

# McFarland Historical Society

5814 MAIN STREET, MCFARLAND, WISCONSIN 53558

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Edited by Dale Marsden



## President's Message

by Dale Marsden

Covid-19 has had a great effect on our museums' operations but our society has been active and busy getting ready for reopening when conditions permit. Our annual meeting will be rescheduled for sometime in September or October. I would expect the museum and Larson House to be able to reopen for visiting this summer. We should be able to have the McFarland third grade classes visit by October.

I would like everyone of our members to fill out a membership form to update our records, addresses and to provide email addresses so we can contact you and provide up-to-date information on our society.

## Jim Harried Retires from Mowing Crew

by Jane Licht

Jim Harried will be 83 years young this year and certainly deserves his retirement - his third retirement. Jim worked in the University of Wisconsin's printing department for 37 years. Then he started his lawn care business and continued for 16 years. Five years ago, he joined the Larson House Museum Mowing Crew. Using his faithful John Deere lawn tractor, he mowed the lawn the second Saturday of every month during the growing season. The lawn always looked especially nice whenever Jim mowed because of the special mulching kit on his tractor that ground up the cut grass.

Like many area residents, Jim's family's Norwegian roots are strong. His grandfather Olaf (Ole) Harried was born in Sogn, Norway, in 1875 and left for America at the age of 16. He married Tomina Johnson and they homesteaded land in North Dakota. They returned by covered wagon to the Stoughton area in 1919 and farmed until he retired in 1936. They had nine children with Truman being their fifth child. Truman grew up on their Wisconsin farm and married Vera Flattem. They named their second son Hjalmer (Jim). Jim grew up on the family dairy farm near Utica, Wisconsin, and went to Stoughton High School where he met Loraine Platt. They married in 1958.

Jim and Loraine raised five children. Loraine grew up on a farm on County Highway MN, four miles east of McFarland. They built their first house on the family farm in 1963. They moved into McFarland in 1980. Both volunteered as emergency medical technicians (EMTs) for 15 years during which Loraine served as the



Loraine and Jim Harried in the parlor at the Larson House. They named this room in honor of son Michael.

EMS Director for eight years. This civic involvement inspired their son Michael to serve on the Village Board of Trustees beginning in 1997 and to become village president in 2007. Michael (Mike) was very supportive of the McFarland Historical Society's purchase of the Larson House in 2012. Later that year, Mike passed away suddenly of cardiac and thoracic sarcoidosis to the shock of his parents, many friends and colleagues. Jim and Loraine decided a fitting memorial to Mike would be to purchase the naming rights to a room in the Larson House. They did so and the parlor is named the Harried Room in honor of Mike. His brief but inspiring life history and a State of Wisconsin citation are displayed in that room.

Jim's presence on his lawn tractor at the Larson House will be missed but the Harried family influence will remain.

# Winter/Spring Work Projects

by Wes Licht

When some sort of normalcy gets back to life in McFarland, visitors to the McFarland Historical Museum will notice some changes to various display areas that weren't there at the last open house in autumn of 2019.

The largest change will be the addition of the McFarland State Bank display relating the historical importance of this business to our community from 1905 to 2020. You can read this story elsewhere in the newsletter.

Other remodeling changes are currently in progress to upgrade several display areas. For many years, temporary room dividers were used to provide barriers between the early Norwegian kitchen, the child's bedroom and Pete's Shoe Repair. Now permanent walls, appropriately covered to enhance the authenticity of each display, have been constructed by seven members of the current board of directors. Photographs showing the details of the displays were taken prior to deconstruction to make the reconstruction and reassembling process a bit easier.



Rod and Dick salvaging paneling for the shoemaker's display.

After considerable planning, work began on a weekly basis. Small exhibit items were boxed for temporary safe storage. Large pieces of furniture were moved and consolidated just enough to have room for the rebuilding process. Drop cloths are now covering these old artifacts and are also hanging from the ceiling to the floor, protecting other displays from the dust generated by the cutting and sanding of the wood frames, paneling and drywall.



The wall crew - Joe Larson, Don Peterson and Wes Licht.

