

**We'd love to hear from you!**

Here's how you can reach us:  
 Email: [woodedarchives@gmail.com](mailto:woodedarchives@gmail.com)  
 Phone: 608-729-1783

## AUGUST 2021

As we near the end of the second summer of the COVID pandemic, we can't say that things are "back to normal," but we can say that things are getting back to normal. For example, in June, the Society Board had its first in-person meeting in over a year and a half, and we've been able to access our office at the Fitchburg Library, which is also allowing access to library patrons. Vaccination rates in Dane County are high, and many of us have been able to see friends and family again. We are proud of the Society's efforts to capture many aspects of the pandemic's impacts on Fitchburg residents, businesses, and government. (Maybe "Resilient" should be added to Fitchburg's city motto.)

This newsletter falls on the cusp between the end of summer and the beginning of a new school year. One of our articles features a common summer job for several decades of Fitchburg and area youth (working at Blaney's Seed Corn), and another highlights Fitchburg's school system. We welcome your feedback and suggestions on topics of future newsletters, and ways that we may be able to connect with our members and others interested in Fitchburg.

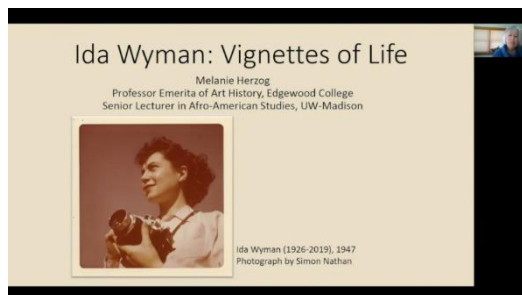
## HELP SUPPORT LOCAL HISTORY

The Fitchburg Historical Society relies primarily on membership dues to finance our activities, including the website and programs. You can help support our activities by becoming a member. For a nominal amount, \$10 individual, \$12 family, or \$50 business, you can support our efforts to document and preserve Fitchburg's rich history. Our membership year runs from April 1 – March 31. As a member, you have the right to vote in Board elections and participate in Society business decisions such as by law revisions. Download the membership form from our website at <https://fitchburghistory.org/registration-form/>, or send your payment, along with your name, address, telephone number, email address, and membership level to this address:

FITCHBURG HISTORICAL SOCIETY, c/o Roger Tesch, 3417 Brighton Pl, Fitchburg WI 53713-2842

## 2021 ANNUAL MEETING AND PROGRAM: A VIRTUAL SUCCESS!

The Society's annual meeting and board election were held Sunday, April 25, via Zoom, an online meeting platform. The event made history as the Society's first ever virtual meeting and presentation, made possible by the valuable technical assistance of Fitchburg FACTv staff. Melanie Herzog, professor of art history at Edgewood College, spoke on the topic "Ida Wyman, acclaimed photographer of everyday life." Ms. Wyman lived much of her life in New York, and became a Fitchburg resident in her later years. She is best known for her photographs of New York street life, and her work in *Life* magazine. The presentation is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h6IOpAaPRI8>. With the success of our first virtual presentation, we plan to explore the possibility of offering hybrid in-person and virtual offerings in the future.



The Annual meeting and Board election were held after the presentation. Both the minutes of the last annual meeting, and the treasurer's report were shared with members via email prior to the meeting. An election to fill four

three-year Board member seats was held. Three incumbents, Allan Tereba, Catherine Schneider, and Eileen Kellor, chose to run again, and were reelected. The seat previously held by Rich Eggleston, who opted not to run again, remains vacant. Board meetings are generally held the first Saturday morning of every other month, February through December, at the Fitchburg Library or via Zoom. If you are interested in becoming a Board member, email [woodedarchives@gmail.com](mailto:woodedarchives@gmail.com) and a Board member will contact you.

