

ANNUAL REPORT

Washington County Historical Society
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2010

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Staff

Executive Director

Brent T. Peterson

Historic Sites Supervisor:

Kirsta Benson

Hay Lake Museum Manager,

Anna Kirchner

Washington County Historical Society Board of Directors

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Dave Lindsey, Cottage Grove

Vice President,

David Williamson, Forest Lake

Scott Foss, Mahtomedi

Treasurer,

Chuck Irrgang, Stillwater

Recording Secretary,

Joe Otte, St. Paul

Corresponding Secretary

Duane Thein, White Bear Lake

Members

Stev Stegner, Forest Lake

Mark Balay, Stillwater

Scott Schell, Stillwater

Nancy Goodman, Stillwater

What Is the Washington County Historical Society?

Introduction

The Washington County Historical Society serves as a historical umbrella for the county's history organizations and 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 FY2010. 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;
- Continue 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.

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.

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 2008 the staff, volunteers and board of directors of the Historical Society participated in the following activities, organizations and projects.

- *Partnered with Arcola Mills Foundation on an evening of River History.
- *Partnered with Saint Paul Saints Club for a fundraising event at Midway Stadium in St. Paul to raise funds for the second harvest food shelf – playing a winter vintage baseball match against the Saints drew over 2,000 spectators.
- *Created a half hour program about Stillwater and the St. Croix River using Legacy funds and the John Runk 8 mm films donated to WCHS in 2008.
- *Staff & various board members attended Washington County History Network meetings which met at various sites around Washington County.
- *Executive Director attended start up meetings for the pursuit of creating a Federal National Heritage Area which would include all of Washington County, Minnesota.
- *Staff met with representatives of the Washington County Agricultural Society and Washington County 4-H to collaborate to help raise funds and visibility of all three organizations.
- *Executive Director appeared on local cable and radio programs throughout the year including on Almanac on Channel 2, news programs on Channels 9 & 11, and on the Stan Turner radio program on KLBB 1220AM.
- *WCHS held two membership meetings at Boutwell’s Landing senior complex in Oak Park Heights with speakers, photographer Doug Ohman and St. Paul Saints owner Mike Veeck.
- *Created and published a book about Stillwater Lumberjack Days memories by Diane Thompson.
- *Executive Director is a board member of the Minnesota Alliance of Local History Museums and attended their board meetings and conferences throughout the state.
- *The Washington County Historical Society summer program, “St. Croix Base Ball Club,” which plays by the rules of 1860, received a statewide Minnesota History Award for public programming.
- *WCHS held the first annual Tom Vardon Open at the White Bear Yacht Club in September.
- *WCHS partnered with the Lions Club in the Hay Lake Beer Tasting.
- *Executive Director spoke to the St. Croix Valley Daughters of the American Revolution; Stillwater Lions Club, Stillwater B & B Association; Minnesota State Prison Volunteer organization; Friends of Scandia Parks.

At right are WCHS Board Chair Dave Lindsey, left, and WCHS Executive Director Brent Peterson accepting the Minnesota History Award at the fall conference of the Minnesota Alliance of Local History Museums held at the Winona County Historical Society in September, 2010.



Organizational Information

History

The Washington County Historical Society, founded in 1934, is a private, nonprofit educational institution with about 775 individual, family and business members. 2009 marked the 75th anniversary of the Washington County Historical Society and that theme was carried out throughout the season.

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 2002 the WCHS opened a museum in Boutwell's Landing in Oak Park Heights. Changing displays and exhibits were there until September 2008 when Boutwell's took over the museum site for construction.

2009 marked the 75th anniversary of the founding of the Washington County Historical Society. The organization used this anniversary to spark interest in local history across Washington County using outlets in schools, libraries and other public venues.

Board of Directors & Staff

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

The Executive Director position was created at the beginning of 2002 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.

In 2010 three new board members were elected - Scott Schell of Stillwater; Mark Balay of Stillwater and Joe Otte of St. Paul.



Interns

The Society has built a partnership with the DeLonais Foundation to fund a summer internship program. For the eighth year, three 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 were highly involved in projects that leaned toward their development in museum management and to further the mission of the Washington County Historical Society.

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.

