

1ST QUARTER · MAR 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.

## NEW MEMBERS

Judith Berg  
Valois Brothers  
Dennis & Laura Coopage  
Diana Drew  
Susan & Robert Everhard  
Patricia Jansen  
Terry Kippa  
Julie & Maggie Konig

Lisa Lautenschlager  
Julie Long  
Oliver Long  
Ruth River  
Sharon Slover  
Chelsea Smit  
Andrew Smith  
Caden Smith

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Randy Domer

President

Austin Frederick

Vice President

Stacey Frank

Secretary

Greg Bellmer

Treasurer

Scott Cross

Steve Davis

Julie Johnson

Cory McKone

Dawn McKone

Charles Williams

Kim Nerenhausen

Dean Sandeman (Emeritus)

Newsletter Edited by

Michael McArthur





## MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Preserving our local history is something we take very seriously at WCHAS. Behind the scenes, our Board of Directors selflessly volunteer countless hours of time and energy, working on a various number of ongoing projects within their respective committees. We are blessed to have such a great team of community leaders that share the passion to keep our history alive.

I'd like to introduce two of our newest Board members who recently joined our team.

Charles Williams is an Oshkosh native and currently works in Oshkosh as an attorney. He also serves as a Board member and Treasurer with the Wisconsin Trust for Historic Preservation, Inc. Born and raised in Oshkosh; Charles is a third-generation attorney whose grandfather started his law practice here in 1895 on Main Street. His grandmother was the first woman physical education director at the Oshkosh Normal School where she also became the first women's basketball coach in 1907. Charles brings a wealth of historic knowledge, passion, and experience to our Board.

Scott Cross also joined our Board this past year. Some of you may know Scott from his tenure at the Oshkosh Public Museum where he served as archivist from 1999-2020. In that position, Scott was responsible for the care of the museum's archival collection that includes 175,000 photographs; 195 Archival Record Groups and 5,000 volumes in the library and 2,000 volumes in the rare book collection. Scott also was assistant to the Curator at the Wisconsin Veterans Museum in Madison.

As an author, Scott has published six articles in the historical journal of the Company of Military Historians along with the book "Like a Deer Chased by the Dogs: The Life of Chief Oshkosh" (Dec 2002). Scott's experience and background would fill several pages and we are so delighted that he has chosen to join our team where he will work in the archival collection area.

We still have room for another history-minded person who would love to join our Board. If this interests you, I encourage you to contact me directly. (rrdomer@gmail.com) I will be happy to explain in more detail what is all involved.

Spring is right around the corner. I look forward to seeing you soon at the Oshkosh Farmer's Market for a piece of our delicious pie or visiting historic Morgan House on Saturdays.

Preserving Our Local History for Future Generations

Randy Domer  
President - WCHAS





# HELEN FARNSWORTH MEARS HONORED

Today Governor Evers delivers a Proclamation in an eloquent tribute naming December 21, 2022 "Helen Farnsworth Mears Day" in Wisconsin! Please share this Proclamation honoring the 150th Anniversary of the birth of this eminent woman sculptor from Oshkosh.

Her memory lives on through her sculptures in museums, buildings, and parks in the US and, also, the GFWC-Helen Farnsworth Mears Art Contest for 7th-8th grade students in its 97th year. May her life and her achievements inspire all those who express their creativity and find inspiration through the Arts.

Celebrate this day and share with friends.

Cheers,

Shirley Brabender Mattox



STATE of WISCONSIN

  
OFFICE of the GOVERNOR

*Proclamation*

*WHEREAS* born in Oshkosh on December 21, 1872, Helen Farnsworth Mears became one of the most prominent women sculptors in Wisconsin's history and helped pave the way for women in art everywhere; and

*WHEREAS* Helen Farnsworth Mears created art that exemplified the Wisconsin spirit, and one of her most notable works, the "Genius of Wisconsin," commissioned for the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, is still exhibited in the State Capitol Building's Southeast Wing today; and

*WHEREAS* Helen Farnsworth Mears was also commissioned by the state of Illinois to create a statue of Frances E. Willard, a notable suffragist and temperance reformer, which became the first sculpture of a woman to be included in the National Statuary Hall in the U.S. Capitol; and

