



NORTH WOOD COUNTY  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

# NEWS

Marshfield, Wisconsin

Fall 2025

## From the President

### Fall Greetings

As always, the house and property are alive with the hustle and bustle of activities. In late July, we again had our Horse-Power event during the annual Hub City Days. I would like to thank John Berg and Evan Ruecsh for providing blacksmithing demonstrations. Additionally, I would like to thank Hiller's Hardware for once again providing the tools for the fundraising efforts that were a part of the day's activities. It has been fun to host the Horse-Power event, but we are now at a place where getting those antique wagons to the House is getting too difficult to continue. We are looking at other options for Hub City Days starting next year. Stay tuned as I am sure it will be exciting.

In early August, we used the front yard for the type of event for which front yards were designed; we hosted a very special birthday party for a very special person—Monie Upham, the granddaughter of William H. Upham, who celebrated her birthday in style. Though we battled rain up to the party's start time, we still had a ball. I would like to thank so many people who worked hard to ensure that this event was a memorable one. Laura Ptak and her gardening group made the grounds look unbelievable, as always. Laura also organized the caterer. Brad Allen secured the tent for the event. Kris and Mike Coleman and Amy Varsho created the unbelievable charcuterie boards. Paul Rogers provided the mimosas. Kim Krueger, House Manager, helped bring everything together, including getting the invitations out. Don Schnitzler kept the house open for tours while the rest of us had fun at the party. I am certain others helped as well, and I wish to thank them all.

Later in August, we again had several people working at the Central Wisconsin State Fair, where we again displayed historic information for fairgoers to view. I would like to thank the Central Wisconsin Fair for giving us the space to display the panels and meet with people about history. I would also like to thank Don Schnitzler for his efforts on getting the boards compiled and printed. For those of you who worked shifts at the fair, thank you also.

The last event we had in August was our annual summer picnic. This again was a wonderful event held in the front yard of the Upham Mansion. Though it was a fun event, it also saw the passage of the proposed bi-laws changes, as they had been presented at the winter annual meeting.

I would again like to remind everyone that memberships should be renewed in the next few months. If you have not renewed for next year, or if you have let your membership lapse, please consider renewing it in the next couple of months. Additionally, as you look at year-end donations to various organizations, please consider the North Wood County Historical Society.

I would be remiss to not say thank you to all of the volunteers in the organization. I have mentioned a few people above, but there are so many more who assist in so many other ways. Thank you to all of you. For those interested in getting more involved, please check out the article about the Board of Directors' Retreats on page 6 in this newsletter. That article provides ideas for additional opportunities to be involved in specific areas within the organization.

Happy fall and Thanksgiving everyone and I look forward to seeing many of you at our annual meeting on November 24.



Tom Witzel



Upham House

### NWCHS Board of Directors

**President** - Tom Witzel  
**Vice President** - Don Schnitzler  
**Secretary** - Mike Meyers  
**Treasurer** - Melissa Sinha  
**Past President** - Brad Allen

#### Directors

Kris Coleman  
JoAnn Gougeon  
Laura Ptak  
Amy Varsho  
Shelby Weister

**Coordinator** - Kim Krueger

#### Consulting Rosarian

Tom Ptak

#### Tour Hours

Wednesday - 1:30 - 4:00 p.m.  
Saturday - 1:30 - 4:00 p.m.  
Or by appointment

#### Office Hours

Monday - 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.  
Wednesday - 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.  
Thursday - 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

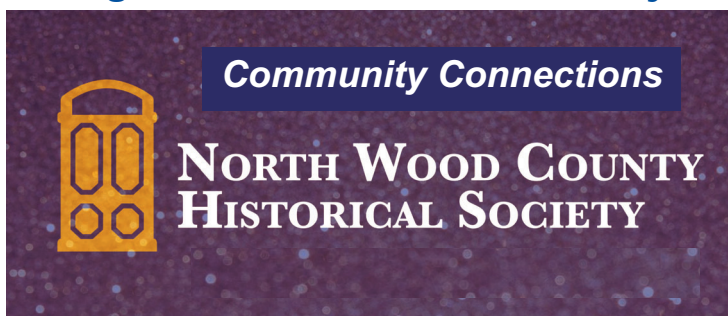
Phone - 715.387.3322

Email  
nwchs@uphammansion.com

www.uphammansion.com

Tom

## Look what's brewing at the North Wood County Historical Society



Dear Members & Friends of NWCHS,

We're excited to share a new way to keep you informed about upcoming events and activities at the Upham House Museum. Earlier this year, we launched a monthly email newsletter called Community Connections, designed to provide timely updates and event details directly to your inbox. If you haven't seen it yet, please check your spam or promotions folder—it may have landed there since we're using a new platform. If you prefer not to receive future updates, you'll find an unsubscribe option at the bottom of each email. We look forward to sharing more of our news, programs, and community happenings with you each month. To subscribe, simply click the following link: [io/7yndF4.r](https://io/7yndF4.r)