High energy, good humor and cooperation have marked all phases of this project from the start. Each member of this work crew shares his or her specific skills and takes pride in the group's workmanship and overall accomplishments for each day. Amazing progress has been made and we look forward to finishing the walls and reassembling these exhibits in the near future.  
(continue on next page)



Joe fires a fastener into the concrete to anchor the wall.



Wes and Joe measure a salvaged panel for the shoemaker's display.



Dick Kohl, Dale Marsden and Rod Clark are the panel installers.

### (Winter Projects continued)

Another unrelated small project was the acquisition and installation of storage cabinets for the Records Room. An opportune visit to the Habitat Restore in Monona helped us find a number of available wall cabinets that matched the desks and shelving already being used. While the cabinets are not near full, they have helped immensely with the organization of materials and use of this valuable workspace.



Overhead cabinets were installed in the Records Room.

## Lawn Mowing at the Larson House

by Bill Mitchell

Everyone heading East on Farwell Street comes to the stop sign at Exchange Street. On that corner is the Larson House. And hopefully, everyone notices the well maintained house and neatly mowed lawn.

A group of five known as the “Larson House Lawn Mowing Brigade” mow the lawn each week. This group of individuals have been mowing the lawn since the Larson House was purchased by the McFarland Historical Society back in 2012.

One of the members of the group, Jim Harried, is retiring from this volunteer mowing commitment after 6 years of dedicated service. With Jim’s retirement, a new member is needed to join the lawn mowing brigade.

Each volunteer mows the lawn once per month based on the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, or 5th Saturday weekend of the month between Thursday afternoon and Sunday morning during the mowing season - a time commitment of about 2 hours. Bill Mitchell handles the 5th Saturday weekend and is the first person to be called as a substitute mower if one of the volunteers is unable to mow on his designated Saturday weekend.

If you are interested in becoming a member of the “Larson House Lawn Mowing Brigade”, please contact Bill Mitchell at 838-2879 after 6:30 pm to discuss the mowing schedule and identify one Saturday weekend per month commitment.

## LARSON HOUSE GARDENS FUNDRAISER

By Gail Aaroen

Are you tired of winter yet? Are your thoughts turning to spring and the smell of fresh earth? Are you gazing longingly at your garden clogs? The Larson House Garden Committee is partnering with Flower Power Fundraising, a Wisconsin company, to provide funds to grow and maintain the Larson House Gardens. These lovely gardens depend entirely on volunteers and donations. You can help us and enhance your own gardens at the same time.

Order your seeds and bulbs online to be delivered directly to you at the appropriate planting time for your area. Flower Power delivers anywhere in the US so you can invite your family and friends to participate. We receive 50% profit for each sale. What could be easier?

Use this link for further information and to order:  
<http://LarsonHouseGardenfundraiser.fpfundraising.com>



A welcoming, restful place to relax under the cedar tree after gardening all morning.

# New Bank Display at the Museum

by Jane Licht

Early last year, E. David Locke invited society board members to discuss his idea for a display on the history of McFarland State Bank. David explained that both he and the name “McFarland State Bank” would be retiring in May of 2020 and he would like to preserve the long history of this local institution. The bank was mainly organized by John Anderson in 1904 and opened for business in 1905 in a small but ornate building tucked between a hardware store and a furniture store on Main Street. In 1967, the bank moved to larger quarters across the street in a colonial style building. In 1995, a branch bank was established on Highway 51 and became quite popular. The bank at 5911 Main Street was demolished and the lot donated to the village for a new library. The McFarland State Bank on Highway 51 was greatly enlarged in 2003. In 2020, McFarland State Bank and several other banks in south central Wisconsin were incorporated into One Community Bank.



Dale, Don, Rod, Joe and Wes work together to move the heavy display case.

The McFarland Historical Society decided to take up David Locke on his offer to display bank artifacts and develop an historical narrative. David volunteered to pay for the entire cost of the project, including the purchase of a new display case. A few months later, board members received many old ledgers and various artifacts, and developed a plan for the display. The first step was to install more lighting since the area to be used was rather dimly lit. Next, the wall board was removed and the studs were reinforced to allow for hanging the very heavy door and lock from the bank's 1924 safe. Some light oak paneling was purchased to replace the darker paneling and was installed. For the display title, Dale Marsden made an attractive frame as a backdrop for the large brass “McFarland State Bank” letters saved from the most recent bank building. Dale, Rod Clark,

Joe Larson, Don Peterson and Wes Licht wrestled the new display case into the museum and they all helped with various phases of construction.



