

ANNUAL REPORT 2007

Washington County Historical Society

**Washington County
Historical Society
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Hay Lake Museum Manager,
Rachel Abbott

*For more information, check
our website at
www.wchsmn.org*

Contents

What Is the Washington County Historical Society?.....2
Introduction2
Strategic Direction.....2
Community Outreach3
Organizational Information4
History.....4
Board, Staff, Interns and Volunteers4
Staff and Board Development5
Museums6
Research Center.....7
History News7
Education Programs8
Book Publication.....8
Historical Reenactments.....8
Public Forums9
Exhibits and Displays.....9
School Programs and Curricula.....10
Scholarship Program10
Financial Operations.....11
Funding Constraints11
Capital Needs11
Operating Needs and Budget.....12
Endowment Fund12
Annual Report January 1 -December 31, 200613

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What Is the Washington County Historical Society?

Our Vision

The Washington County Historical Society is committed to becoming an integral part of our communities' education and culture, recognized for its leadership in helping people learn from the past, developing a sense of place for the community, and providing information and innovative programs on county history.

Our Mission

The Washington County Historical Society promotes and preserves Washington County's history for county residents and visitors in the belief that a historical perspective enhances our understanding of community and sense of place.

Our Motto— Gateway to Minnesota History

The Washington County Historical Society is uniquely situated to document early Minnesota history and tells the story of immigrants from the eastern US and Europe who settled the region in the mid-nineteenth century. The county's geographic connections to the Mississippi and St. Croix Rivers are key to the establishment of the state.

Introduction

The Washington County Historical Society serves as a historical umbrella for the county's history organizations, acts as a community resource for individuals and organizations seeking historical information. The Society:

- **operates two interpretive museums** showcasing county heritage,
- **provides educational programs** to schools and to the public,
- **assists researchers** to document their own, county and state history,
- **provides expertise** to help community groups conserve collections and produce exhibits,
- **investigates and publishes** county history,
- **collects and preserves** cultural artifacts and documents for future generations, and
- **showcases county history** through exhibits and displays throughout the county.

Strategic Direction

Long-term Goals and Objectives are:

- To enhance the Society's capacity to provide educational programs and exhibits that incorporate the cultural history of the entire county;
- To increase awareness among the public and the Society's key constituents of the high quality programs and services the Society provides; and
- To operate at the highest level of efficiency, professionalism and fiscal responsibility through developing and stabilizing funding sources.

General Goals Adopted for FY2007. In the next twelve months, the board of directors will focus on:

- Developing a plan for raising additional revenue through current and new sources;
- Increasing membership through and aggressive recruitment plan;
- Determining the scope and budget for a new Washington County History book;
- Completing documentation of our collections;
- Developing more effective partnerships with schools, local governments and community agencies;
- Determining and prioritizing the need for additional staff and a plan for funding same; and
- Establishing a taskforce to investigate and make recommendations

pertaining to short-term
and long-term space
needs.

Community Outreach

Consistent with its mission, the Washington County Historical Society attempts to increase community access to Society programs and collections through developing off-site programs and exhibits (in temporary and permanent locations), publishing information (electronic and print), and other outreach activities. In 2006 the staff, volunteers and board of directors of the Historical Society participated in the following activities, organizations and projects.

- *Member of the Civil War Soldiers & Sailors Monument Committee
- *Toured Dunn County [WI] Historical Society museum exhibits
- *Toured Sherburne County History Center
- *Hosted informal meeting with other county historical society executive Directors.
- *Served on Boom Site Community Focus Group at Stillwater Town Hall
- *Attended Washington County History Network Meetings in St. Paul Park, Lake Elmo, Afton & Denmark Township.
- *Participated at the Minnesota History Center exhibit event at the MN History Center.
- *Attended Metro Area History Groups meeting in Hugo.
- *Co-sponsored Conversations in the Valley with St. Croix Valley Community Foundation a program with MHS conservationist Bob Herskovitz
- *Attended and speaker at Scandia-Marine Lions Club meeting
- *Attended and speaker at Stillwater Lions Club meeting
- *Attended Minnesota Historical Society workshop in Becker, MN [Sherburne County].
- *Interviewed a number of times on radio station KLBB by Stan Turner.
- *Appeared twice on Valley Access Cable show, "Community Live."
- *Attended Fairview Cemetery Board of Trustee meetings.
- *Presented two photo restoration events and genealogy.
- *Held four community input sessions: Stillwater, Bayport, Hugo & Cottage Grove.
- *Met with the Stillwater Chamber Hospitality committee
- *Dedicated historic marker at Point Douglas Cemetery in Denmark Township
- *Held two WCHS Membership meetings with programs about Dan Patch and Minnesota Cabins.
- *WCHS member spoke to the Minnesota Scenic By-ways Conference held in Stillwater.
- *Attended and speaker at the Forest Lake Rotary Club