*WHEREAS* while her life was short, Helen Farnsworth Mears' legacy lives on in her many works in marble and bronze that are exhibited in museums and buildings around the country and that continue to inspire Wisconsinites; and

*WHEREAS* in recognition of her work and influence, the General Federation of Women's Clubs-Wisconsin (GFWC-WI) established an annual art competition in her name in 1927 for 7th and 8th grade students that continues to this day; and

*WHEREAS* on what would be her 150th birthday, the state of Wisconsin joins the GFWC-WI in honoring the legacy of Helen Farnsworth Mears—both as an artist and as an influential woman in Wisconsin history—and recognizes the importance of her art to the collective culture of the state;

*NOW, THEREFORE*, I, Tony Evers, Governor of the State of Wisconsin, do hereby proclaim December 21, 2022, as

**HELEN FARNSWORTH MEARS DAY**

throughout the State of Wisconsin and I commend this observance to all our state's residents.

IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Great Seal of the State of Wisconsin to be affixed. Done at the Capitol in the City of Madison this 18<sup>th</sup> day of November 2022.

  
TONY EVERS  
GOVERNOR



By the Governor:  
  
DOUGLAS LA FOLLETTE  
Secretary of State



# PAINING GIFTED TO WCHAS

The Winneconne Historical Society made a wonderful donation to WCHAS in December 2022. A framed, signed and numbered print by local artist Ray Pable was gifted to WCHAS by the Winneconne Historical Society and presented by Winneconne Society President Mary Lou Schroeder.

The print features a scene from the Children's Day Parade (in South Park) that was held for many years sponsored by the Ohio Street Business Association.



Pable painted a series of five local scenes in 1981 to help dedicate the grand opening for a new Oshkosh National Bank. Each painting was made into signed and numbered prints of which 250 copies of each were given away to attract new customers during the event. The other four scenes in the series included The American Legion, Civil War Statue at Monument Square, Autumn - Rural Oshkosh (Farm Scene), and the Stone Bridge in Menominee Park.

**WINNEBAGO COUNTY COURTHOUSES**  
**A HISTORY**

By Austin M. Frederick

**THURS., MARCH 9, 2023 - 6 PM**  
**OSHKOSH PUBLIC LIBRARY—LOWER LEVEL**

Sponsored By:  
Oshkosh Public Library  
Winnebago Genealogical Society  
Winnebago County Historical & Archeological Society





[Miss] Luthera Adams, an early resident of Omro, had this to say about the naming of Omro. "I have been told that there was much discussion by the people of the village in regard to the new name and that many names were suggested.

Two young business men, Joel Taylor and E. B. Dean, decided that the name must be short and easy to pronounce. They wrote several letters of the alphabet on slips of paper, one letter on each slip, and put these slips into a hat. Shook them up and drew then drew out 4 slips and arranged the letters so as to form the word 'Omro'. (How it ever happened that there were two vowels and 2 consonants, instead of 2 Q's or 2 P's in place of two O's is anyone's guess)."

Another terse version of how "Omro" was chosen is mentioned in Dr. Emma Jaeck's history of Omro. "In 1847 the town was organized as Butte des Morts. Two years later it became Bloomingdale. In 1852 it was named Omro from the blacksmith and trader, Chas. Amereau. Two distinctly different account from which one may choose.

# HOW OMRO GOT ITS NAME

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From the Publication "History of Omro,  
Volume 1" by Miss Mariam Smith, 1977



