



McFarland Historical Society

5814 MAIN STREET, MCFARLAND, WISCONSIN 53558

PH: 608-838-3992 Issue No. 567 February 15, 2024

Edited by Dale Marsden



Historical Society Annual Meeting March 10 in the Municipal Building

The McFarland Historical Society annual meeting will be held on March 10 from 1 to 3 pm in the Training Room of the McFarland Municipal Building at 5915 Milwaukee Street. McFarland educator Brian Ward will be our guest speaker. Brian will talk about the Ho-Chunk people living in our area during historic times and other tribes living in Wisconsin. Brian has lived and worked on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, home of the Oglala Lakota Nation. He has also worked with indigenous people in Guatemala and Peru through the United Nations World Food Program. He is employed at McFarland High School teaching U.S. History, Political Science, Indigenous Studies and African American Studies. Brian is also the co-advisor of the Black Student Union and Model United Nations. His master's thesis work focused on the representation of indigenous people in K-12 classrooms. He contributed to the book "101 Changemakers: Rebels and Radicals Who Changed U.S. History" and his articles on indigenous and environmental issues has appeared in various publications. In addition, Jane Licht will present an overview of the First Peoples display in the McFarland Historical Museum.



Brian Ward is a McFarland educator and guest speaker at the Society's annual meeting.

Gail Aaroen is our Volunteer of the Year

Back in 2013, Gail Aaroen volunteered to serve on the Larson House Garden Committee. Little did board members know what a treasure she would be. Gail is master a gardener who knows the Latin names as well as common names for plants. When Ginny Dodson was too ill to continue as chair of the Garden Committee, Gail took over and energetically worked to revitalize the gardens and reorganize her committee. In 2020, Gail was elected to the McFarland Historical Society Board of Directors. A former pre-school teacher, Gail soon began giving tours to the 3rd grade classes that visit the Museum on Main Street in October. Gail took over the job of renting the Larson House to interested parties. She has been involved in most of the recent fundraisers and murder mysteries at the Larson House. Gail initiated a Facebook page for the Larson House Museum and gardens. She uses her contacts with Channel 3 and the village media people to promote the society's activities and displays. Gail has organized special tours for seniors and other groups and lined up the necessary tour guides. Gail is an idea person who has good suggestions for improvement as she participates in board meetings and Larson House meetings. Not only does she provide good ideas but volunteers to make those ideas happen. Please come to the Annual Meeting on Sunday, March 10, from 1 to 3 pm at the Village Hall to help us honor Gail Aaroen.



Very Victorian Christmas

The Larson House Museum welcomed many visitors during the Village “Winter Wonderland,” and the following Sunday afternoons in December. Many of our guests were from out of town and quite a few were McFarland and Town of Dunn residents



Many families enjoyed the Larson House Museum during the month of December. This family is standing in the dining room.

who visited for the very first time. They viewed the lovely decorations in all the rooms and voted on their favorite room. Thanks to DeAnn Larson for arranging for the piano tuner, lining up piano players and finding the reader who shared the “Night Before Christmas” story with our youngest visitors. Thanks to the hosts, tour guides and the many ladies who baked Christmas cookies that were greatly appreciated by our guests. Some families have made visiting the Larson House in December part of their holiday tradition.



This family is in the living room at the Larson House. They have come to enjoy our Very Victorian Christmas..

Decorating and Taking Down the Decorations and Trees

A tradition of long-standing makes possible our offering the Very Victorian Christmas to the community. Every year a group of volunteers moves Christmas trees and tubs of Christmas decorations up from the basement and down from the attic in the Larson House. Then another group decorates every tree and every room in the house. In January, volunteers take down the decorations and trees. We greatly appreciate these dedicated volunteers. Thanks to Barb Seth, Peggy Anderson and her daughter Sarah, Rosalie Richardson, Emily Wei, Sophia Bexson, Diane Voiss, Sylvia Krepski, Deb Brennum, Sue Vick Finley, Carol Beck, Karen Kuenzi, Marlene Richard, Cheryl Salava, Linda Scheid, Gail Aaroen, and Jane Licht for decorating and/or, taking down the decorations. Thanks to Sandra Gerrik for making scones for the workers. Thanks to those who moved trees and tubs: Tim Mitchell, Don Peterson, Rod Clark, Wes Licht, Mike Flaherty, Aaron Jacob, Sylvia Krepski, Dianne Hartson, and Dale Marsden.



Carol Torgeson headed up the decorating crews. Here she is adding candy canes to the tree in the children's room at the Larson House. The tree was donated by Peggy Anderson.



Carol Beck and Gail Aaroen decorated the Christmas tree in the office at the Larson House.

