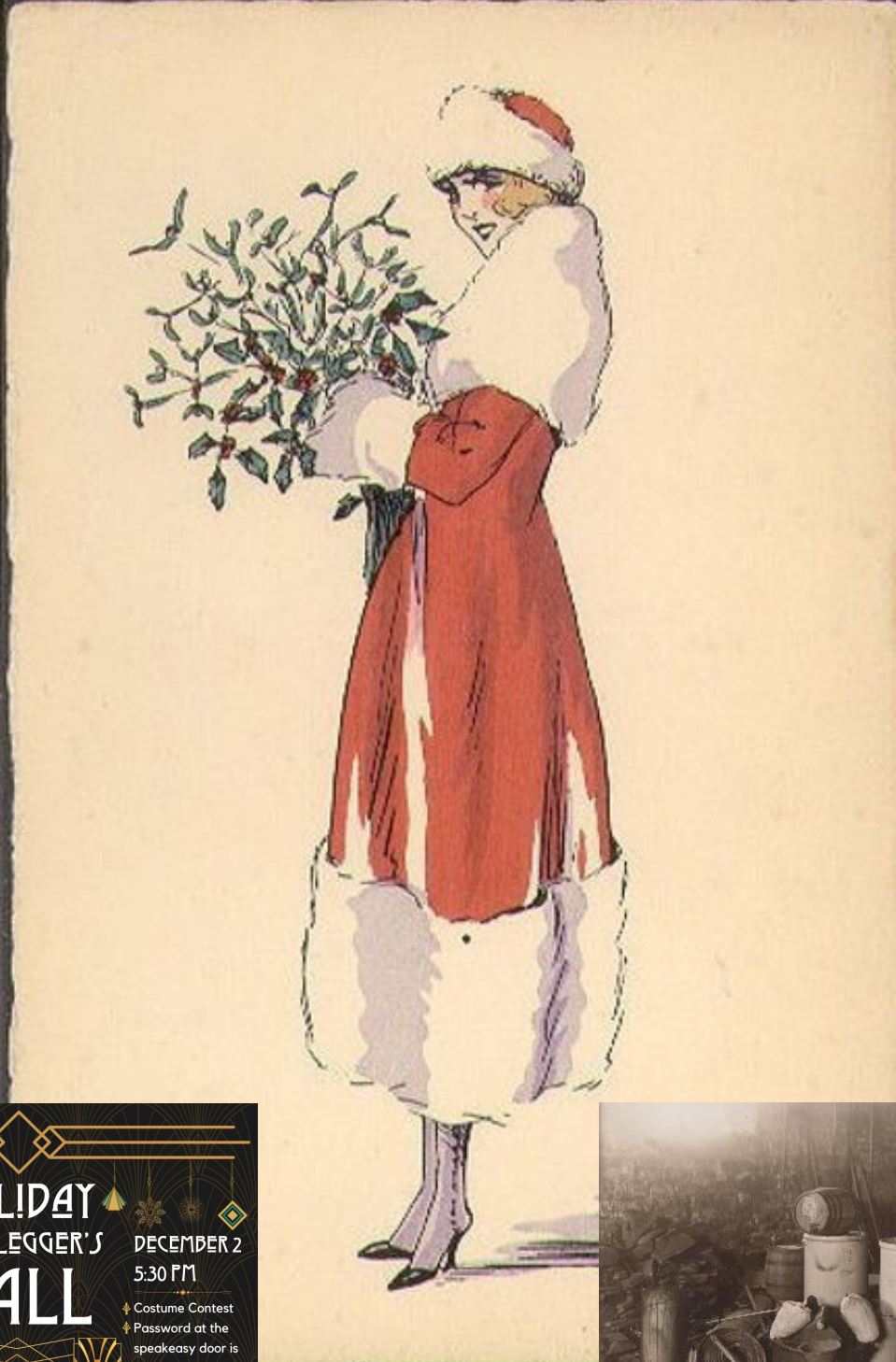


**Waseca
County
History
Center**

HISTORY NOTES

315 NE 2nd Avenue P.O. Box 314 Waseca MN 56093

www.historical.waseca.mn.us



**HOLIDAY
BOOTLEGGERS'
BALL**

**DECEMBER 2
5:30 PM**

- ◆ Costume Contest
- ◆ Password at the speakeasy door is "Buttercup"
- ◆ Tickets \$20 or free for members
- ◆ RSVP required

