



The Bulletin

**St. Croix County Historical Society
The Octagon House Museum**

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A New and Improved Eighth Grade Hudson History Tour

The 3rd annual Hudson History Walking Tour for Hudson Middle School's eighth grade students was on October 12th. Students spent the morning on a walking tour and the afternoon viewing history booths at Lakefront Park.

The tour gives students an opportunity to learn about former Hudson residents. Each student is assigned the identity of a former Hudsonite. The students tour the neighborhood, stopping at the homes that once belonged to their resident as guides tell them about their person. Students see photographs and an artifact that actually belonged to the their person. Each group of students tours Willow River Cemetery and Humbird Chapel, and then finds their person's grave and makes a rubbing of the grave marker.

This year's tour was the best one yet. After a very well timed, warm weather walk in the morning, the students went to Lakefront Park for lunch followed by history activities. There were Civil War re-enactors, quill pens to write with, voyageur and fur-trade booths, as well as demonstrations about soap and butter making, the railroads, the lumber industry and agriculture. Next October, we would like to have even more booths. If you have any ideas or can help, let me know.

A special thank you to all the wonderful volunteers who helped with the tour. Those who spent their morning in the cemetery, at the Octagon House, or at one of the historic houses are: Wayne and Jean Haut, Mike Miller, David Trebesch, Patt Colton, Renee Snow, Jacki Bradham, Barbara George, Pete Close, Connie Frantz, LaVonne McCombie, Opal Rorig, Lisa Yerry, Rose Marie Stayberg, Dolores Taavola, William Bauman, Mary Jane Bridge, Robyn Wefel, Dorothy Wilson, and Ann Hall.



Volunteer and homeowner David Trebesch talks to students about his Vine Street home where Horace and Lizzie Taylor once lived. Horace was a newspaper man and politician who served as a State Senator; the US Railroad Commissioner; the American Consul to France; and as the Assistant Secretary of the US Treasury.

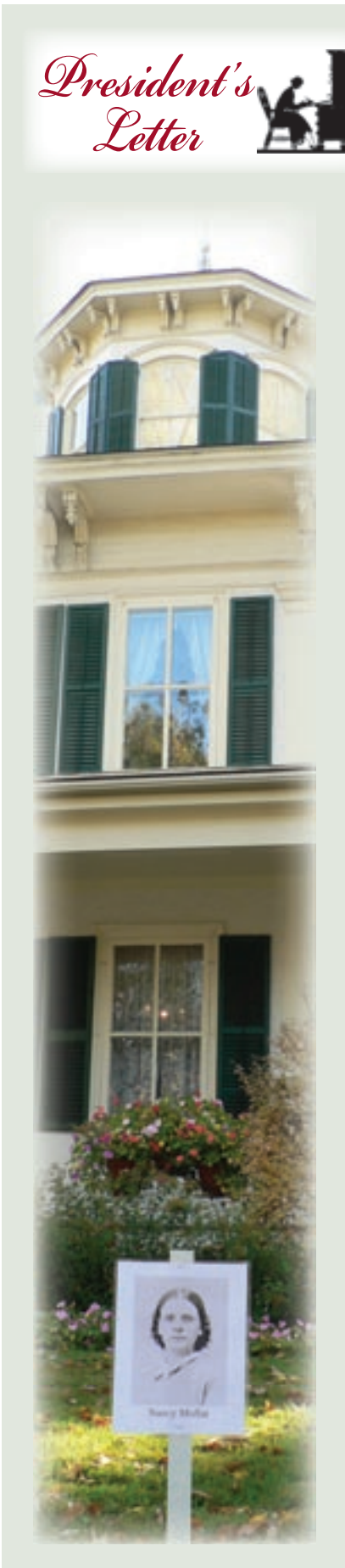
Thank you to all the volunteers who came to Lakefront Park to share their time and talents at the history booths.

The volunteers who manned the history booths were: Clayton and Renee Snow with quill pen writing; Brian Geissler from Camp St. Croix with the voyageurs, fur and tracks; Doug Harmon with Civil War re-enactors from Company B Prescott Guards; Nancy Brooks and family demonstrated butter and soap making; Peter Close at the railroad booth, Jacki and Bob Bradham and Carolin Barrett at the lumber industry booth; John and Kathy Maas at the farming and wheat booth; and I manned the artifacts display.

