



# McFarland Historical Society

5814 MAIN STREET, MCFARLAND, WISCONSIN 53558  
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Edited by Dale Marsden



## March Through Wisconsin Women's Suffrage History Will Highlight Annual MHS Meeting Municipal Center, Sunday, March 1, 1 - 3:30 P.M.

*The public is invited to attend our lively annual meeting that includes Wisconsin wines and home made refreshments.*

### The Woman's Hour Has Struck - Simone Munson

Simone Munson, Wisconsin State Historical Society librarian and archivist, will lead McFarland Historical Society members and guests on a march through Wisconsin's suffrage history as the guest speaker at this year's Annual Meeting from 1-3 p.m., Sunday, March 1, at the McFarland Village Hall. Munson's talk is open to everyone. During her presentation, "The Woman's Hour Has Struck - Wisconsin's Role in the Women's Suffrage Movement," Munson will share the stories of Wisconsin suffragettes, the tactics they used, and the challenges they met and overcame as they worked to gain the right to vote. Munson will also discuss how Wisconsin fits within the national enfranchisement movement and how it became the first state to ratify the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment, which when enacted allowed women to vote in federal elections.



### Volunteer of the Year



We are pleased to announce that Ginny Dodson will be honored as our McFarland Historical Society Volunteer of the Year for 2019. As those of you who know her, Ginny is a force of nature - a strong-willed, intelligent and caring woman who once she puts her mind to something, there is no stopping her. Friends also appreciate Ginny's intellect, competence, and sense of humor. Ginny and husband Stanley arrived in McFarland with their baby daughter Sarah in 1973 and moved into their home built in 1906 on Hough Street. Close friendships with neighbors and long-time village residents Charlotte Sullivan, Celia Thompson, and Nora Brickson deepened their appreciation for the history of McFarland. Ginny joined the McFarland Historical Society board in the 1980's and joined again after she retired from work as a computer programmer and trainer at American Family Insurance in 2007. Ginny has been active in the Larson House Museum through helping with restoration projects, naming the gardens for Stanley who died in 2009, and serving as chair of the Garden Committee. Ginny's other passions are playing the recorder with The Winds of Southern Wisconsin and practicing Tai Chi, but her heart condition curtailed these activities in 2019. Her top priority is visiting grandchildren Kate and Henry Wilson and their parents in Connecticut.

**Be sure to come to the annual meeting on March 1<sup>st</sup> to see and hear a special tribute to Ginny for her amazing volunteer work on behalf of the historical society and this community.**

# Notable Women of McFarland

By Cindy Clark and Jane Licht

Early in 2019, the board members decided on the theme “Notable Women of McFarland” for the lobby display. Jackie Utter, Paula Niedenthal, Cindy Clark and Wes and Jane Licht served on the committee to select, research and prepare displays on women of McFarland who contributed greatly to their local community and beyond. Unfortunately, there was not enough space in the lobby to adequately display all of the women who probably should have been recognized and the committee was forced to narrow down the number of women to be honored. The committee also decided to limit the chosen women to those who are no longer living.

In business, Jane Harrison and Geraldine Larson played significant roles in the development and success of Lake Waubesa resort communities in the early through mid-twentieth century. Ruby Larson and Dorothy Schiefelbein were critical partners in their family enterprises, Badger Petroleum Company and Badger Medical Supply, respectively; and Margaret Larson built her own CPA firm in McFarland.

Four were McFarland Lutheran church leaders: Dorothy Schiefelbein created and with Pauline Larson directed the highly successful smorgasbord fundraiser for twenty-plus years; Pauline Larson updated the complex church history; Ruby Larson served as one of the first women on the board of directors; and, Alice Olson was a charter member of the Rebecca Circle and a religion teacher.

In civic affairs they were strong proponents of community initiatives and organizations: Ann Davis (creation of McDaniel Park); Ann Stajich (McFarland Library, Village Farmers Market, McFarland Citizen of the Year); Margaret Larson (Arnold Larson Park and development of the business park); Doris Hanson (Wisconsin Women’s Network, NOW, Aldo Leopold Center, women’s sports advocate); Alice Olson (local and county 4-H leadership, McFarland Senior Citizens activist).

