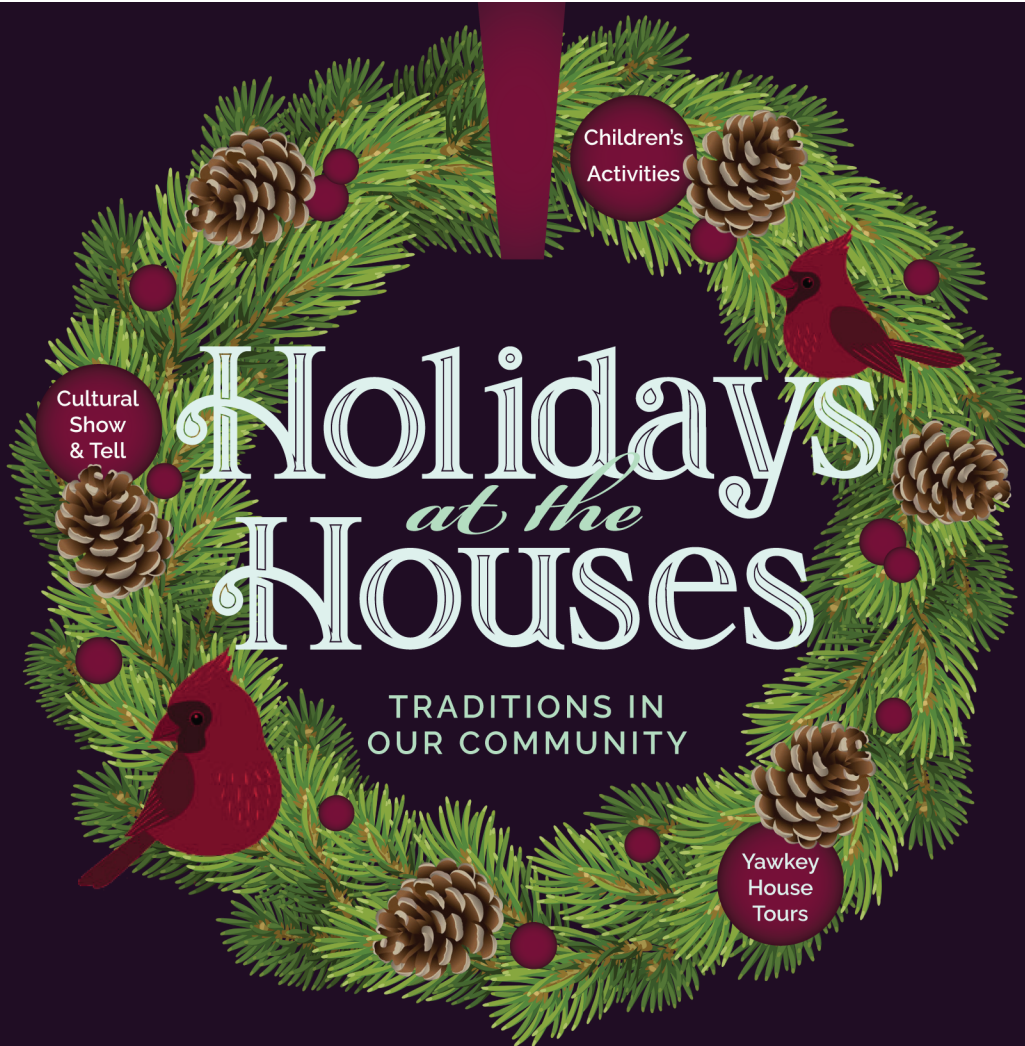


The Wanigan

History Chats

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE MARATHON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY • 2021 No. 5 WINTER



S A T U R D A Y

04

DECEMBER
2021

11:00 AM - 4:30 PM

WOODSON HISTORY
CENTER

FREE Admission

&

YAWKEY
HOUSE MUSEUM

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For more information visit our website — marathoncountyhistory.org

AN INTERVIEW BY/WITH THE PRESIDENT

By Russ Wilson, MCHS Board President

Our theme for this issue is favorite things, and I have been tasked with chiming in. If you've seen "The Lady from Shanghai" (1947) directed by Orson Welles (and if you haven't, by all means do so), you will recall the memorable scene when the character of criminal defense lawyer Arthur Bannister (Everett Sloane) takes the stand and cross-examines himself. In that spirit I offer the following imaginary interview conducted by an imaginary MCHS staffer or volunteer.

Mr. President, looking in the archives I see that you have served on the MCHS board for, oh my gosh, let's see, um, since before I was born. Wow, you must really like serving on the board!

Yes, I surely do because our board members are not merely thoughtful, smart, creative, and competent. Much more than that, they are just so much fun to be around. We laugh among ourselves that for our collective age, or average age, however you want to look at us, we are a lively, fun-loving bunch. One listening to us might be forgiven for believing us to be a good bit younger than we are.

