spelling in her written account of the fire that day. (Above photo is Anna on her 95th birthday celebration.)

Rembs Celebration Center Nears Completion

Editors Note: The following story, written and submitted by Theodore Jackan, Licensed Funeral Director, is an update on Rembs Funeral home history continued from the Society's September newsletter.

Cultural and social evolutions are happening in America at seemingly lightning speeds. Nearly everything about our entertainment, our social lives and norms evolve given time. Benjamin Franklin once wrote that “in this world, nothing is certain except death and taxes”. This is true, however, American businessman Bert Lance once wrote “If it ain't broke, don't fix it”. These seemingly unrelated aphorisms can be found abundantly throughout American funeral service. For more than a century, American funerals have largely followed the same fundamental pattern. These patterns have become so entrenched in American culture that when someone hears the word funeral, they almost instinctually think of a casket, viewing and service at a church. For generations, especially in Wisconsin, it would be very easy to find a funeral director who started working in the '60s, running the business and conducting funerals exactly in the same manner fifty years into his career.

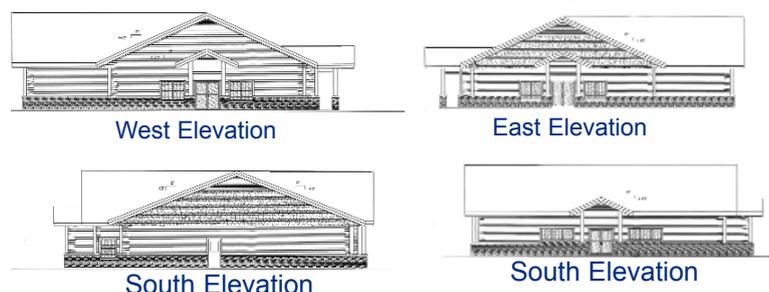
Throughout my funeral career, I have worked for some of the largest as well as some of the smallest funeral homes throughout Wisconsin. This experience gave me the pleasure of working with so many amazing, compassionate funeral directors over the years. However, despite being some of the kindest individuals, many funeral directors, especially the older ones, do not like change. One of the biggest changes in funeral service happened when the cremation rate began to rise around the early 2000s. For decades, funeral directors across the nation had been doing funerals the traditional way. This has many variations, but typically includes a viewing with a casket, service at a church, hearse, cemetery, and lunch. In fact, funeral establishments focused so much on traditional services with a casket and viewing, that in many funeral homes, cremation was essentially frowned upon because it was such a change in an industry famous for not changing.

Following the financial crisis of 2008, funeral service saw a tremendous rise of cremation. From below ten percent in the '90s to today where many funeral homes have a cremation rate above sixty percent. This dramatic change took place in less than twenty years causing funeral service as a whole to meet the needs of this changing culture. As our American culture evolves, so does our ideas on what a funeral can and should look like. As funeral professionals, we must adapt to the needs of the communities and families we serve. If we fail to recognize these needs as well as the changes in our culture, we may risk going the way of the typewriter repair man. With the decline of organized religion among our younger generations, specifically generation X, and the up-and-coming millennials, we see many families deciding not to have a service at a church, rather choosing to have everything at the funeral home. Even the very language in funeral service is evolving as well. Instead of funerals, people wish to have a memorial service, or a celebration of a life well lived.

This is why the decision was made to construct a celebration center, that will offer families a beautiful and modern place for a lunch after a service, regardless if the services were conducted at the funeral home, or at the church. In many ways, funeral gatherings have become de facto family reunions as families and children are more spread out than ever. This celebration center embraces the changes happening in our industry and it is the future of funeral service.

The Rembs Celebration Center has been five years in the making. As church congregations begin to get older, some churches are finding it harder and harder to provide meals for funerals. Other options like the KC Hall in Marshfield no longer exist anymore. All of these factors contributed to Rembs moving forward and building a separate facility to accommodate a number of both professional and community needs. The Celebration Center will have seating for nearly 200 people, with an industrial kitchen that would make any professional chef happy. Food can easily be brought in from any caterer in the area. The Wi-Fi and state of the art sound system, along with two big screen televisions, making the Celebration Center the perfect place for community meetings and presentations. In fact, we currently have more weddings planned at the center than funeral celebrations. We envision the center to seamlessly hold birthday parties, family reunions, baby showers, dance classes, support groups, and quilting classes. The possibilities of the Celebration Center are only limited by the imagination of our community.