Rod and Dale put new paneling in place. Joe is on the far right.

For the wall display, Jane created panels of historical information on John Larson - the first bank president, Homer Vick - head cashier for many decades, and David Locke - the youngest bank president at age 29 who continued working for McFarland State Bank for 45 years. She created a panel on a brief history of the bank and another showing the various bank buildings over the years. A large photograph of the interior of the first bank, donated by David Locke, was also used for the display.



Dale and Jane measure to make sure items will fit the space.

Cindy Clark and Jane looked through the many old ledgers and other items. They filled the display case with various artifacts, including a coin counter, coin box and the first bank journal. This new display will likely be much appreciated, especially by the McFarland area residents who banked at MSB for many years.



Joe, Dale, Rod & Wes in front of the new display case.



The ledgers and other bank artifacts are arranged in the display case.



## Obituaries



**Margaret L. (Alsmo) (Ellestad) Stolen**, age 97, passed away peacefully on August 15, 2020, at Skaalen Nursing Home in Stoughton. She was born the third of twelve children on August 14, 1923, to Raymond and Martha Alsmo on the home farm in McFarland.

On Nov. 3, 1951, she married Curtis Ellestad who preceded her in death in 1975. On May 3, 1986, she married Ingman Stolen who passed away in 2014. Margaret worked for McFarland State Bank from 1944 to 1951 and 1976 to 1986. She and Curtis ran Ellestad Concrete Products for 15 years until his death. She enjoyed travel, including trips to the Holy Land, visiting her family home in Norway with Ingman and many trips throughout the United States. She was a voracious reader, an excellent cook and loved spending time with her children, Mark Ellestad, James Ellestad and Betty Ellestad Kalhagen, and her grandchildren. Margaret had a strong Christian faith and was a lifelong member of McFarland Lutheran Church where she taught Sunday school for many years. She was also a member of the Rebecca Circle and served a term on the church council and many other committees.

Margaret was interested in local history and served on the board of directors of the McFarland Historical Society. She was interviewed by her daughter Betty who prepared Margaret's Alsmo family history and had it printed in 2006. Copies are available for viewing both in the museum on Main Street and at the Larson House Museum.



**Elizabeth A. (Betty) McConnell**, age 98, passed away peacefully at the Skaalen Home in Stoughton on March 11, just shy of her 99th birthday. She was born Elizabeth Ann Egner on March 30, 1921, in the town of Dunn to Ole and Mabel (Krogfoss) Egner. After graduating from Stoughton High School, she started a 38-year career at Oscar Mayer, retiring in 1979.

Betty married Edwin O. McConnell on November 14, 1948. Together they celebrated 56 years of marriage before his passing in 2004. She was a devoted wife, sister, sister-in-law, aunt, great aunt and friend. She was involved in McFarland Lutheran Church and Skaalen Home activities. Betty loved playing cribbage, bridge, doing crossword puzzles, word jumbles and the cryptquote found daily in the Wisconsin State Journal newspaper.

Betty had a knack for making the best lefse, divinity (sea foam) and old-fashioned fry cakes. Her door was always open with a dessert to share. She had an amazing memory and enjoyed reciting a wealth of information about local McFarland history and families. Betty and her husband Edwin were very generous and community oriented, donating money for the village gazebo. Betty also bequeathed thousands of dollars to the McFarland Historical Society.

Betty is survived by two sisters-in-law, Eleanor Geiger of California and Jeanette Egner of McFarland, and many nieces and nephews. She was preceded in death by her husband Edwin, brothers Willard and Howard and her parents.



