



# The Bulletin

Spring 2010

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

1004 Third Street • Hudson, WI 54016 • (715) 386-2654 • [www.pressenter.com/~octagon](http://www.pressenter.com/~octagon)

## **Second Annual Eighth Grade History Tour on May 14th**



*Eighth grade students stop at Micklesen Drug Store as part of the Second Street business station to learn about Earnest Gatchell.*

On Friday, May 14th, the SCCHS hosted the Historic Hudson Walking Tour for all of Hudson Middle School's eighth graders (over 400 students). The tour had been scheduled for last October, but was postponed due to unseasonably cold weather. Mother Nature agreed with us this spring, and we had a beautiful warm sunny day. The tour was a great success. I would like to thank all of the volunteers who helped make the tour possible.

Burt Witthuhn and Paul Bourget were the donations committee, securing over \$300 worth of free prizes for students who won the scavenger hunt. (prizes included: movie passes, gift cards, and meals from local restaurants). Ellie Davenport was my assistant for the artifacts and slideshow (which she and her mother, Joan, helped to create.) Dan Bradham and Wayne Haut worked at the cemetery helping students find the proper grave and make rubbings of the grave markers. Many volunteers were posted in front of houses and along the walking route to tell students about who lived there. These were: Robin Wefel, Mary Ellner, Ellen Burnley, Jean Haut, Lisa and Sam Yerry, Bob Hawksford, Patt Colten, Jackie and Tom Hugdahl, Tami Tulibaski, Peter Close, Jacki Bradham, Doug Peterson, Opal Rorig, Bill Leckey, and La Vonne McCombie.

The Octagon House was also filled with volunteers that day, as all students came to see the house. Those volunteers were: Jessica Johnston, Stacey Lokker, Meredith Berg, Dolores Taavola, Meg Fronczak, Renee Snow, Helen Stoltz-Wood. The hands-on history station was manned by the Yerry boys, Issac, Matthew, Joseph and Jonah. Irene Hines and Beverly Solsvig held down the fort. Ed Crandall, our caretaker made all the signs we needed. Special thanks to Meg Fronczak and Jacki Bradham for all their help with everything in the weeks leading up to the tour, and to Bill Leckey for showing up extra early to help me set up the grounds.

We are not sure yet if next year's tour will be in the fall or the spring. We will pass along more information as soon as we know. Thanks again to all these people! The Eighth Grade History Tour only works because of all of you.

~ Heidi Rushmann

P.S. We had an eighth grade student come and buy a copy of the "Hudson in the Early Days" book. He thought the tour was really cool and wants to learn more about Hudson's History — good news!

## President's Letter



Have you been at the Octagon House lately? We are so lucky—with the very early spring, our wonderful gardens will have an even longer season. They look great right now. And the House—with our new theme, “Hudson in the Early” Days—is already impressing tour-goers with its elegant look and many stories of Hudson’s beginnings. 2010 looks to be a splendid year.

We always have to remember that we would have none of this if we didn’t have our valuable team of volunteers. Their hard work and many volunteer hours keep this great historic house so well-preserved and beautiful.

I’m sure many of you know who they are, but I’ll remind you now of the committees who do all the work around the House and the Society.

The House Committee, Finance Committee, Publicity Committee, Publications Committee, Personnel Committee, Garden Committee, Maintenance Committee, Tour Committee, Research and Preservation Committee, Membership Committee, Garden House Committee, Acquisitions Committee, and Gift Shop Committee—all these committees and their hard-working members make our museum possible; along with our Tour Guides and Receptionists.

At the Volunteer Tea in April, it was so rewarding to see everyone stand to be recognized for their hard work in all these areas. They all seem to take pride in their work for the House.

If you’d like to help out on any of these committees, stop in and see us. It’s work to help out at the Octagon House, but it’s a lot of fun, too.

Come and see our new theme anyway—and don’t forget to stop in our Museum Gift Shop. There are lots of new things for spring and summer.

And while you’re there, join me in remembering that this grand old Victorian House owes it all to volunteers and say thank you.

~ Dolores Taavola



## 12th Annual Artful Garden Tour

presented by

**The Hudson Women’s Club**

will begin at the

**Octagon House**

**Saturday, June 26**

**from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.**

**Sunday, June 27**

**from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.**

The self-guided tour of Hudson and River Falls area gardens. Gardens will showcase artists and musicians. Cost: \$12/person

For more information, call (715) 386-7787



## House Director's Corner

The 2010 theme for the Octagon House Museum is "Hudson in the Early Days." This is the title of Genevieve Cline Day's book that was originally printed in 1932, and reprinted by the SCCHS in 2009. This year at the Octagon House we are doing just what Genevieve did: exploring Hudson's past and people. The library has an exhibit honoring Mrs. Day and Willis Miller for all they contributed to our local history.