This tour is really a great experience for both the students and the volunteers. Can't wait until next year!

~ Heidi Rushmann

*President's
Letter*



Another Summer season has ended and the Octagon House Museum is getting ready for Christmas. We had a very busy six months and the House, depicting Hudson in the Early Days, pleased all its visitors, who had much praise for the decor and the guides who told the story.

Everyone was impressed, too with our Victorian garden. Dorothy Wilson and her committee have work very hard each summer to make it authentically beautiful.

The Night at the Nova was fun again this year. If you didn't attend, be sure to come next summer. It's a time for members and volunteers to get to know each other and have fun.

Leaving our Board of Directors this year is Opal Rorig. We appreciate her years of service. She planned all our dinners, presided over the Garret Gang, planned our History Series Evenings, and guided in the House. She was out there for our Eighth Grade Tours. We surely will miss her.

Again, our director, Heidi, was in the Booster Parade this past summer, along with Jacki Bradham and junior guide Abby Zappa.

The Maintenance Committee repainted the porch. Wayne Haut and Clayton Snow have made the visitors entrance fresher and much more welcoming.

The Garret Gang is busy every Monday. The crew is very busy, cataloging items, accepting new donations and generally keeping everything in order. Opal has been getting them going, Jacki Bradham, Renee Snow, Nancy Potratz and Nancy Hawkinson and Stacey Lokker are the hard workers.

Coming up is the Christmas Tour of Homes, November 20th and 21st. Come and bring friends. It's a wonderful way to begin the holiday season and an easy way to buy your gifts. (Perhaps a few for yourself.) The Museum Gift Shop, run by Jean Haut, is stocked with a multitude of ideas. This year she even has jewelry!

A Victorian Christmas Night (our new name for Light-Up Night) looks to be a big event; on December 3rd. If you come, you will have a tour of our lantern-lit House, a tour of the Phipps Bed and Breakfast across the street and the John Lee House on Fourth Street. Wine and cheese and sweets will be served in the Carriage House. And, as I keep telling you, the Gift Shop is ready for some serious shopping.

This year, again, you can bring your family and friends on a House tour anytime during December, as long as you have 10 people. If you have relatives that visit near Christmas week, just call ahead and we will open for your family. We're happy that the House can be shown the entire month of December. We love showing off our fabulous Christmas decorations.

A big thank you for everything you do; volunteers and members. We couldn't do any of this without you. And have a Merry Christmas!



Opal Rorig

~ Dolores Taavola



House Director's Corner

I am pleased to report a very successful 2010 season at the Octagon House. Our theme was "Hudson in the Early Days." Visitors to the museum learned about the history of the Octagon House, the town, and local residents. Our guests this year included all of Hudson's third grade students, the Miss Hudson candidates, several church groups and garden clubs, and many groups of red hat ladies. Of course there are countless walk-in tours of local residents and folks from out of town too.

Our biggest event of the year was the annual Hudson History Walking Tour for the eighth grade students of Hudson Middle School. A special thank you to the many volunteers who helped make this event successful.

Volunteers are the most important people in our organization. I am thankful for every one of the volunteers and what they do for the Historical Society. I would like to recognize a few of them for some special contributions.

Thank you to Pat and Burt Witthuhn who donated funds to purchase prizes for the eighth grade on the walking tour. Along the walk the students did a photo scavenger hunt. Those with all the correct answers were eligible for a prize. A little bit of a reward doesn't hurt.

Meg Fronczak donated several pairs of her mother's (Genevieve Galassini) gloves. When we give tours of the Octagon House, all guides wear a pair of gloves. We always had plain white gloves, but now we have many different colors and styles. Back when gloves were popular you would have short gloves to go with long sleeves, long gloves with short sleeves. If possible, they were to match your shoes, purse and hat.

Bill Leckey donated a framed display that is a great visual aid for Hudson's beginnings. Louis Massey and Peter Bouchea are regarded as Hudson's earliest settlers. Bill's reproduction print of an 1837 map shows where these men lived near Fort Snelling in Minnesota. Around this time there were problems with whiskey being sold to the Native Americans so people living near the Fort had to leave. Only military personnel were allowed to live at the Fort. Some of the settlers went down the Mississippi to settle at Pig's Eye (later named St. Paul). Louis Massey and his brothers-in-law Peter Bouchea came down the Mississippi and then up the St. Croix River to the mouth of the Willow River where they settled at what would later become Hudson. Bill's "whiskey map" is a great way to show what happened before Hudson was settled.



above: The gloves donated by Meg Fronczak are a variety of colors and styles.

below: Bill Leckey holds the map of the Fort Snelling area including information about Massey and Bouchea.