**Susan "Sue" Babich Minihan**, age 77, of the Town of Dunn, passed away peacefully at home with her husband and daughter at her side on Sunday, July 19, 2020. Sue was born on June 7, 1943, to William and Rita (Skerski) Babich in Presque Isle, Maine. Sue married the love of her life, Edmond P. Minihan, on June 25, 1965. They began married life in Ann Arbor, Michigan, and moved to the beautiful Town of Dunn, in

1972. With her husband Ed, who became the Town of Dunn Chair in 1979, she made many lifelong friends and helped to create a close-knit community of lovers of the land. Sue loved to travel all over the country and world with Ed and they enjoyed life to the fullest in their 55 years of marriage. Sue and Ed adopted their daughter, Joanne, and Sue loved being a hands-on grandmother to Lena and Emma, sharing with them her love of nature, books, farmer's markets, museums and musicals. Sue had a special way of making every day feel like a celebration. Sue loved to entertain and threw amazing parties. She excelled at helping her husband in all his many endeavors and enjoyed being his sous chef to create delicious and beautiful meals for friends and family. She was passionate about justice and equality in the world and was especially proud of meeting (and hugging) former Vice-President and now President, Joe Biden. Sue especially loved the natural beauty and history of her home in the Town of Dunn. Early on, she connected with long-time residents who were keepers of local history and politics, and she later became a mentor herself to encourage land preservation and good government.

Sue received her Registered Nurse degree in 1964 from Mercy School of Nursing in Detroit, Michigan, and later earned a M.S. degree in Labor Relations from UW-Madison. Sue was a nurse for over 50 years, specializing primarily in child psychiatric nursing. She was the Nurse Manager at clinics dedicated to autism and eating disorders, helping many people and families navigate through health crises. After receiving her Master's degree, Sue became the Nursing Labor Relations Manager for UW-Hospital and Clinics. She also taught Labor Relations at Madison College for ten years. One of Sue's favorite roles was being a Nurse Recruiter later in her career, hiring 1,100 of the best and brightest nurse residents for UW-Hospital and Clinics.



**Sheryl Renslo** was born on March 6, 1944, to Leo and Marcella (Onnen) Anderson. She grew up on a farm near Raymond, Minnesota, where her love for the land took root, and her joy for singing was encouraged by family and neighbors. Sheryl was a 1966 graduate of St. Olaf College, where she sang in the choir. While at St. Olaf, Sheryl spent a summer in rural Alabama teaching students during the Civil Rights era. She married Robert Renslo on

Dec. 17, 1967. Together, Sheryl and Bob taught at international schools in Germany and Libya during the 1960s and 1970s. In 1982, they took their three kids abroad to teach in

Jakarta, Indonesia. As a music teacher at Westside Elementary in Sun Prairie, Sheryl shared her love for music with thousands of students before retiring in 2003. She was a lifelong gardener, sang with the Unkalung choir, and was a fierce advocate for social justice, cultural, and charitable causes. She was active in land preservation efforts in the Town of Dunn near McFarland, where she raised her family and lived for 45 years. On May 14, 2016, Sheryl married Charles Larson and was blessed to find a wonderful partner in travel and just causes. They were faithful members of Lake Edge Lutheran Church in Madison, where Sheryl worshipped for almost 50 years. Though frontal lobe dementia colored the last years of life, Sheryl's lively spirit and love for family never dimmed.



**Keith Emery Voelker**, age 80, passed away at his home on June 28, 2020, from the effects of myasthenia gravis. He was born on July 3, 1939, in Milwaukee to parents Herbert and Elisabeth (Countryman) Voelker. Keith graduated from Washington High School in Milwaukee in 1957 and that is where he met his wife Barbara. Keith continued his education, receiving his BS, MS and

PHD degrees from UW-Madison. He married Barbara on September 14, 1963. They celebrated 56 years of marriage until his death.

Keith became a college professor, teaching economics at Carthage College in Kenosha and then at UW-Oshkosh. He received a Distinguished Teacher Award and directed the honors program while in Oshkosh. He was a dedicated member of the Oshkosh Rotary Club (downtown), serving as secretary, director of student exchange and president, often repeating Rotary's motto "service above self."

He was fortunate in his life, happy to spend time with his family and many friends. His love of music from Beethoven to John Denver, traveling, reading and camping enhanced his enjoyment for many years. Highlights are his experiences hosting an AFS exchange student from Norway and volunteering for Marriage Encounter. One constant interest was a strong connection with his church.

Keith and Barbara moved to McFarland after his retirement to be near their daughter Sharon Stratton and her family. Keith became a McFarland Historical Society board member and both Keith and Barbara volunteered for the society's many activities. They were also active in McFarland Lutheran Church.