**Waseca
County
History
Center**

**Inside:
Reserve Tickets Today!**



History Notes is a publication of the Waseca County Historical Society ©2023
P.O. Box 314, Waseca, MN 56093
315 Second Avenue N.E., 507-835-7700
www.historical.waseca.mn.us

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amandal@historical.waseca.mn.us

Virginia McCarthy, Researcher, Genealogy
research@historical.waseca.mn.us

Museum Hours

Open Tuesdays-Fridays, 9-5 p.m.
Bailey-Lewer Library
Open for research Tuesdays and Fridays, 9-5 p.m.

Traveling?
Please call ahead.
507-835-7700

WCHS is a recipient of Thrivent Financial Choice Dollars Program

With Thrivent Choice®, you can recommend where some of Thrivent Financials charitable outreach funds go. Since 2010, more than \$370 million has been distributed to churches and nonprofits nationwide.
www.thrivent.com

From the Executive Director

Joan Mooney



With the Holidays on our doorsteps, let me wish all of you a very Happy Holiday season. Beginning with Thanksgiving. We all have memories of what this holiday means to us and our families. The simple truth for me is, Thanksgiving is a time to give thanks and be grateful. It is with sincerity I thank you for the support you have given to WCHS and to staff over the many years I have been here. Many changes have happened since I first came on board. The past five years have been challenging. Because of your support, WCHS has weathered well. Again, Thank you.

You may have noticed programming at WCHS has geared up once again. Amy Danielson came onboard in the summer months to assist with programming, exhibits and marketing.

We couldn't be happier! We had a busy fall season and are excited for the 2023 Holiday Event—the Holiday Bootleggers Ball, Saturday December 2, at the museum. Tickets are \$20 for non-members, free for members. Must RSVP to reserve a spot. Details can be found on our website and Facebook page.

It is also the time for Year End Giving. WCHS is a 501 (c)(3) charitable organization. If you are in a position to give—WCHS is a good investment! Talk with your tax advisor about deductible donations on your 2023 return.

THIS JUST IN!

We have just received word from the **Waseca Area Foundation**. WCHS has received a grant award of \$1000 from the Edgar F. and Ethel Johnson Fund and \$500 from the Janesville Area Foundation for replacing outdated equipment needed for data management **and** If that isn't enough good news, an **Anonymous Donor** has given the **Waseca County Historical Society Endowment Fund \$15,000 in honor of Rod Searle, Don Wynemer and Jim King.**

We are surprised and deeply moved by this generous gift! Rod, Don and Jim all served on the WCHS Board of Directors together. All three contributed greatly to our efforts. Honoring these three individuals together with this donation is so fitting. Whoever you are must have known this too. Thank you for this legacy gift.



SHORT ON COSTUME IDEAS FOR THE BOOTLEGGERS BALL?

How about a simple Head Piece
Available now at the WCHS Gift Shop!
Custom made! Limited Supply!

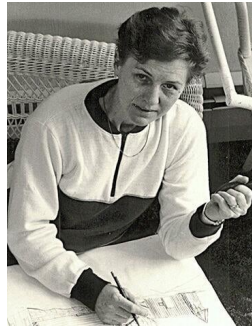
2023 Holiday Exhibit:

The 1920's-It's the Cats Meow!

The featured article in this issue gives you a glimpse of prohibition era activity in America, Minnesota and Waseca County. Although celebrated, even today, this was a very dark and dangerous time in our history.