The WCHS Board of Directors: From the top down: Ryan Collins, Matt Thueson, David Williamson, Lawri Will, Monica Fogg, Hank Sampson, Nancy Goodman, Angie Noyes, Phil Eastwood.

Organizational Information

History

The Washington County Historical Society, founded in 1934, is a private, nonprofit educational institution with about 700 individual, family and business members. The Warden's House Museum in Stillwater was given to the Society in 1941 by the state and is one of the state's oldest buildings as well as its oldest continuously operating house museum. The Society leased the Hay Lake School for a museum in 1972 and purchased it from the school district in 1978. The school's neighbor, the Johannes Erickson Log House, was donated to the Society in the early 1980s, moved to the site and restored. All three buildings are on the National Register of Historic Places. The historic family-owned Boutwell Cemetery west of Stillwater was purchased in 1974.

In 1996 the Society reconstructed the Carriage House that originally stood behind the Warden's House. In 2000-2001 climate control was added and the textile collection and archives were moved into the new facility. In March 2002, the Society opened a new museum space in the Boutwell's Landing Development in Oak Park Heights.

Board of Directors

Staff

The Society has three paid positions: An Executive Director, Historic Sites Supervisor and Hay Lake School Manager

The Executive Director position was created at the beginning of 2003 so that more organization for the Society could be made. The Executive Director reports to the Board of Directors and oversees the daily operation of the Historical Society.

The Historic Sites Supervisor is hired by the Executive Director to oversee the management of both historic sites operated by the WCHS. This includes volunteers, interns, interpretation and displays.

The Hay Lake School site manager is hired by the Executive Director and Historic Sites Supervisor to oversee the daily operations of the Hay Lake School and Johannes Erickson museums, give tours, handle volunteers, makes up daily tally sheets, and

book outside groups to tour the museums, including school groups and senior groups from across Washington County and Minnesota.

Interns

The Society has built a partnership with the DeLonais Foundation to fund a summer internship program. For the fifth year, two students with quite different goals and backgrounds were hired to assist the Site Managers on a part-time basis over the summer. In addition to learning museum management and curatorial techniques, the interns this year was highly involved in making an accurate inventory of the collections and entering them in our database.

One internship was saved from the summer for the winter of 2007. This internship will help in the organization of WCHS collections, photographing the artifacts and cataloging them in the WCHS PastPerfect database.

Volunteers

Volunteers do most of the work of the Society. Volunteers serve as tour guides, teachers, cashiers, cleaners, research assistants, editors and re-enactors. They work maintaining the collections, repairing and maintaining the buildings, caring for garden and grounds, and helping with workshops.

Volunteers serve on committees, such as membership, publicity, fundraising, collections. They assist with research, write historical articles, give talks and demonstrations, index and edit manuscripts for publication, and enter collection records into the computer database. More than 1,500 volunteer hours went into Society activities and

museums last year.

Currently there are volunteers that care for the gardens near the Wardens House, index vital records in the WCHS collections and are on call for such events as book signings, open houses and mailings to the WCHS memberships.

Staff and Board Development

The Washington County Historical Society held two workshops in 2005 to develop strategic goals for 2005-2008.

The Washington County Historical Society also continues to keep updated on recent activities of preservation and historical organizations throughout the state by being members of the Minnesota Historical Society, Washington County History Network, The Minnesota Alliance of Local History Museums, and the American Association of State and Local History.



