

# History Notes

Volume 41, Issue 3, September 2019

www.historical.waseca.mn.us / LOOK FORWARD TO OUR PAST



Joel and Renae Groskreutz farm is in Section 26 of Vivian Township, Waseca County

## Inside:

Feature Story : *“WCHS Member Memories”*

On Going Exhibits: *“The City of Waseca First 100 Years”*

*“Where the Big Woods Meet the  
Prairie - A Timeline of Unique  
Stories from Waseca County”*

Events: **WCHS Annual Meeting and Brunch - Sun. Oct 6**

**Box Lunch Special Luncheon - Thurs. Oct 17**



**WCHS ANNUAL MEETING  
and  
Brunch**

at  
**JR'S Barn, Waldorf MN**

**MAKE YOUR RESERVATION TODAY!**

**507 - 835 - 7700**

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P.O. Box 314, Waseca, MN 56093  
315 Second Avenue N.E., 507-835-7700  
www.historical.waseca.mn.us

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amandl@historical.waseca.mn.us

Linda Taylor, Researcher, Genealogy.  
research@historical.waseca.mn.us

**Museum Hours**

Open Tuesdays-Fridays, 9-5

**Bailey-Lewer Library**

Open Tuesdays-Fridays, 9-12, 1-5



The Timeline Project has been financed in part with funds provided by the State of Minnesota through the Minnesota Historical Society from the Arts & Cultural Heritage Fund. WCHS is also grateful to the Carl & Verna Schmidt



Foundation, the First National Bank-Waseca, Principal Financial Foundation-John Priebe, and Bill and Patti Hoversten for match support to the Implementation Phase.

## From the WCHS Museum Director

Dear WCHS Members,

I am sad to announce that I will no longer be working for the WCHS. I have enjoyed the past 14 years and have had a wonderful time working with you to help preserve Waseca County history for future generations.

Sincerely,  
Vanessa Zimprich



## From the Executive Director

Joan Mooney

Dear Members,

We are sad to lose Vanessa. Vanessa has contributed significantly to our past achievements and has paved the way for our future plans and aspirations. Vanessa knows she will be missed, and we will continue to support her through this transition. We will now be assessing our staffing needs. We hope to provide current staff with additional hours as we seek to maintain our high



standards of service to our members and supporters. We may be looking for a few special volunteers to fill in the gaps.

We are also sad to announce that due to his recent new position as Director of the Waseca Arts Center, our wonderful and talented Andrew Breck will no longer be able to provide assistance with our exhibits. There just isn't enough of Andrew to go around! We will continue working in harmony with the Waseca Arts Center exploring exhibits and program opportunities to celebrate our rich cultural heritage. There are many opportunities ahead.

I'm so pleased to be able to announce that The Downtown Waseca Historic District Nomination has qualified for the final rounds. After a daunting few years of hard work, the Nomination is now pending! Our Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC) will be notified sometime this fall.

Thanks to the City of Waseca Administrative Assistant Ranae Shult, Assistant to the City Manager Mike Anderson, HPC Members Les Tlougan, Robin Terrell, Jeanne Thompson, Bill Casper and Justine Meyer. Sincere thanks as well goes to Tom Zahn and Associates, Molly Patterson and Andrew Schmidt for providing the extensive research required to nominate downtown Waseca for a National Register Historic District listing. Much of the research conducted was funded by Minnesota Cultural Heritage grants.

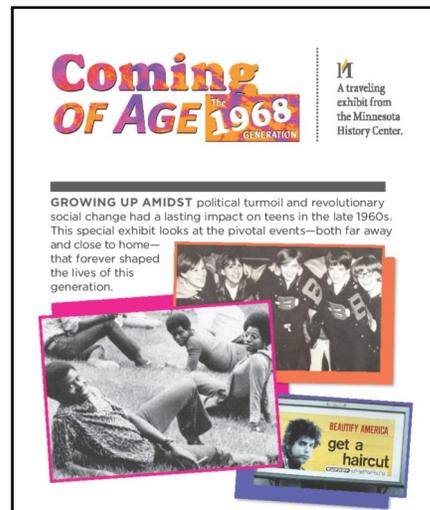
### Programs

We have heard your requests to bring back our Luncheon Lecture Series. We will be offering a **Fall Box Lunch Lecture on Thursday October 17**, noon to 1 p.m. at the WCHS Museum.