### October - December 2025 - Save the Date

#### ***J-Rolls "Dine to Donate"- September 23 & 24 (Postponed until further notice)***

J-Rolls & NWCHS have teamed up for a "Dine to Donate" fundraiser. **Order by calling 715-650-7001 or via Facebook** for pick-up or delivery. J-Rolls will donate a portion of their proceeds to North Wood County Historical Society.

#### ***Annual Meeting / Elections and Potluck***

The NWCHS Annual Meeting and Potluck will be **Monday, November 24 at the Upham House**. This is open to all members, and friends of the NWCHS. A potluck meal will be followed by the meeting and elections of directors and officers. Please bring a dish to pass as well as a white elephant gift to exchange. Memberships must be up to date to vote. You can pay your membership dues that evening.



***Christmas Open House at the Upham House - Saturday, December 6 and Sunday, December 7 from 10am to 3pm both days.*** Join the NWCHS this Christmas holiday as we feature Upham Mansion's Christmas Exhibit. Step into two very different Decembers as the North Wood County Historical Society presents its 2025 holiday theme "Christmas 1890 vs. 1990--A Century of Celebration.". This year's exhibit will transform the rooms of the Upham House into a time-traveling celebration contrasting the elegance of a Victorian Christmas with the colorful charm of the late 20th century. Visitors will experience the garlands, and modest gifts nestled beneath a table top tree. Then passing through the archway, the 1990s come alive with popular toys - Beanie Babies, Tamagotchis, Furby, Pokémon cards, Pogs, Polly Pocket, Power Rangers, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, and Nintendo Game Boys—all iconic treasures from 1990 to 1999. To bring the 1990s side of the exhibit to life, we invite the community to loan items from their personal collections. We're seeking toys, decorations, and memorabilia from the year, especially beloved icons like Inspector Gadget, Polly Pocket, Games Boys, and holiday-themed VHS tapes. Items will be safely displayed and returned after the exhibit closes. If you have something to share, please contact the Historical Society at 715-387-3322 or by email [NWCHS@uphammansion.com](mailto:NWCHS@uphammansion.com) by November 15. Hope to see you there!

#### ***Seasonal Craft Classes coming this December***

Get ready to add a touch of vintage charm to your holiday season. The North Wood County Historical Society is hosting Seasonal Craft Classes every Sunday in December from 1-4 pm where participants will create beautiful, historically inspired decorations. ***This year's focus includes: Victorian-era paper ornaments and Decoupage holiday designs.*** Full class details will be featured in the November and December issues of Community Connections, so keep an eye out! A small materials fee will be collected from all participants. Whether you're a seasoned crafter or just looking for a cozy afternoon activity, these classes promise festive fun and timeless keepsakes.



## NWCHS Community summer events

### Hub City Days - July 27-



July 26 the NWCHS held its 6th annual Horse Power Carriage exhibit and brat fry. Featured items included vintage carriages, sleighs, and wagons; John Berg and Evan Ruesch held blacksmithing demonstrations on the front lawn, historic photo boards displayed area businesses and events. People also enjoyed touring the Upham House Museum and experienced the "Timeless Treasures: A Journey Through American Clocks," exhibit which presented an opportunity for guests to explore the historical significance of clocks and watches and the time they marked. The Society also held a silent auction on the corner of 3rd and Central which featured sponsored items from Hiller's Hardware, Advanced Auto, Art's Body Shop, and All The Above Tattoo Studio.

### Potluck Annual Picnic - 2025



On Monday, August 25 the NWCHS held its annual Members and Volunteers' Potluck picnic. Despite the cooler weather, it was a beautiful evening and more than 20 people came out to enjoy a variety of food and enjoy each other's company. The annual potluck picnic is held each summer to thank NWCHS members and volunteers for investing their time, talents, and support to the Society's mission to preserve area history. A huge thank you to everyone who attended. During the potluck President, Tom Witzel held a brief member's meeting which contained two items of business. The first was to review proposed Bi-Law changes which had been postponed from the November 2024 Annual Meeting and needed approval. Following the motion to approve and passing unanimously the proposed By-Law changes, Tom shared about Board of Director's retreats. (Please see page six for more details on the retreats.)

