

County



Fare

1st Quarter 2020

The NEWSLETTER of the

WINNEBAGO COUNTY HISTORICAL & ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

WINNEBAGO CO., WIS.

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Mission Statement

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

Contact Us or Submit Articles to

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- ◆ Leslie Walfish
- ◆ Patti Yana
- ◆ Austin M. Frederick



Visit Our Website

WinnebagoCountyHistoricalSociety.org

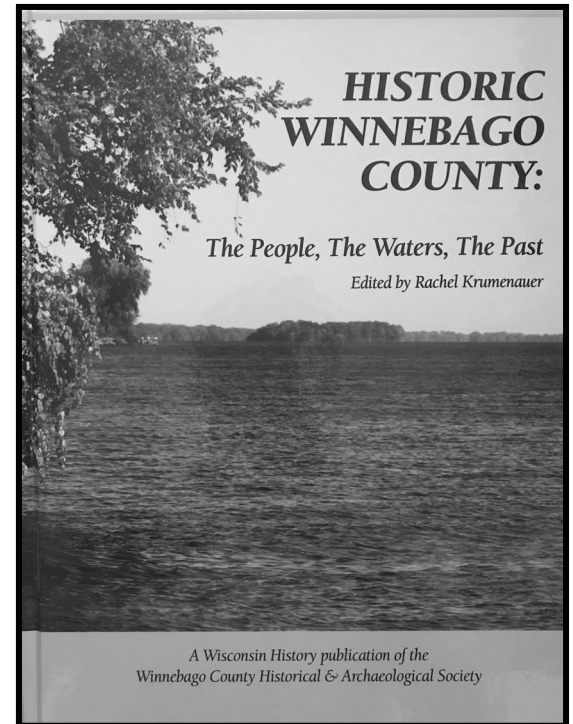
New Winnebago County History Book

We are excited to announce that our new book is hot off the press! Get them while they are still available!!! We have a special rate for our members--just \$20! Non-members can purchase a book for \$35.

This book as been about two years in the making. The WCHAS has been working with our sister organizations around the county to gather histories to include in this hardcover history book. It is filled cover to cover with great information and wonderful pictures that help tell the story of Winnebago County's rich history and the important people that shaped it.

It took many people to make this book a reality. The Centennial Book Committee which consisted of Randy Domer, Julie Johnson, Steve Cummings, and Mara Munroe were the organizers of the project from the beginning. Each of our sister historical organizations of Winnebago County provided the histories to fill the book. We extend a huge thank you to our editor Rachael Krumenauer who worked diligently to keep everyone on track and put this wonderful narrative together. Finally, we thank to fine folks of HPNbooks of San Antonio, Texas, for working with us to make this book a reality.

Contact us or visit the Morgan House this summer to get your hands on a copy of this wonderful treasure of captivating history.



Book Club



March - *Mayflower* - Nathaniel Philbrick

April - *Killers of the Flower Moon* - David Grann

May - *Over the Edge of the World* - Laurence Bergreen

June - *Necropolis* - Catherine Arnold

Interested in joining the book club or have questions? Email Kim at ellingsonkim7@gmail.com for more information. The book club meets that last Tuesday of each month at 6 pm in the Morgan House. Join us for the fun!

WCHAS Retires POTP

It is with great sadness that the WCHAS has decided to bring Pie on the Porch to a close after eleven years of the event. What started off as a fundraiser right on the front porch of the Morgan House transformed into a landmark booth on Main Street during the Oshkosh Saturday Farmers Market. It was not an easy decision for the board of directors to make, but several factors lead to the event coming to a close. We are so grateful for all of the volunteers and pie bakers who have helped us over the years in making this so successful. We also acknowledge all of the building owners on Main Street over the years who have allowed us to use their facilities to serve home-baked pies at the farmers market. We appreciate all of the local businesses that donated supplies to make POTP enjoyable and delicious.

With the end of the POTP brings new opportunities to raise awareness of our historical society and plan new, fun events that support our cause and help us maintain the Morgan House. Anyone with an interest in gearing up for a new fundraiser is encourage to get in touch with our Revenue Development chairperson and president, Randy Domer. We look forward to what is in store for the future, and excited to host another event like this that can go as strong as Pie on the Porch did these past ten years.

Thank You!