**Annual Meeting-Sunday Brunch** will be held on Sunday October 6 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. at JR's Barn! Tickets are \$20. You can call the WCHS Museum to make reservations. Reservations must be prepaid no later than Wednesday, October 2. Sorry no refunds after October 2.

**Holiday Open House** is scheduled for Saturday, December 7 from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Waseca  
County  
History  
Center



The weather during this year's county fair was very interesting with tornado warnings, severe thunder storms and an extreme heat warning. Our overall visitor count was down by about 600 people and our overall concession sales were down by around \$135.00. We continued our tradition of selling all of our concession items for fifty cents each. People really seemed to enjoy the popcorn and our mini cans of pop and mini ice cream treats! It was fun having our building open for everyone and providing a place for people to come visit and talk over old times. There were many conversations reminiscing about the way things used to be. Hodgson Hall is becoming more of a destination place that sparks interest and a yearning for more information. Hopefully people will be inspired to learn more and come visit us at the museum and research library.



**The Waseca County Historical Society  
Annual Meeting and Brunch  
Sunday October 6, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.  
At **JR's Barn**, Waldorf Minnesota  
Reservation - \$20  
Paid Reservations must be in by  
Wednesday, Oct. 2  
Call in to register today!  
21573 45th St. Waldorf, MN 56091**



Waseca County History Center (507)835-7700 315 NE Second Avenue Waseca MN 56093  
[www.historical.waseca.mn.us](http://www.historical.waseca.mn.us) Museum open Tuesday - Friday 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.  
Bailey /Lewer Research Library open Tues. - Friday 9 - noon 1 - 5 p.m.

## On the Cover: Groskreutz History in Waseca County

The Joel and Renae Groskreutz farm is in Section 26 of Vivian Township, Waseca County, just south of Waldorf. Their 1912 barn, now called “JR’s Barn” has become a popular venue for outdoor events. We thought it might be interesting to learn a little more about how this property was handed down through the Groskreutz family.

Joel’s great-great grandfather, Carl Groskreutz immigrated from Prussia in 1878 with his wife Ernestina (Thom). Carl’s brother, Gotlieb Groskreutz had arrived in Minnesota earlier and urged his brother to come also. He even sent the \$80 needed for the ship’s fare which Carl paid back as soon as he could after he came to Minnesota. After paying back his brother, Carl invested in his own land in Section 34 of Vivian Township. Carl’s son, Otto Groskreutz married Emma Putz of Vivian in 1898. Otto and Emma began farming the land in Section 26 where Joel lives today with his wife Renae (Prail) Groskreutz who married in 1989. The old barn on the property served as an efficient working barn for over 100 years, but in 2014, it became necessary to replace its roof. They began thinking of how to finance the costly replacement. Since Renae had over 11 years of experience as a camp social director where they had done weddings, the idea of JR’s Barn seemed like a natural fit. After extensive remodeling, planning, and marketing, the barn opened as a center where the family business has hosted worship events, weddings, proms, barn dances, family reunions, graduation parties and corporate events. They have given this old barn a new lease on life that provides a venue for beautiful and fun outdoor social events. More information available at [www.jrsbarn.com](http://www.jrsbarn.com)

“The **Groskreutz Story**”, by Jeff A. Groskreutz is located in the Bailey Library of WCHS.