### NWCHS was at the Central Wisconsin State Fair



The North Wood County Historical Society, in partnership with the City of Marshfield Historic Preservation Commission and the Marshfield Historic Preservation Association, proudly hosted a well-received exhibit at this year's Central Wisconsin State Fair. More than 900 fairgoers explored Marshfield's cultural and commercial heritage through a curated display of historical photographs, highlighting iconic sights and sounds, local businesses—grocery stores, jewelry shops, and more. Visitors lingered over the images, studying details, reminiscing, and sharing stories sparked by familiar scenes. Many copied photos to share with loved ones, while others pulled up chairs to engage in spirited conversations about the people and places remembered—and even those not pictured. The exhibit quickly became a hub for storytelling, reflection, and community connection. The Society was deeply gratified by the enthusiastic response from attendees of all ages. Whether through quiet appreciation or animated dialogue, the experience reaffirmed the importance of preserving and sharing Marshfield's rich local history.



## The Traveling Trunk is Back



North Wood County Historical Society is proud to announce that the Traveling Trunk Tour is up and running. On September 10 it visited the Upham Village. The trunks were filled with fall harvest items, as well as school and canning items. Music was played from various generations to keep the mood light. Before leaving the Upham Village invited The Traveling Trunk Tour to visit again in the winter. The Tour is designed to make connections with the elderly community by use of artifacts, stories, music and memories and is paid for by a generous grant from the Marshfield Area Com-

## Upham granddaughter celebrates 80th birthday



Saturday, August 2 the NWCHS saw a double celebration on the Upham front lawn. Over the years Monie Upham, granddaughter of Governor WH Upham, has been involved with various events held by the North Wood County Historical Society. She and her sister, Darby were in the parade which commemorated the 125 anniversary of the Marshfield Fire, in 2022 Monie was grand marshal in the Dairyfest parade. More recently she has attended the NWCHS' Pie & Ice Cream Social where she greeted people who toured the Upham House Museum. History came alive as she explained that the house was built for her grandfather. To thank the NWCHS and community for all they have done to take care of her grandparent's house, Monie hosted a party reminiscent of the garden parties her family might have hosted in the past. The NWCHS included celebrating her upcoming 80th birthday to thank her!

## Red Hat Society Luncheon



Some wonderful ladies from the Red Hat Society stopped by this summer at the Upham House for lunch on the front porch and to celebrate a special birthday—happy birthday to Laura Ptak, with best wishes for many more! After lunch, the group enjoyed a guided tour of the exhibit Timeless Treasure: A Journey Through American Clocks with curator Don Schnitzler. The exhibit was on display through the end of August and could be viewed during regular North Wood County Historical Society tour hours.



## Fire Destroys Upham Company Planing Mill and Lumber Yard

*Submitted by Donald Schnitzler.*

A devastating fire swept through Marshfield October 18, 1919, destroying the Upham Company's planing mill, several lumber sheds, and a large quantity of lumber. Likely what may have been the city's most destructive fire in decades - perhaps the worst since the great fire that nearly leveled the city in 1887.

The blaze broke out at the Upham Company furniture factory. At the time of reporting, the fire was still actively burning. The planing mill, several sheds, and a significant stock of lumber had already been consumed by the flames.

### **Likely caused by overheated bearing**

The fire appeared to have originated in the south-end cupola of the structure that housed the power transmission line running from the powerhouse to the planing mill, likely caused by an overheated bearing, or "hot box." Several railway section workers, who had been working on the track between the powerhouse and the mill, were reportedly the first to spot the fire. They noticed smoke rising from the cupola and quickly alerted those inside the powerhouse. The factory whistle was then sounded, issuing a general alarm.

When the fire department arrived on the scene, the transmission line structure was fully engulfed, and the roof of the mill had already caught fire. For reasons unclear, there was initially no available water, rendering the fire department temporarily helpless.

### **Fire spreads rapidly to consume the entire mill**

Within minutes, a strong southeast wind fanned the flames, allowing the fire to rapidly consume the entire mill and spread to nearby buildings and the adjacent lumber yard near the Soo Line tracks. With no chance of saving the buildings already in the fire's path, firefighters shifted their focus to containment.