~ Heidi Rushmann

Very Special Visitors - John and Catherine Hughes

On a very hot humid day in August 2010, the Octagon House Museum was again visited by the last child born in it and the only surviving former resident. John Ingram Hughes (91) and his lovely wife, the former Catherine Combacker (90), honored us with their presence and their stories.

While John climbs the stairs to the second floor a bit slowly, due to knee replacement, his memory of the house and his years spent in it were extraordinarily fine. He first remarked that the wallpaper in the stairway was “the same as when he lived here.” As we ascended the stairs John told us that his sisters (Mary and Margaret, both deceased in recent years) each had their own rooms, his parents had the master bedroom, and the sleeping porch was his “quarters” year around. However, to escape the heat, the entire family slept in the porch during the summer. John had two pet cats named ‘Nip and Tuck’ and that ‘Tuck’, being his favorite, often snuck into his bed at night. However, father, John Moffat Hughes, did not allow the cat to be in the bed, so cat was escorted to the basement on a regular basis.

John described how the furniture was arranged in each room, informing us that the built-in cupboards in the master bedroom alcove were added when he was growing up, as that area was originally the nursery. The sewing room was a bathroom when John lived here and an auxiliary operating sink and vanity were in the master bedroom also. John inherited what is now the guest room as his older sisters left for college. Hughes does not remember the catwalk as it was removed a few years before his birth. That same year, the old barn was removed and replaced by John’s barn (now called the carriage house – housing the gift shop and research center). Looking out the upstairs window, John remarks that he remembers those same

lilac trees with the twisted trucks. His father was an avid gardener, especially after retirement. Catherine remembers her father-in-law instructing her how he maintained his show-place gardens with his weekly routine.

Catherine Hughes, a vivacious and charming very young 90 year old, remembers the first time she came to the Octagon House to visit John’s parents. As a music major, Catherine knew how to impress her future in-laws by playing the piano for them. John and Catherine still have John Moffat Hughes’ 1906 piano. Music was a main stay in the life in the Hughes household. John’s father played the piano every morning, often performing his latest composition.

John remembers many of his father’s original compositions and that his father, organist and choir director at the First Baptist Church for 60 years, often spent his Sunday afternoons at the church making repairs to the aging organ. Of course, John Ingram Hughes has music in his blood too; he played the clarinet in the high school band and would help the band director, Dave Dahl, set up before school started. This talent has been passed on to the next generation, also. Margaret (Betty’s) son, John Swanson, was an accomplished musician, as are John and Catherine’s own two daughters.

John likes to tell of the playroom above his barn (the Carriage House) where his sisters performed plays on the stage built by their father, as he played with his trains. Trains were also an important part of the Hughes family. John Moffat Hughes was hired by William Phipps to work for the railroad; he traveled to his job in St. Paul by rail until autos became more common (coincidentally John Moffat Hughes drove a “Hudson” automobile). John himself rode the train
See Hughes on page 8



The Hughes pose for a picture during their visit at John’s boyhood home. (l-r) Octagon House Director Heidi Rushmann, Catherine and John Hughes.

Annual Dinner Meeting: A New Venue & A New Program

Forty three members and guests of the SCCHS enjoyed a delicious Chicken Kiev dinner, after a social hour, in the Chateau Room of the Hudson House Inn on Thursday, October 21, 2010. A brief business meeting followed the dinner at which new and renewing Board of Directors members were elected. Returning members are Meredith Berg, LaVonne McCombie and Dorothy Wilson. New board member Nancy Hawkinson was elected. All terms expire in 2014.

The program was a deviation from the norm also. This year the we produced our own program in the form of a sneak peek at the forthcoming History of Hudson movie.

