



Past » Present & Future



Exploring The E. Hackner Altar Company Legacy in La Crosse and Beyond

By Charish Badzinski

On September 29, 1880, passengers in Hamburg, Germany, boarded a 375 ft. ocean steamer, the *S. S. Herder*,¹ steadying themselves for the 3,800-mile journey across the North Atlantic Ocean for the promise of the new world. Among the travelers was Egidius "Egid" Hackner, who was embarking for America from his Bavarian homeland in search of a new geographical canvas for his life's greatest work.

Egid had packed up his prized belongings, including books from what he referred to as his "small but well chosen library."² Although third-class passage to New York provided few comforts, he determined that a modest bunk in steerage was the best option for his pocketbook.

"The voyage was stormy and I suffered from seasickness," Hackner wrote in *Records and Reminiscences*, an account of his life initially recorded in German by hand, then translated and typed at St. Rose Convent in La Crosse by three Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration (FSPA) and published by the La Crosse County Historical Society in 1945.³ Third-class passengers aboard such ships were expected to endure the stormy roll of the ocean below the main deck in tight quarters with little air circulation and limited toilet access, if any. Hackner's journey aboard the steamboat took nearly two weeks. He disembarked October 12⁴ on a sun-soaked 78-degree day in New York⁵ at the precursor to Ellis Island: Castle Garden Emigrant Depot.



Interior view of Hackner Altar Co., circa 1925. Image courtesy of Murphy Library Special Collections/ARC, UW-La Crosse.

It was a humble launch for the 23-year-old who would go on to build a company and amass a team of gifted artisans. Under his craftsmanship the churches and cathedrals of La Crosse, middle America, and beyond would command admiration and awe for generations to come.

The Craftsman's Childhood

Egidius Hackner was born in the tiny village of Forstheim, Germany, on December 27, 1856, to John and Crescentia

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Hackner. His twin brother, Ambrose, died in infancy. Of the 15 children born to the family, only six—all boys—survived; Egid was the youngest. They lived in a farmhouse overlooking 60 acres of land, and the family ran a small hotel to augment their income.

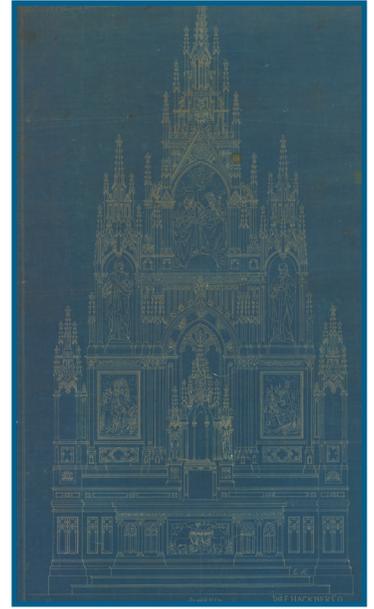
Even as a child, Egid was deeply involved in church activities, including serving as an assistant to the pastor as well as mass server. He recounted how Holy Week, Easter, and the feast days piqued his interest, offering an early window into the footings upon which his life's calling would be built. The pastor had established a fund for repairs and decorations for the church; he was in Egid's words, "an ardent admirer of all that was artistic and beautiful."⁶ The decorator hired for the job lodged at the Hackner home as he worked on the project, giving the budding young artisan access to the essence of the project from multiple angles and ample opportunity to develop an appreciation of his own for fine craftsmanship.

"Although I was only nine or ten years of age, I became deeply interested in church art," Egid wrote. "At that time the altars in the church were also renovated. This was of great interest to me. Instead of spending my leisure hours at play with my companions, I stole away and watched the decorator at his work. I even ventured to construct a model of the interior of the church with a primitive altar and pews."⁷ Egid noted that his mother gave him the materials he needed as well as mementos from Altötting, Germany, a place of pilgrimage for Catholics for centuries.