President's Message

For those of us who are settling into our retirement years, we can consider ourselves blessed with seeing many things which I would call life changing events unfold over the years. Among those most notable to me include cell phones and the internet. Now we carry our phones in our pocket wherever we go and God forbid we do not have it with us when we leave the house.

What I'm leading up to is how dependent we have now become using texting and social media as our main form of communication. At WCHAS, we have a Facebook page that we use for various activities such as announcing upcoming events and sharing historical factoids that our community of followers seem to enjoy. Other Facebook sites that also offer historical and local postings include People Past and Present of Oshkosh Wisc, Oshkosh Memories, Oshkosh Memorabilia & Collectables Buy Sell Trade, You Know You Are From Oshkosh Wi if you remember... and many more. These sites are monitored regularly by local history buffs who post old photos and answer questions and engage dialogue on things from our past.

Want to know who owned that business on Main and Ceape in the 1950s? Just ask and I can assure you that you will receive a flood of answers. I urge you to explore Facebook using some keywords like "Oshkosh" or "Winnebago County". If you're interested in the history of beer and brewing I encourage you to visit this site www.oshkoshbeer.blogspot.com There you will find a blog created by local brewing historian Lee Reiherzer that is filled with dozens of stories on the history of beer and brewing in Oshkosh and Winnebago County.

There's a world of history out there right at your fingertips. Why not start exploring? Be curious...learn. Also, don't forget to visit our website at that is posted on the front cover of this newsletter!

Randy Domer

President – WCHAS

rrdomer@gmail.com

Stars of the Grand Opera House: Anna Held

By Julie Krysiak Johnson

Anna Held was much more than a sensation when she appeared at the Oshkosh Grand Opera House on Wednesday, April 24, 1901, in the musical comedy, "Papa's Wife." The musical comedy was written by Harry B. Smith and composed by Reginald DeKoven. She was one of the most popular musical comediennes on the stage in the early part of the 1900s. The young Florenz Ziegfeld, along with leading comedy star Charles Evans, sailed to Europe in 1895 in search of a new female star. While in London they saw musical hall sensation Anna Held and were captivated by her colorful French accent, eighteen-inch waist, hour-glass figure, and coquettish personality.

Helene Anna Held, known professionally as Anna Held, was a Broadway stage performer and singer born in Warsaw, Poland. She started her career with stints in theatres in Paris and London and is most often associated with theatre producer and impresario Florenz Ziegfeld, her common-law husband. Known for her risqué songs, flirtatious nature and a willingness to show her legs on stage, her vivacious and animated personality proved popular and launched her career as a stage performer.

While touring through Europe she met Florenz Ziegfeld in London in 1896. Ziegfeld asked her to return to New York City with him and she agreed. He set about creating a wave of public interest in her by feeding stories about her to the American press. By the time they arrived in New York, she was already the subject of intense public speculation. Enjoying several successes on Broadway, which apart from bolstering Ziegfeld's fortune, made her a millionaire in her own right. Ziegfeld's talent for creating publicity stunts ensured that Anna's name remained well known. Anna



Held suggested the format for what would become the famous Ziegfeld Follies in 1907, which helped Ziegfeld establish the most lucrative phase of his career.

As far as big stars are concerned, Anna Held is by far one of my favorites. The reporting of her arrival and appearance on Wednesday, April 24, 1901, by the Oshkosh Daily Northwestern was extensive. She arrived in Oshkosh with Florenz Ziegfeld from Green Bay in a private Pullman car. Anna, a believer in plenty of fresh air and exercise, had a full day planned for herself and her company before their performance that evening. Her itinerary started with an interview with

the Oshkosh Daily Northwestern, a tour of the city in her automobile followed by a chartered fishing trip on Lake Winnebago with part of her cast. It was rare for any newspaper to get an interview with a famous stage star. In the theatre world, it was believed that if a star was seen in public or interviewed too often by reporters the public would not come to the theater to see them. This was not the case with Anna Held, who received the reporter "graciously." The paper reported that her private palace car "was luxuriantly furnished and upholstered and fitted with all the conveniences desirable. Sleeping chambers were located at one end and a snug parlor at the other." The eccentrics of the interview included Anna "amusing herself by feeding a tiny bear

cub....which sat on a fancy cushion in her lap and was vigorously pulling at a large nursing bottle." The cub was soon replaced by a "wee black dog of the Mexican type, and this hairless pet received much petting as she chatted pleasantly of her trips and future plans."