The WCHS Board of Directors holding a meeting at the Hay Lake School Museum site in Scandia during the month of July.

- _ providing community leadership to help others discover and preserve their heritage,
- _ increasing community access to history through partnerships and outreach, and
- _ involving youth in our programs to assure county heritage is not forgotten.



show two of the Big Laker's 4-H group volunteering
Warden's House Open House in April and at right
Scandia Elementary School class at the Hay Lake
seum in Scandia.

WCHS Museums

Warden's House Museum

The Warden's House, one of the state's oldest residences, was built in 1853 to house the wardens of the Minnesota Territorial Prison. It is the only government building remaining from Minnesota Territory. Today the house is dedicated to displaying pioneer and lumberjack life in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and houses an extensive prison collection.

The 2007 Season began with Kirsta Benson as the Historic Sites Supervisor, a newly created position that has the responsibility of keeping both WCHS historic sites open to the public. Through her, a site manager was hired and trained to keep the Hay Lake School complex open and available to the public.

The 2007 tour season was a busy one for the Washington County Historical Society. The Warden's House Museum in Stillwater and the Hay Lake School Museum in Scandia welcomed area schools and other tour groups. The months of May, June, September and October brought a flurry of students to WCHS museums. Over 700 students visited from Castle Elementary, Chisago Middle School, Lake Elmo and Lily Lake Elementary, New Life Academy, Northeast Minneapolis Middle School, Oak Park, Rutherford, Scandia, and Stonebridge Elementary. We also welcomed over 400 people that visited with tour groups, some from as far away as Sweden. In addition to scheduled group tours, our museums welcomed hundreds of curious visitors stopping by to learn more about Washington County's history.

In addition to the work of our interns, WCHS has been fortunate to have the help of several dedicated volunteers this season. Veteran volunteers Bob and Nancy Goodman, and Lynn Wilson once again helped out at the Warden's House Museum with daily tours and large tour groups. Christine Hoffman of Forest Lake, Brooke Ellman of Hudson, Alyson Murray of Lake Elmo, and Gibson Holm of Woodbury were new volunteers at the Warden's House this season. They all caught on quickly and gave



informative tours. A few other volunteers worked at the Warden's House this year. Jo Harrison of Stillwater, greeted school groups and helped usher students in and out of the museum on the busy tour days. Dale Carmichael of Stillwater, and the Big Lakers 4-H Club, kept the grounds of the Warden's House beautiful.

The Warden's House was the subject of a segment on Channel 4 news called "Finding Minnesota." WCCO reporter Bill Hudson came and toured the museum and was a feature in early May.

Hay Lake School Complex

This museum near Scandia is open only in warm weather as the buildings are unheated. On the site are the Hay Lake School and the Johannes Erickson Log House. The 1896 one-room brick school was originally Washington County Rural School District #2, and then became a part of the Forest Lake School District as rural schools were consolidated into larger districts. The Hay Lake School was slated for demolition when the Historical Society obtained a lease in 1974 and in 1978 purchased the building. The living museum provides a full day pioneer school experience in a one-room school-house for grade school children from all over. The two-story Johannes Erickson Log House, built in 1868, showcases pioneer Scandinavian life.

Again this year the Hay Lake School sponsored "Hay Lake Day" with many people attending the one-day outdoor event. This year many of the past students attended the event and helped put some of the school's history into perspective for the historical society.

The Scandia Elementary School held classes at the museum for five days in the spring, and schools from the Stillwater area also came through the museum. Two groups from Sweden visited the site over the summer, as well as many alumni and their families came through the museum and log house.

At left, WCHS Volunteers Lynn Wilson and Christine Hoffman

Research Center in Carriage House

Donation Highlights

Items from Sen. Karl G. Neumeier including his high school diploma; University of MN diploma, photos and documents.

Records of the Stillwater Women's Reading Club 1886-present

Photographs and folding chairs from Bone Lake School, District #38 - Washington County.

Documents from the Eberle or North School, District #13 – Washington County.

Many items concerning the schools of the Stillwater area including photographs, yearbooks and documents. Donated by School District #834.

Real photo postcard of Afton, Minnesota ca. 1918. Donated by Jean V. West of St. Paul, MN.