Egid's brother Willibald, four years his senior, showed little interest in farming, and instead spent his leisure time enjoying his father's library. At the advice of their pastor in Forsheim who recognized his studiousness, Willibald was enrolled in an episcopal seminary in the city of Eichstätt. After eight years of dedicated study, Willibald pursued an opportunity extended by the Reverend Michael Heiss who had studied at the very same seminary in Eichstätt, and had been consecrated the first Bishop of La Crosse, Wisconsin in 1868.⁸

"Willibald at once resolved to embark for America and to complete his course of study in the seminary at St. Francis near Milwaukee,⁹ and entered the philosophical and theological courses," Egid wrote.¹⁰

While Willibald headed for distant shores, Egid's interest in church art continued to flourish. As a teenager he worked as an apprentice, the proverbial starving artist, under a renowned master in Freistadt. "Our board was meagre (sic), but I never ventured to utter any complaint, for my brothers would have said, 'Stay on the farm!'"¹¹ After three years, he took on jobs in woodworking shops throughout Europe to hone his skills and finance his travels as he immersed himself in the beauty and inspiration of the continent's grand churches and museums.



Blueprint of an altar from the E. Hackner Co. Collection of LCHS.



Hackner Altar Co. employees, circa 1905. Egid is seated on the left, second row up from the bottom. Image courtesy of LCHS and La Crosse Public Library Archives.

La Crosse and Beyond

In 1878, he was accepted into the School of Art in Munich, Germany, where he further improved his skills in carving, cabinetry, statuary, drawing, and architecture. He also wanted to learn to make clay models so he enrolled in a special course in the Modelling School at Rosenthal. Two years later, he was ready for something new. Willibald had written him a letter, promising there was great opportunity in La Crosse for a man of his talents. Egid wrote,¹² "My mind was now made up to embark for America."¹³

An Artisan in America

After his stomach-churning sea voyage, Egid traveled to La Crosse, Wisconsin, by train via Chicago. "Even if La Crosse at that time, 1880, was not a large town, where one might look forward to fame and fortune, still it was ideal in its location and in the congeniality and friendliness of its inhabitants. It served as a peaceful rendezvous for a humble beginner until his name might be echoed beyond its limits," Egid wrote.¹⁴ He arrived in La Crosse with just 50 dollars in his pocket.¹⁵

Egid swiftly set up a little factory, renting two rooms in the back of a tailor shop on State Street which he used to store materials. He secured room and board from a family on La Crosse and Tenth Streets. His first hire at the factory was a worker named Adrian Schwartz, and together they constructed the company's first order: a wooden altar for his brother's church at St. Mary's Ridge, east of Cashton, at a price of \$400.

Egid quickly decided to make La Crosse his permanent home and sent for his fiancée, Juliana Kracklauer in Chicago. On May 10, 1881, they were married at St. Joseph's Cathedral in La Crosse, with his brother Willibald officiating at the ceremony. Several years later, with three small children in their growing family (they would eventually have eight), they took out a zero-interest loan from Willibald and bought a home at 1021 Winnebago Street.

"Here I spent many happy evenings in singing and playing with the little ones whilst Mother Hackner, wearing her usual smile, busied herself with her unfinished task," he wrote.¹⁶

As waves of immigrants made the La Crosse area their new home in the 1880s, and parishes sprang up to satisfy their spiritual needs, demand for church altars and furniture grew. Meanwhile, the Sisters of St. Francis (now known as the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration) established the first hospital in Western Wisconsin to meet the health care needs of those in the region. They named it St. Francis Hospital (now known as Mayo Clinic Health

Exhibition to Feature Work of Hackners

In conjunction with the celebration of the 175th anniversary of their founding, the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration, in partnership with the La Crosse County Historical Society are hosting an exhibition featuring the work of the E. Hackner Altar Company as well as art created by Sister Marietta Hackner. The exhibition, entitled *The Hackner Touch: A Legacy of Sacred Craftsmanship*, is slated for May. For more information, visit <https://www.lchshistory.org/>.



Hackner Altar Co. drawing. Collection of LCHS.

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System - La Crosse).¹⁷ Demand for the hospital's services was robust. To accommodate this expansion, Egid sold his home and two additional lots to the Sisters in 1887.