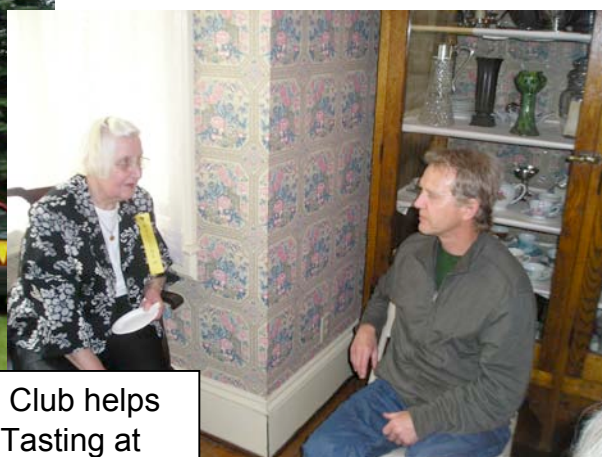
Volunteers serve on committees, such as membership, publicity, fundraising, collections. They assist with research, write historical articles, give talks and demonstrations, index, write and edit manuscripts for publication, and enter collection records into the computer database. More than 3,500 volunteer 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 a strategic planning session in November 2009 at the Afton House to coordinate the future of the Historical Society and develop goals for the future.

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.



Scandia-Marine Lions Club helps at the Hay Lake Beer Tasting at Left; A couple chat at the Warden's House Museum Open House.

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.

In 2008 the Warden's House Museum participated in the Chocolate March and the Stillwater Historic Homes Tour in September. In April the Stillwater BPW held an open house at the museum in. The museum also hosted several community organizations for meetings including the Big Lakers 4-H club.

Over the past several years the Warden's House has seen attendance rise by a margin of 5-10% and revenues have also increased by the same margin during that time period. The increase in attendance has made it very important that the Warden's House have a strong volunteer base, which it has.

Other events held at the Warden's House include book signings by author Denis P. Gardner on his book, *Wood, Concrete, Stone, Steel: Minnesota's Historic Bridges* as well as a local author book signing event that included nine local authors and was also the kick-off for the book, *Garage Sounds: Bringing Down the House*, by local author Scott Schell.

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 schoolhouse 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 second annual beer tasting event drew more than double the number of attendees as the year before. This year the topic was home brewing.

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 the Hay Lake School complex in 2009 the School bell tower was repaired and painted. The plumbing in the school also had to be repaired. The Erickson log house and corresponding out house had a new roofs put on them. The Scandia-Marine Lions Club donated funds to partially cover the repairs.

Boutwell's Landing

The Society developed a new exhibit space in the Boutwell's Landing senior living community development in Oak Park Heights in 2002. This space has been a showcase for rotating exhibits that describe the history of Washington County.

In September of 2008, the Boutwell's Landing site was closed as the facility needed space for their own expansion. The WCHS still has artifacts on display in their café and in one of the display rooms in the Town Hall area. Other areas will be developed for exhibition space in the coming years.

Washington County Historical Society in motion!!



WCHS in ACTION!
Top, at county fair, students learning at Warden's House Museum, beer tasting at Hay Lake School, and a volunteer welcoming visitors to the museums.

Research Center in Carriage House

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.

In 2010 there were many donations, listed below, that helped supply the WCHS research center with more information in family history. Over 500 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 viewed sections of the web page.

The WCHS also produces an e-newsletter called the "Historical Messenger," that is sent out to nearly 500 people free of charge. The newsletter contains upcoming events, a weekly historical photo as well as an article relating to the history of Washington County.

WCHS Donation Highlights:

Part of the mission of the Washington County Historical Society is to collect and preserve the history of Washington County, Minnesota. Through that we rely on donations of artifacts and information to help keep the heritage of the county from being lost.



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 plays by 1860s rules written by Henry Chadwick. They are unique in bringing a piece of the past to the present for people to view.

The St. Croix's played 14 matches around Washington County, the states of Minnesota and Wisconsin. The Club played in Afton, Denmark Township, and Stillwater. The Club also played in the second annual Crispin Iceball event sponsored by the St. Paul Saints Baseball club at Midway Stadium in St. Paul. That event raised more than \$30,000 for the Second Harvest Heartland food shelves of the Twin Cities.

The club also played in events sponsored by the Olmsted County Historical Society in Rochester, the Barron County [WI] Historical Society in Barron, at the Sherburne County Historical Society in Becker, MN, and in Osceola, Wisconsin in a real cow pasture.

During Lumberjack Days in Stillwater there were more than 900 people that turned out to watch an afternoon of vintage base ball with four clubs representing different area's of the state of Minnesota.