The 2023 Holiday event, the Bootlegger's Ball will offer guests the opportunity to experience the fun and glamour enjoyed by some during this decade of decadence.

Featured in the exhibit are items from the WCHS Collection and costumes from the **Little Theatre of Owatonna Coletta Collection**. The collection is the lifework of costume designer Coletta Flom. The collection was acquired by the Little Theatre of Owatonna (LTO) after her passing in December of 2020. Coletta was an artist, teacher and talented seamstress-evident in over 4000 pieces created from her Kenyon Minnesota home. Using vintage laces, adornments and fabrics she restored, repaired and refitted original as well as recreations to fit today's cast members. Carrying on this tradition is costume curator **Norma Louis**, also a master seamstress with a great eye for design and period clothing. Thank you LTO!



Another guest exhibitor for the holiday exhibit is **Natalie Pierson of Vagabond Village** in Mankato. On loan are garments and accessories

from her fabulous antique clothing collection. The artifacts are from the 1920s to the 1930s. Vagabond Village is a resale gallery & lounge full of charismatic clothing, decor & music from all eras, and a platform for local talent. The vintage/ antique and eclectic clothing pieces for sale are second to none in the area. Vagabond Village is a go-to for those seeking out the most unusual of the unusual. Theatrical and fun! It's located at 732 N Riverfront Dr, Mankato.

Also lending a creative flare to the exhibit and Bootlegger's Ball motif is Justine Meyer, Pearl Button Primitives, 206 North State Street, Waseca.

Justine is a collector of fine things, which is why she attracts those of us that



appreciate her unusual inventory of found art, antiques, jewelry and collectables.

We are fortunate to have such talented individuals contributing to this exhibit. Thank you!

NEW DONATIONS



Herter's Sno Ghost snowmobile covers from the late 1970s, still in original packaging. Thank you Allen Taylor.

Oral History: Dr. Carl G. Oeljen Vietnam War audio letters.

We were recently made aware of audio recordings by Dr. Carl Oeljen made while serving as an orthopedic surgeon in Da Nang Vietnam, 1970-71. The tapes are not in the WCHS Collection, but can be accessed through the Minnesota Historical Society and the Library of Congress. Search the link below or by title.

Carl is the son of Dr. Siegfried and Adele Oeljen of Waseca.

Subjects discussed: Living quarters description, surgery details, stress experienced by soldiers, personal feelings about the war, loneliness and isolation.

Thank you to friend Bill Wolfe for letting us know about the tapes and where to access this personal account of the Vietnam War. Dr. Oeljen died in 2004.

<http://www2.mnhs.org/library/findaids/sv000223.xml>

STAFF

Pauline Fenelon
Artifact &
Library Curator



Jan Hunter
Research &
Genealogy



Virginia McCarthy
Research &
Genealogy



Amanda Larkin
Museum Manager
& Admin. Assistant



Amy Danielson
Exhibits &
Programs



Joan Mooney
Executive Director



Special Thanks!

To WCHS Volunteers:
Dan Swenson for recycling/selling leftover books from the Book Sale.
Dave Dunn for changing furnace filters and light bulbs and to **Marty** and **Karen Buom** for raking all the leaves!

The Volstead Act: Party's Over, or was it?

In late October in the year 1919, a century long battle to prohibit the use of intoxicating liquors was made into law. The United States House and Senate voted to override President Woodrow Wilson's veto of the Volstead Act, marking the beginning of a decade long ban on any beverage containing more than one half of one percent alcohol.

The History 1920-1933

America entered WWI in April, 1917 after Germany attacked American ships. More than a million troops were sent to Europe. Women and children were summoned to work factories, grow food and sell war bonds to support the war effort. President Woodrow Wilson issued a temporary wartime prohibition to ration grain for food production. Attempts to prohibit alcoholic beverages sparked powerful coalitions like the Woman's Christian Temperance Union and Anti-Saloon League to lobby local, state and federal governments to create laws prohibiting the use of alcohol.