Murder Mysteries at the Larson House

We continue to offer murder mysteries at the Larson House. Many times our poor male manikin has been sprawled out “dead” on the floor of the master bedroom as he has been the victim of horrible crimes for the past two years. Last November, he was “Champagne Charlie” and at our New Year’s Eve party he was “Delroy De Bubbles,” the wealthy owner of vineyards in France. All of the guests are suspicious characters and the murderer is finally revealed at the end of the evening. The guests always have lots of fun working up their costumes and getting into their characters. The events are fundraisers for the Larson House with each guest contributing \$50 for their wine, champagne, three-course meal, or in the case of the New Year’s Eve party, lots of fancy hors d’oeuvres. The next murder mystery will be held March 2nd and is filled but others are planned for later in the year. Thanks to those who have prepared the food for these events and for those who acted as “maids” and “butlers” at the Larson House, taking coats and serving drinks and food. Thanks to the main organizers of these fundraisers: Renee Rodeck, Gail Aaroen, Karen Kuenzi, Cheryl Salava, Carol Beck, Marlene Richard, Deb Brennum and Jane Licht. Thanks also to the many guests who contributed with their money and their ingenuity. Let one of these ladies know if you wish to be part of a future murder mystery.



There were many guests at the New Year’s Eve murder mystery party at the Larson House. From left to right standing: Eric Swenson, Jane Licht, Candy Mooney, Tom Mooney, Kevin Page, Patrick Miles, and Wes Licht. Seated are: Traci Swensen, Barb Seth, Marlene Richard, Sharon Page, Judie Heiman, Joyce Morrison, Carol Beck, and MaryKay Wills.



Champagne Charlie’s murder mystery dinner at the Larson House in November featured the following guests. Standing L to R: Jane Mitchell, Sue Rausch, Karen Kuenzi, Jerry Mandli. Seated L to R: Diane Flynn, Mary Jeanne Murl, Karin Mandli, and Sheryl Rowe.

Renting the Larson House

Folks continue to tell us that they did not realize that the Larson House Museum and grounds may be rented for small groups and larger groups during the



Our first high school graduation party held at the Larson House was for Maya Thompson.

summer months. Last summer, the patio and grounds were used for a graduation party and a retirement party. With our Garden Committee assuring a lovely backdrop of flower gardens, these outdoor parties are greatly enhanced. Showers, birthday parties, luncheons, book club meetings, family and neighbor dinner parties are also popular events held at the Larson House. Contact Gail Aaroen at gtaaroen@hotmail.com for the rental agreement and more information.

Volunteer Opportunities

We always welcome volunteers at the Larson House Museum and the Museum on Main Street. Hosts and tour guides are needed. They provide the face of our historical society and make visits to all our museums interesting and enjoyable. Throughout the summer months on Sunday afternoons, hosts unlock the doors and invite the public in to view our local history displays. Many of our hosts are retired. They enjoy talking with youngsters and oldsters and they enjoy sharing the events, people and practices that shaped the history of our community. Volunteers are also needed for Spring and Fall cleaning at all the facilities, for fundraisers and for decorating the Larson House for Christmas. Board members are happy to train new tour guides and workers so please let us know of your interest. Contact Dale Marsden at 608-838-3992 or Jane Licht at 608-234-2504 (cell) or 608-579-8011.



Members of the fall cleaning crew at the Larson House were (L to R) Marlene Richard, Rosalie Richardson, Jane Mitchell, Peggy Anderson, Deb Brennum, and Jane Licht.

Snow Removal Crew

We have lauded our lawn mowing crew many times for the excellent job they do during the spring, summer and fall. This winter especially, we needed a reliable snow removal crew. A huge thanks to Sylvia Krepski, Jerry Herbst and crew leader Mike Flaherty. Jerry and Mike provided the muscle to clean the sidewalks while Sylvia used the blade on her truck to push away the deep snow from the driveway. Sylvia did an amazing job of staying on the driveway, staying away from the cellar doors and moving the snow so as not to disturb the garden plants.

Thanks to Jackie Utter

We wish to thank Jackie Utter for her dedicated work as the McFarland Historical Society treasurer, a position she held for about twenty years. Jackie and husband Bud often hosted at the Museum on Main Street for the Memorial Day open house. They greeted those attending the McFarland Historical Society's annual meetings and accepted membership fees. For the Larson House, Jackie used her skills to restore the hand pump in the kitchen, the original chandeliers, and the brass bed in the master bedroom. She was a member of the Chocolate Fest Committee where she organized the many bakers and handled the ticket money. Jackie recently stepped down from her position as treasurer and from the board of directors after many years of faithful service. A special recognition is planned for her at the annual meeting on March 10.



Ladies Afternoon Tea?

Remember years ago, when we ladies wore fancy hats, dressed up and attended the Ladies Afternoon Tea at the Larson House? Gail Aaroen is hoping to gather enough volunteers to make it happen this year on Mother's Day. It was such fun but a huge amount of work for the committee members. Gail is proposing a scaled-down version inside the Larson House with room for about 20 guests. Please let her know if you are interested in serving on the committee or would like to be a guest who will be treated royally with tea, lemonade, exquisite hors d'oeuvres, a short history lesson, and weather permitting, a guided walk around the garden. You may email Gail at: gtaaroen@hotmail.com



Barb Obst is pouring tea at the Ladies Afternoon Tea held at the Larson House in 2015. The menu was elaborate with lots of savory and sweet choices.