Documents from the Lowell Family of Stillwater. Letters and other items dating from the 1820s to the 1870s. Donated by Jeanne Tait of Stillwater, MN.

Abbott Family photographs of Newport, MN.

The Research Center is open Tuesday, Friday and Sunday noon-5, Wednesday 3-9 p.m. year-round.

**Research Center:
A Place to Find**

Family

Elementary and secondary school students and well as college students do research projects using primary sources use the WCHS Research Center extensively. Other researchers come to do genealogy, house history and to research local history topics. Students are not charged.

As you can see in the donations, there were many donations that helped supply the WCHS research center with more information in family history. Over 300 people either wrote in via regular mail or email or stopped into the center to do research of one kind or another. The most popular is genealogy, looking for one's ancestors. Although the WCHS center does not carry census records or microfilm of newspapers, there is a wide variety of information to search, and most come away with something they have never known before about their family.

Getting the Word Out: County History News

The quarterly newsletter, *Historical Whisperings*, is distributed to members, libraries, sponsoring businesses, key constituents and other historical societies and museums. Issues include information on membership, upcoming events and museum activities as well as events from other historical and heritage organizations throughout Washington County.

The Washington County Historical Society web site [www.wchsmn.org] has had more content added to help get the history of the county and its communities to the outside world. The community histories of all local municipalities in Washington County have been completed and have been some of the most view sections of the web page.



Local authors Nancy Goodman and Anita Buck [both seated] chat with a visitor during the WCHS local author meet and greet in December 2007

Education Programs Draw Children and Adults into Discovering History

Historical Reenactments

VINTAGE BASE BALL. The Society's vintage base ball team, the St. Croix's, wears 1860s uniforms and play by 1860s rules written by Henry Chadwick. They are unique in bringing a piece of the past to the present for people to view.

Again this year the St. Croix Base Ball Club was invited to provide an exhibition of vintage base ball at the Metrodome by the Minnesota Twins. With the Quicksteps, the St. Croix's performed before a crowd of over 30,000 on Mother's Day in May. Other events that featured the St. Croix Base Ball Club included:

Murray County 150th Celebration in Currie, MN; Greenwald, MN; Glencoe, MN; Arlington, MN; Spring Valley, MN; St. Peter, MN; Murphy's Landing in Shakopee, MN; on the grounds of Old Main at St. Olaf College in Northfield, MN; and in Bruno, MN.

In Washington County, the St. Croix Base Ball Club performs exhibitions at Lumberjack Days in Stillwater; at the Denmark Township Town Hall; and at Pettit Park against the Afton Red Stockings in St. Croix Beach.

The St. Croix's again were invited to a National Exhibition of vintage Base Ball at the Ohio Historical Society in Columbus, Ohio over the Labor Day Weekend. The Club attended and played matches against clubs from Missouri, Michigan, Colorado and Ohio. Every member of the St. Croix Base Ball Club is a member of the Washington County Historical Society and donates their time, and money, to the benefit of the WCHS.



At left, Don "Pieso" Hammer is batting at the Metrodome exhibition and above the St. Croix bench at Denmark Township in September 2007

What Is the WCHS Education Program?

The Society's Education Program includes book publication, historical reenactments, public forums, school programs and curricula, traveling and special exhibits and a history website.

WCHS book publication helps all county history groups.

The WCHS Publications committee worked hard in the first part of the year to republish and expand the book, *Scandia: Then and Now*, originally published by the WCHS in 1974 and several reprints since that time.

This version was updated with help from Judy Rydeen and Dick Johnson, along with the use of personal photographs from Mark McGinley and Lorna Burke. The book was reprinted by the University of Minnesota Printing Services.

The main addition to the *Scandia* book was a full index which makes the book easily referenced and more useful for the person looking for genealogical information.

Also reprinted was the book, *Pioneers of the Big Lake Community*, originally published by WCHS in 2001.



Public Forums

MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS.

The Society holds two meetings for the membership each year, which are open to the public as well.