In 1917 the Eighteenth Amendment also known as the Prohibition Amendment was sent by Congress to the states with a seven year deadline for passage. It passed 13 months later.

The Great War ended on November 11, 1918. Post war America experienced a wave of civil rights activism for equal rights for African Americans and women. The Temperance movement secured the right for women to vote with the passing of the 19th Amendment on June 4, 1919, however remained relentless supporters of prohibition.

The 18th Amendment did not clearly define what "intoxicating liquors" meant. Some proponents of the amendment assumed beer and wine would be exempt. To clarify, the Anti-Saloon League drafted the language and Minnesota Representative Andrew Volstead, Granite Falls, sponsored the act that came to be known as the Volstead Act, making it illegal to manufacture, sell, barter, transport, import, export, deliver, furnish or possess such beverages. The Act gave the federal government the power to enforce prohibition nationwide. Three Presidents — Warren Harding, Calvin Coolidge and Herbert Hoover served terms during this time. The Presidents stood by the amendment but congress held the purse strings and were reluctant to spend money on the enforcement of the Volstead Act.

Waseca Journal - Radical, Wednesday Sept.8, 1920, pg.1



New Richland Pool Hall. A group of four men are holding cues and standing around a pool table in the background; a man leans on a barrel-topped counter in the foreground. Ca. 1920

Volstead Law Has Teeth—Two Federal Officers Visit Waseca—Otona and Similar Drinks Ousted.

An article appeared in the St. Paul Dispatch the previous Saturday telling of traveling salesmen peddling medicines to drug stores and soft drink parlors containing as high as 25% alcohol. One drink was called Otona and another called Wine of Pepsin—both made in Owatonna.

There were many other kinds of bitters and decoctions containing high percentages of alcohol sold here, besides more or less whiskey bootlegging and possibly the product of some local stills....After surveying the town, the agents met with the Mayor, County and City Attorneys and proprietors at city hall. It was determined the manufacturers sold the products under false statements and guarantees. All received a stern and a thorough education of the law and consequences—including the bootleggers and moonshiners.

Violators could and did serve time in

Leavenworth Federal Penitentiary.

Party On

And they did—for a decade. Well documented and still celebrated. The Roaring Twenties, F.Scott Fitzgerald's novel *The Great Gatsby*, published in 1925 is referenced to reflect the period also known as the Jazz Age on Long Island. A glamorous lifestyle, masked the repercussions and consequences of the danger and risks associated with organized criminal activity, corruption and violence imposed on willing and unwilling participants.

Waseca Journal, Wednesday January 12, 1921

Gambling Den and Booze Joint Raided...

Waseca Herald, Thursday February 24, 1921

Booze Is Still Cause Of Trouble—Janesville Parties Are Arrested As Liquor Vendors...

Waseca Herald, Thursday, June 16, 1921

Sheriff Raids Moonshine Plant — Booze-Making Outfit Captured On Farm North Of Janesville...

By August of 1921 it seems the strong arm of the law had "dried up wet spots by many arrests". Jail sentences, heavy fines, closed businesses and license requirements for soda parlors were put into place, but more and bigger busts were to follow.

Waseca Journal, Wednesday January 30, 1924

Biggest Haul of Bootleg Booze in Waseca's History Made Monday... Eighty Gallons Of Booze Confiscated in the last 10 days...



The Waseca Journal,
Wednesday, March 5, 1924
Raid At Waldorf Uncovers
Liquor-small amount of Booze
Taken...Three Fined As a
Result...
Waseca Journal, March
26,1924—Awarded Damages
Under Volstead Act.

Waseca Journal, Wednesday, February 10,1926
Janesville Man Freezes Hands Blame To Moon...Victim Found
On Tracks... Victim Charges That Stuff Was Sold Him By
Prominent Janesville Business Man...

Waseca Journal, February 23, 1927
Alderman And Former Mayor In Liquor Raid...Officers Find
Largest Still in Residence of City Official Located Across the
Street From The County Jail...