Once water became available, they concentrated their efforts on keeping the fire from spreading further. By late in the day, it appeared they would succeed. Fortunately, the wind blew away from the main portion of the factory complex—had it been otherwise, the entire facility might have been lost. The fire continued to smolder through the night in the lumber yard, which was almost entirely destroyed. The estimated loss ranged between \$40,000 and \$50,000 and was reportedly fully covered by insurance.

Manager E.E. Finney announced plans to clear the site of all debris and begin construction of a new, modern planing mill immediately. Additional storage buildings for stock would also be erected, and the retail lumber yard would resume operations as before. The new mill, he stated, would be outfitted with the latest equipment and designed to meet modern standards.



**Fire photos preserved on the pages of the 1920 Marshfield High School Yearbook identified as the Upham Company Fire. circa 1920**

## Board of Directors Retreats

Various members of the Board of Directors of the North Wood County Historical Society (NWCHS) met four times from early February 2025 through mid-spring to discuss the general direction of the NWCHS. Two primary objectives were tackled during the meetings, including updating the mission of the organization and developing ideas for streamlining tasks to make monthly board meetings more efficient.

The board has written and adopted the following mission statement, to be used for publications and social media outlets: ***The North Wood County Historical Society is dedicated to collecting, preserving, and sharing area history for present and future generations.*** The board believes that this more succinct statement clearly identifies the purpose of the organization. Along with the new mission statement, the board adopted five goals, to which all activities and efforts should align. The goals of the NWCHS are: collect area historical artifacts; preserve history through archives and stories; connect people to area history through research and education; celebrate history and community through collaboration, tours, and event; and engage volunteers and increase support of the society.

To streamline the monthly board meetings, it is the plan of the NWCHS to enlist the help of a variety of people to help with specific areas within the organization. This is to be accomplished in five sub-committees. These sub-committees are to be made up of a variety of people, including at least two board members along with other historical society members and/or community members interested in assisting. These sub-committees will meet at agreed-upon times and will have latitude to complete work within the area for which they are tasked, but all decisions for actions, activities, etc. will be reviewed and approved by the board at a monthly board meeting. Our hope is that we can get more people interested in being involved through a limited engagement, since many are afraid of committing too much time due to their busy schedules.

The Public Relations committee will oversee the following areas: marketing, recruiting, newsletter, social media, the web page, and the community connections monthly emails. The Fundraising committee will oversee grants and fundraising events held off-site, such as dining-out fundraisers and community nights at local supporting businesses. The Outreach committee will oversee events held at the Upham Mansion as well as history-related events off-site, such as Spoken History and the Traveling Trunks. The Education committee will oversee classes held at the Upham Mansion, school tours, and cemetery tours. The Collections committee will oversee the receiving, storage, maintenance, and display of artifacts. If any of these committees are of interest to any of you, we encourage you to reach out and discover how you can be involved by calling Kim at the Upham House at 715-387-3322 or email her at: [nwchs@uphammansion.com](mailto:nwchs@uphammansion.com)

### Spoken History Series

Those interested in learning more about the area's rich history are invited to attend the monthly Spoken History presentations in person in the Felker Family Genealogy and Local History Room at the Everett Roehl Marshfield Public Library. These monthly presentations are offered the second Wednesday of each month at 6:30 pm. The presentations are **FREE and open to the general public.**

**October 8:** *Spoken History*, Wednesday • 6:30 pm, Felker Family Genealogy and Local History Room at the Everett Roehl Marshfield Public Library.  
**Program:** Antique typewriter collection. **Speaker:** Jill Porter

Roehl Marshfield Public Library. **Program:** An experience: Decorating the White House for Christmas 2024. **Speaker:** Nick Peter

**November 12:** *Spoken History*, Wednesday • 6:30 pm, Felker Family Genealogy and Local History Room at the Everett

**December 10:** *Spoken History*, Wednesday • 6:30 pm, Felker Family Genealogy and Local History Room at the Everett Roehl Marshfield Public Library. **Program:** New Marshfield Christmas Memories **Speaker:** Don Schnitzler.



*Thanks to the Marshfield Health Systems Print Shop, we are now able to send all our newsletters in color. They have graciously agreed to print our quarterly newsletter as a donation to the North Wood County Historical Society.*

## Now accepting memberships for Year 2026

Fill out form below and mail or apply online using Historical Society Web Site.



**NORTH WOOD COUNTY  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

*Preserving North Wood County history since 1952*

Phone: (715) 387-3322

E-mail: [nwchs@uphammansion.com](mailto:nwchs@uphammansion.com)

Web Site: [www.uphammansion.com](http://www.uphammansion.com)

### Membership and Donation Form for the year 20\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Acknowledgement of monetary donations will be emailed for those who provide an email address.