**Joyce A. (Jerdee) Wildt**, age 78, passed peacefully at home with her family by her side on Thursday, January 7, 2021, after a long struggle with vascular dementia. She was born on June 15, 1942, the daughter of Edwin and Dora (Sperle) Jerdee. Joyce spent her childhood years growing up on the family farm with her parents and sisters, Ruth and Kaia. This is where she learned

the value of hard work and family. She was very proud of her rural upbringing and referred to it often. Joyce graduated from Stoughton High School in 1960 and attended UW Platteville before enrolling in the Madison General Hospital School of Nursing where she graduated in 1963. While at Madison General Hospital she met her future husband, Phil Wildt. They were married on October 23, 1965, at West Koshkonong Lutheran Church and celebrated 55 wonderful years together.

Although educated and employed as an RN, Joyce's passion was music. She was a self-taught, naturally-gifted musician with the ability to play several instruments by ear. Joyce successfully combined her nursing background and her musical talent to develop a music program for the elderly at several area nursing homes and assisted living centers. At Skaalen Home in Stoughton, she was employed for 15 years and known affectionately as the "music lady" or "accordion lady". Joyce loved people and loved to entertain at home. The Wildt household was often the scene of people singing around the old player piano.

Joyce was a long-time member of McFarland Lutheran Church where she sang in the choir for several years, served as a greeter and was part of the Befrienders Ministry program. She was also a member of the McFarland Lioness Club and the Sound of Madison Chorus for many years. Joyce volunteered at the McFarland Historical Museum and at the Larson House Museum.

Phil and Joyce took several trips throughout the USA and visited Norway where their ancestors came from. Joyce was a kind, loving and caring person who always put the needs of others before hers.



**Charlotte Grace Edwards** passed away on Wednesday, March 3, 2021, at her home surrounded by her loving family. She was born on July 18, 1920, in Madison, the daughter of Charles and Gaea (Holtan) Kittleson of Sun Prairie. Charlotte was a graduate of Sun Prairie High School and Madison Business College. She married Robert "Bob" Edwards on April 3, 1943, at Burke Lutheran Church, where she was baptized and confirmed.

They celebrated nearly 73 years of marriage before Bob's death on March 4, 2016. Charlotte worked as a legal secretary during World War II. After raising her children, she served as church secretary and parish worker at Our Savior's Lutheran Church. At the time of her death, she was the oldest member of Our Savior's. Charlotte was a founding member of the Ruth Guild, a member of the Women's Aid Society and Bethany Auxiliary. She served in many capacities for the Missionary Society because of her abiding faith in Jesus.

Charlotte loved entertaining family and friends, gardening, playing bridge and traveling in the U.S. and abroad with special trips to Uruguay, Norway, and Israel. She had a passion for her Norwegian heritage and genealogical research. She wrote many stories about her childhood on the farm during the Depression. Charlotte and her husband Bob Edwards helped donate for naming rights to the pantry at the Larson House Museum. The pantry was named for the Edwards family so prominent in McFarland history.

## 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 2021. (If you are a **life time member** new donations are appreciated.)

(Select one membership option)

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

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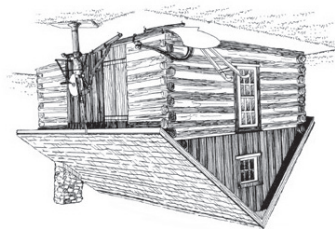
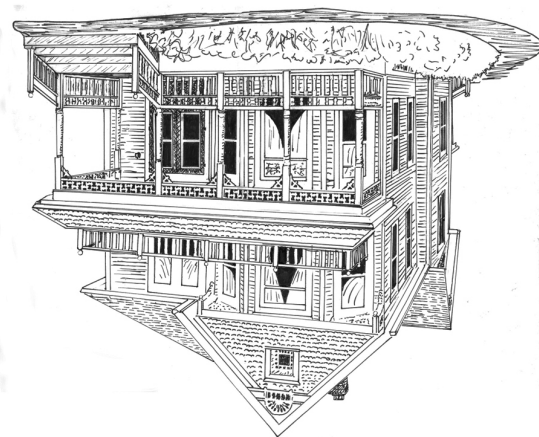
McFarland Historical Society

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