

4TH QUARTER · DECEMBER 2023

COUNTY FARE

Official Newsletter of the Winnebago Historical & Archeological Society

OUR MISSION

The Winnebago County Historical & Archaeological Society will represent, serve and involve community members in preserving the history of our area.

History Buffs Book Club Returning

WCHAS is preparing to restart its non-fiction focused, history book club, on hiatus since 2020.

Those interested in participating contact
Austin Frederick
AustinMFred@gmail.com

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Austin Frederick

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Newsletter Edited by
Michael McArthur





MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Warm holiday greetings to all of you! I hope this festive season brings you joy and togetherness. First, I'd like to take a moment to introduce myself to those who may not know me. My name is Austin Frederick, and I am honored to have been elected as the president of our society at this year's Annual Membership Meeting.

I feel very fortunate to have worked alongside Randy Domer these past several years, and I would like to thank him for his exceptional leadership. I am truly excited about stepping into this leadership role and working alongside the amazing individuals on our board. Our collective mission is to preserve and promote our local history, and I'm passionate about this cause.

A little about me: I grew up on a dairy farm near Markesan, Wisconsin. I have a lifelong passion for exploring the past. I currently reside on the west side of Oshkosh with my wife, Molly, and our two sons, Emmett and Finley. My journey in history led me to the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh, where I earned my bachelor's degree in history in 2013. During my time at the university, I had the privilege of writing a book on the history of my hometown. Additionally, I contributed to the curation of the exhibit, "Take Cover, Neenah! Backyard Family Fallout Shelters in Cold War America," for the Neenah Historical Society.

In 2014, I joined the Winnebago County Historical & Archaeological Society, where I've had the pleasure of working with many people to engage the public in our local history. I've also served on the Oshkosh Landmarks Commission and helped write text for some of the historical signage placed on North Main Street and the Oshkosh Riverwalk.

I am genuinely looking forward to working with my colleagues on the board, our dedicated members, volunteers, and other historical organizations in the county. Together, we will continue our mission to represent, serve, and involve community members in preserving the history of our area.

I welcome you to share your thoughts, ideas, and enthusiasm for our shared mission. Let's make this holiday season and the year ahead a time of inspiration, discovery, and community.

Wishing you all a wonderful holiday season and a fantastic year ahead.

Warm regards,

Austin M. Frederick
President
AustinMFred@gmail.com





HOLIDAY OPEN HOUSES

**FRIDAY, DECEMBER 1ST
5-8PM**

**SATURDAY, DECEMBER 2ND
2-5PM**

**WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 27TH
5-8PM**

At The Morgan House



THANK YOU, WEBSTER STANLEY! & HATS OFF TO THEE!

By Charles Williams

Continued from County Fare Q2 2023...

In early 1952, the city council's judiciary committee rejected the school board's "economy plan" to convert Longfellow into a Junior High and build an elementary school in the park when vacant single-family lots at the foot of Melvin between Hazel and Grove became available. This prompted a vote by the city to purchase the lots for \$63,320. Vacant city owned land on the corner of Nevada and Hazel St. also led to proposals for a new elementary school or a combined elementary/junior high school at the "North Point" site, now Emmeline Cook school.



Debate continued over the location of the new junior high with the Board of Education claiming it was their statutory function to select the site of the school and not the city's. The longer distance from 1883 Washington Elementary on Bay and Otter Ave to the North Point site led the board to select the Grove-Melvin-Hazel site as the location for the new junior high and North Point for a new elementary school.