The Saint Croix Base Ball Club, an educational program of the WCHS, plays by the rules of 1860 and brings its message of history throughout the county and the state of Minnesota. Top photo shows the club at Osceola, Wisconsin and the others at Denmark Township.

The Vintage Base Ball Club won a Minnesota History award for public programming in 2010.

Public Forums

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 having Photographer Doug Ohman come to speak on his latest publication about Minnesota State Parks.

In September, the membership meeting was held at Boutwell's Landing in Oak Park Heights, Minnesota. Speaker for the evening was St. Paul Saints owner Mike Veeck. Veeck related stories of his father and his early attempts of marketing – what worked and what didn't work.



Exhibits and Displays

The Washington County Historical Society has displays at its 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 and had been given a set of four connecting display cases in the new Norris Square development which is also located in Cottage Grove.

Special Events

The Washington County Historical Society attends many community special events. The WCHS has been a regular at the Washington County Fair for more than a decade, providing a glimpse into our counties heritage while also providing the opportunity for the general public to look at and purchase community history books from across the county.

The WCHS also attended the events in Stillwater, the Washington County Historic Courthouse, Denmark Township, Afton, and other areas of the county. With more volunteers and staff, WCHS should be able to be a part of more community festivities in the future. At right is the WCHS float in the 2010 Lumberjack Days Parade.



Scholarship Program

Again this year the Washington County Historical Society was able to present \$2,000 worth of scholarships to graduating seniors from Washington County high schools who have shown interest in going into a history related field. The DeLonais Foundation funds the WCHS scholarship.

Linsay Nelson, of Lakeland attends the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire where she is majoring in public history and anthropology. Her areas of study are European and American history. Lindsay hopes to pursue a career as a museum curator or book editor.

Kathleen Burns graduated from Woodbury High School and plans to pursue a degree in public and American History at the College of St. Benedict in the fall. She hopes to someday work in a museum or historical site.

WCHS Artifacts on Long-Term Loan

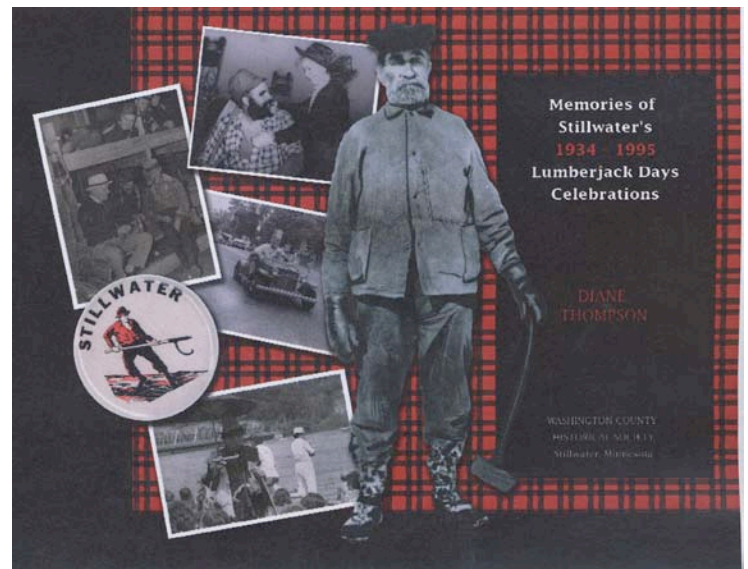
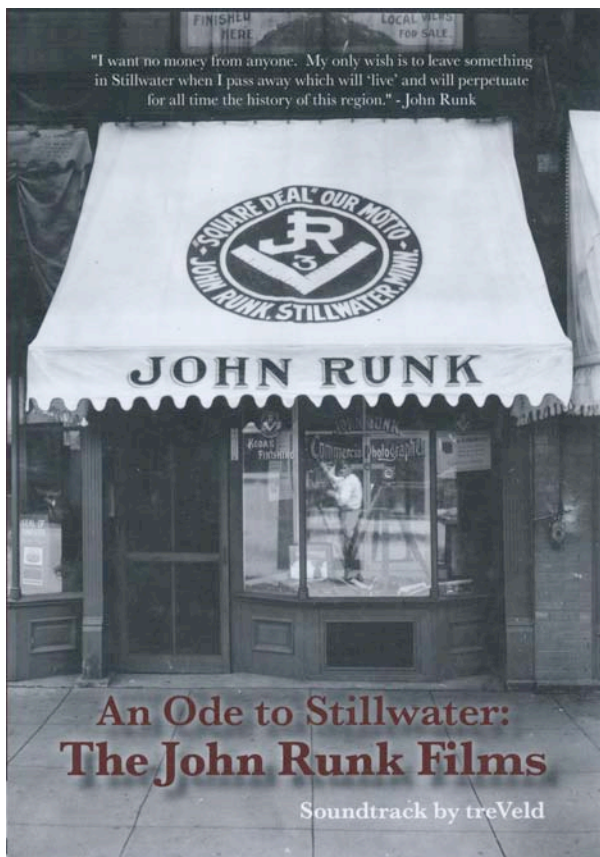
Several unusual WCHS artifacts are on display off-site, including: an inlaid table made by a prisoner (at the Historic Courthouse), a bateau (at the Minnesota Zephyr depot), and a delivery wagon and sleigh (at Aamodt's Orchard). Many lumbering and general historic artifacts are at Boutwell's Landing senior complex in Oak Park Heights.