In March the WCHS held its annual membership dinner meeting at Boutwell's Landing in Oak Park Heights with Tim Brady talking about his recent book about the great horse Dan Patch and its own, the remarkable Mr. Savage. The fall dinner meeting, also held at Boutwell's Landing, had photographer Doug Ohman present a program about Cabins of Minnesota.

Public Input Sessions.

The WCHS also held four public input sessions concerning the possibility of WCHS constructing a new facility. These four sessions were held in Stillwater, Bayport, Cottage Grove and Hugo.



Members of the public attending one of the four public input sessions, the above session was held in the Hugo City Hall.

Exhibits and Displays

The Washington County Historical Society has displays at their respective museums in Stillwater and Scandia as well as the museum space at Boutwell's Landing Senior complex in Oak Park Heights. The WCHS also has a display case at the Cottage Grove City Hall.

The Society continues to rotate displays around the county in which will allow WCHS to do so. Among some of the titles of the exhibits are Washington County by Trolley; Vintage Toys, Ice Skating in Washington County, Strike up the Band, Lumberjack Days throughout the years, and many more.

WCHS Artifacts On Long-Term Loan

Several unusual WCHS artifacts are on display off-site, including: an inlaid table made by a prisoner (at the Historic Courthouse), a bateau (at the Zephyr depot), and a delivery wagon and sleigh (at Aamodt's Orchard).

Many lumbering and general historic artifacts are at Boutwell's Landing senior complex in Oak Park Heights



Boutwell's Landing

The Society has developed a new exhibit space in the Boutwell's Landing senior living community development in Oak Park Heights. This space has rotating exhibits that describe

the history of Washington County.

Scholarship Program

Again this year the Washington County Historical Society was able to present a \$2,000 scholarship to graduating seniors from county high schools that are going into a history related field. The DeLonais Foundation funds this scholarship.

The Washington County Historical Society has awarded the 2007 WCHS Scholarships to four Washington County students.

Dan Abrahamson, of Oakdale, is attending the University of Minnesota and majoring in Architecture. He is a volunteer at Preservation Alliance of Minnesota and is working on their façade easement program, which is an effective tool in historic preservation.

Nickolas Cusick is a senior at Park High School in Cottage Grove. After graduation he will be attending Winona State University and will be majoring in Art and History. His future plans involve combining his passion for writing, filmmaking and history.

Luke Hvass, of Woodbury, will be graduating from St. Thomas Academy in June and plans on attending Creighton University in Omaha, Nebraska. He plans on majoring in history, journalism and chemistry.

Laura Nelson, of Bayport, attends the College of St. Catherine in St. Paul and is majoring in history and mathematics. Her areas of study have been American and Western European History and she hopes to pursue a career in government or education.

The Washington County Historical Society presents scholarships to graduating seniors or Washington County students attending higher education in history or related fields. The scholarships are funded by a grant from the DeLonais Foundation.



WCHS Scholarship winner Luke Hvass of Woodbury stands next to WCHS Executive Director Brent Peterson in the Warden's Home.

Education Projects Now Under Way

School Curricula

Hometown History is a joint project of WCHS and Arcola Mills in cooperation with local historians and teachers from District 834. The curriculum features the greater Stillwater area history and historic sites.

Teachers have been asking for these curriculum materials for teaching local history.

The first units, Lumber in the St. Croix Valley and Stillwater Interactive Biography Profiles have been well received and are being used by several Afton and Stillwater fourth grade teachers to help teach local history.

Traveling trunks with artifacts and activities have been developed for more "hands-on" history. The material is also available on the website at www.wchsmn.org/education.

Steamboats and their influence on settlement is a possible new curriculum the committee is considering. Plans are also being made to expand the curriculum to be useful to other school districts.

A volunteer, Mary Smith, a former teacher surveyed District 834 teachers to determine their needs and wants under the new Minnesota social studies guidelines.

Financial Operations

Monuments and Markers Program

The Washington County Historical Society, along with the Denmark Township Historical Society, dedicated historical plaque at the Point Douglas Cemetery, directly across the street from Carpenter's Nature Center, on Sunday September 30th at 2pm.