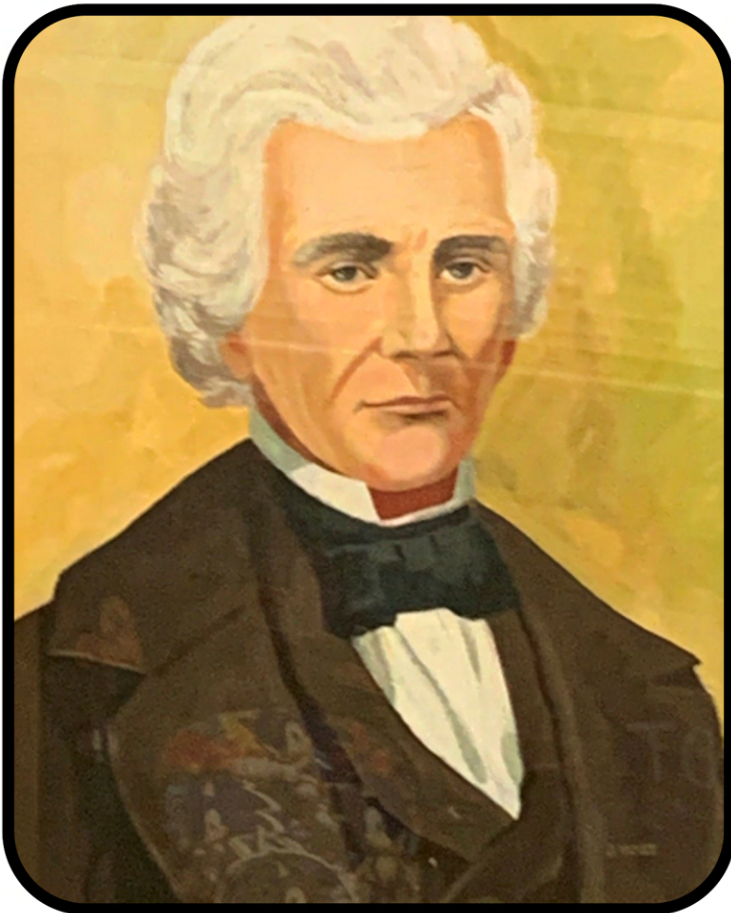




The Board of Education sponsored a contest to name the new junior high school, open to all school children. Thomas Harenburg, a sixth grader at Longfellow, won the contest with his entry: “My name for the east side junior high school is ‘Webster Stanley Junior High School’ because Webster Stanley, first settler and founder of Oshkosh, should have permanent recognition of being a leader in educational, political, and religious activity in Oshkosh.” Other names proposed by students for the school were Lakeview, Lakeside, Lakeshore, Lake Park, Chief Oshkosh, Pa-Ma-Chu-Met, Centennial, Century, Webster, Emmeline Cook, and Stanley.



Wearing a buckskin fringed coat, sixth grader Thomas Harenburg attended the laying of the cornerstone in November of 1954. He was given the honor of placing a copper box of memorabilia into the cornerstone. Tom said recently that two of Webster Stanley’s great granddaughters were also present at the ceremony and gave him a copy of “Webster’s Dictionary” that he still uses.



Tom, who is a supporter of the Menominee Park Zoo and stockbroker at Robert Hennig, also confirmed he mentioned, in his original contest submission, the name “Emmeline Cook” the first schoolteacher in Oshkosh, who, in 1841, taught two of Webster Stanley’s children and others in a room off Webster Stanley’s 1836 cabin on Bayshore Drive.

“Emmeline Cook” became the name of the new 225 pupil elementary school at the “North Point” site designed by Oshkosh architects Auler, Dreger, Wiley & Wertsch that was also completed in 1955.

HISTORIC ARTWORK GIFTED TO WCHAS



WCHAS has received a wonderful gift! A lovely original watercolor work by artist Nile Behncke. Behncke was born in Oshkosh June 6, 1892 to artist Gustave Behncke, a fresco painter and muralist. A charter member of the Winnebago County Historical & Archaeological Society (est. 1919), he served on the Board of Directors for several years before being named director of the Oshkosh Public Museum in 1924, the year the museum ownership transferred to the City of Oshkosh. He remained museum director until his death in 1954.

Donald Riddle, an American historian at the University of Illinois in Chicago, and his wife, Ruth, acquired the painting in the late 1940s. It hung above their stone fireplace at their cottage at Gills Rock in northern Door County, WI.

Dr. Stanley L. Jones, also an American historian at the University of Illinois in Chicago, bought a cottage near the Riddle's in the early 50s. Around 1976 the Riddle's sold their cottage to the Jones' and the picture hung in its original place until the cottage was sold in 1995. The watercolor moved to the nearby Jones family cottage and there it remained until the cottage was sold in 2022.

The Jones Sisters and Stephan Peters of Sister Bay, WI contacted WCHAS with the intent to preserve this wonderful piece of local history for future generations to enjoy.

Our friends and colleagues at the Oshkosh Public Museum estimate the painting was done circa 1940. The Historical Society is very grateful to receive this historically important piece of our local history.



2023 ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

A CELEBRATION OF ACHIEVEMENTS AND TRANSITIONS

On the beautiful autumn afternoon of October 8, 2023, the Winnebago County Historical & Archaeological Society gathered in the historic Morgan House with a strong turnout of about 36 attendees. This annual event served as a moment of reflection on the society's successes, a glimpse into its future, and a bittersweet farewell to a dedicated leader.

The focal point of the meeting was the long-awaited completion of the conservation work undertaken in the Sitting Room and Ladies' Parlor of Morgan House. These restoration efforts marked a significant milestone in preserving the Morgan House and provided a visual testament to the society's commitment to safeguarding local history. Throughout the meeting, various committees presented their reports, outlining their accomplishments over the past year and setting objectives for the promising year ahead in 2024. These achievements demonstrated the dedication and hard work of the members and volunteers who have continued to advance the society's mission.

The treasurer's report showcased the organization's financial well-being, celebrating the resounding success of the "Pie on the Porch" fundraiser, which took place at the Oshkosh Saturday Farmer's Market in 2023. This event raised over \$8,000, providing vital support for ongoing preservation efforts and historical programs.

One of the most poignant moments of the meeting was when Randy Domer, a longtime member of the WCHAS, announced his retirement from the board and role as president.