### WINNIE LACY

It is on a sad note that we share news of the death of Winnie Lacy, a long time Fitchburg Historical Society member and board member. Although she was not a Fitchburg native, she became an ardent Fitchburg supporter when she



married Phil Lacy, and moved to the Lacy family farm. She was the longest presiding President of the FHS, serving from 1995 to 2001. Winnie kept busy with FHS projects such as cataloging over 1100 photos amassed over the years with the help of Eric Amlie. For many years she was the editor and major contributor of the FHS Newsletter. In 2017, she pushed for and did the early work for the FHS to submit a Wisconsin Council for Local History mini grant. This grant provided the FHS funds to develop both a digital database for organizing our collection as well as developing the FHS website. Winnie retired from the FHS board due to health reasons and to finish her genealogy book. We are grateful to Winnie for her important role in capturing Fitchburg's history and her ongoing support to the Society.

### RICH EGGLESTON

We are extending a heartfelt "thank you" to Rich Eggleston, a longtime member and former president of the Board. Rich's professional career as a journalist brought him to this area. He has played an important role in moving forward the Fitchburg Historical Society's mission. Rich opted not to run for another term on the Board, although his work and interest in history continues with the Dane County Historical Society. We are grateful that Rich is continuing as the lead for our Facebook page.

### WEBSITE DEEP DIVE: FITCHBURG SCHOOLS

A recurring question is why doesn't Fitchburg have its own school system? At present, Fitchburg children attend school in three districts: Madison, Oregon, or Verona. But few people know that in the past, there were at least 12 different school districts serving Fitchburg's families and children. These were primarily one room schools, with grades 1-8 being served by a single teacher. After eighth grade, students from these schools attended high school in Madison, Oregon, or Verona. Gradually, many of the schools closed and joined one of the other districts. For example, in 1951, residents of the Syene School District voted to join the Oregon School District, and the school eventually became a private residence. In 1965, the Stoner School, District 7, shown at right in 1911, closed and became part of the Verona Area School District, and that building as well was converted into a private residence.



By the mid-1960's, changes at the state level resulted in the closure of the remaining small districts, which were consolidated into one of the three larger districts. District consolidations were not unique to Wisconsin and continue, usually as small school districts face decreased funding or student populations, that make it difficult to operate a comprehensive secondary school. The consolidations are still reflected in the names of the three districts that

Fitchburg's students attend: Verona Area School District, Oregon Consolidated School District, and Madison Metropolitan School District. Despite all the schools being closed for at least 55 years, several board members have personal connections to these former schools. For example, one member and her father both attended Stoner School, and her mother attended Camp Badger. Another member's grandparents purchased and lived on the property on which Lake View School was located, and her father attended Lake View School.

As part of a joint project with the Oregon Area Historical Society, markers were erected at the locations of most of the old Fitchburg schools. A detailed map showing Fitchburg's old schools and a history of each are at <https://fitchburghistory.org/schools/>. Current Fitchburg residents might find it interesting to locate the school that

they would have attended and envision what it would have been like. One former school, Silver Springs joined the Madison district in 1961, and continued to operate until 1970. Its former location is close to the current Rocky Rococo's off the Beltline. It's hard to envision a school at that site, in the shadow of the Beltline and amidst commercial properties, yet not that long ago, students walked to it from Badger Road and Fish Hatchery,



Some of Fitchburg's former schoolhouses were converted to private residences, while others were lost to development and growth of the surrounding communities. One former resident recalls that in the 1950s, four of the old school houses were moved next to the red brick Oregon High School and used as temporary classrooms while a new school was built. After the new school was completed, the old schools were demolished. Top left is Lake View School in 1911, at its original location on the corner of Highways MM and B, and lower left, sometime in the 1950s, when it was moved to an unknown location. Camp Badger School, (top right, in 1911) 6048 McKee Road,



was purchased by Alcoholics Anonymous, and currently is used as a Serenity House (lower right).

In addition to the histories of the schools, another source of information about the history of Fitchburg's school system is a FACTv video by Catherine Schneider, available at this link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fNZYUzmwZEc>.