## Bailey - Lewer Research Library Ramp and Porch Project

### Good things come to those who wait!

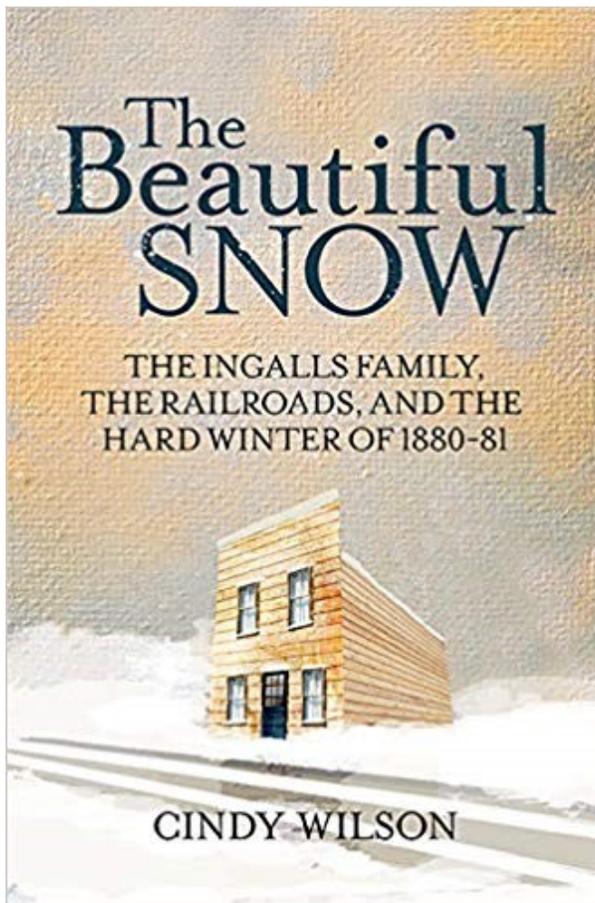
Thanks to Henry and Phyllis Lewer, Phil and Mary Allen, this project was made possible. It took awhile and the front and back gardens were disturbed to say the least; however, the areas have been hydro-seeded by Dahle Sod of Morristown and we look forward to replanting spring 2020. Thanks to Ron Thorson for his carpentry skills, Barry Raetz and crew for prepping and pouring the ramp, Boy Scout Troop #85



and parents for help clearing the site and WCHS board members Dale Groskreutz for tilling, Dave Zika and Marty Buum for painting porches and windows.

**Thank you to Everyone!**





## Box Lunch Lecture

### *The Beautiful Snow*

by author **Cindy Wilson**

Thursday October 17 Noon - 1 p.m.

WCHS Museum - Catered Box Lunches \$15

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#### **About the Author**

Cindy Wilson is a writer, researcher and student of history. She majored in American Studies and resides in Elysian Minnesota.

**The presentation** "The Big Cut West of Tracy" uses material that is mostly included in the book. The presentation focuses on a core part of the book - the battle to keep the railroads open amidst blizzard after blizzard -- thus cutting off the supply chain for the new settlements to the west. Historic photos taken

along the Winona & St. Peter rail line depict the daunting task of clearing the snow from the tracks and how that winter affected future railroad operations.

**"The Beautiful Snow"** What really happened during the Hard Winter of 1880-81? Based on Laura Ingalls Wilder's "The Long Winter". Harvesting stories from over 3000 regional newspapers "The Beautiful Snow" weaves the historical record around and through Wilder's fictionalized account of "The Long Winter". The hard Winter comes to life with extraordinary tales of survival and resilience adding rich context to Wilder's beloved novel.

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**When you make your reservation please choose which box lunch you'd like:**

**Box Lunches-your choice:** *Includes: sandwich, one side, chips, cookie, condiments, punch and coffee.*

- **Ham** or **Turkey** on a square croissant with lettuce, tomato & cheese
- Choose a side:  
**Macaroni salad** or **Potato salad**

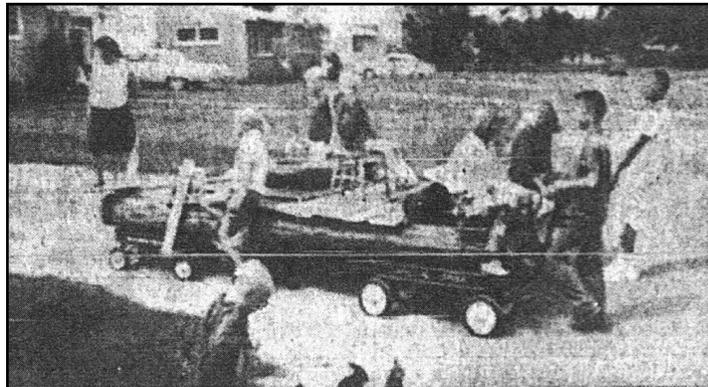
**\$15** **Paid reservations must be made by Tuesday October 15.**

*All lunches are pre-ordered - no refunds after October 15, 2019*

# WCHS Member Memories

by Vanessa Zimprich

After reading our last newsletter article *A Waseca Remembrance* by Jeanie Lorenz Thompson, a memory was sparked for WCHS member Nina Carlson. "During the summer of 1963, our sons Kurt and Art along with some of the neighborhood boys, the Sjoberg boys and one of the Dyar kids, built a raft. I believe that they used old telephone poles and scrap lumber to construct their raft. When they were done building the raft, they launched it on Clear Lake. I remember that the newspaper came by and took some photographs of that launch."