Having served for many years, Randy's contributions to preserving and sharing local history are immeasurable. To honor his work, this year's Clarence J. Jungwirth Historian Award was bestowed upon him. This prestigious award recognized Randy Domer's dedication to local history and his invaluable service on the board of directors. Philip Marshall, a former board member and Secretary of the WCHAS, had the honor of presenting Randy with the award via video call, capturing the essence of the society's enduring bonds.

The election of new officers brought a sense of continuity and renewal. All candidates ran unopposed, showcasing the trust and support they had from the membership. The new President Austin Frederick, along with Vice President Stacey Frank, Secretary Chelsey Smit, and Treasurer Greg Bellmer, are well-positioned to guide the society through its next chapter.



As the meeting adjourned, members and guests enjoyed refreshments, toured the newly restored rooms, and caught up with old friends, making the gathering not just an annual event but a celebration of the vibrant community dedicated to preserving and promoting the history of Winnebago County.

The day's events underscored the strength of the society's commitment to its mission, its past achievements, and the promise of the future.

A SUMMER TOUR

By Julie Krysiak Johnson.

This summer Christoph Mayer of Germany contacted the WCHAS desiring a historical tour of our beautiful city in the hopes of connecting with his family's past. I was more than happy to oblige. Christoph's focus was to visit the former residences and business of his relative George Mayer and brother Leonhard Mayer who immigrated to America and settled in Oshkosh in 1850. I met up with Christoph, accompanied by his friend Oliver Simmet, in the parking lot of the Oshkosh Public Library on Tuesday, August 15th. It was a beautiful summer evening.

Christoph's relative, George Mayer, was a pioneer jeweler in our city since 1850. Both he and his brother Leonhard were known as watchmakers and jewelers. George excelled in his business and erected a three-story high brick building around 1858.

After 1870, Leonhard owned a supermarket and bakery and continued this business into the turn of the century. The 1879-82 Oshkosh City Directory tells us that George has closed out his interest in the business with his son Max Mayer as the present proprietor.

As we toured downtown Oshkosh it was exciting for Christoph to see the George Mayer building still standing at 421 Main Street with his ancestor's name proudly engraved toward the top of the building. Ruby Owl occupies the first floor.

Another destination was to visit George Mayer's residence at 809 Ceape Street. A house most of us are familiar with is the pink colored brick home at the corner of Ceape and Bowen Streets.

I did not accompany Christoph and Oliver any further, though a text informed me that they spent the next day "walking the whole day through Oshkosh...I got a good feeling for the city of my relatives. I will tell my family everything, in which country the relatives once lived."

The research that I have done on the Morgan House, the Grand Opera House, the Athearn Hotel etc., has already made me familiar with so many names from the past. It's a real treat for me to meet and give tours to present day relatives in search of past ancestors.



Top: Mayer Bldg 421 Main St.

Bottom: Christoph Mayer (left) and Oliver Simmet (right) in front George Mayer's home at 809 Ceape St.





Calling All History Lovers!

The WCHAS is looking for new board members and volunteers to help us preserve and share our community's history.

We are looking for passionate people to join our working board. As a **BOARD MEMBER**, you will have the opportunity to:

- Help shape the future of our historical society
- Make a difference in your community
- Learn more about local history
- Meet new people who share your interests

As a **VOLUNTEER** you will have the opportunity to:

- Plan Educational Events
- Assist with Fundraising Events
- Care for the Morgan House and Grounds
- Promote the Historical Society



If you are interested in becoming a board member or volunteer, please contact us at winnebagohistoricalsociety@gmail.com or (920) 267-8007.





WINNEBAGOLAND GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

EST. 1984

For nearly 40 years, the Winnebago Genealogical Society has supported genealogical researchers, conferences, projects, and programs throughout Winnebago County.

Your membership will include a vote at all meetings, annual election, and you will receive a quarterly newsletter.

Meetings are the 2nd Thursday of each month at 6pm at the Oshkosh Public Library (lower level).

Circle One: Single - \$10.00 Couple - \$13.00
Complete Information

Name: _____
Street Address: _____
City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
Phone Number: _____
Email: _____



WGS at Summer Farmers Market

Make checks payable to Winnebago Genealogical Society and mail to:
WGS
PO Box 2124
Oshkosh, WI 54903

JOIN OR RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP WITH THE WINNEBAGO COUNTY HISTORICAL & ARCHEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

New Member or Renewal (circle one)

- ___ \$5 Student (15-25 yr old)
- ___ \$15 Individual
- ___ \$25 Couple
- ___ \$35 Family
- ___ \$250 Lifetime Membership

Mail this form with payment to:
WCHAS
234 Church Ave.
Oshkosh, WI 54901

OR

Complete/Update Information

Name: _____
Street Address: _____
City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
Phone Number: _____
Email: _____

Pay electronically via Paypal by sending payment to:
winnebagocountyhistoricalsociety.org





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