The program presenter was Jacki Bradham, who is also the driving force behind the movie project. Her committee includes LaVonne McCombie, Nancy Hawkinson, Opal Rorig as well as other volunteers. The project was the brainchild of Hudson's Community Development director, Dennis Darnold, who suggested converting the many written historical sources into a modern technological format for the use in schools, library, City and Chamber of Commerce. Bradham began by giving some background of the project's conception, funding and selecting a production manager. Next came creating an outline, making decisions on what to include and writing reports for the script. It may have sounded easy, but trying to consolidate 200 years of history into a two hour DVD proved to be quite a challenge. After that came the interviews of local personalities and finally scanning hundreds of photos. And now putting



The Ojibway and Dakota Treaties of 1837 opened the St. Croix Valley and its abundant pine forest to the lumber industry.

it all together into a comprehensive and accurate piece of history is in the hands of producer, Chris Larsen of Hudson-North Hudson Cable TV station.

Bradham thanked Greg Tellijohn of Digital Garage for the use of his projector, then showed us the opening portion of our accomplishment so far. The preview took Hudson from the days when the land was inhabited by Native Americans up through the lumbering and saw mills days to the coming of the railroad. After this preview Bradham also showed footage of the Steve Anderson and Lorraine Jacobs interview.

Many favorable comments were heard after the presentation. We are now all anxiously looking forward to seeing the finished product.

~ LaVonne McCombie

Volunteers Tour the Gibbs Farm Museum

On October 5, twenty of our Octagon House volunteers enjoyed an afternoon at the Gibbs Farm Museum in St. Paul.

Heidi, our director, arranged this trip and made sure that Peggy Stern, who guides at the Museum, took our group around. Peggy, as you know, is a descendant of the Octagon House family. Peggy showed us around the large property and told us the history of the Gibbs family and the Chippewa Indians that lived in the area. We saw the farmhouse and the animals that reside on the farm. We enjoyed all the artifacts and found that the Gibbs Farm Museum is a wonderful place for schoolchildren. We saw several groups touring when we were there.

At the end of the tour, we were surprised with dishes of homemade ice cream! It was a rather hot day, so we truly appreciated them. The ice cream was delicious. Thank you, Peggy, for a wonderful afternoon!

~ Dolores Taavola



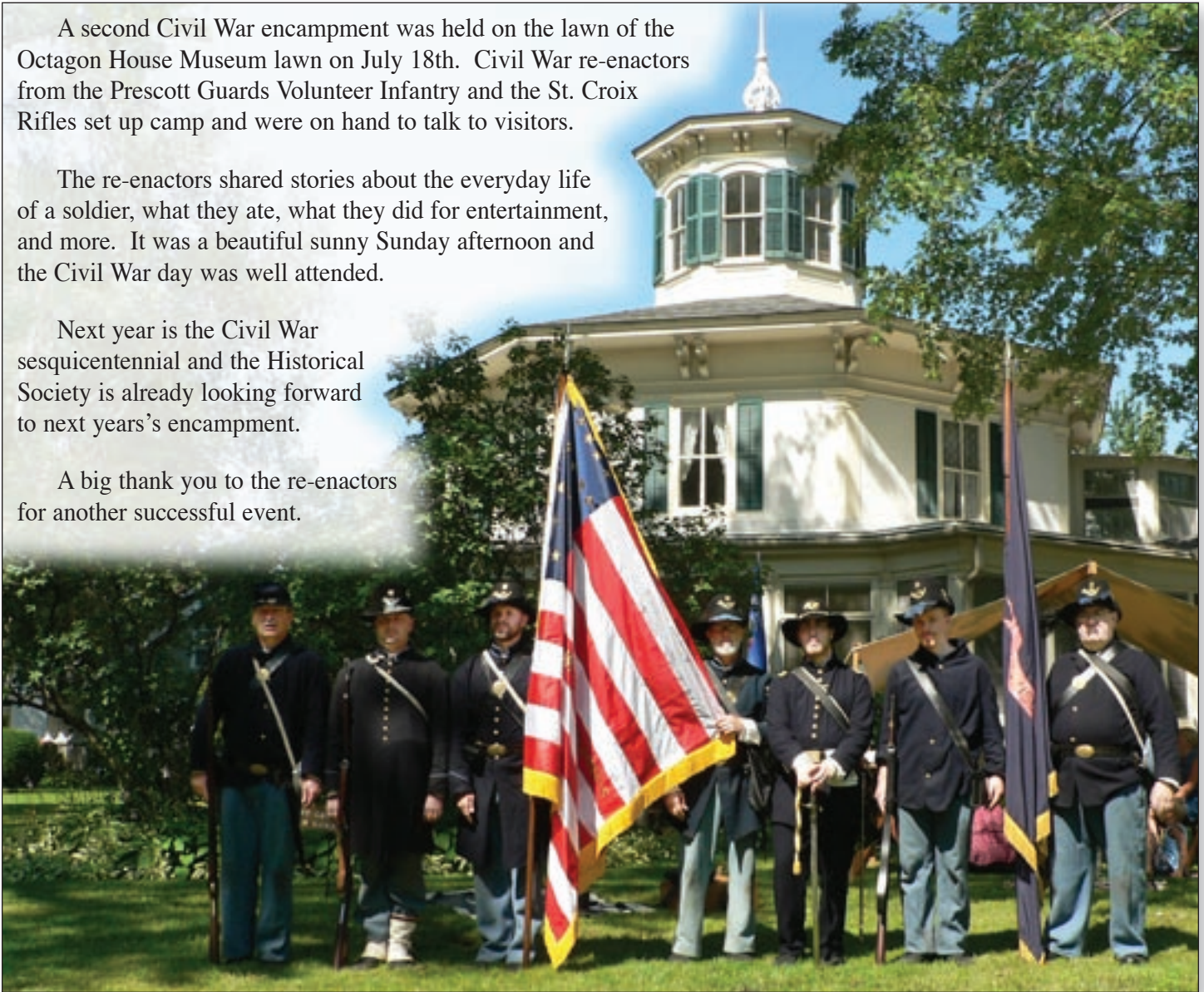
Civil War Encampment at the Octagon House

