

**Waseca
County
History
Center**

Waseca County Historical Society
315 2nd Avenue N.E. | P.O. Box 314
Waseca, MN 56093

NON-PROFIT
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
WASECA, MN
56093
PERMIT 41

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Membership Renewal Date



FOR THE WASECA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

ROCK & ROLL REVUE | **FRI APR 22**

BIG SHOW
IN WASECA, MN

1960s Rockers at 5:30 pm
Los T-5:30pm
Bob Stephan-6:30pm
Miller-Denn-7:30pm
Family Tradition-8:30pm

Beer and Wine tasting
& Oscar's Taco Bar
at 5 pm

Silent Auction
Quality items, 5 pm
Ends at 9 pm

ROCK & ROLL REVUE
featuring

CLETUS HANE BAND 9:30PM **call 507-835-7700**

With Steve McLoone, Jim Kozan,
Keith Deike, Randy Keeley,
Jerome Broughten, and Dan Westphal

TICKETS:
\$30 Advanced
\$35 At the door

THE WASECA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY IS A 501(c)3 NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION LOCATED AT 315 2ND AVE NE, WASECA, MN

WCHS Word Scramble

National Register of Historic Places listed in Waseca County

W J MARTSRONG PYMNAO EOLWHSLEA OEGRCRS
JNHO W GUHAAHEBUGN OSEUH
ILHOP C BALYEI SUEH
HNAMNFO ASIPREAI
AELVLIENS FEER LICUBP RRYILBA
SEHA HMURGOS ILLM
RERTGSSAN EUERFG LDEGO EBNURM 47
ASTIV HARLTNUE CHHCUR
ECOSOR P WRDA USOEH
AWSECA YONTCU ROCUTHEOSU
WLIAML R FOLW OEHSU

GET YOU TICKETS TODAY 507-835-7700

Word Scramble Answers: WJ Armstrong Company Wholesale Grocers, John W Aughenbaugh House, Philo C. Bailey House, Hofmann Apiaries, Janesville Free Public Libraries, Seha Sorghum Mill, Strangers Refuge Lodge Number 74, Vista Lutheran Church, Roscoe P. Ward House, Waseca County Courthouse, William R Wolf House,

**Waseca
County
History
Center**

History Notes

315 NE 2nd Avenue P.O. Box 314 Waseca MN 56093 www.historical.waseca.mn.us



Photo Credit: Brad Nelson, National Weather Service, Grant/Ottertail County, July 8, 2020

Inside: **WHAT DOES THAT SIREN MEAN?**



AT THE MILL | **FRI APR 22**
BIG SHOW 5:00-11:30 PM IN WASECA, MN

ROCK & ROLL REVUE
Fundraiser

Save the date!

507-835-7700
www.historical.waseca.mn.us

Waseca County History Center

History Notes is a publication
of the Waseca County Historical Society
©2021
P.O. Box 314, Waseca, MN 56093
315 Second Avenue N.E., 507-835-7700
www.historical.waseca.mn.us

WCHS 2022 Board of Directors:

Diane Beckmann, President
Marty Buum, Vice President
Dawn Halgren, Treasurer
Molly Byron
Dave Dunn
Linda Finley
Dale Groskreutz
Brian Harguth (Waseca Co. Commissioner)
Gregg Johnson
Trevor Kanewischer
Jackie Peters
Carol Raimann
Dave Zika

Staff:

Joan Mooney, Executive Director
Grant Administration, Programs & Research
director@historical.waseca.mn.us

Pauline Fenelon, Artifacts/Library Curator
paulinef@historical.waseca.mn.us

Amanda Larkin, Administrative Assistant
Museum Manager
amandl@historical.waseca.mn.us

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

Museum

Open Tuesdays-Fridays, 9-5
Thursday 9:00-4:30 p.m.

Bailey-Lewer Library Research

Open for research Tuesdays and Fridays, 9-5

**Traveling?
Please call ahead.
507-835-7700**



From the Executive Director

The Birds Are Singing Joan Mooney

Dear Members,

Hallelujah! We made it through another COVID winter! Most definitely something to celebrate.

It just takes a few consecutive days of 30 degree temperatures and we're ready to plant! Sure feels good.