End of year receipts will be mailed out in January the subsequent year.

#### I/We wish to support the North Wood County Historical Society

☐ Individual \$35      ☐ Student \$10 (High School & College)      ☐ General Gift \$ \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Family \$50      ☐ Business \$100      ☐ House Restoration \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Memorial—In Memory of \_\_\_\_\_ \$ \_\_\_\_\_

*All memorials will count as General gifts unless otherwise designated:*

Membership includes a quarterly newsletter and monthly event updates. I would prefer

☐ Emailed copy      ☐ Paper copy

## The Origins of “Taps”: A Tale of Truth and Legend

In the summer of 1862, as the American Civil War raged across the land, Union General Daniel Butterfield sat in his tent at Harrison’s Landing, Virginia. The night was heavy with loss, and the bugle call that signaled “lights out” felt too rigid, too impersonal for the mood that hung over his weary troops. Butterfield, a man not known for musical prowess but driven by a desire for something more reflective, summoned his brigade bugler, Private Oliver Wilcox Norton. Together, they reshaped an existing call into a new melody—just 24 notes long, slow and mournful. It was first played that very night, drifting through the camp like a prayer. Soon, the tune spread. Soldiers on both sides of the conflict heard it and adopted it. Not long after, it was played at a Union soldier’s funeral when Captain John Tidball, wishing to avoid enemy attention, requested a bugle call instead of rifle volleys. From that moment on, “Taps” became a sacred sound—a final farewell to the fallen.

But history, as it often does, gave birth to a second story. One not found in official records, but passed down through whispers and newspaper columns. It tells of a Union captain named Robert Ellicombe who, after a brutal battle, discovered a Confederate soldier’s body near his lines. When he turned the young man over, he was struck with horror—it was his own son, who had gone South to study music and had enlisted against his father’s cause. In the boy’s pocket was a scrap of paper with a melody. The grieving father asked a bugler to play it at the funeral, and thus, “Taps” was born.

This version, though deeply moving, is a myth. No records of Ellicombe exist, and historians have traced the melody’s true origin to Butterfield and Norton. Yet the legend persists, perhaps because it speaks to the heartbreak of war—the way it divides families, and the way music can offer solace when words fail. Whether born from a general’s quiet moment of reflection or a father’s unimaginable grief, “Taps” endures. It is not just a signal to extinguish lights, but a symbol of remembrance, echoing across generations with every note.



North Wood County Historical Society  
PO Box 142 (Mailing Address)  
212 W. Third St.  
Marshfield, WI 54449

## NWCHS Upcoming Community Events

**September 23 & 24** - J-Rolls & NWCHS have teamed up for a “Dine to Donate fundraiser. **(Postponed until further notice)** Order by calling 715-650.7001 or via Facebook for pick-up or delivery. J-Rolls will donate a portion of their proceeds to North Wood County Historical Society.

**October 8** - Spoken History, Wednesday • 6:30 pm, Felker Family Genealogy and Local History Room at the Everett Roehl Marshfield Public Library. Program: Antique typewriter collection.  
Speaker: Jill Porter

**October 30** - Main Street Trick or Treat at the Upham House. 4:30 - 6:00 pm.

**November 12:** Spoken History, Wednesday • 6:30 pm, Felker Family Genealogy and Local History Room at the Everett Roehl Marshfield Public Library. Program: An experience: Decorating the White House for Christmas 2024.  
Speaker: Nick Peter

**November 24:** North Wood County Historical Society Annual Meeting and Potluck at the Upham House. Open to all members, and friends of the NWCHS. See details on page 2. Memberships must be up to date to vote. You also can pay membership dues that evening.

**November 27** - Happy Thanksgiving to all our members and their families.

**December 7 & 8** - Annual Christmas Open House at the Upham House - Saturday and Sunday, 10am - 3pm, both days. This year’s exhibit is “**Christmas 1890 vs. 1990.**” — “**A Century of Celebration.**” Light refreshments.

**December 10** - Spoken History - Wednesday, 6:30 pm - Felker Family Genealogy and Local History Room at the Everett Roehl Marshfield Public Library. Program: New Marshfield Christmas Memories Speaker: Don Schnitzler.



**December 25 - The Board of Directors of NWCHS wish all the members, their families and of the Society a Merry Christmas and a Joyful New Year!**