Guests on the Octagon House tour will learn all about the Moffat-Hughes family, as well as other families in town, including the Merritts, the Baileys, and the Phipps, and Hudson's first settlers, Massey and Bouchea. We are also featuring a display on the Chippewa and Sioux Indians who lived here for hundreds of years before the settlers arrived. Come and see the stone arrowheads, axe heads, and other tools once used by Native Americans and later found by Hudson residents.

Hudson celebrated "Yellowstone Trail Days" this May in honor of the first east west highway created almost 100 years ago. We are highlighting this early automobile route that went through downtown Hudson and over the Toll Bridge. The artifacts and photographs on display at the Octagon House this year are sure to give visitors an idea of what Hudson was like in the early days.

Just a reminder, SCCHS members receive a free tour with their paid membership, so I hope to see you all this summer!

~ Heidi Rushmann

Photo: Hudson Star-Observer



Genevieve (Cline) Day



Willis Miller



(above) Abigail McGowan Page was born on April 15, 1847 and is the first white child born in Hudson. She married George Bailey in 1868 and they farmed on 80 acres at the current location of Hudson High School.



(left) The Hudson Garage was on the corner of First and Walnut Streets. Located just off the entrance to the Hudson Toll Bridge it was convenient for Yellowstone Trail travelers.

## Volunteers Enjoy the 7th Annual Volunteer Tea

In the Spring of 2004 Dorothy Wilson proposed the idea of hosting a tea for the Historical Society volunteers in appreciation for all their work. — And what a delicious idea that was.

In fact it was such a good idea that it has been repeated yearly, and April 24th was the 7th Annual Volunteer Tea.

As usual Dorothy was the gracious hostess and with the help of her tea team set a beautiful table for the volunteers. SCCHS volunteers were treated to a lovely tea with fine linens and silver, freshly baked scones with clotted cream, a selection of finger sandwiches, a variety of tasty cakes, and a bottomless cup of hot Earl Grey tea.

Historical Society President Dolores Taavola was on hand to thank volunteers and share what projects and committees everyone was currently working on.

House Director Heidi Rushmann gave an update on the 2010 House theme and described the different topics



*House Director Heidi Rushmann and volunteers enjoy a cup of tea. (l-r) Heidi Rushmann, Tami Tulibaski, Joan Davenport, and Junior Guides Anna and Ellie Davenport*

displayed throughout the house. Heidi also thanked the tour guides and reception volunteers.

The tea gave volunteers an opportunity to see, and taste, what the teas that are served to tour groups are like. SCCHS's Victorian Cream Teas are served in the sunny atrium at the Phipps Center for the Arts, overlooking the scenic St. Croix River. Tea can be served by reservation for groups of 25 or more anytime after noon. More information about the teas or House tours is available at 715-386-2654.

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## Spring 2010 is Off to a Early and Busy Start

In February, the Octagon House was open for one day for the Hot Air Affair Balloon Festival. Nearly fifty people toured that day and enjoyed our display on the history of ballooning.

This last month of spring will bring third grade students from all of the Hudson elementary schools. They all come to tour the Octagon House. I went to Hudson Middle School for Wild West Day and did a Pioneer School lesson with the eighth grade students.

We have several large group tours and teas booked for the summer. Some of the groups are the Shoreview

Garden Club, Coon Rapids Senior Center, West 7th Community Center, Hudson PEO, and tour companies from the Twin Cities, Appleton, WI, and Albuquerque, NM.

The visit I am looking forward to the most will be from John and Catherine Hughes. John was born in the Octagon House in 1919, great-grandson of the original owners, John and Nancy Moffat. He and his lovely wife are making the trip from Delaware in early August. I am very excited to see them both again, and have them give me a tour of the house.

*~ Heidi Rushmann*

## SCCHS Members are Invited to Night Nova

St. Croix County Historical Society members are invited to meet for a social night at the Historic Nova on Tuesday, June 8th at 5:30 p.m. Delicious food, good wine, and friendly conversation will make for a relaxed and enjoyable social event.

This “Members Only” event is designed as an opportunity for members to take a break from their busy

volunteer work at the Octagon House and enjoy a more social event.