"Eventually, the hospital should be in possession of the entire block upon which its first portion was built, and it would seem unethical not to lend a helping hand to further a good cause, even if it involved no small sacrifice to relinquish the little home so dear to Mother Hackner and me. No other could quite replace it." He built a two-story brick house for the family at 1235 Ferry Street which still stands today. The company office and shop were also relocated to the corner of 13th and Ferry where it employed about 20 men in 1894. In 1910 the factory was again relocated to Second and Division Streets for modernization with motor-driven machines and expansion to allow for a staff of 75.

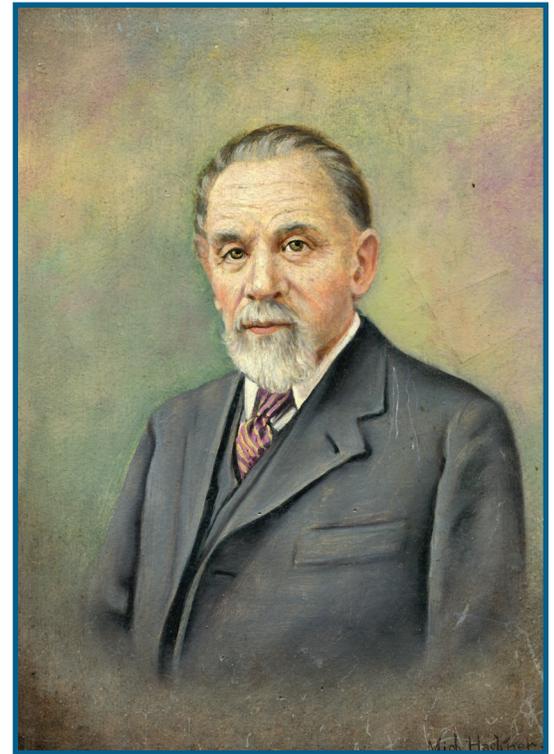
Lean times in the early days of his business summoned unconventional cleverness. "Egid used to go for walks and liberate wood from the lumberyards, keeping his costs down," said Kurt Papenfuss, great-grandson of Egid Hackner. "That's family lore, so it's probably true."¹⁸

In fact, Egid confessed to the petty offense. "What did it matter if I pushed my wheelbarrow full of pieces of lumber, sometimes even some of the leavings which I might be able to utilize, along the unpaved street from Segelke & Kohlhaus¹⁹ to my little shop?"²⁰ Egid noted that they were always on friendly terms with the manufacturing company.

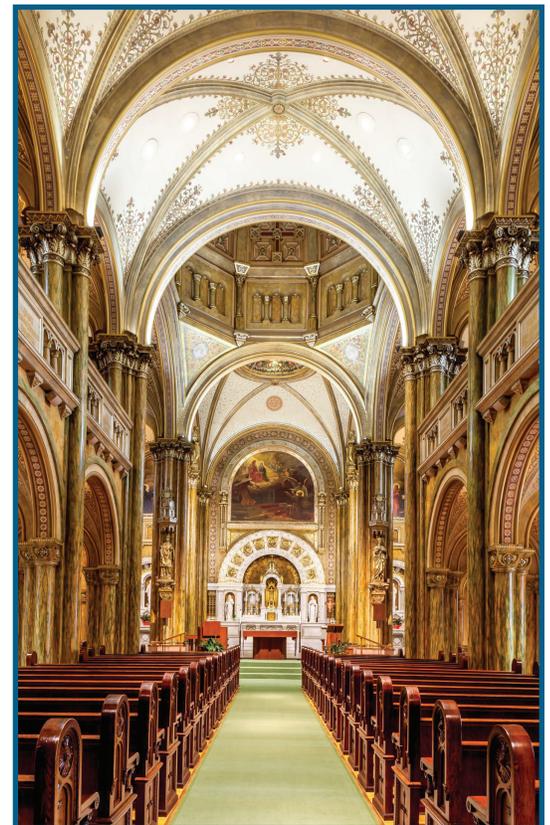
Such thriftiness served the new enterprise well. The E. Hackner Altar Company grew over the years from one man with a wheelbarrow and a dream to a dream team in La Crosse of more than 100 skilled workers: carpenters, carvers, painters, agate burnishers, sculptors, architects and more. The workshop evolved from producing everything painstakingly by hand, to the incorporation of motor-driven machinery which paired high-quality craftsmanship with improved safeguards for the workers. The humble beginning of a small shop scavenging scraps to cut costs advanced to a sought-after team of artisans who sourced and imported the finest materials from around the world to create some of the most revered church interiors on the continent.