Ok, Mr. Wilson, then, what is your favorite thing about serving as president?

My favorite thing about being president is, in my opinion, the absence of any sense of drudgery as meeting dates approach. I think that is because our meetings are snappy; we don't waste time. And as I said, they are filled with keen thought, creativity, respect for everyone's opinion, intelligent decision making, and good humor. I hope, and believe, this view is widely shared.

All that sounds great, but what about the staff? Do you have any favorite aspect of staff performance?

I'm so glad you asked that question because it allows me to repeat again what I have proclaimed over and over. I could not be prouder of our staff's talent, ingenuity, resilience, skill and dedication. In an earlier Wanigan piece I described our staff as "ridiculously talented," and I stand by that phrase. They are a joy to work with. And let's not overlook the army of volunteers who serve with intense dedication in a myriad of ways.

So, Russ, is everybody here just bonkers about the history of Marathon County?

You know, our mission is to preserve, advance and disseminate knowledge of the history of Marathon County and the State of Wisconsin, and we take that charge very seriously. But neither this county nor the state exist in a vacuum. One hears the saying that "all politics are local." Well, I think that can be said about history. And if you ask me what my favorite idea, perhaps feeling is a better word, about MCHS is, I would tell you that it is the intense interest in history, with a capital "H." That interest fosters so much intellectual stimulation. MCHS is a great institution with which to be associated and to serve!

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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| | |
|----------------|--------------------|
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Linda Forbess, Curator of Textiles

WANIGAN PRODUCTION

Editor- Janet Klutterman
Photo Selection and Colorization- Ben Clark
Graphic Design- Alison Coady
Co-Editors- MCHS Staff



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.

HISTORY CHATS AND SPEAKS NOW AND LATER

By Ben Clark, Archivist / Historian

Have you ever wondered why curling is so popular in Marathon County? Maybe you've driven through Wausau and been curious about the monuments on the grounds of the Courthouse? Perhaps you've heard stories about the wooden roller coaster in Rothschild, want to know more about Win Brockmeyer's football dynasty, or are interested in my lies about the infamous Wausau Excelsior Company?

Well, our virtual programs have been addressing these questions and many more for over a year now. Between the virtual versions of our History Speaks programs held almost every month, and our weekly History Chats programs, we have covered a lot of history and have amassed nearly 10,000 views between the livestreams and folks watching the recordings later on. So a big thanks to all of you who have been joining us for these programs all year.

And if you have never seen any of these programs, the good news is that they are available for viewing right now! Here are a few of our favorite programs that you can go back and watch. And there is a lot more where these came from. I'd bet you can find something that you will be interested in (and if not, let us know what topics you might want to see next year). Here are a few examples of what you will discover.



Winter Sports Month- Back in January, we looked at some of the local history of notable winter sports, from curling to snowmobiling, hockey to ski jumping. Pick one that interests you and enjoy the story!

March MAPness- Maps might seem a mundane topic to talk about, but think again! We took on a different type of map each week to uncover some interesting stories and introduced you to new kinds of maps!

Favorite Images- In July, we looked at some of our staff's (and the public's) favorite historical images. This provided a fun excuse to tell some interesting stories, often in smaller more detailed segments. They are favorites for a reason.



Stories Seldom Told: Women in the Civil War- Brett Barker always does a great job in combining his extensive knowledge of American history with an accessible presentational style. In this program, he spoke about an area of the Civil War that is less frequently discussed, the roles of women.

Impressions of Poland- Rick Lohr recounted his trip through Poland and discussed the deep and fascinating history of this part of Europe.

Botany, Apples, and Cider- Paul Whitaker, a professor of biology at UW Stevens Point-Wausau Campus, did a phenomenal job in explaining where apples come from and the long history of how human beings (and bears) have been cultivating the perfect apple.

How To Watch Live:

- 1) Visit our website—marathoncountyhistory.org
- 2) Click the red link in the right side bar over the History Chats / History Speaks Logo
- 3) Scroll down to the "Links to View Live" section
- 4) Use the red links to go to Facebook or YouTube
- 5) If using Youtube, click the video tab at the top of page to see the live video
- 6) Enjoy your program!

How To Watch Past Programs:

- 1) Visit our website—marathoncountyhistory.org
- 2) Click the red link in the right side bar over the History Chats / History Speaks Logo
- 3) Scroll down to the "For Past Programs" section
- 4) Choose the subject you would like and click the red link
- 5) Choose the video you want to watch and click the play button in the center
- 6) Enjoy your program!

A few of **OUR FAVORITE THINGS** at the Yawkey House



Erick
GUILLOCHÉ BOX

This simple storage box has been decorated with metal pieces that have been turned in the guilloché method and coated in an enamel.