If there was any one star that could transport you from your everyday humdrum existence into a memorable evening full of excessive and lavish style and entertainment it was Anna Held. Beautiful and vivacious, boasting an eighteen-inch waist, beautiful legs, a charming French lisp, and coquettish personality made her highly popular with the masses. The night of her performance, and "hereafter in Oshkosh she will be the 'divine Anna'" boasted the Oshkosh Daily North-

western on Thursday, April 26, 1901. On stage, her lavish and expensive wardrobe of the latest Paris creations were a sight to behold on her and her "magnificent chorus girls." The paper described Anna Held, adorned by a "volcano" of diamonds, donning her celebrated "curious and dazzling symbol brooch and pendants containing sixty-five brilliants of great weight and beauty." The "captivating French comedienne gave a magnificent performance of "Papa's Wife" that fairly thrilled the great audience at the Opera House last evening. So charming, so chic was the remarkable little French actress. Anna Held, in a glitter of wealth, with her magnificent chorus girls in their sumptuous dresses and her volcano of diamonds and precious stone, which nearly obscured her exquisite self, was all wonderful."

As quickly as she arrived her departure was all too soon. The next day's paper described the circumstances of her departure as, "the special palace car reserved entirely to the actress and her attendants, including maid, valet, colored cook, butler, and a special car for the members of the company.... were attached to the 8:30 Northwestern," and that "after a few other one night stands in Wisconsin and Michigan, the company goes directly to New York to disband for the season, Anna Held sails off for Paris, and France to spend the summer."

Born: March 8, 1872, Warsaw, Poland
Died: August 12, 1918, New York, NY
Spouse: Maximo Carrera (m. 1894)
Children: Liane Held Carrera (actress)
Movies: Madame la Presidente

Neenah Historical Society Exhibit

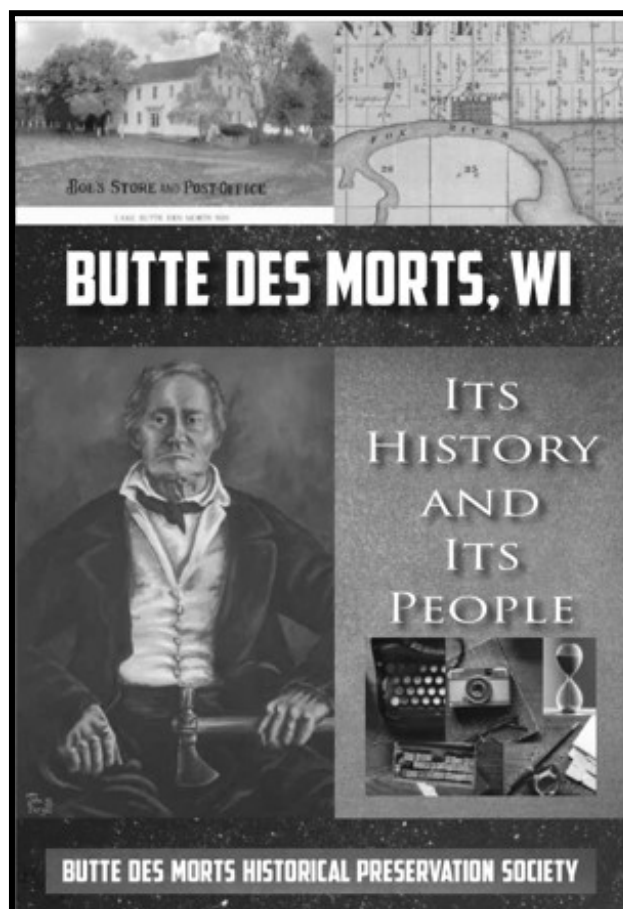
Voting for a Change - The Impact of the 19th Amendment on our Community highlights the 100th anniversary of women's right to vote in the United States and how local women championed this cause. The exhibit also features "modern" gadgets to help women in the early 1900s, the clothing they wore and how it was changing, and the struggles women underwent to help our state and country achieve voting rights for women. Visitors will be able to cast their ballot in the 1920 election in an early voting booth, discover political cartoons of the time, and learn about leaders who influenced participation by women in all spheres of our community.

The exhibit opened on May 19, 2019. The exhibit will be open during our regular hours on weekdays from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. from May 20, 2019 through Novem-

ber of 2020. Please register at the Ward House (white house next to the Octagon House) when you arrive. Tours can also be arranged through November of 2020 by appointment by calling (920) 729-0244 or e-mail at neenahhistoricalsociety@gmail.com.