Many Visitors at the Main Museum

It was an especially busy autumn at the museum with both young and older visitors enjoying our historical displays. The usual third-grade tours from Waubesa Elementary, organized by teacher Libby Rowley, brought eight classes of students with boundless energy in mid-October. Shortly after, Tom Thrun shared his wonderful model farm exhibit for the last time at a special open house with families of past and present third graders.



The Tom Thrun Model Farm

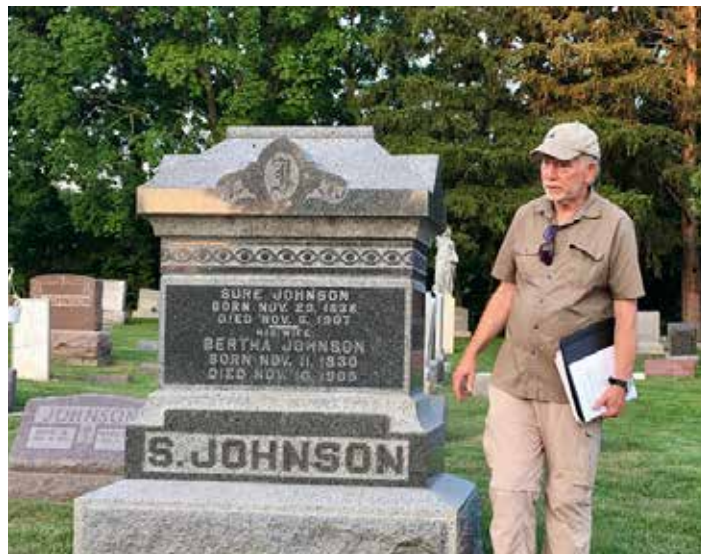
Seniors from Skalen Village and seniors from the village swim program then arranged tours which brought back lots of memories from the good old days. Lastly, Dawn and Art Shegonee were welcomed by board members to the museum, made positive comments on the indigenous display and were amazed at the many fine historical exhibits. Thanks to these guides who served all our visitors this fall - Jane Mitchell, Gini Nichols, Gail Aaroen, Cindy Clark, Rod Clark, Carol Beck, Dale Marsden, Deb Brennum, Jane Licht and Wes Licht.



Jessica and Jim Schwefel, and, in front, Addy and Matti with friend Milah Rothchild, visited the McFarland Museum and Norwegian Log Cabin by special invitation. The parents of the third graders who had visited the museums in October of 2023, were all invited to visit and receive museum tours from their youngsters. Board members also helped give the tours.

Ron Larson Leads Cemetery Tours

Local historical Ron Larson has been giving a series of cemetery tours on various themes as part of the E.D. Locke Library adult programs. Last sum-



Ron Larson stands next to the grave of Sure Johnson who emigrated from Norway. Johnson was a farmer and a carpenter who is believed to have worked on the Larson House. The Conrad Elvehjem Primary School is located on his former farmland.

mer, he agreed to give a special tour to members of the McFarland Historical Society board of directors. Members met him at the "Lower" cemetery across from the Lutheran church. Ron pointed out the graves of early settlers to the McFarland area and told true stories about each individual. Most of the board members were able to attend and they appreciated this walk through history. Some stories were familiar, but they all learned new information about the individuals who emigrated from Norway and Germany to settle in this area.



Ron Larson gave a history tour through the Lower McFarland Cemetery and pointed out the graves of early settlers to attentive members of the McFarland Historical Society board of directors.

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 2024. (If you are a **life time member** new donations are appreciated.)

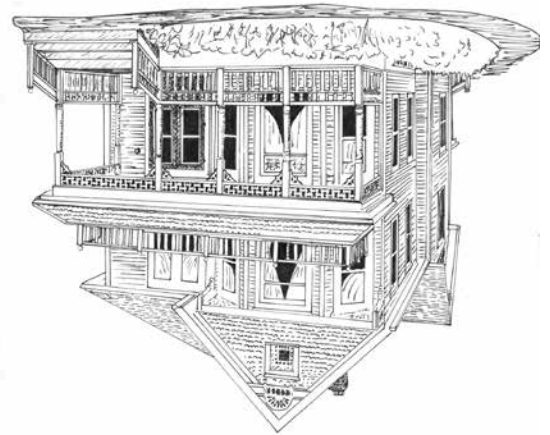
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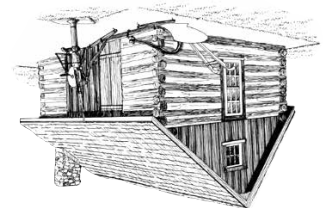
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 5814 Main St.
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Go to www.mcfarlandhistorical.org for a color copy of the newsletter, information and color photos on all McFarland Historical Society activities. Photos are by Jane Licht & Sue Vick-Finley.



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McFarland Historical Society
 P.O. Box 94
 McFarland, WI 53558