In education, master teacher Constance Elvehjem was recognized as Wisconsin’s Rural Teacher of the

Year in 1958. Dorothy Helmke taught in one-room schools around DeForest and McFarland; and Barbara Thompson went on from a rural McFarland schoolhouse to teach and later became Wisconsin State Superintendent of Schools.



Connie Elvehjem

These women served in government at the local and state levels: Anne Davis managed the combined positions of Village Clerk/Village Treasurer; Ann Stajich and Margaret Larson were village trustees and Margaret was later elected McFarland’s first woman president; Pauline Larson, (the first woman school board member), Dorothy Schiefelbein and Barbara Houghton were elected to the McFarland School Board; Barbara Thompson was the first woman elected State Superintendent of Schools; and, Doris Hanson the first woman to lead the Wisconsin Department of Administration, was also Village President and elected 48<sup>th</sup> District Assemblywoman in the Wisconsin Legislature.



Barbara Houghton

The McFarland’s Historical Society was established and grew with the dedication of Pauline Larson and Alice Olson, charter members of the society; Ruby Larson held every office in the society and received honors from the Wisconsin State Historical Society; Barbara Houghton was a society board member and author of “City of the Second Lake,” a history of McFarland; Margaret Larson and Dorothy Helmke were avid volunteers and society promoters.



Alice Olson

As journalists, Dorothy Helmke wrote of McFarland’s people and events for local and regional newspapers, including the Capital Times; Ann Stajich was a freelance writer for the McFarland Community Life; Barbara Houghton’s articles and poetry were published in local and national magazines, and she co-authored “City of the Second Lake.” The promise of an opportunity to be of service during WWII prompted Dorothy Schiefelbein to volunteer for the U. S. Army in 1944.



Dorothy Schiefelbein

To learn more about each of these Notable Women of McFarland, read the biographies posted in this exhibit.



Pauline Larson



Ruby Larson



Ann Stajich

# Wedding Gowns as Part of our Very Victorian Christmas

by Jane Licht

Every December the Larson House Museum is decorated for the Christmas holiday season under the leadership of Kathy Krusiec. Volunteers move trees and tubs of decorations from storage in the basement and attic to the various rooms. More volunteers decorate each room. In addition to the usual exquisite decorations, a special wedding gown display was offered for the enjoyment of the many visitors during Christmas in the Village on Dec. 7<sup>th</sup> and every Sunday afternoon in December. Three of the wedding gowns were originally housed in the museum on Main Street, including a white cotton gown used by Anna Johnson who married E.N. Edwards in 1884. E.N. was the contractor and first owner of the Larson House in 1898. John Larson's great-granddaughters, Barbara Nelson Luczko and Janine Wendling Turner, donated their wedding gowns from 1969 and 1977 for the display. Jeanine also donated the wedding gown worn by her mother, Ruth Larson, in 1951. Board members Carol Beck, Gail Aaroen and Paula Niedenthal donated wedding gowns used in 1911, 1948 and 1955. Paula's Aunt Audrey Helmke Endres donated her 1951 gown. Board member Dick Kohl literally did a dumpster dive to save Sandy Larson's mother's gown, a very lovely dress dating from her 1938 wedding. Each dress has information about the wedding, including photos of the bride when possible. Visitors to the Larson House gave many positive comments about the wedding gown display that will remain in the house museum through the summer. Come and have a look any Sunday from 1 to 4 pm from Memorial Day through September.



*Hilda Rucks married Elmer Buchholz in the Lutheran Church in Augusta, Wisconsin, in 1938.*



*Ruth Larson married John Wendling in the McFarland Lutheran Church in 1951. Ruth is the mother of Janine Wendling.*

# Waubesa Third Grade Visitors

by Wes Licht

October at the museum means third grade tours and lots of activity in preparation for the eager young visitors. Several members made sure that displays were tidy and put in good order and Wes Licht organized the scheduling of guides who reviewed ideas for their presentations for the three-day period. The mornings of October 1, 2 and 3 would be busy with each of the eight classes beginning with an introduction to the museum in the lobby. Then small groups would rotate touring the log cabin, the early farm display in the annex and the main museum. Guides this year included Wes, Dale Marsden, Mary Freund, Gini Nichols, Jane Licht, Carol Beck, Cindy Clark and Rod Clark. Candy Mooney shadowed a couple of these guides and prepped for her chance to work with the third graders.