BDMHPS Releases New Book

A book release event will be held on May 6, 2020, at 7 PM at the Butte des Morts Lions Club 5068 Washington St. in Butte des Morts. The event will feature a presentation on the book and an opportunity to talk to the authors and get a signed copy. The public is cordially invited to attend this free event. The Oshkosh debut for the book will be in conjunction with the Winnebago Land Genealogical Society meeting at the Oshkosh Public Library on May 14, 2020, at 6 PM. The book will also be available for purchase at the annual meeting of the Butte des Morts Historical Preservation Society on June 14, 2020, at the Butte des Morts Lions Club, 5068 Main Street in Butte des Morts. If you are unable to attend any of these events and want to purchase a copy of the book, please contact the Butte des Morts Historical Society at bdmhps@gmail.com.



Recollections of Augustin Grignon

Part 11

By Joe Yana

In the last installment reviewing Augustin Grignon's *Seventy-two Years of Recollections*, we examined Grignon's memories of life in Green Bay and its settlers arriving after the American Revolution, particularly Jacques Porlier. Other settlers of that era played a prominent role in the development of the area. And some of them found how difficult it could be to succeed, even though there seemed to be a lucrative market in trading with the natives

One of the settlers Grignon discusses is Charles Reaume, who he had rather mixed opinions about. Reaume came from a respectable family in Montreal, and like Porlier was well educated there. He moved to Detroit and worked in the trade with the native population in the Great Lakes area, and ultimately returned to Montreal and married the daughter of a prominent Montreal merchant. He started a merchandising business on credit and failed miserably. Shamed by the experience, he abandoned his wife and moved to Green Bay in 1792, accompanied by Jacques Porlier. They then spent the winter on the St. Croix River to attempt some trade with the natives. He somehow arranged more credit in Mackinaw to obtain goods to engage in trade in Green Bay with the natives. He built a small log store. He promptly failed again, sold out and ate what stock he had obtained on credit. Grignon describes him in not a very favorable light:

He was a singular man—vain, pompous, and fond of show; and his sense of honor and justice was not very high. He led a jolly, easy life, always getting his share of good things whenever within his reach, and never seemed to have a care or thought for the morrow.

However, Reaume was apparently politically well connected, through his experiences in Montreal or Detroit. In about 1808, Indiana Territorial Governor Harrison (Green Bay was in the Indiana Territory until the Wisconsin Territory was established in 1836) appointed Reaume as Justice of the Peace for the Green Bay settlement, the first judicial office in the settlement. Apparently, the governor did not renew Reaume's appointment after the term expired, but he continued to act in that capacity without authority, apparently for 11 years, according to Grignon. This apparently was how things worked in the early days of Wisconsin under U.S. control, before it became a Territory itself. Prior

to that, under French and British rule, serious legal matters were sent to Canada for trial. And, in Grignon's view, Reaume was not much of a judge. He could not recall Reaume ever having any law books, or apparently much knowledge of the law and could be prone to changing his mind after he made a decision on a case. He recounts a story related to him about a case in Reaume's court:

The late John Dousman related to me a case tried before Reaume, of which he was personally cognizant. Joseph Houll was the complainant, and his claim[^] which was a just one, was for labor rendered the defendant. It was a plain case, and Reaume decided in favor of Houll, and dismissed the parties. Dousman having heard so much about Reaume's singular decisions, concluded he would test the good Justice; and observed, with assumed sincerity, "Mr. Reaume, now that you have decided the Case, I must say, I am very much surprised at your decision—you ought, in justice, to have decided in favor of the defendant." "Ah," replied Reaume, "you did not understand me aright;" and then, stepping to the door, he called Houll back, and asked him how he understood the decision? Houll, of course, said that he understood that he had *won*, "Yes," said Reaume, "you have *won to pay the costs!*" *This is only one instance in many of a similar character, showing a very facile conscience, and a mind easily changed by caprice or interest.*

Such apparently was the nature of justice in Green Bay in those days. With no oversight on the frontier, the rulings of the courts could not be practically reviewed by a higher authority, and litigants were stuck with what they got, fair or not, clear or not. Eventually, Reaume claimed some land and established a farm with livestock near Green Bay, apparently, from funds he retained from the sale of the goods from his store in Green Bay and made a successful operation. While Grignon apparently did not have a very high opinion of Reaume's ventures into business and as a judge, he notes: "...he was, in truth, very kind, and very hospitable. With all his eccentricities, he was warmly beloved by all who knew him."