Drinks and food will be ordered off the menu. Members are asked to RSVP to the Octagon House at (715) 386-2654 by 3:00 on Wednesday, June 2nd.

## Volunteer Highlight - An Interview with Stacey Lokker

The volunteers at St. Croix County Historical Society are the very heart and soul of tis organization. Without the generous gift of their time and talents the Society would not exist.

The following is an interview with our newest volunteer Stacey Lokker. Stacey began volunteering in January 2009. She works with the Garret Gang on Mondays and is often on hand for special events.

**Q:** *Tell us a little about your background?*

**A:** “My name is Stacey Lokker. I was born in St. Paul, MN and raised in New Richmond, WI. I have spent several years working in the Twin Cites in the Health Insurance and the Human Resources Industry. I attended college full time and just graduated from Century College in White Bear Lake, MN with a Liberal Arts degree. I will be attending the University of River Falls in the fall majoring in Communications.”

**Q:** *When did you become interested in history?*

**A:** “As a child I spent time after school at the public library in New Richmond reading about the 1899 tornado in the *The New Richmond Tornado of 1899 A Modern Herculaneum* book By Anna Epley. I really liked when I could connect a building or a place that was written about in the book to the current times.”

**Q:** *When did you start volunteering for the Historical Society?*

**A:** “This past fall I moved to Hudson from Minnetonka, MN and I came to volunteer at the Octagon house because I enjoyed walking around town looking at all

the amazing churches, homes, and businesses. I would wonder what they meant to the community and how, and who, helped Hudson become Hudson.”

**Q:** *What do you like about volunteering at the Museum?*

**A:** “I have enjoyed giving tours at the Octagon House and it is so fun when someone on a tour has a story about an artifact or an event they remember from town. I learn something new every time I am here! I look forward to learning more about this great town and the people that made it so.”



SCCHS volunteer Stacey Lokker

*the Gift Shop is Open*



The Museum Gift Shop has a variety of garden items and tea lights to hang in your garden to give it a romantic light. Or aprons for the perfect hostess gift.

**SCCHS members receive a 10% discount**

## **Our Old Octagon House Gets a New Door**

Beautiful old houses like the Octagon House Museum often have one thing in common; with 19th century construction, they tend to be drafty and not very energy efficient. With energy cost on the rise the Octagon House underwent an energy audit last September and many suggested weatherization improvements were implemented. Bob Hawksford led the house maintenance committee with weather stripping, caulking, and insulation of the water pipes, the sill plate, and the crawlspace under the caretaker's apartment.

The energy audit also revealed that the back door was a problem area and a new storm door was needed. The search for a new storm door lead Hawksford to Team Depot, the Home Depot's associate-led volunteer program which brings together volunteerism, do-it-yourself expertise, product donations and monetary grants as a way to support the communities where their associates live and work.

On March 15th Home Depot volunteers Etta Twernbold and Neil Schaitel delivered a new storm door to the Octagon House. The door was donated by Home Depot and installed by Etta and Neil. Etta noted that she and Neil have worked together on many Team Depot projects. The next project for the Hudson store will be painting for a local family in need of assistance. Hudson's Team Depot has several projects in the near future with others in line for the later half of the year.

The St. Croix County Historical Society extends a warm thank you to Home Depot and to Neil and Etta



*Team Depot volunteers Neil Schaitel and Etta Twernbold install a new storm door at the Octagon House Museum.*

for the donation and installation of our new storm door. Not only will the new door help keep our old house warm; it also warms our hearts to know that we live in a community where businesses and volunteers give so generously to their neighbors.

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## **Civil War Encampment at the Octagon House**

A second Civil War encampment is currently being planned for this summer on the lawn of the Octagon House Museum. Civil War re-enactor Ben Walbrun will return with the First Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry, Company F to take us back to the Civil War era for an afternoon.

The re-enactors will present an encampment on the Octagon House lawn from 2:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. Guests

can learn about the everyday life of a soldier, what they ate, what they did for entertainment, and more. The solder re-enactors will also demonstrate infantry drills.

The encampment is free and open to the public. The Octagon House will be open for walk-in tours at its regular price. Check the website at [www.pressenter.com/~octagon](http://www.pressenter.com/~octagon) for more details at a later date.

## SCCHS Joins in the Yellowstone Trail Heritage Days

The Yellowstone Trail was the first transcontinental automobile route through the northern United States from New York to the state of Washington. The Trail came to Hudson in 1915, across the old Toll Bridge, and continued through Wisconsin to Kenosha and into Illinois.