**Waseca
County
History
Center**

The WCHS Board of Directors and staff are busy preparing for our fundraising event: *Rock-n-Roll Revue II, Friday April 22 at The Mill*. This event features Wasecans of yesteryear, many of which are still actively rockin' n rollin'. Many of you may remember Rock-n-Roll Revue I, held way back in the summer of 2014. It was hotter than Haiti that night as I recall. We first scheduled this second Revue for summer of 2020, then the summer of 2021, until finally, COVID cut us a break. Fingers crossed moving forward.

Unfortunately, since the last show, we have lost some prominent Waseca musicians. Our hearts go out to the families of Mike Mullen and Doug Neste. Two Waseca musicians who made music their life. We honor their contributions to the rich musical history of Waseca County. Please join us for this event as it will be the last Rock n Roll Revue.

Tickets are \$30 now, \$35 at the door.

About the feature article: *What Does That Siren Mean?* A while ago we received Civil Defense items from the county when they were cleaning and updating the Emergency Management office. With the waning winter comes severe weather warnings shifting from snowstorms and blizzards to thunderstorms and tornados. Most people associate the first Wednesday of the month siren soundings to just that, testing the sirens that warn us when severe weather is coming our way. Represented in the exhibit are stories and recollections of cyclones and storms that ripped through the county, most notably, the tornado of 1967.

The Civil Defense items on display include a model of how to build a bomb shelter, gas masks, storage containers for food and water, Geiger counters to measure radio active activity and warning signs for poison gas and other dangers associated with nuclear warfare post WWII.

Just 2 weeks ago we thought of these objects as artifacts from a time in history that will never be again. For those of us who remember the Bay of Pigs episode, the fall out drills at school-under your desk-heads down. The threat was very real and those sirens remind us of what we thought were past experiences.

This exhibit was put together prior to the Ukraine invasion. It is not meant to alarm or scare you, but it is a sober reminder that what we once thought was a closed chapter in world history is now an unfathomable situation unfolding in real time.

Prayers and support for the people of Ukraine.

Joan

First Quarter Contributions: December 23rd, 2021 – March 17th, 2022

New Members

Nelson, Dean
Pierce, Anne
Pulis, Tim
Wecker, Margaret

Renewing Members

Bartelt, Mark and Jane
Buesing, Orville
Bruesch, J. Carl
Buland, Eric
Byrne, Robert
Carpenter, Michael
Cervenka, Robert
Dietz, Mary
Elsner, Arlene
Fitzsimmons, William
Giesen, Marjorie
Gilomen, Carollea
Gruetzmacher, Bonnie
Habeck, Bill
Halgren, Dawn
Holmens, James
Holmquist, Harlan
Hoversten, Patricia and William
Jacobson, Robin Forrest
Joecks, Judy
Knecht, Susan
Lewer, Cindy
Milkint, Noralee
Miller, Juanita
Nelson, John
Oftedahl, Kathleen
Olson, Laura
Pascua, Mary
Poehler, Roslyn
Reak, Bonnie
Roemhildt, Scott
Roemhildt, Terry
Spies, Loy
Spies, Lynferd
Tollefson, Nancy
Velett, Laurie
Vogler, William
Walter, Bonnie
Wildgrube, Barbara

New/Renewing Sustainer Members

Britton, Valerie
Buker, Mark and Barbara
Cox, Cheryl
Dunn, Jane
Engle, Diane
Johnson, Gregg
Joyce, Ron
Kramer, Robyn
Strain, Reid
Streng, Gary