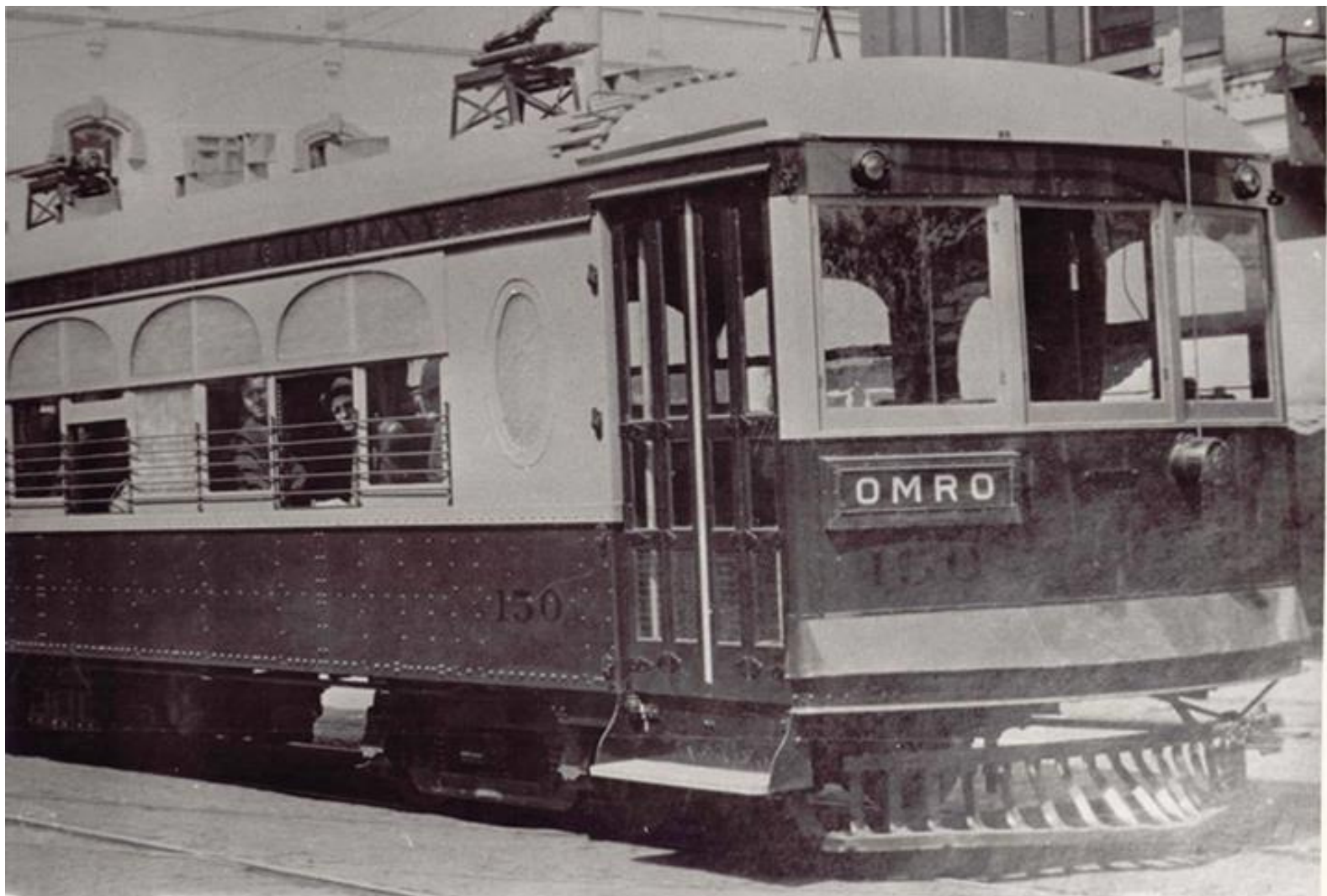
Yet another version might be suggested from a clipping about the "First Cemetery". This cemetery was located at the junction between Omro and Algoma and was on a wooded hill south of where the schoolhouse now stands.

That procedure might have satisfied those who favored not changing it from Bloomingdale, those who still favored Kero, and the young men who insisted on a short name. It appears quite a logical surmise.

At that time the Town of Omro was called Bloomingdale, and the Village of Bloomfield. The present Village of Omro was then but a trading post known as "Kero". Why not a compromise of opinions – the last two letters of Bloom and the last two letters of Kero, and form the name Omro?

*So, there you have it! Clear as mud. Which version seems the most likely to you?*

Could be possible.





The recent passing of Oshkosh native Janice Due Pennau on February 13, 2023 at the age of 104, marks the end of the Oshkosh Campfire group known as the “Ponkapoag Campfire Girls”. Janice Pennau (née Due) was one of twelve “Ponkapoags”, a group started in 1929 by Margaret Fisher Williams.