There is a grassroots effort to remember the Trail and place new signs to mark it. To welcome the Trail back to Hudson a community event called “Yellowstone Trail Heritage Days” was held on May 14th and 15th.

St. Croix County Historical Society joined the celebration by conducting free Hudson History Walking Tours on Saturday. The tours took guests along the original Trail from the Hudson Arch, through downtown, up Third Street and ended at the Octagon House Museum.

Close to 30 people attended the tour and explored Hudson’s history. Tour guides included: Peter Close at Lakefront Park who shared information on Hudson’s early history and the Toll Bridge; Jacki Bradham shared stories about the downtown business district; Paul Bourget took guests along the first half of Third Street sharing his experiences growing up there; and Doug Peterson continued along Third Street with tales of the historic homes and wrapped up the tour at the Octagon House.



SCCHS guide Jacki Bradham (center) tells about the Great Hudson Fire of 1866 that burned down Hudson’s Second Street business district.



Antique automobiles lined the Dike Road for the Sunday Celebration.

## Thank You to Local Businesses for their Support



A student poses like his historic personality Ernest Gatchell

Local businesses showed their support of the Eighth Grade History Tour with several donations. The donations were used as prizes for students who correctly completed the “Where’s My Door” scavenger hunt.

Donations included:

- Bottled Water from County Market;
- Cookies from Best Maid Cookies;
- Gift Certificates from Family Fresh;
- Gift Certificates from Target;
- Movie Passes from Hudson Theater;
- Pizza Certificates from Pizza Hut;
- Waffle Cones Certificates from Culver’s;
- Meal Certificates from Burger King;
- Meal Certificates from Arby’s; and
- Bowling Passes from Hudson Bowling Center

***Thank you for your support!***

## Jessica Johnston Awarded Willis Miller Scholarship



Scholarship recipient Jessica Johnston

In the fall of 2009 the estate of local newspaperman and historian Willis Miller made a bequest of over 1 million dollars to the University of Wisconsin River Falls. Willis had a passion for education and the interest earned on his endowment will leave a legacy of annual scholarships for years to come.

As one of the co-founders of the St. Croix County Historical Society, Willis was on hand for the creation of the Octagon House Museum and he witnessed more than one generation of young volunteers serve as Junior Guides at the museum.

It seems only natural that one of this year's winners of the Willis H. Miller Memorial Scholarship is our very own Junior Guide Jessica Johnston. Although after several years of guiding at the museum (Jessica began volunteering May 2006) this pleasant, poised, young woman has moved beyond the "Junior" part of the Junior Guide title.

The Willis Miller Scholarship gives preference to applicants from the Hudson area and preference to students with strong academic achievement and extracurricular involvement. Applicants submit an essay on "How I have helped make the Hudson community a better place." The Historical Society can attest to Jessica's efforts to help make Hudson a better community as it has benefited directly from her volunteer hours spent at the Octagon House Museum.

Jessica will be attending University of Wisconsin River Falls as a freshman in the fall of 2010 and will be studying piano, voice, and organ, while pursuing a Music degree.

Congratulations, Jessica, on your scholarship award. We wish you well in your studies.

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## Women's Club Presentation

On March 16, 2010, the Hudson Women's Club enjoyed a presentation by the Octagon House Director, Heidi Rushmann, at the Phipps Center for the Arts in the River Room.

While Rushmann is an old hand at giving presentations to school children, she was a bit nervous speaking to an older crowd, until she realized they were just an "older" group of students, with a few more years and a lot more memories. The Women's Club group was as enthusiastic as their younger counterparts when it came to enjoying Director, Rushmann's "Show & Tell" teaching wagon artifacts. Highlighting the presentation was the distribution of an historic artifact at each table of the audience, who were asked to identify the item and describe its use. While Historical Society members were excluded from this exercise, as it was thought they might have some inside information, other members of the audience enthusiastically shared their memories and stories connected with the "antique" articles. Most of all the articles were identified by the group which consisted not only of Women's Club members but a good number of guests as well.

Rushmann went on to describe her involvement with Hudson Middle School "Wild West Days" at which she impersonates a teacher during pioneer days, imposing the rules and regulations common to that era. The upcoming Eighth Grade History Tour event was also explained. During this event students are given the name of a prominent Hudson personality of the past, as a temporary identity. The group then visits the homes and/or business establishments of these personalities, artifacts connected to the person, the cemetery burial site of their character, along with other historic sites of the community. Women's Club members had the opportunity to view the computer slides, shown to the students, giving pertinent information about the various Historic Hudson characters. The History Tour artifacts were also on display for the audience to view.