New Lifetime Members

Pooley, Arlene
Youngberg, Lucille

Memorials and Honorariums

In memory of Larry Roesler
By Virginia McCarthy

In memory of Ruth Sybilrud
By James and Cathy Dey

In memory of Barbara Ann Cliff
By Donna Fostveit

In memory of Donald B. Larson
By Donna Fostveit

In memory of Janet Carlson Quiram
By Donna Fostveit
By Russ and Terri Ingram

In memory of Sharon R. Allen
By Steven Inman

In memory Thomas L. Jackson
By Carol E. Jackson

In memory of Bonnie Lou Zimmerman
By Donna Fostveit

In memory of Marlene Korman
By Jo Ann Sutlief

In memory of Vickie Patraw
By Jo Ann Sutlief

In honor of Ronald and Janet Johnson
By Kathryn Tollefson

Donations

Barbknecht, Rosanne
Beckmann, Diane
Cawley, Jerome
Dobberstein, Gary and Deb
Dunn, Dave
Fette, Jeff
Finley, Joseph
Fitzsimmons, William
Groskreutz, Dale
Harguth, Dorothy
Holmquist, Harlan
Holt, Maggie
Hoversten, Patricia and William
Inman, Steven
Jackson, Carol
Joecks, Judy
Kroeger, Lester
Madel Jr., R.P. & Mary Ann
Mighty Cause
Miller, Gene and Bonnie
Nelson, John
Nelson, Susan
Purcell, Pat
Roesler, Neil
Rudolph, Janet
Singlestad, Scott and Vicky
Smith, Maureen
Suek, Peter and Teresa
Tesch, Martin
Tetzloff, James
Tollefson, Kathryn
Vogler, William
Walter, Kevin
Wick, Bruce and Lorraine
Welch, Janet
Wolff, Dennis and Beth Ann
American Motel
Cinch Connectivity Solutions
Thrivent Financial

Appropriations

Blooming Grove Township
New Richland Township



The importance of learning from History.

What do you think of when you hear a Civil Defense siren?

Back in the 1950s and until the Cold War era ended, the focus of our local defense management was survival of a potential nuclear attack. A wailing siren could mean that you as an individual would need to respond by seeking underground safety areas, storing food, water and medical supplies that would be used to prolong your life until safe conditions allowed you back out of your bunker. Schools responded by sending children to lower floors, basements, hallways, during drills. Some even remember having to drop and duck under their desks.

Of course, we know now that had there actually been a nuclear attack, these

would have provided little protection. Government leaders from many countries forged agreements that mitigated or eliminated nuclear stockpiling. People around the world felt a sense of relief.

Gradually, the focus on nuclear fallout shifted to an “all-hazards” approach of Comprehensive Emergency Management. The focus of civil defense planning became more of an effort to protect the citizens of state or locality from natural disasters, by using the principles of emergency operations:

- Prevention
- Mitigation
- Preparation
- Response by emergency evacuation or recovery

Political changes in our world have been gradually building over the past few years. Just within the past few weeks, those changes have brought us to a boiling point and the world is at a critical place in history. The year is 2022, and once again we face a potential world war and a leader who is threatening to use nuclear weaponry to meet his goals. Because of this frightening development, the Civil Defense Emergency Management forces might once again find a need to focus on survival of nuclear attack.



Technology has progressed tremendously since the Cold War era. The siren alert system has been augmented successfully by the fact that many people now carry a cellphone or smartphone with them. Local Civil Defense

departments have developed a notification system that delivers alerts and warnings directly to each citizen as explained on their website:

“Waseca County utilizes an Emergency Notification System called CodeRED. Get alerted to emergencies and other important community news by signing up for the Waseca County Emergency Notification System. The CodeRED notification system enables Waseca County authorities to provide

you with critical information quickly in a variety of situations such as severe weather, unexpected road closures, missing persons, and building or neighborhood evacuations.”



Important Information About Tornado Sirens

Sirens are for **OUTDOOR** warning purposes and are not meant to be heard indoors.

Hearing a siren is a signal to get indoors and seek additional information.

It does **NOT** mean the threat has ended when the sirens stop sounding.

Sirens are activated by city or county officials, not the National Weather Service.

NWS Chicago weather.gov/Chicago

Graphic created by NWS Kansas City, MO

(continued)



What do you think of when you hear a Civil Defense siren?

Many of us today associate the sirens with bad weather. There are more than one siren sounds tested at 1 p.m. on the first Wednesday of each month. You can listen to the different sirens by googling on your phone *What do civil defense sirens sound like? Or Emergency Sirens in St.Paul* to be more specific as sirens may vary state to state.