It's difficult, if not impossible, to capture the full breadth of the company's influence in religious as well as secular spaces. But if you have stepped inside a church or cathedral in the Upper Midwest over the past 120 years, it's likely you have seen and perhaps even touched the work of the E. Hackner Altar Company. Over the decades, the company crafted altars, shrines, pews, statues, confessionals, balustrades, and much more. Their body of work touched churches throughout the Upper Midwest, the greater United States and Canada as well as private homes and the Adolf and Helga Gundersen Estate.²¹

Of the company's most significant achievements are their contributions to Mary of the Angels Chapel in La Crosse, the spiritual center for the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration who are now in their 175th year.



Painting of Egid Hackner painted by Michael Hackner in 1929. Image courtesy of Egid Hackner's descendants.



Interior view of the Mary of the Angels Chapel Main Altar.

La Crosse and Beyond

Located inside St. Rose Convent, the chapel is on both the State and National Registers of Historic Places. The E. Hackner Altar Company constructed six altars for the chapel.

"It is no exaggeration to say that these altars seem to vie with one another in beauty and perfection. All are constructed of very fine Italian marble: carrara, bianco, chiaro, bianco-purissima, interspersed and decorated with flawless Mexican onyx, mother-of-pearl, and precious gems," wrote Egid. "Very artistic and colorful designs are carried out by means of Venetian mosaic which is second to no other. The keen observer will perceive that each little particle is coated with an almost invisible film of glass, which serves to protect it from the effects of the moisture that is caused, now and then, by sudden changes of temperature in the chapel."²²

Egid wrote that he supervised all the designs and patterns for the marble and brass work as well as models for carvings and relief work. The 48 red oak pews on the main level of the chapel exhibit this craftsmanship. Each is hand-carved with egg and dart trim, Greek crosses, a fleur-de-lis, four-petaled rose designs and individual pearl-sized beads.²³ Notably, the company also enlisted the expertise of Czech sculptor Albin Polasek who carved a marble statue of St. Michael with a mallet and chisel. The entire project took two and a half years for the Hackner company to complete and the altars were installed in 1907, and marked the beginning of other marble contracts for the company.

An Enduring Legacy

Mary Bracken, now 94, lives in La Crosse, where her grandfather Egid, her father George, and the rest of the E. Hackner Altar Company crafted their legacy. She remembers Sunday dinners at grandpa's house, and recalls Egid as a friendly, dignified person who would give the children coins after dinner. "I knew that they had built altar works all over the world, all over the United States, because my father traveled and would get orders. I remember that when I was a little girl. I guess I just thought it was their job so it didn't seem it was a special thing," she said. "He was just my grandfather."²⁴

After Egid's passing in 1952 at the age of 95, the E. Hackner Altar Company remained in business under his sons and was dissolved after their final project in 1967.²⁵ As a little boy, Kurt Papenfuss recalls that time. "When the factory closed, I remember going down there with my dad. We were just loading up stuff they were throwing away, things going to the burn pile."²⁶

Marietta Hackner, FSPA: A Lifelong Commitment to Faith and Art

On January 25, 1882, Marietta Hackner became the firstborn of Egid and Juliana Hackner's eight children. Like her father, Marietta was passionate about her faith and art, and the two became intertwined in her life's work. Marietta's father had planned to send her to Europe to study art, but she was unable to do so due to her fragile health. Instead, she studied art in Milwaukee and Chicago at St. Xavier's Academy. In 1907 she returned to La Crosse and joined St. Rose Convent as a Franciscan Sister of Perpetual Adoration. Her profession as an artist spanned 56 years and included wood sculpture and paintings.

At the time of her passing at the age of 92, Sister Marietta was in her 65th year of her religious profession. Her art continues to beautify spaces at St. Rose Convent, Viterbo University, Saint Joseph the Workman Cathedral, Western Wisconsin Technical College and the La Crosse County Historical Society.