At right is the inlaid conference table on display at the Washington County Historic Courthouse.



Publications

The Washington County Historical Society has had a long history of producing fine historical publications. In 2010 WCHS published the book titled, *Memories of Stillwater's Lumberjack Days Celebrations 1934-1995*, by Diane Thompson and released the DVD "An Ode to Stillwater: The John Runk Films."



Memories of Stillwater's Lumberjack Days Celebrations took nearly the author's lifetime to write. It was Mrs. Thompson and her husband, Robert, that brought back the annual celebration to Stillwater in 1968. In the book, she details how the celebration was reborn and who were the main movers and shakers to get the event going. The book was released in December, 2010 – just a few months before the author died of cancer.

An Ode to Stillwater: The John Runk Films was the culmination of the donation of over 40 reels of 8mm film of Stillwater photographer John Runk to the Washington County Historical Society. After gathering enough donations for the films to be transferred to digital tape and CD, the WCHS received a Legacy Grant to put the film together forming a documentary of the St. Croix Valley from the late 1940s to the early 1950s. The film also has a generous amount of extra's

that show the Minnesota State Fair, the Minnesota Prison, the last day of the trolley in Minneapolis, and highlights of a 1948 Stillwater Logger's baseball game against St. Paul Park.

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.

Internship Program

For the past seven years the Washington County Historical Society has been able to hire three college interns to work at the Society for the summer months from a grant from the DeLonais Foundation.

Bryan Karban: attends the University of Minnesota where he is majoring in History and Political Science. His interest in history extends beyond the dates and events and encompasses what history means to us contemporarily and what it meant in the past. Karban will be working at the Hay Lake Museum Complex in Scandia and created a display on a day in the life of a student at Hay Lake School.

Sarah Marrs: Attends St. Olaf College in Northfield, Minnesota where she is majoring in American Studies and Mathematics. She has worked as an intern with the Northfield Historical Society and as a Gallery Supervisor at the Science Museum of Minnesota. Marrs has been on the Dean’s List and was awarded several scholarships during her academic career. She worked at the Warden’s House Museum in Stillwater and created a coloring book intended for use by elementary school students around Washington County.

Whitney Schecher: a recent graduate from the University of Wisconsin-Madison with a Bachelor’s Degree in History. She has worked as a volunteer for the Wisconsin State Historical Society and hopes to pursue a career in the museum field. Schecher worked at the Warden’s House Museum researching and creating an exhibit on fashion through the ages.



WCHS Summer Interns, Left to Right: Whitney Schecher, Sarah Marrs, and Bryan Karban.

Funding Still a Problem

This is the third 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:

- 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.

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:

- 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.

Endowment Fund

Memorials and other gifts donated to the Washington County Historical Society are placed directly into the Endowment Fund. The principal is not used. Only the interest is available to the Board of Directors. The fund is now valued at \$345,489 with about \$85,298 of that as interest available to the WCHS board. In 2009 \$1,470 was given by individuals, most as memorials for deceased WCHS members.

The Society also has \$22,000 invested in the St. Croix Valley Community Fund, of which about \$1,200 is available yearly.

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. All funds are now in certificates of deposit and insured money market accounts. The average interest rate is four percent.

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.

Operating Needs

The Historical Society still needs on-going dollars for general operating support. Our desired annual operating budget requirement of \$148,000 is lower than 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 \$23,000 yearly.