

From the President

Unusual Times: Working From Home

I initially wrote a piece for this issue of the Wanigan during normal times. That article celebrates National Historic Preservation Month, which is May. But we will preserve that piece for when better times return. For now, I want to tell about two things that happened just before COVID-19 struck, and then I will brag about the work our staff and volunteers have been doing since our doors closed to the public.



Russ Wilson

Before COVID-19

The first is a sad note: We wished a fond farewell to **Sara Goetsch** because she was successful in securing a full-time position at a major employer in the Wausau area. Sara's contributions to our events, displays, programming, and operations have been outstanding, and we will miss her cheerful, smiling manner. We wish Sara the best!

On a happier note, we have reached out to two people in the community who have the in-depth knowledge, talent, and dedication to lead development of our exhibit on Hmong emigration from Southeast Asia to Marathon County. To our great fortune, **MaiGer Moua** and **Ka Lo** have agreed to take on this project. We are very excited over their participation, and we look forward to a great exhibit opening in 2021.

Since the pandemic struck

So far, fingers crossed, staff layoff has been minimal. Most staff members are hard at work doing those things that require uninterrupted attention – things that are hard to get done when our doors are open.

Mary Forer has added indices to the entire 1900 and 1940 US Censuses for Marathon County. Volunteer **John Frieders** created these indices by comparing census records to plat maps and city directories so as to verify name spellings. The two indices added 72,138 records, which puts the total number of Marathon County census records at 187,190! All are indexed and searchable on our website.

Ben Clark is catching up on processing accumulated donations and creating finding aids for existing collections. He is putting finishing touches on Window Capital of the World, our online exhibit of the Central Wisconsin window industry. Ben has been working with volunteers **Linda and Russ Forbess** on the upcoming Marathon County Parks exhibit, which we hope (again, fingers crossed) to open in late summer or early fall.

Sandy Block keeps on communicating with the public through social media, email, press releases, and the Wanigan (a new responsibility for Sandy since Sara left). **Janet Kluttermann** has been updating our membership letters and related documents, updating rental contracts, processing checks, and sending membership renewals.

Anna Straub has spent time organizing our demonstration collection, which we use to create displays at various locations, develop traveling trunks that go to schools, and loan items to other organizations around Marathon County for special events. **Gary Gisselman** continues to monitor and respond to research questions.

Mike Bresnahan has been touch-up painting, doing various repairs, installing a tile backsplash in the lower level catering kitchen, and deep cleaning all over. **Gary Walters** has been checking on the Yawkey House Museum to be sure all remains ship-shape through changing seasons.

In addition, volunteers too numerous to list here continue to do important work that helps us preserve and share Marathon County history.

As you find new ways to fill your days during Safer At Home, please keep in mind the rapidly expanding and increasingly user-friendly mountain of records, documents, and photographs accessible on our website, www.marathoncountyhistory.org/.

Stay safe and healthy!

Russ Wilson, MCHS Board President



Screenshot from website Online Resources page

• **IN MEMORIAM** •

We were saddened to hear of the passing of our friend and former colleague Shelley Dodge Green on March 30.

Shelley started as a volunteer at the Marathon County Historical Society in 1996, then joined the staff from 2002 until August 2015 when she moved from Wausau to Amery, WI. Many will remember Shelley as our staff genealogist who loved to help solve the mysteries related to any family history question.

Fun fact: Her great grandfather arrived in Marathon County in 1854.

Shelley, we appreciate all you did for MCHS. You will be missed.



Shelley Green



George Alafouzios

Long-time MCHS volunteer and Yawkey House Museum docent George Alafouzios died on April 14. George started volunteering with the Historical Society on July 16, 1966.

During his nearly 54 years of service, he introduced many a youngster to the amazing exhibits and displays of the early eclectic collection that was “the museum.” In more recent years, he has invited many visitors across the threshold at the Yawkey House to explore the early history of our community and the home’s original occupants, Cyrus, Alice, and Leigh Yawkey.

George’s ready smile and cheerful greetings will echo through the Woodson History Center and the Yawkey House Museum and in our hearts forever.

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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.

Welcome to our New Members

- | | |
|--------------------|--------------------|
| Elizabeth K. Gille | John & Lori Sheehy |
| Shelby Weister | Angela Gonzalez |
| Sandy Schulz | Shirley Gonzalez |

• **THANK YOU VOLUNTEERS** •

We love our volunteers! Yet with the current need to avoid meeting in groups, we have postponed our annual Volunteer Appreciation Dinner. Once we are allowed to meet again, we plan to have a special picnic to honor our many volunteers. We couldn’t operate without you!