Architectural Rendering



“Behind the Scenes at the Governor William H. Upham House”

By Kim Krueger, NWCHS Coordinator

You know the adage... “When life hands you lemons you make lemonade”... That is exactly what we did here at the Gov. Upham House when all normal events the North Wood County Historical Society holds were cancelled this year. No third grade student tours, no Pie and Ice Cream Social, no “Horse Power” Carriage exhibit... or many tours for that matter. But we took those proverbial lemons this year handed to us all and made, well - inventories.

Inventories may not sound very exciting, but they are an essential part of what a museum needs to do to ensure it is operating under best practice standards, and, quite frankly, to know what is within its walls. So, while many people took this unprecedented time to get into their closets, nooks, and garages to clean out long forgotten items to give to thrift stores, we here at the Upham House also dove into closets, dressers, and boxes. Not to get rid of things, but to discover artifacts and long forgotten stories, and to take into account where things were as well as their condition.

In March, just after the world hit pause, we took advantage of a quiet museum to unpack drawers of tablecloths, napkins, doilies, and other linens. Starting in June, volunteers Katie Streckert, Kris Coleman, and Madeleine Lawler helped delve into other spaces to unveil their secrets. Our focus was the clothing collection. The goal was to identify, photograph, and document each item found.

We searched each artifact for evidence of donor information- felt in pockets, flipped over attached tags, read paper slips pinned to lapels. If we could not find identification, we gave the respective item a “UNK” designation. Unknown donor. Hopefully, a temporary designation. Because there are Deeds of Gift documents in the office that, for example, may be able help reunite an 1890s sequined shawl with its donor, and possibly whisper hints of a story about the persons who wore it.

After eight months of inventory, which involved one and a half closets, two wardrobes and three dressers, we have documented well over 300 garments, hats, shoes, cuffs, and collars. We did discover clothing dating back to the late 1800s and thought about how to share what we found. It has been a huge but rewarding project - and still has a way to go. I would like to thank Katie, Kris, and Madeleine for all their hard work and problem-solving skills!

(Photo 1) Deeds of Gifts (DoGs) are the documents we use when a collection of artifacts is donated to the historical society. The earliest DoGs go back to the 1950s.

(Photo 2) Detail of 1930s dress. Unknown donor.

(Photo 3) Donated in 2002, this early 1900s dress was owned by Alta Vedder.

Check our YouTube channel for an overview of the textile inventory here:
<https://youtu.be/7xAY4rwjY88>.

Also check page 6 of this newsletter for more “Behind the Scenes” videos.



Photo 1



Photo 2



Photo 3

Wood County Forest Fire - Continued from page 3

by and told the teacher there's a big fire down by Olsen's wouldn't be surprised if their house is burned now. My Sister Bertha began to cry. But the teacher said she didn't believe it was that bad. If it was some one would have come after us, so we felt relieved, but that day we got home in half the time it usually took.

Those fires were very strainious on my Father, his Heart began to trouble him and he passed away 8 years later at the age of 44.”

Spoken History Series

Editors Note: Our in-person Spoken History Series has temporarily been discontinued due to Covid-19, and will resume when restrictions for indoor gatherings have been lifted. However, this is an excellent opportunity to review or watch for the first time past speakers on local history topics. You may view the presentation by visiting the North Wood County Historical Society's *Youtube* channel. To reach the channel, open **YouTube** and search for “North Wood County Historical Society” or visit: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCyMsPsMSfTIKJEjUJ4KE6Kw>

What is the Spoken History Series?

Those interested in learning more about the area's rich history are invited to attend a monthly lecture series called “*Spoken History*,” at the Everett Roehl Marshfield Public Library.