"This box was made by the Lenk Company in Austria . . . the pattern is engraved by a rose engine."



Jessica
BEADED HANDBAG

This beaded hand bag is from the early 1900s and is a part of the MCHS collection. This bag is made from steel beads. The metal has corroded over the years and is now brown where it was silver.

"I love the simple elegance of these everyday items."



Gary
BUFFET

The dining room buffet was designed and installed by George Maher during the 1908 remodel. Buffets are used to store dishes or as a serving space for food.

"It is a spectacular buffet, a spectacular window display on the east side of the house facing into the gardens."



Sheryl
HANDEL LAMP

Handel lamps were made in the early 20th century in Meridan, CT. This shade is made of stained glass, but Handel was also known for their reverse painted shades.

"The Handel Company was started just before the Yawkey Family came to Wausau."

Compiled by Alison Coady, Front Desk Manager

The Yawkey House Museum is full of wonderful things. So full that you can take multiple tours and not learn about them all. So for this issue—instead of raindrops on roses or whiskers on kittens—our MCHS staff have picked out some of their Favorite Things from the Yawkey House to share with you.

A sampling of these stories are included below, and the full discussion of all of these items (and more) are been put up on the internet for your viewing. Watch for more on social media or visit our website.



Dave
JAPANESE PRINTS

These Japanese woodblock prints from 1900 hang in the second floor hallway. They are made by carving the reverse image onto a wood block, then using the block as a stamp.

"[They] opened up the story of Orientalism . . . and the history of art in general."



Martina
FIREPLACE SCREEN

When fire was the preferred means of home heating, fireplace screens were used to shield a room from the hottest heat of the fire.

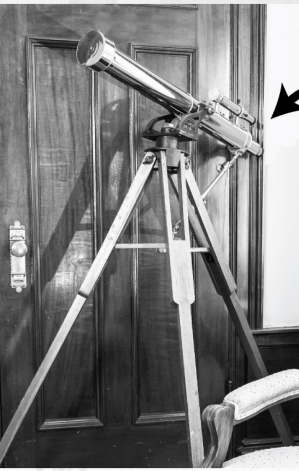
"Over time the fireplace screen has developed into the decorative item we see today."



Anna
BOOKCASE DOOR

Designed by George Maher and produced by Tiffany, these bookcase doors feature Art Nouveau style stained-glass bluebells.

"During the restoration they found it [in the living room] and it was returned to Leigh's Suite where it belonged."



Linda
TELESCOPE

Alice Yawkey was an avid amature astronomer and the library is full of her reference books. She also had this refracting telescope which sat in the bay window for her star gazing.

"I find [the telescope] intriguing . . . it gives us a whole new look into her personality and I find it very intriguing that she had an interest in the science and the stars."



Mary
CLAW-FOOT TUB

A gilded claw-foot bathtub was a sure sign of wealth in the 1900s. This tub also has an overhead shower, curtain ring and a secondary hand-held sprayer.

"We [found] the tub in a vintage bathroom store in California . . . the whole process makes it my favorite item."

THE CHARM OF THE WOODSON HOUSE

By Gary Gisselman, Librarian/Historian

The Marathon County Historical Society is certainly blessed to be in a neighborhood with great, architecturally significant houses. So, when it comes to considering favorite things, be it of the neighborhood or of the Historical Society itself, it is easy to determine that the Woodson House is one of my favorite things.



The exterior arch pattern of the Woodson House is repeated on the outside railing and in the foyer, as pictured below.

The Woodson House, at 410 McIndoe Street, was built in 1913-1914 for A.P. and Leigh Yawkey Woodson. It was designed by George W. Maher, a noted Chicago architect and designer of many Wausau houses and public buildings. For several houses in Wausau, he specialized in the Prairie School style of architecture. This style reflected a strong sense of the horizontal- long and low- and many elements of the Arts and Crafts Movement. The Hiram Stewart House and the A.P. and Leigh Woodson House are the two most notable of his Wausau homes that reflect the Prairie Style of architecture.

It is the design elements of the Woodson House that give it charm and significance. And the architect George Maher was a master of exterior and interior art. The hallmark of this art is the use of repeating themes. This came to be called his Motif-rhythm theory, that included floral and geometric motifs or designs that brought visual unity to the interior as well as the exterior of the house. The lotus design on the two small windows on both sides of the front door is repeated on the large leaded glass on the landing between the first and second floors. The large leaded glass window also features morning glories and pears.

Geometric themes are also used by Maher at the Woodson House. The three arches greeting you as you enter the front door are repeated in the foyer. Also note the arches on the outside railing and the decorative trim on the two planters.



While some of the elements of the George Maher designed Woodson House are lost, the remaining elements are truly distinctive. They bring harmony and character to the house. So, while the Woodson House is a favorite thing, my favorite things of that favorite thing are the special design features such as the stain glass windows, the arches, the extended arches, and the cartouches.