The well received presentation stirred lots of fond memories and participation from the audience. Favorable comments heard were: "This was one of the best presentations we've ever had." "It was wonderful!"

~ LaVonne McCumbie

## *Membership & Memorial Thank You*

The membership drive has gone very well this year. So far we have 154 new and renewing members. If you have not already done so, we are very eager to have you join us. Along with our successful membership we have been very fortunate to have received several Memorial donations.

Memorials received:

In memory of  
***Catherine Hawksford***  
*from Robert Hawksford*

In memory of  
***Albert & Rosella Obermueller***  
*from LaVonne McCombie*

In memory of  
***Del & Edith Sather***  
*from Ruth Sather Paulson*

In memory of  
***Curtis Solsvig***  
*from Beverly Solsvig*

*For these and for all donations we are very grateful.*

Also to all of you members who have added an extra donation to the annual membership, we extend a mighty big THANK YOU!

## **SCCHS Appreciates Recent Donations**

We really like donations, especially donations that are Hudson related, either connected to prominent Hudson citizens or associated with historical events from Hudson's past. So before you toss out Grandma's old treasured collection (or even unidentified photographs), please consider contacting the Historical Society to see if it is of local historic interest. For example we have recently acquired items connected to Charlie Ward and Willis Miller.

The Area Research Center (ARC) on the campus of UW-River Falls also recently donated a collection of items pertinent to Hudson and St. Croix County history. Among those items are: several scrapbooks of local news and events; buttons of Pepper Fest and St Croix County Centennial; special Hudson newspaper editions; diplomas and certificates; old bank records; Hudson Toll Bridge rates poster and a scrapbook documenting Hudson's Company C during the Spanish American War.

The timing on this donation proved to be fortuitous — several items were used for this year's décor theme. The Yellowstone Trail items used included: an original newspaper from the 1913 opening of the Toll Bridge; a Hudson parking pass that promoted Prospect and Birkmose Parks with a dining hall, and a public restroom in the Library; and a business card for Mrs. Helwigs Tea Room located on the Yellowstone Trail (now Vine Street Florist).

A big thank you to Tim Ericson and the Area Research Center for sending many Hudson artifacts to their new home at the Octagon House Museum.

SCCHS has a request: Please think of us before you throw Grandma's old treasures in the trash. Many years ago these items were important enough for someone to save, and now they may be important enough for the Historical Society to preserve for future generations.

**2010 St. Croix County Historical Society Members & Volunteers**

**Life Members**

Mr. & Mrs. Arnold Bertelsen  
Carolyn Craig  
John Hughes  
Norma Stone Lewis  
Mr. & Mrs. Fred Nagel  
Andrew Richardson  
Dora Rohl  
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Nancy Potratz\*  
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Donna Mae Seim  
Beverly Solsvig\*  
Nancy Stephens\*  
Lars & Dolores Taavola\*  
John & Shari Thomas  
Annabell Weggel  
Jenebelle Zappa\*

*\*indicates volunteer & member*

**2010 Volunteers and Guides**

Heidi Boiteau  
Joan, Ellie & Anna Davenport  
Peter Hartzel  
Carole Rieg  
Robyn Wefel

Ellen Burnley  
Mary Ellner  
Jessica & Natalie Johnston  
Janan Terperstra  
Lisa Yerry & Sons

Stephanie Cudd  
Connie Frantz  
Lisa LaBeau  
Tami Tuliaski  
Abby Zappa

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St. Croix County Historical Society  
The Octagon House  
1004 Third Street  
Hudson, WI 54016



The Historic Octagon House Museum  
Hudson, Wisconsin  
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email: [octagonhousemuseum@juno.com](mailto:octagonhousemuseum@juno.com)

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## *Spring & Summer Calendar*

2010 Theme: "Hudson in the Early Days"

June 5th • **Master Gardener's Plant Sale** • 9 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. - Octagon House lawn

June 8th • **SCCHS Member Social** • 5:30 p.m. at the Historic Nova Restaurant, Hudson

June 20th • **Father's Day Tour** • Children of all ages may bring their Father for a free tour (2 to 4:30 p.m.)

June 26th & 27th • **The Artful Garden Tour** • Saturday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. & Sunday, 1 to 4 p.m.