A second Civil War encampment was held on the lawn of the Octagon House Museum lawn on July 18th. Civil War re-enactors from the Prescott Guards Volunteer Infantry and the St. Croix Rifles set up camp and were on hand to talk to visitors.

The re-enactors shared stories about the everyday life of a soldier, what they ate, what they did for entertainment, and more. It was a beautiful sunny Sunday afternoon and the Civil War day was well attended.

Next year is the Civil War sesquicentennial and the Historical Society is already looking forward to next year's encampment.

A big thank you to the re-enactors for another successful event.



Garden Delight

This year, thanks to the wonderful weather and Mother Nature's ample water supply, the gardens were spectacular! Even the Japanese beetles in the rose garden didn't ruin the beauty of the most magnificent roses we have seen in years. The best part was that the season started early and lasted late into the fall. The dahlias were still in full bloom in the middle of October. We have finally achieved our goal of having something blossoming in the garden all the time, from the Snow Drops and crocus in the spring to the chrysanthemums in the fall. This does not happen by accident and I would like to thank Jean and Wayne Haut, Connie Klecker, Sheryl Lindholm, Karen Langfeldt, Georgia Scheu, Robyn Wefel, Clayton Snow and Byrd Wilson for all their help in making the Octagon House gardens a place to renew the soul

~ Dorothy Wilson



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- 1 - In June the Miss Hudson candidates enjoy the Octagon House garden for a tea and tour of the museum.
- 2 - Junior Guide Abby Zappa and House Director Heidi Rushmann in the 4th of July parade .
- 3 - Kim Holbrook shares stories of how quilts were used by the underground railroad during the Civil War.
- 4 - Students pose for a photo during the Eighth Grade Tour.
- 5 - Clayton Snow (right) directs Pierce Johnston (left) where to hang a hook at the "Hanging of the Greens" as volunteers begin decoration for the holiday season.

Tea for Two... and for Balancing the Budget

This year, for the first time the revenue from our special events has exceeded that received from admissions for tours of the Octagon House. To date the admission totals are down from previous years, as is the case with many museums this year. To make matters even worse, the City of Hudson has cut back on the subsidy we receive from the tourism tax, and according to proposed budget figures, intends to cut the Society even more in 2011. To maintain the House and to carry on the various activities of the Society the loss of income from these sources must be covered in other ways.

Fortunately, special events such as our teas have helped to fill in the void this year. We offer a cream tea at the Phipps Center for the Arts for groups of 25 or more, serving them assorted finger sandwiches, scones with clotted cream, and a variety of sweets with unlimited cups of Earl Grey tea. If you know of a group looking for an experience in elegance or an organization looking for a special meeting give the Octagon House a call and help us balance the budget.