2021 MEMBERS RECEPTION

In order to keep our members, staff and volunteers healthy, we have rescheduled our 2021 Members Reception from this December to late spring, 2022. The date and details have yet to be finalized, but we are planning a lovely event in the beautiful Yawkey House Gardens. Please watch for details.
Thank you all for your continued support of the MCHS!



Join us Thursdays at 12:30 pm for **History Chats**, a livestreamed 20 minute presentation on Facebook and YouTube. Programs are recorded and are available for later viewing.



December History Chats

2022 will mark the 70th Anniversary of the Marathon County Historical Society. Today's continuing efforts to collect, preserve, and keep alive the history of the people of Marathon County has been built on decades of historical exhibits and programs. As we finish this year and look to the next, we are digging into the foundations of our own Historical Society to see some of the earlier stories of how we keep Marathon County history alive.

December 2- Walking Tours and Architectural History. Gary Gisselman looks at keeping local history alive by examining historical architecture and walking tours.

December 9- LogJam! Join Martina Kostreva to learn the story of this community event that took place during the 1980s and 1990s.

December 16- The Good Ol' Days: The Early Years of the History Museum. Erick Konop examines the Historical Society of the 1960s and 1970s and Director Ed Schoenberger's efforts to develop colorful connections to the community and foster interest in local history however he could.

December 23- Before the Historical Society. Ben Clark discusses how, after decades of programs and events, Marathon County decided it had history and that someone ought to do something to preserve it.

December 30- The Marathon County Historical Society in 2022. Sheryl Del Conte will join us to give us a peak at what's coming up in 2022.

No History Speaks programs are scheduled for December. Join us January 22, 2022 at 2 pm for Wisconsin Valley Improvement Company- Running the Wisconsin River

History Chats and History Speaks are co-hosted by the Marathon County Public Library, and sponsored by Janke Book Store.

WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

Mark Bliese, Joel and Shantel Gardner, and Judith R. Young

THANK YOU FOR YOUR DONATIONS

Robert and Sally Decker, Linda Lockhart, Karen Maier, and John McConnell in Memory of Patricia McConnell

2022 Civil War Book Club

The 2022 Civil War Book Club meets at 7 pm the last Thursday of the month.

Please contact Gary Gisselman at 715-842-5750 or research@marathoncountyhistory.org for more information.

January 27, 2022 Don H. Doyle, *The Cause of All Nations: An International History of the American Civil War*.

Cloth: 978-0465029679 Paper 978-0465096978

February 24, 2022 Jeffrey Wert, *A Brotherhood of Valor: The Common Soldiers of the Stonewall Brigade, CSA and the Iron Brigade, USA*,

Cloth: 978-0684824352 Paper: 978-0684862446

March 31, 2022 Stephen Cushman, *Belligerent Muse: Five Northern Writers and How They Shaped Our Understanding of the Civil War*.

Cloth: 978-1469618777 Paper: 978-1469633398

April 28, 2022 James Oakes, *The Crooked Path to Abolition: Abraham Lincoln and the Antislavery Constitution*.

Cloth: 978-1324005858 Paper: 978-1324020196 (scheduled for release in January, 2022)

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Calling all Gingerbread Architects! Find your favorite Wausau landmark, whip up some gingerbread and royal icing, and start building your entry for the annual Sweet Landmarks Gingerbread Contest! From the ornate Plummer mansion to your Mom's rambling ranch, we want to see them all on December 4th, in miniature with lots of sweet details.

We have cash prizes for the top three in each of the three divisions. Full details, rules and entry form are available on our website and Facebook. Please call 715-212-9922 with any questions.

Now grab a spatula and build!



One of my favorite things about MCHS is that any person on any given day will walk in the door with an artifact meaningful to them and/or their family. A means for us to preserve and share the stories of ordinary people who may not otherwise be remembered. Or it may not be terribly sentimental, but just really cool! Like this Flash Gordon pop up book. My world is a better place knowing this is archived for history. -Janet

By Kathy Volkmann, Curator of Artifacts

Flash Gordon is an American superhero who originated in 1934 in a comic strip drawn by Alex Raymond. Flash is a Yale polo player who is thrust into an interplanetary conflict with the evil emperor Ming. The Flash Gordon comic strip ran daily from 1934 to 1992, then as a Sunday strip until 2003.

This "Pop-Up" book from the Marathon County Historical Society artifact collection, *Flash Gordon: Tournament of Death*, was published in 1935. It tells the story of the marriage feast Ming holds for Flash and his bride-to-be, Dale Arden. The 20-page book has 3 full-color pop-up pages - the remaining pages are text interspersed with story illustrations.

In addition to being a well-illustrated book, it's a look at the early years of our fascination with superheroes.