Next installment: More on the residents of Green Bay in the early 19th Century, including John Lawe.

The Beckwith House Fire: December 3, 1880

By Lynn Lorenson, Amy VandenHogen,
Steven Wiley and Tim Franz

Part I - The Setting

In the late afternoon of December 3, 1880, fire broke out in the Beckwith House hotel in downtown Oshkosh. Thanks to a well-trained fire department and new building codes this fire was contained to a single structure and was never to become “a great fire” like the April 1875 fire that was responsible for the reconstruction of the hotel. The fire was nonetheless tragic and would leave lasting impacts on the lives of those involved.

Simon and Leafy Paige

The story of the Beckwith House fire is the story of one of Oshkosh’s early fires, but it is also the story of real people. Two of those people, Simon and Leafy Paige, had left their home in Massachusetts in 1856 looking for opportunity. They met up with Simon’s brother John in Chicago, travelled through Milwaukee and Fond du Lac and settled in Oshkosh. Within a week of arriving in Oshkosh, Simon and John bought a general merchandise and lumbering business. Although



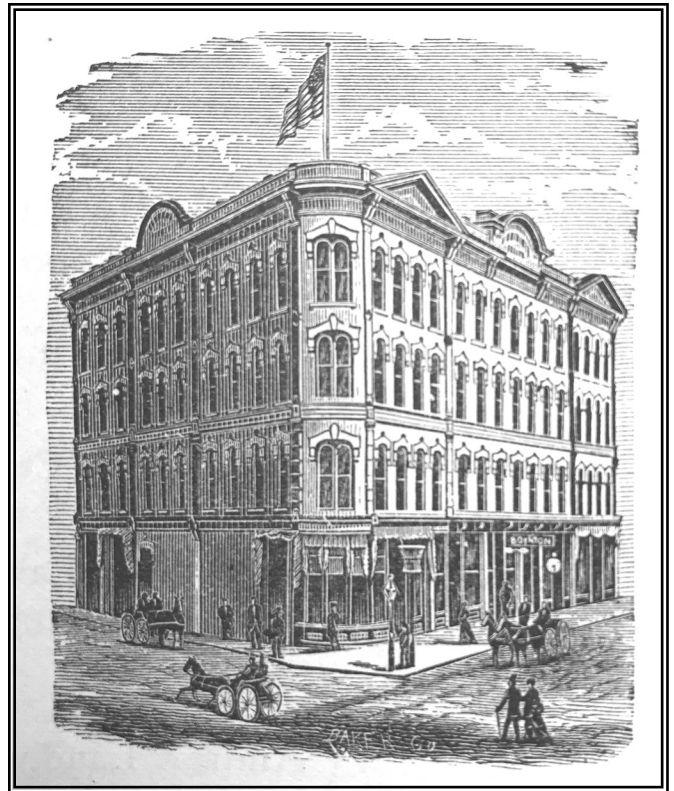
the brothers were burned out in a fire in May 1859 they quickly leased another property and resumed business. Over the years the brothers grew the business and expanded their lumber interests north in Superior and south

into Iowa. Simon took a keen interest in development in the new City of Oshkosh, in particular bringing rail service to the City of Oshkosh and developed a reputation as a good businessman possessing foresight, good judgment, honesty and integrity. He never drank liquor or used tobacco. But, in 1872 Mr. Paige’s health began to fail and on the advice of his physician he closed his merchandising concerns. He maintained his interest in the lumbering businesses and timberlands, but took a less active role and began to travel. Simon and Leafy

would travel the world together. Shortly after their return to Oshkosh on July 22, 1874 the Paiges lost their Jefferson Street home to one of Oshkosh’s too common large fires. After a time they took rooms at the newly rebuilt Beckwith House, which itself had been the victim of an April 1875 fire.

Sanford Beckwith and the Beckwith House

Almost as soon as the embers cooled from the April 1875 fire that devastated much of Oshkosh’s downtown, architect William Waters began to prepare plans for new buildings along Main Street including a hotel for to be known as Beckwith House. Beckwith House would be a four-story structure situated on the highly visible pie-shaped intersection of Main Street and Algoma Boulevard. The hotel, completed in 1876, was the largest of the new “fireproof” brick structures in the City with 130 feet of frontage on Main Street and a depth of 110 feet on Algoma.