*Mary Freund tells her group about the Lake Waubesa room exhibit.*

These Waubesa classes were the first to see the new displays about important women in the early history of McFarland, tourism activities and life along Lake Waubesa and an automobile exhibit featuring simple tools and equipment. Over the course of the winter and spring, board members had worked diligently on these projects. Regardless, the students favored their visit into the log cabin, imagining their family living in such a confined place with designated chores and responsibilities for all members young and older.

Thanks to educational assistant Mrs. Angie TeBeest from Waubesa Intermediate School for arranging the busy schedule that would bring the third graders to our museum coordinated with stops at the library, McFarland House, food pantry and village hall. She could control most everything but the weather and

unfortunately Mrs. Miller's class missed out on their visit to the museum as severe area storms with lightning caused an early return for the classes on day one. Those boys and girls under the direction of Mrs. Rowley, Ms. Griffin, Ms. Case, Mrs. Swierczek, Mrs. Eckel, Ms. Lown and Mr. Joyce were all able to spend time at the museum. Our guides appreciated the teachers having the students wearing large nametags and in predetermined small groups assisted by parents, grandparents and other Waubesa staff members.



*Guide Dale Marsden begins his group's tour at the Skare Memorial.*



*One of the new displays at the museum is a life size picture of a 1914 Maxwell automobile.*

# Larson House Picnic

by Jane Licht

Those who attended the Larson House Picnic last August on a Sunday afternoon not only enjoyed good weather and great food in a lovely outdoor setting, but they also got to see the “ghosts” of John and Julia Larson. Carole Pingel portrayed dutiful wife Julia and Al Schneider was a distinguished John Larson who made several appearances during the afternoon. They sat in wicker chairs on the side porch and exchanged tidbits about life and people in McFarland in the 1920’s. They moved into the dining room and talked about their lovely home. Finally, they went to the grand piano in the living room. “Julia” played while husband “John” and she sang a couple of duets. Those gathered around the living room thoroughly enjoyed the performances. Thanks so much to Carole and Al for making the entertainment at our picnic so special. Be watching for another picnic at the Larson House. It will be open to the public and you won’t want to miss it!



*Carole Pingel as Julia and Al Schneider as John Larson. pose on the porch.*



*Serving lunch .*



*The dessert table.*



*The crowd clapping after one of the performances at the picnic.*



*“Julia” and “John” at the Piano.*

## Obituaries

### Virginia Eighmy Smith Swingen, 101

Virginia Eighmy Smith Swingen, passed away Saturday, Nov. 30, 2019, at home in Maple Bluff. She was born in Madison, Wis., on Nov. 9, 1918, to Dr. Karl W. and Bess (Eighmy) Smith. Virginia was educated at West High School in Madison in the first complete graduation class of 1936, and the University of Wisconsin where she received a BA degree in Spanish in 1940. She was a member of Delta Zeta (formerly Phi Omega Pi) sorority, and Sigma Delta Pi (Hispanic Honor Society). During World War II, she was employed at Forest Products Laboratory in Madison testing woods. Virginia married Eldred M. Swingen at Bethel Lutheran Church on Sept. 28, 1946, after his graduation from law school. Together they raised a daughter, Regina Anne. Virginia traveled and cruised extensively with her husband to Europe, the Caribbean, China, the Middle East and Egypt. Her last big trips were with her daughter to Alaska, Machu Picchu, and the Galapagos Islands.