Margaret Ellen Fisher was born May 27, 1885 in Ponkapoag, Mass., an “Indian Praying Town” near Boston where the Massachusetts Tribe of Native Americans lived under colonial law and were converted to Christianity using a Bible translated to their Algonquin language. She graduated in 1904 from the Hygiene and Physical Education Department of Wellesley College in Boston. She came to Oshkosh in 1907 to become the first woman director of the PE Department at the Oshkosh Normal School (now UW-O).

Fisher chose Oshkosh over Berkeley, California because she thought she would meet Native Americans here. And she did; becoming friends with Mrs. Angus Lookaround, author of *Sunrise of The Menominees*.

At the Normal School, Margaret Fisher instituted a complete physical education program for men and women, introduced women’s basketball, field hockey and orthopedic clinics, as well as coached the first women’s basketball team from 1909 until 1912. She married attorney Charles Williams after meeting on a city playgrounds committee. Charles and Margaret were intensely interested in Camp Fire Girls, helped establish Camp Hiwela. One of their four daughters, Charlotte Fisher Williams, was the “second to last” Ponkapoag dying in 2017 at age 98.





In 1932 all twelve Ponkapoags achieved the highest rank of Torchbearers and celebrated the Washington Bicentennial by performing the “Minuet” 121 times over a three-year period in colonial attire. Janice Due Pennau dressed as a male so she could lead. Margaret Fisher Williams also received the 1932 Harriman Medallion award for the best Campfire leader in the US.



The group had 100% attendance at Twin Lakes Scout Camp where they learned practical skills including etiquette, posture, exercise, table setting, songs, parliamentary procedure, cooking, camping, hiking, and making their own buckskin tunics.



Each chose an Indian name for themselves. Janice Due was “Aiukpa” meaning, “Happy Home.” Charlotte Williams was “Woosickett” meaning, “Rippling Brook.” Margaret F. Williams, their leader, was “Cetinena” meaning, “Keeper of the Flame.” Janice noted they also jokingly called Mrs. Williams “Maggie Fish” and her son, Russell, their “mascot.” They sang: “WOHELO for work, WOHELO for health, WOHELO, WOHELO, WOHELO for love...”.

Janice acted as scribe and published in the Sunset Point neighborhood paper started by Mrs. Williams, called the “Wamapatuck News” for a Massachusetts Chief from before King Philips War of 1675.

Margaret Fisher Williams died January 11, 1957. The twelve Ponkapoags continued to meet throughout their lives becoming the longest running Campfire group in US History. The Ponkapoags were: Janice Due, Betty Dunham, Doris Hardy, Grace Marquardt, Margaret Stinson, Ruth Sullivan, Jane Tangye, Janet Swope, Charlotte Williams, Jean Yule, Lorraine Ellingson and Bonnie Dalton.



Janice Due Pennau (1918-2023)

Janice Due Pennau resided at Evergreen Manor until her death in February of 2023. Her motto was:

“Bloom where you’re Planted!” Memorials in Janice’s name may be given to Evergreen Retirement

Community, Continuum of Care, and the Paine Art Center.





**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

Complete/Update Information

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Street Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Email: \_\_\_\_\_

In an effort to be more green and reduce postage costs, newsletters will be sent via email unless you signify you require a printed copy below.

Please send me a printed copy of the newsletter .

Interested in Volunteering? Let us know what you're interested in! (check all that apply)

- Give tours of the Morgan House (docent training available)
- Historical research on specific topics determined by committees
- Social Media/Publicity
- Newsletter Editing or Content Creation
- Locate and/or events and speakers
- Decorate for the Holidays
- Develop exhibitions (in-person and digital)
- Transcribe Historical Interviews
- Event Photographer/Videographer
- Archive artifacts

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

OR

Pay electronically via Paypal by sending  
 payment to:  
[winnebagoountyhistoricalsociety.org](http://winnebagoountyhistoricalsociety.org)





Winn**e**bago **C**ounty  
H**i**storical & **A**rchaeological  
S**S**ociety, Inc.

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