The first floor was designed for commercial tenants which by 1880 would include J. Bauman & Co. Drug Store, Irvine’s Newstand, Black’s Barber Shop, Overton’s Sample and Billiard Room and C. A. Johnson & Co.’s Boot and Shoe Store. J. Bauman & Co. occupied the prime corner location and was the finest drug store in the City with a nickel-plated chandelier visible

through its prominent windows. Overton's Billiard Room, the most elegant this side of Chicago would also feature deluxe furnishings including a carved walnut bar and cigar counters, handsome showcases and mirrors, and a rich walnut and maple patterned floor.

Hotel patrons entered the lobby from a staircase rising from Main Street to the second floor office with its carved walnut desk. Two parlors across from the desk opened onto balconies facing Main Street. The men's sitting room occupied the corner offering a grand view down Main Street to the bridge. A dining room seating 150 people also occupied the second floor along with restroom facilities, the kitchen and storerooms needed to support hotel operations. The office, reading room, parlors and dining room were elegantly trimmed in wood and decorated with frescoes. Along the Algoma street side were several larger rented rooms designed for commercial travelers requiring both a sleeping room and place to display their samples.

The two floors above were reached by an interior walnut staircase and contained 71 sleeping rooms. Rooms were richly furnished, with no three having the same pattern of carpeting or upholstery giving each a sense of individuality. The third and fourth floors had a hallway encircling each floor with rooms on each side and a small open court allowing light and circulation for the interior rooms. This interior court also provided a skylight for the second floor office. To the back were workers' boarding rooms, entered from a passageway off the main hallway where a staircase also wound down to the alley behind the building. The outside of the Beckwith House was constructed of thick brick with stone window sills and cap pieces while the inside construction was wood framing.

Next Issue: **Part II – The Fire starts and a Woman**

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Brick & Mortar History

Tayco Street Bridge

The predecessor of the Tayco Street Bridge was a rim-bearing swing bridge with a sixty-foot channel clearance. Routing U.S. Highway 41 over this 19th century bridge necessitated its replacement, but stringent War Department requirements mandated that any new bridge across the canal would have to provide clearance of no less than 100 feet. In 1924 McMahon and Clark Engineering Company of Menasha designed a replacement that met this requirement, utilizing a simple trunnion bascule system and a patented Strauss trunnion. Estimated at an astounding \$250,000, the bridge was ultimately funded by the Wisconsin Highway Commission and constructed by Greiling Engineering Company of Green Bay in 1929

Source: Wisconsin Historical Society



98 Center St, Menasha, WI

2020 Membership Form



Winnebago County Historical and Archaeological Society

(Check One)

- \$5 Student (15-25yrs/old)
 \$15 Individual
 \$25 Couple
 \$35 Family
 \$250 Life Membership

(Check One)

- New Member
 Renewal

Name(s): _____

Street Address: _____

City: _____ State _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____

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(Check One)

- Send my newsletter by E-mail
 Send my newsletter by mail

I am interested in volunteering for... (Circle All that Apply)

- | Morgan House Tour Guide | Pie on the Porch | Artifact Inventory |
| Archiving | Holiday Open House | Volunteer Recruitment |
| Newsletter Editor | Fundraising Events | Program Planning |

or

| **Not Interested in Volunteering** |

Mail this form with enclosed payment to:

WCHAS Membership Committee
234 Church Ave.
Oshkosh, WI 54901



FINAL POINTS

- ◆ **Welcome New Members!**
Margot Brand
Jan Guell
Sally Kimberly Lehman - Life

2020 Morgan House Tours

Saturdays

June through Labor Day Weekend

10:00 am - 1:00 pm

Off-Season Tours By Appointment

- ◆ **Contact us about getting your hands on our new book:**

*Historic Winnebago County:
The People, The Waters, The Past*

\$20 for Members
\$35 for Non-Members



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234 Church Avenue - Oshkosh, Wisconsin 54901

THE HISTORY OF



**WISCONSIN
PUBLIC RADIO**

Presented by Randall Davidson

Wednesday, May 6, 6:00pm

Oshkosh Public Library/Lower Level Meeting Room



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