Virginia was a member of numerous wildlife and environmental organizations: Audubon Club, Henry Vilas Zoo, International Crane Foundation, Maple Bluff Garden Club, National Wildlife Society, Olbrich Botanical Gardens, Smithsonian, Yahara Lakes Association, and several others. She also belonged to Bethel Lutheran Church, Maple Bluff Country Club and the Madison Club. Her interests included refinishing antique furniture, gardening, reading, needlepoint, knitting and quilting, making homemade jams and jellies, golf, bowling, jazzercise, yoga, and entertaining with cocktail and dinner parties. Virginia is survived by her daughter, Regina Anne Lee of Cookeville, Tenn. She was preceded in death by her parents; her brother, Robert; and her husband of 66 years, Eldred.

A celebration of life will be planned for a later date. Virginia made the commitment years ago to donate her body to the Anatomy Department of the University of Wisconsin-Madison Medical School but was underweight at time of death. She chose cremation as an alternative. The family requests that memorials be given to the church or charity of the donor's choice.

### John A. Wendling, 89

John A. Wendling passed on to everlasting life with his Lord and Savior on June 8, 2019, rejoicing in the promise of reuniting with his beloved wife Ruth. He died peacefully with his two children and families present following a brief illness. John was born May 31, 1930, in Aurora, Illinois. He attended Wheaton College Academy at Wheaton, Illinois, for 4 years, graduating with the class of '49. John continued on to attend Wheaton College and graduated with a degree in Business and Economics in 1953. John received a master's degree in Business at Northern Illinois University in 1973. He continued to engage in professional development throughout his career by attending advanced banking courses at Southern Illinois University and the University of Oklahoma. John was married to his wife Ruth Larson on March 25, 1951, and celebrated 58 wonderful years before her passing in 2009.

He is survived by his two children, Jeff (Brenda) Wendling of Rochelle, Illinois, and Janine (David) Turner of Richmond, Virginia. He was blessed with four grandchildren, Safra Granot, Amira Turner, John L. Wendling, and Hannah Wendling, and one great grandchild, Orian Granot.

Upon graduating from college, John entered the family automobile dealership with a franchise for Oldsmobile and Rambler. He was the owner of Wendling Motor Sales in Rochelle, Illinois, for 16 years. Upon selling his auto dealership, John entered the banking business where he enjoyed 23 years of service. During his first 7 years he served as the Vice President of the Rochelle State Bank followed by 16 years of service as the Vice President of the First National Bank and Trust Co. in Rochelle until his retirement in 1993. During this time John taught banking courses at Eastern Illinois University, Bradley University and Illinois State University through the Illinois Bankers Association. He was past president of the Ogle County Banker's Association as well as a member and previous president of the Rochelle Kiwanis Club. John along with his wife Ruth, were founding members of Faith Lutheran Church in Rochelle, Illinois, and were dedicated to volunteering their life and service to their Lord Jesus Christ.

John resided in Rochelle, Illinois, until 1993 at which time he and his wife moved to Lake Waubesa in McFarland, Wisconsin. He shared his love of music by volunteering as a pianist at McFarland Lutheran Church. John was also a strong supporter of the McFarland Historical Society.

## Obituaries (Cont.)

### Barbara J. Sperle, 93

Barbara Jean Sperle passed away peacefully at Meriter Hospital surrounded by her loving family on Friday June 7, 2019. Her death was the result of a long and well-lived life. She was born Barbara Jean Olson on August 2, 1925, in Stoughton, Wisconsin, to parents Helmer and Bernice (Wigsmoen) Olson. Barbara graduated from Stoughton High School in 1943 and it is there that she met her high school sweetheart, Richard D. Sperle. Barbara and Richard were married on Easter Sunday in 1946 and they celebrated 63 years of marriage until his death in 2009.

Barbara was a devoted wife, mother, grandmother, great grandmother, sister, aunt and friend. She successfully managed the household as well as the financial accounts for the Sperle family farming operation in McFarland until her death. She was involved in school and church activities throughout her life and some may still recall that she was instrumental in the Norwegian Smorgasbord at McFarland Lutheran Church each fall. Barbara was active in volunteer work at Skaalen Home in Stoughton and served on the Skaalen Home Auxiliary as an officer. In her later years, her flower gardening became her greatest love, second only to her family.