March-April have been dangerous months for tornado outbreaks in Minnesota. You may remember the March 29, 1998 tornado that ripped through St. Peter, Comfrey and LeCenter. So many homes were destroyed or damaged. Hundreds of mature trees were lost, changing the landscape for years to come. The residents of these communities will remember that storm forever. Much like our Waseca County residents will never forget the devastating tornado of April 1967. The storm had such an impact it is featured in our Waseca County Timeline exhibit and remains a popular topic among those who can't forget. The following excerpts are taken from research gathered for the time line exhibit and on display now at the WCHS museum.

1967 Tornado Timeline:

Three separate tornados hit Waseca County on 30 Apr 1967.

The first, the western tornado came into Waseca County from Freeborn County east of Matawan, headed north 6 miles and terminated at the northern edge of Byron township.

The second, the central tornado is the most well known to the city of Waseca residents.

The third, the eastern tornado touched down southeast of the city of Waseca and went north.

The Central tornado originated a mile west of Hartland, Freeborn County, then went almost straight north into the west section of New Richland Township, then Otisco Township before it veered slightly to the east, taking aim at the southeast corner of the city of Waseca . The twister killed six people and greatly damaged property along 8th and 11th streets S.E. and along the south edge of Clear Lake, then jumped over the lake and dropped down again on the north shore of the lake taking out the White Castle Night Club.



Members of the Waseca County Rescue Squad, posed standing beside the rescue truck, opened to show equipment; L-R: (standing) Howard Regan, Joe Collins, Roy Wendland, Bert Torbert (city manager), Bill Dougherty (city council), Aaron Draheim (mayor), and Bob Deef (Civil Defense); also atop truck are Marion "Slim" Cunningham and Marvin Lau. Ca. 1965

“...at the White Castle night club where a tree was driven right through the building, splitting the building in half. There were 25 people in the club at the time. Phil Arnoldt, Dick Wendland, and Art Powell were seated in a booth when the tree drove right between them Powell was knocked to the floor but was not injured. The other two escaped without a scratch. Stan Broughten had placed a \$20 bill on the table, three feet from where the tree penetrated the building. After the storm the currency was still there. Three cars parked along the shore were scattered. The Roy Powell car was found in the slough on the southeast corner of the golf course. The Gary Crumb (Matawan) car was tossed over the White Castle, cutting the tip from tree tops, landing in a slough south of the George Willock place. It was completely demolished. Jerry Hager's car was found in a county ditch 50 feet west of the White Castle. --“ *Janesville Argus*, May 1, 1967





“--The tornado next dipped down at the Art Rux residence, 1120 East Elm Ave. (on the south shore of Clear Lake). The house was disintegrated and the debris thrown into the lake. Mr. Rux was found on top of a section of the house still conscious, asking where his wife was for they had been together in the same room. He was rushed to the hospital where he died at 10 p.m. In the meantime a lengthy search disclosed the body of Mrs. Rux in the water beneath some of the debris. She had been killed outright.” *Janesville Argus May 1, 1967*

As the storm traveled northeast across Clear Lake the twister picked up enough water to cause a six foot tidal wave after the calm which followed.

At the George Willock farm and mink ranch the house was blown off the foundation and leveled. A barn was completely flattened. The mink cages were scattered. Some of the animals are still in the cages and others have escaped or were killed. Mr. and Mrs. Willock and her brother, George Hurley, were in the house. Mr. Willock was decapitated, dying instantly. Mrs. Willock was unconscious but regained consciousness at the hospital. George Hurley was in serious condition and was moved to Rochester at 8:30 last evening. Janesville Argus May 1, 1967

“Of the injured, Mrs. George Willock is considered in the most serious condition. She had been moved from Waseca Memorial hospital to the University of Minnesota Hospital, Minneapolis. She later died. Waseca Journal, 3 May 1967.

The Central tornado took the lives of John and Therese Rippe, 421 11th St. SE, Arthur and Lidia Rux, 1120 East Elm Ave., Mr. and Mrs. George Willock, and injured many living in the S.E. section of the city.

The Eastern Tornado, the third, was believed to have broken away from the central tornado at the Duane Buker farm southeast of Waseca, or possibly south of the Lowell Schmidt farm. The Schmidt farm and Lowell's fathers adjoining farm both were damaged, although the adjoining farm sustained the most damage, section 35, Woodville Township. As it moved, almost straight north, it wreaked havoc, destroying eight barns and turning one house completely upside down.