A special thank you to those who volunteer to help with the teas: Jacki and Jean Bradham, Nancy Potratz, Irene Hines,



Dorothy Wilson (right) serves cake to a guest at the PEA tea. This year the revenue from the teas help balance the budget.

Dolores Taavola, Helen Stoltz-Wood, Renee Snow, Opal Rorig, Stacey Lokker and Byrd Wilson

~ Dorothy Wilson

Hughes... continued from page 4
to attend college at the University of Minnesota and remembers well the Hudson Toll Bridge.

Both John and Catherine spoke fondly of John's school buddy, "Billy" Miller. Other familiar terms heard were, sliding on "Coon's Hill", skiing on North Hudson's ski jump, hockey on the flooded "cinder lot" and "the pond" aka Lake Mallalieu. Other memories include sister Mary being quarantined in the back bedroom when she had Scarlet Fever; the family having hired help (often a farm girl who worked for room and board while attending high school) when the children were small, but only a part time cook and housekeeper, Mrs. Reynolds, who helped out after the children left home. John also recalled sliding down the hall on the polished wooden floor until one day he accidentally slid too far, putting his arm through a glass china cabinet. He revealed the scar which remains today on his right arm.

Catherine emphasized her special relationship with her farther and mother-in-law who treated her as another

daughter; she stated she fondly remembers visiting, with her children, for two weeks every summer. Both remember finding such things as Judge Moffat's wooden leg in the attic and a plethora of silver in the cupboards above alcove between dining room and kitchen, after John and Margaret Hughes both had died.

Hughes reiterated that his great grandfather, John Shaw Moffat, wife Nancy, and daughter Mary, came to Hudson from upstate New York where octagon shape houses were popular. Built with 6-inch slabs of white pine the Octagon House was built sturdy, relatively warm and economically spacious. John Moffat Hughes often worried about what would become of the house when they both were gone. John, echoed by Catherine, expressed how pleased he is that the Historical Society purchased his boyhood home, praising all of the volunteers who work so hard, and how happy they are to be able to come back for visits. They assured House Director, Heidi Rushmann, and all volunteers that John Moffat Hughes would be very pleased and was likely "grinning in his grave".

~ LaVonne McCombie

Special Thank You

We are very grateful to the following supporters for their generous financial contributions.

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Fran Wooley

Robert Hawksford
LaVonne McCombie
Beverly Solsvig

Other 2010 Donations

The Society wishes to acknowledge and thank all of the donors who have given to our organization.

First Baptist Church: music
UWRF-Area Research Center: artifacts
Bob & Jacki Bradham: newsletters and decorations
Charlie Cadenhead: publication
Meg Fronczak: gloves
Nancy Hawkinson: publications
Gloria Kramer: supplies
Susan Larsen: glassware
Bob McGrew: artifacts
Mary Mitchell: silver
Betsy Palesh: artifacts
Michael Stone: artifacts
Gladys Ware: clothing
Dorothy Wilson: clothing and silver

Pierce County Historical Society: publication
John & Rosemary Alberg: silver
Dave & Ellie Burnley: photos and artifacts
Virginia Canfield: glassware
Barbara George: books and publications
Jackie Hugdahl: artifacts
Jessica Kramer: supplies
Bill Leckey: map display
Michael Meulemans: silver
Craig Olson: publication
Duane Phillabaum: documents
Ben Walbrun: photo
Marilyn Weiss: photo
Vera Yndestad: clothing and accessories

the Gift Shop is Open

We are ready for Christmas with vintage inspired jewelry, ornaments and holiday decorations. The Gift Shop is well stocked with antique silver, glassware and linens. This is just the place for that hard to find one-of-a-kind item for your home or garden.

~ Jean Haut

SCCHS members receive a 10% discount



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Winter Calendar

December 3rd

Victorian Christmas Night

Visit the Octagon House, the Phipps Inn and the John Lee House
from 6 to 8 p.m. ~ lamp-lit tours, music and refreshments

Holiday Tour Season

Open for walk-in tours on the Weekends:

December 4th & 5th; 11th & 12th; and 18th & 19th

Saturdays 12 to 4:30 p.m. and Sundays 2 to 4:30 p.m.

Also open for Special Tours of ten or more guests by appointment.

Please call to schedule your group tour at (715) 386-2654.

Members remember your 10% discount in the Museum Gift Shop!

The Historical Society now has a
Facebook page. Find us by searching
for St. Croix County Historical Society