The WCHS Crimes Per Decade files compiled by Jan Hunter contain newspaper articles with reports of bootlegging activity, armed robberies, break-ins and assaults occurring at an alarming rate in the 1920s and 1930s. Things were tough and getting tougher. Perhaps the most alarming was that of the infamous Schuch murders on May 18, 1929. The brutality



Bootlegging Paraphernalia Still Life. Photograph of barrels, crocks, and other distillery equipment identified as bootlegging paraphernalia. Bootlegging paraphernalia confiscated by the Waseca County Sheriff during prohibition; Evidence photograph. Ca. 1925

of this crime made national news for over 5 years. Bootlegging, robberies and assaults silenced those who knew the perpetrators and to this day the case remains unsolved. The prosperity of the twenties abruptly ended on October, 1929. The stock market crashed—marking the beginning of the Great Depression.

1930s

Consequences for liquor law violations made the headlines again on January 22, 1930.

Waseca Journal—Stiff Sentences Given Wasecans in Federal Court. *Several Given Term at Leavenworth for Liquor Law Violation...*



One month later, in the woods around Goose Lake:

Waseca Journal, Wednesday, February 12, 1930
Booze Car Loaded With 200 Gallons Goes Off Grade Here—Car Thought to Have Been Driven Out of Chicago-Driver Escapes...
after setting fire to the evidence.

By 1932, Prohibition was thought to have failed by the American people. Organized crime had taken hold in cities and towns across America. President Franklin D. Roosevelt held his campaign promise to end prohibition and did so with the passing of the Twenty First Amendment on December 5, 1933. Minnesota passed the Liquor Control Act in December 1933. The act allowed cities to decide if liquor sales were permitted in their individual communities.

Raids Continue in Waseca County

January 4, 1933— Feds Make Raids At Janesville...

Thirteen people were arrested in a series of raids: Smiths Mill, Elysian, Janesville, Owatonna, St.Clair and Minnesota Lake. Six months later Waseca Council passed an ordinance liberalizing the sale of 3.2 beer, with restrictions of hours. Hard liquor was still prohibited and the arrests continued.

1957

Minnesota still had many dry counties. The state passed the “city option”, giving cities the right to determine the legality of making and distributing alcohol.

2023

No dry counties exist in Minnesota today—however-individual towns still regulate if, when and where alcohol can be made and sold.

Library of Congress—U.S Participation in the Great War (World War I)

[https://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/minute/Volstead-Act.](https://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/minute/Volstead-Act)

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Great_Gatsby

<https://www.minnesotamonthly.com/food-drink/drinks-cocktails/minnesotas-alcohol-laws-a-brief-history/>

[https://dps.mn.gov/divisions/age/alcohol/Pages/regulation-history.](https://dps.mn.gov/divisions/age/alcohol/Pages/regulation-history)

Second Quarter Contributions: September 9th, 2023 – November 14th, 2023

Renewing Members

Albrecht, Louis
Aldrich, Donald
Amsrud, Mary
Bentley, Bethel
Coyer, Gayle
Day, William
Dey, James and Cathy
Dickie, Jackie and Jeff
Erdman, Molly
Fenelon, Kari
Fenelon, Pauline
Gottschalk, Don
Grable, Sue
Inman, Steven
Josephes, Richard
Kubat, Michael and Kasondra
Miller, Andrew and Kathleen
Miller, Jeremiah
Moonan-Walbran, Mark
Peters, Jackie
Rosenthal, Darryl and Carol
Rosenthal, Gregg
Schwarz, Ann
Thompson, Brian
Wobschall, Ann