Transporting their do-it-yourself project from the Sjoberg driveway to the christening site near Clear Lake beach.

We were able to find the newspaper article on our microfilm copy of the *Waseca Journal* published on August 28, 1963.

*Spirit of Tom Sawyer Lives on as Waseca Boys Build, Launch Raft for Clear Lake Adventure*

The idea, according to the builders began about three weeks ago when the neighborhood group decided to lend their cooperative efforts to providing a means of "navigating" Clear Lake. The five Waseca boys, Roy and Brian Sjoberg, Kurt and Art Carlson and Keith Dyar collected an assortment of ends of old telephone poles, scraps of lumber, nails in countless sizes and a hammer. The supplies were loaded into wagons and hauled to the Sjoberg garage.

After two weeks, a number of bruised thumbs and the normal amount of argument, they were ready to launch their raft. They officially named their raft "Mabeline." A feminine name was chosen because the front of the raft was painted pink. The "Mabeline" was a real do-it-yourself raft...constructed in the best Mark Twain tradition.

On a Sunday in late August, the raft was hoisted on four coasters, towed to the north shore of Clear Lake and readied for "launching." A crowd of nearly half a hundred citizens gathered to witness the christening of the raft on Clear Lake beach. Since the parents objected to using a glass pop bottle in the christening ceremony the boys filled a plastic bag with Clear Lake water and ceremoniously smashed it on the front of the raft. The boys used paddles and oars to propel their craft on its maiden voyage on Clear Lake.



Launching the "Mabeline" on Clear Lake. Photograph courtesy of Nina Carlson

## Third Quarter Contributions July - September 13th 2019

### New / Renewing Sustainer Members

Gjelten, Ann  
Purcell, Patricia

### New Members

Becker, Sharon  
Deef, David  
Schroeder, DeNell  
Wadham, Alan

### Renewing Members

Bathke, Patricia  
Born, Larry and Linda  
Byron, John  
Connor, Matt  
Hallman, John  
Johnson, James  
Josephes Richard  
Kugath, LeAnn  
Lechner, Karen  
McMorris, Kim  
Metzdorff, Thomas & Kristin  
Miller, Jean M.  
Nicolin, Jay and Nancy  
Schoonover, Lorna  
Reinecke, Thiel  
Tetzloff, Jim and Mary Jane  
Welch, Janet

### Memorials

#### In memory of Mary Allen

by Milly Neidt  
by JoAnn Sutlief

#### In memory of Gordon Foels

by Nancy Tollefson

#### In memory of Joyce Josephes

by Richard Josephes

#### In memory of Jerry McCarthy

by June Fell  
by Pauline Fenelon  
by Carollea Gilomen  
by Jane Haala  
by Dale and Dawn Halgren  
by Marty Hofmeister  
by Ivan and Janice Maas  
by Clark Meyer  
by Dan Swenson  
by Norma Witt

#### In memory of Nancy Murphy

by Bob and Janette Larson

#### In memory of Elaine Sack

by Donna Fostveit

#### In memory of Beau Leon Tobin

by Donna Fostveit

#### In memory of Diane Wendland

by Nancy Tollefson

### Volunteers

Buum, Marty  
Dunn, Dave  
Jones, Karl  
Raimann, Carol  
Zika, Dave  
Witts, Roger  
Groskreutz, Dale  
Boy Scout Troop #85  
Youngberg, Katie

### WCHS is a recipient of

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Research & Genealogy



### Amanda Larkin

Photograph Archivist



### Pauline Fenelon

Artifact & Library Curator



### Jan Hunter

Research





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## Bailey~Lewer Research Library Ramp and Porch Project