• **GIFTS RECEIVED** •

- ◆ In honor of Rob Hagge by Cyrus Hagge.
- ◆ In memory of Glenda Walker by Jane Johnson & Jim Janke.
- ◆ In memory of Joanne Beckman by Jane Johnson & Jim Janke.
- ◆ In memory of Shelley Dodge Green by Martha Albright.
- ◆ A donation from the Nancy Woodson Spire Foundation, Inc.

Community Project

Exhibit will show off local parks

By Ben Clark, Archivist

The 1920s was a period of great civic enthusiasm. Leaders from Birnamwood to Unity wanted to let everyone know that Marathon County was a modern and progressive place. And in the 1920s, nothing showed a community was progressive and cultured better than a system of developed parks.

The Marathon County Parks Commission was established in April 1920, by order of the County Board of Supervisors. Its members were among the most dedicated and influential men you could find, and their task was to identify locations that would make good parks for the County. And they did. Within a decade, they established a half dozen fine parks for the County, and laid the groundwork for the fine park system that we have today.

As we mentioned in the last Wanigan, this year we were planning to celebrate the anniversary of our County Parks System in cooperation with the Marathon County Parks Department.

In the original draft for this article (written in early March), we were going to announce that our new exhibit on the County Parks system would be opening in June... but in the last few weeks, we (like everyone else) have had to reevaluate timetables and schedules in light of the current public health crisis. So for now, expect the exhibit to open sometime later this year.

In the meantime, we are still working on the celebration of the parks for when things get better. And we would still love to hear about what the County Parks have meant to you. **If you have a photograph to show us, a story to share, or an interesting object** that you would be willing to let us borrow for the exhibit, please let us know.

Listed below is a wish list of things that we would love to include, and they might help inspire an idea or two. If you want to get in touch with us, email Ben Clark bclark@marathoncountyhistory.org or leave a message at 715/842-5750 (extension 302).

Thanks in advance for your help. We are looking forward to when we can safely share this history, and celebrate a century of our wonderful County Parks system.

Our Wish List

Objects:

Aluminum canoe. In order to fit in the exhibit space, we would need one 11 feet or shorter if possible (or if you have a damaged canoe that you don't mind if it gets cut into smaller pieces).

A small canvas pup tent. Emphasis on small here, as we would prefer if the tent does not fill the whole exhibit space if possible.

Vintage camping equipment from the 1930s-1960s, such as an old Coleman stove or cooler.

Vintage fishing poles

Throwing horseshoe set

Vintage wood hockey stick. We have smaller kids' sticks, but would love a nice adult stick

Ads or announcements for events held at a park. These could be posters, flyers, or notices in a church bulletin; for company picnics, camping trip with the scouts, church outings, etc.

Photographs:

Park photographs. Pictures of Big Rapids Park and Rib Falls Park in particular.

Family photos of events or travels to a park. Part of our plans for the exhibit is to include a display with a screen showing a slideshow of the many ways people enjoy the park system., especially the smaller parks. Any pictures of you, your family, and/or friends enjoying any Marathon County parks would be welcome!



Children gather at the pool in Marathon Park during the 1920s. Photo from the MCHS collection.



Marathon County Historical Society
410 McIndoe Street
Wausau, Wisconsin 54403

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Inside:

- 2:** Tributes: Shelley Green & George Alafouzou
Thank You Volunteers!
- 3:** Parks Exhibit Update
and Wish List

Keeping healthier: This issue looks a little different from our normal quarterly newsletter. To help keep our staff and volunteers safe during the COVID-19 pandemic, we did not ask volunteers to fold this edition of The Wanigan and instead had Sun Printing manage the mailing process.

Coming Up: We can't wait to reopen to the public and reschedule History Speaks talks and other events. Watch our website www.marathoncountyhistory.org and our Facebook page for up-to-date information about those dates.



**MARATHON COUNTY
HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

Our Mission Statement

To collect, preserve, advance, and disseminate the knowledge of the history of Marathon County and the State of Wisconsin

**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

Currently we are closed because of the COVID-19 virus.

Your Membership Matters

Your participation matters to us!

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, whether at home or beyond!

Becoming a member is easy! Visit our website www.marathoncountyhistory.org/about-us/membership to donate online, 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.