Starting back in 1981, the Washington County Historical Society has marked 13 cemeteries with historical plaques; Point Douglas will be the 14th

Other pioneer names in the cemetery are George W. Campbell (1887) and his wife Harriette (1886) and two daughters. Campbell came to the area in 1849, got into lumbering and retail trade, served as Denmark Township's first town clerk in 1858 and on the first school board in 1850. He also represented the district in the last territorial legislature and the first state legislature. James Shearer (1896) was chairman of the town of Point Douglas in 1858 and town treasurer and county commissioner in 1880, as well as serving as postmaster and farming.



Funding Still a Problem

This is the second year that the Washington County Historical Society received no funding or assistance from the county. To meet this challenge, we are endeavoring to expand our membership base, and are actively looking at creative ways to enhance revenues, such as a yearly fundraising event that will become associated with the Society. One of our best strategies for enhancing revenue has been through publication of historical books and other sales ventures.

The WCHS board is working to work to establish a stable funding base that will enable us to preserve our collections and historic buildings, hire professional administrative help, and develop and strengthen our education programs. The board is also still focused on maintaining our museums and collections in top condition through preventive maintenance and capital investment in buildings and equipment.

Capital Needs

In late 2004 the WCHS staff produced a Capital Needs Report for consideration by the board of directors.

Warden's House needs:

- Replace screen doors on both entrances and the cellar doors.
- Implement landscaping plan produced by our University of Minnesota intern, is estimated at \$100,000, about 4/5 of which is hardscape and drainage correction.
- Upgrade computer system to include wireless internet. A computer and printer for the Historic Sites Manager, integrated to the internet and capable of running PastPerfect has been purchased. Cost: \$1,426.59.

Other needs: replace or repair 15 windows, estimated cost \$15,000; and install HVAC system to better control the humidity the artifacts are exposed to. Estimate for new furnaces and humidity control, \$20,000.

Hay Lake Museum needs:

- Paint school trim and bell tower.
- Repair school interior, estimate \$2,600.
- Repair or replace 12 windows in school, estimate \$12,000.
- Install moisture barrier in log house, estimate with donated labor, \$500.

Other needs: redo plumbing in school; replace logs on west side of log house; no estimates yet. There are also some pests in the log house that need to be removed including boring insects and bats.

Lawrence Henry, at left, and Rod Olson stand next to the plaque placed at the Point Douglas Cemetery by WCHS. Both men have ancestors

Operating Needs

The Historical Society still needs on-going dollars for general operating support. Our desired annual operating budget requirement of \$137,000 is in line with other comparable organizations.

Having temporary part-time staff for the summer months has placed a great burden on our Executive Director, who is responsible for hiring and training as well as program management and budgeting. While we are hoping to be able to hire staff who can work with us year-round and from year to year, it is not feasible to do so at present. Playing catch-up by hiring temporary office help for one year may be one answer.

The cost of maintaining the museums has risen sharply and will continue to rise. Fuel costs are increasing exponentially, but turning off the heat has the potential to damage irreplaceable artifacts as well as the building itself. Reanalyzing our insurance coverage resulted in a substantial increase. Building and utility costs, unavoidable administrative expenses, and collections maintenance now consume over \$21,000 yearly.

Operating Budget

Endowment Fund

The Endowment has grown considerably over the past few years due to more active investments, sale of land to the city of Stillwater, and several members of the community who remembered WHCS in their wills.

Memorials and other gifts donated to the Washington County Historical Society are placed directly into the Endowment Fund. In 2005 \$1,100 was given by individuals. The principal is not used. Only the interest is available to the Board of Directors. The fund is now valued at \$296,031.43 with about \$46,000 of that as interest available to the WCHS board.

The Society also has over \$25,000 invested in the St. Croix Valley Community Fund, of which \$1,100 is available.

Current policy is to invest in bank certificates of deposit, preferably of banks located in Washington County, and in short-term U. S. government securities.

A separate committee of five manages the endowment and is charged with investing the funds as safely as possible. The board of directors appoints members of the committee and they serve three-year terms. One member of the WCHS board of Directors also sits on the Endowment Fund Committee.

The WCHS Board of Directors is continuing to solicit donations to the Endowment Fund in order to produce interest income that can be used for operations, programs or emergencies.