New Members

Anderson, Marilyn
Arlt, Debra
Bently, Debra and John
Brandt, Angie
Coughlin, George
Dvorak, Jenifer
Ebnet, Linda
Forsythe, Erica
Gartner, Jessica
Hanson, John
Hofmann, Jan
Ivers, Jack
Kramer, Nadine
Kuehnel, Andy
Marlow and Malecek, Dan and Mallory
Pearce, Robert
Schmidt, Amy
Schroeder, Stacey
Tostenson, Dwight
Opalinski, David
Oswald, Michelle
Vought, Penny
Zimmerman, Randy

Memorials/Honorariums

In memory of Stanley S. Oftedahl
by JoAnn Sutlief

In memory of Delency Sutlief
by JoAnn Sutlief

In memory of Verna Schoenrock
by Dave and DeeAnn Britton

In memory of Rodney Brandt
by Dave and DeeAnn Britton

In memory of Jurgen Peters
by Sheila and Rick Morris

In memory of Gene Rosenthal
by Kathleen, Kelly and Blair Rosenthal

In memory of Jurgen Peters
by Diane Beckmann

In memory of Pete Madden
by Dave and DeeAnn Britton

In memory of Gene Rosenthal
by Patti Hoversten

In memory of Bonnie Kastner
by Dave and Melissa Dunn

In memory of Don Kelly
(Class of '60 SHHS) by Richard Josephes

In memory of Jerry McCloone
(Class of '59 SHHS) by Richard Josephes

In memory of Arlene Nelson
by Joanne Hintz

Anonymous \$15,000 donation to the
Waseca County Historical Society
Endowment Fund in memory/honor
of Jim King, Rod Searle and Don
Wynnemer.
(See Director Letter pg.2)

New Lifetime Members

Giesen, Marjorie

Sustaining Members

Born, Linda
Nicolin, Jay and Nancy
Rudolph, Janet

Appropriations

City of Waseca

Donations

Adelmann, Marianne
Barbknecht, Rosanne
Byron, Mark and Karen
Cawley, Jerome
Dobberstein, Gary and Deb
Dunn, Dave and Melissa
Flitsch, Kathleen
Grant, Linda
Guentzel, Richard
Harguth, Dorothy
Hoversten, Patti
Johnson, Ron and Janet
Klinger, Richard
Peters, David and Debra
Rudolph, Janet
Swenson, Daniel
Tollefson, Kathryn
Wick, Bruce and Lorraine
Nelemans Construction
Waseca Dental Care

Fall Events



We had a busy fall season! Kicking off the Fall 2023 season was the **2022 Annual Meeting and Harvest Dinner** with guest speaker, author *Rachael Hanel* and catering by the *Red Leaf Café*.

WCHS Researcher *Virginia McCarthy* teamed up with *Woodville Cemetery site manager Cap Peterson* and *Dennis Steffel Omtvedt Funeral and Cremation's Sam Steffel and Sarah Miller* to bring you the *Woodville Cemetery Walking Tour*. Beautiful day and lovely event!



The Bailey-Lewer Research Library hosted *The Haunted Library: A Riddle and Puzzle Room Experience*, created by Amy Danielson and Virginia McCarthy. Not only was The Haunted Library a fun experience it taught the participants a little bit about Waseca County history and how to do their own research.

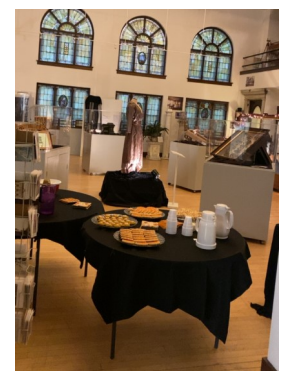
The museums exhibit *With All Due Respect* showcased artifacts from both our collection and Dennis Steffel Omtvedt Funeral and Cremation Service. All of the items were from the Victorian period and were featured because they were used in different mourning rituals. Curated by Pauline Fenelon, Amanda Larkin and Amy Danielson.



Thank you to the many volunteers who made these events possible!



Thank you to **Waseca Floral** for loaning us the floral frame and Album of Designs: Funeral Flowers.



**Waseca
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Waseca County Historical Society

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Membership Renewal Date