## IT WAS THE BEST OF JOBS, IT WAS THE WORST OF JOBS

The address of a current Fitchburg business, Hartung Brothers Seed, on Blaney Road, reveals its origins as Blaney Farms, Inc., a provider of hybrid seed corn grown by farmers as livestock feed. But Blaney's was probably better known in the Madison area for the summer jobs for teens than for its seed corn.

Every summer, hundreds of teens (usually at least 14 years old) and young adults spent long days in the fields. Buses transported the young workers from across the Madison area and brought them back at the end of the day. Most worked as corn detassellers, removing the tassels from every other row of corn to prevent unwanted pollination that would disrupt the desired hybrid line. An inspector (often a college student) followed their progress through each row and reported at the end of the day. Too many tassels left unpicked might result in a warning or termination.



We recently posted on two Madison and Oregon area Facebook pages, asking people for their memories of these summer jobs. There were scores of responses, including from people who had the same job in another state or at another Madison area seed corn producer. Not surprisingly, memories of the experience varied. Best job ever, worst job ever. Best suntan, worst sunburn. Good pay (a special incentive was paid if you worked the entire summer), poor pay. Many people worked the job to earn money for a big purchase or to fund a school trip. There were memories of injuries inflicted by the surprisingly rough corn stalks, including someone who remembered that a friend severed an artery – or at least that's how it's remembered. We'll be compiling these memories into an article for our website. Until then, here's a recollection from Board Member Dianne Reynolds:



*"I detasseled corn for 2 summers for Blaney's (1967 and 1968). We walked down to the corner of Syene and Irish Lane to get picked up for work at 6 a.m. Mornings in the corn were wet and buggy and afternoons were hot and dry. Suntan lotion in the 1960's really didn't have much SPF so even if you wore it you most likely were going to be very tan by the end of the detasseling season. If I remember correctly, the season only lasted two to three weeks. We had two older gentlemen as our crew leaders one of whom lived in a boarding house in Oregon. We either walked or rode the detasseling machine. One thing I didn't realize was that corn stalks when broken off (culling rogues was part of the job) are really sharp and I still have scars today to prove it. I was thankful for the opportunity to work and earn money because my only other job option was babysitting which only paid 50 cents an hour; it seems like at Blaney's we made a \$1.00 an hour."*

### THINGS ARE HAPPENING IN LAKE VIEW



What or where is Lake View? Lake View is the area of Fitchburg at the intersection of MM (also known as Old Highway 14) and County Highway B, near Fitchburg's eastern edge. Early in Fitchburg's history, Lake View thrived. Two of Fitchburg's oldest structures are located there, including the Lake View Stagecoach Hotel and Tavern (Conrad Getts' Inn, photo courtesy Wisconsin Historical Society), built in 1845, as well as a property across the street, built at a similar time, and used most recently as a private residence and antique shop.

Earlier this summer, two of our Board members met with the new owners of the second property, who are eager to learn the history of the property and of Fitchburg. Among their first projects is restoring the residence to resemble its original state more closely. This photo of the staircase provides a glimpse of what their efforts are revealing. We are excited by their energy and interest in Fitchburg history and have invited them to share their progress with us.



### SAVE THE DATE: FALL PROGRAM SET FOR NOVEMBER 7, 2021

The Historical Society typically holds two in person programs a year, one in the spring, in conjunction with the annual meeting, and another in the fall. The recent surge of COVID cases makes it difficult to plan in person activities. Given the success of its first virtual program in April, the Board is moving forward with a virtual fall program on genealogy research. An in person option has not been ruled out, but would be dependent on local public health conditions and meeting space availability.

Mark Sunday, November 7, at 1:30 on your calendars. If there are specific genealogical topics you would like to suggest, please email them to us at [woodedarchives@gmail.com](mailto:woodedarchives@gmail.com).