The series is a collaboration of area groups dedicated to the region's history:

- North Wood County Historical Society
- Marshfield Historic Preservation Association

- The City of Marshfield Historic Preservation Committee
- Everett Roehl Marshfield Public Library
- Marshfield Area Genealogy Group

By offering a monthly lecture at a predictable time and location, it will encourage those interested to plan for these outings – maybe a weeknight getaway, a monthly date night or just an educational outing.

Watch on *YouTube* the following recorded past “Spoken History” Presentations:

All lectures were held the first Monday of each month at 6:30 pm at the Everett Roehl Marshfield Public Library-Felker Family Genealogy and Local History Room, unless otherwise noted.

Complete History of Marshfield Schools.

presented by Mike Meyers

The Adler Bakery

Marshfield, Wisconsin:

presented by Jim Adler

Wood County Parks: Their Creation and Projects:

presented by Chad Schooley

Marshfield Historic Driving Tours

presented by Vickie Schnitzler

It Happened on Main Street

presented by Don Schnitzler and Mike Meyers

1905 Marshfield Illustrated:

presented by Don Schnitzler

Marshfield's First Family:

presented by Don Schnitzler

Voyage of the Comrade.

presented by Kim Krueger

Wicked Wood County

Wisconsin:

presented by Rhonda Whetstone

Skunk Hill:

presented by Robert A Birmingham

Beyond the Dress:

presented by Kim Krueger and Vickie Schnitzler

Fill 'er Up, The Glory Days of Wisconsin Gas Stations:

presented by Jim Draege

Also tune in to watch the following video presentations on Youtube ...

“Behind the Scenes at the Governor William H. Upham House”

Episode 1 -

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pLN__NQffDU

Episode 2 -

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J9SWVC3UPtw>

Episode 3 -

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ExCePwKGMzU>

Hidden Textiles at the North Wood County Historical Society

Episode 1

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7xAY4rwjY88>

Episode 2

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=letigmHCS10>



Thanks to the Marshfield Clinic Print Shop, we are now able to send all our newsletters in color. They have graciously agreed to print our quarterly newsletter as a donation to the Historical Society.

Now accepting memberships for Year 2021



NORTH WOOD COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC

Membership and Donation Form

212 WEST THIRD STREET, P.O. BOX 142
MARSHFIELD, WISCONSIN 54449

Phone: (715) 387-3322 E-mail: nwchs@uphammansion.com Web Site: www.uphamansion.com

Preserving North Wood County history since 1952

Please make checks payable to NWCHS. Send to: NWCHS P.O. Box 142, Marshfield, WI 54449

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Acknowledgement of donations will be emailed for those who provide an email address.
End of year receipts for all donations will be mailed out in January the subsequent year.

I/We wish to support the NWCHS –Governor W.H. Upham House for the year 20__

- Individual \$35
 Student \$10 (High School & College)
 General Gift \$ _____
 Family \$50
 Business \$100
 House Restoration \$ _____

Our **Wish List** and areas where members and nonmembers can **Volunteer** to help the Society

- Donate postage stamps to help cover mailings
- Join the Society by sending in your application with your yearly dues
- Bake pies for DairyFest (hopefully next year)
- Guide at Upham House- occasional Saturday afternoons (We will train you!)
- Garden and yard care - seasonal work
- Help with special events - DairyFest, Hub City Days - Carriage Exhibit, Christmas Open House
- Identify and classify photographs - meet one Saturday afternoon a month
- Artifact care and accessioning - Wednesday or Saturday afternoons
- School partner - work with projects with education liaison and students at Upham Mansion
- Research exhibits - develop exhibit material and historical data for the Exhibit Committee
- Help design exhibits - layout and display of artifacts with the Exhibit Committee
- Sponsor an event - ideal for businesses, groups of members, families
- Take a leadership role- board member, committee member, publicity, fundraiser



North Wood County Historical Society
PO Box 142 (Mailing Address)
212 W. Third St.
Marshfield, WI 54449



The Board of Directors of *NWCCHS* wish all the members, their families and friends of the Society a *Merry Christmas and a Joyful New Year*