She is survived by her two daughters, Diana Jean Sperle and Mary Louise (John) Teppo; her grandson, Nathan Richard (Rebecca) Kirch; three great granddaughters and cousins.

### Corrine M. "Corky" Ollhoff, 74

Corrine M. "Corky" Ollhoff passed away after a 6-month battle with cancer. She was born June 4, 1945, in Watertown, the daughter of the late Zale and Valoise Pennell. She was a graduate of Palmyra Eagle High School. Corky graduated from the Bellin School of Nursing and worked as a Registered Nurse in Labor and Delivery at St. Mary's Hospital until her retirement in 2012. Corky married Dale Ollhoff on October 2, 1971, at Bethel Lutheran Church in Madison. She was a member of McFarland Lutheran Church. Corky was an active volunteer at the Dane County Humane Society. She loved to read, loved horses and cats and spend time with her family and friends. She also enjoyed fellowship and travel with the Wisconsin Voyagers Motorhome Chapter of FMCA.

Corky is survived by her husband Dale, of 48 years; son Matthew Ollhoff, daughter Melissa Pitts and grandchildren. She was preceded in death by her parents and her brother Dorian "Buzz" Pennell.

## Lake Waubesa Room

By Jane Licht

In 1918, restoration work was completed on our double-pointed rowboat originally used at a Lake Waubesa resort around 1900. In 2019, board members completed work on the rest of the Lake Waubesa room. The boat is a focal point plus there are displays on ice harvesting, fishing, resorts, resort stores, swimming, boating and other activities on the lake. Cindy and Rod Clark, Carol Beck, Dale Marsden, Dick Kohl, Bob Kolek, Wes and Jane Licht, Don Peterson and Joe Larson worked on this major display that encompasses most of the new addition to the museum. If you have not already visited the Lake Waubesa Room display, be sure to stop by on Memorial Day or any Sunday afternoon this summer.



*These wool swimsuits from the 1930's were used by Ruth and Conrad Jaeger who lived in McFarland along the Yahara River.*



*Hauling ice in Madison in the early 1900's. The ice was cut on the Four Lakes, stored in ice houses insulated with sawdust, and the "ice man" would bring blocks of ice to homes and businesses.*

**Please renew your membership this year to stay on our rolls.**

Your membership and donations help to support the McFarland Historical Society and keeps the museum operating. If you would like to volunteer, let us know. We also have board positions open if you are interested in becoming more active in the Society. Many area residents volunteer their time and energy to make this a successful organization.

I want to support local history as a member of the McFarland Historical Society. Please enroll me as a new  or renewal  member for 2020.

(Select one membership option)

- Individual \$ 15
- Family \$ 25
- Individual/Family life \$ 150
- Supporting \$ 250
- Business \$ 250

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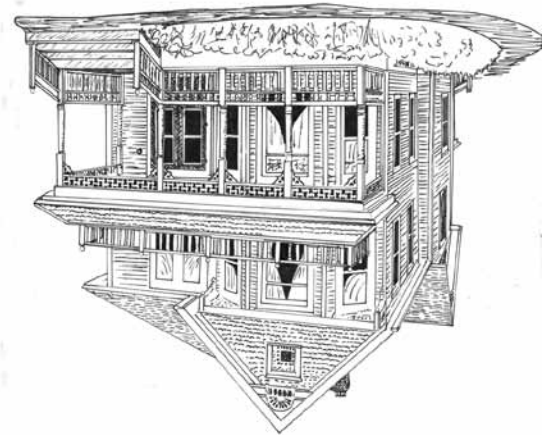
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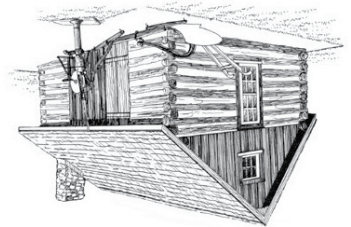
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**Go to [www.mcfarlandhistorical.org](http://www.mcfarlandhistorical.org) for a color copy of the newsletter, information and color photos on all McFarland Historical Society activities. Photos are by Sue Vick-Finley, Jane Licht and Dale Marsden.**

*We hope to see you at the Annual Meeting.*



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