Other storms have ripped through Waseca County causing damage and destruction.

Child's History of Waseca County tells of the year **1881**. Not only did Waseca suffer terrible winter storms but tornados as well. On **June 11** a tornado made its way north from Blue Earth in Faribault County causing much damage to structures in surrounding counties. On August 30 in Waseca County, a cyclone (heavy rain and winds) was reported. Farms and homes just east of Janesville were flooded, Isaac Ballard's cow was killed by lightning. Other animals were killed by baseball size hail. On **July 13, 1883**, the worst storm ever reported, occurred in Waseca County. The storm came from the southwest. Billowing black clouds, thunder that shook the buildings and crackling lightning were followed by a few seconds of eerie calm. Suddenly the wind shifted. From the northwest sheets of rain, wind and hail wreaked havoc. Roofs were torn off buildings. The barn at the Catholic parsonage was moved off its foundation and buildings in the village were damaged or destroyed. In Josco, the German Lutheran Church was moved from its foundation, in St. Mary Township the S.S. Phelps barn was destroyed. The new residence of James and John Keeley was blown away. Wm. Oestereich's cow was killed by lightning, E. Brossard's barn lost its roof. Julius Papke lost his granary, corn cribs, sheds and other property. In Blooming Grove Malachi Madden lost his brand new barn. Roger Garaghty lost his log house, barn and sheds. Ole Sonstebys' log house was carried away and his oak trees toppled roots and all. In Woodville, Mike Spillane lost his granary and crops as did Charles Hensel. The storm traveled eastward to Meriden causing more damage. The German Evangelical Church, the blacksmith shop and the flour mill were badly damaged. Miraculously no lives were reported lost to this monster of a storm.

In June of 1956 a tornado ripped across southern Minnesota entering Waseca County from the west and cut a path across the north half of the county. In Waseca the light plant and Waseca Telephone Co. were badly damaged. Trees and power lines were strewn around town. The Waseca grandstand lost its roof. All this damage took place in one half hour.

In May of 1961 a bad storm hit St. Mary and Wilton townships destroying The Erwin Ewest farm, killing livestock, destroying buildings and injuring Ewest. Also damaged were the farms of Armin Roemhildt, Francis Kramer (continued) ..and John Priebe destroying the barn, and brooder house, killing 60 chickens. Also lost in the the storm

were five colonies of bees owned by John Grunwald. All five stands for the bees were destroyed. *“They may recover from the storm but I don’t know. They should be swarming now. If the queen bee is dead, it’s no good.”*

Only a few months ago our neighbors to the south-east were struck by a tornado on December 15, 2021. The latest report of a tornado ever in Minnesota. Temperatures reached 60 degrees that day. Winds were reported at 110 miles per hour. Hartland’s Arcadian Bank was destroyed as was the Post Office and other buildings. Many homes were damaged. Recovery begins this spring.

Who knows what Mother Nature has planned for the upcoming season. Heed the warnings, whether from a town siren, radio or phone. Pay attention, as these stories reflect the unpredictable nature and fury of these storms and the ensuing damage that can change lives forever.



Lola and Marvin Manthe. Tornado damage at Fessel’s Place . 1925



Tornado damage, Hugo Tolzman property ,Alma City 1925.

About the Fundraiser

The WCHS Board of Directors and staff have been working hard to make this event successful. The last fundraiser for WCHS was in 2014. It is time again to build up our

Capital fund needed for facility repairs and maintenance. This fund will be applied to Hodgson Hall roof, foundation repairs on the Museum and Bailey House and all the unknown projects yet to be identified. Please join us for the **Last Ever-Waseca Rock-n-Roll Revue.**

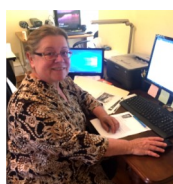
Get your tickets Today! \$30-\$35 at the door.

ATTENTION!
WCHS received an online donation with no identifying information.
If you have made an online donation in February and have not received an acknowledgment please contact us 507-835-7700

Pauline Fenelon
Artifact & Library Curator



Jan Hunter
Research & Genealogy



Virginia McCarthy
Research & Genealogy



Amanda Larkin
Museum Manager