Sister Marietta Hackner. Image courtesy of the FSPA Archives.



Albin Polasek, circa 1915. Image courtesy of Library of Congress Bain News Service photograph collection.



Egid seated with his marble likeness from the carvers in Pietra Santa. Image courtesy of Egid Hackner's descendants.

Hackner descendants retain many family heirlooms that were spared the flames: hand-carved furniture, statues, picture frames, religious carvings, a large rosary. In a departure from the altar company's professional work, the family also has a wooden carving of a woman hollowed-out in the center, a gift intended as a hiding place for a pint of liquor. Whether religiously inspired or fodder for family legends, these treasures shaped by hands long stilled provide an invaluable link to the Hackner family legacy.

Subsequent generations of the Hackner family continued in similar lines of work. Egid's grandson Robert worked as an architect with several companies including Hackner Schroeder Architects which designed buildings throughout Wisconsin. These include the La Crosse Public Library, La Crosse Human Services building, Stokke Tower North Hall at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, The Roncalli Newman Center and St. Thomas More church. He also served as partner at HSR Associates, (formerly Hackner, Schroeder, Roslansky and Associates), and later as a construction supervisor who oversaw work on the La Crosse Center and West Salem High School. Robert Hackner passed away in 2016.²⁷

Egid Hackner's influence endures, as does his likeness. In 1929, a pedestal and marble bust of Egid were carved in Italy for him as a gift from the carvers in Pietra Santa because he had ordered so much product from them.²⁸ After spending years in the FSPA archives, the bust and pedestal were given back to Egid's descendants.

"My mom had it in the entryway of her house forever," explained Janet Papenfuss, great-granddaughter of Egid Hackner who said the stern expression on Egid's face made an impression. "Each grandkid would walk in, see that as soon as they could talk, and say, 'Is him mad?'"²⁹ Janet is also an affiliate of the FSPA, furthering the family ties to the community which began with Egid, and continued with his descendants.

"Those people are never really gone, as long as you have things of theirs around to remind you," said Jane Nichols, great-granddaughter of Egid who now has the bust in her own home in La Crosse. She moved away from the region and returned later in life only to realize the full impact of her family's legacy. "I thought, wow. You're a part of the very beginning of La Crosse."

1. "S/S Herder, Hamburg America Line." *Norway Heritage*. Accessed January 31, 2024. https://www.norwayheritage.com/p_ship.asp?sh=herde.
2. Hackner, Egid. "Records and Reminiscences." *La Crosse County Historical Sketches* 7, (1945): 12. Accessed January 31, 2024.
3. Hackner, "Records and Reminiscences," 1.
4. Although his Reminiscences indicate Egid Hackner believed he had departed Hamburg mid-September and arrived mid-month, the official ship manifests for the S.S. Herder show he departed September 29, 1880 and arrived in New York on October 12.

La Crosse and Beyond

5. "New York City Weather in 1880." *Extreme Weather Watch*. Accessed January 31, 2024. <https://www.extremeweatherwatch.com/cities/new-york/year-1880#october>.
6. Hackner, "Records and Reminiscences," 3.
7. Hackner, "Records and Reminiscences," 3.
8. Crane, Florence. "The Catholic History of La Crosse, Wis in Two Chapters." *Catholic History of La Crosse Wis, 1855-1904, (1904)*: 7. Accessed January 31, 2024.
9. *St. Francis de Sales Seminary is located in the city of St. Francis, a suburb of Milwaukee, Wisconsin.*
10. Hackner, "Records and Reminiscences," 9.
11. Hackner, "Records and Reminiscences," 10.
12. Ellenbecker, John O. "They Left Names to Remember." *La Crosse Tribune (La Crosse, Wis.)*, October 26, 1976.
13. Hackner, "Records and Reminiscences," 12.
14. Hackner, "Records and Reminiscences," 12.
15. Ellenbecker, John O. "They Left Names to Remember." *La Crosse Tribune (La Crosse, Wis.)*, October 26, 1976.
16. Hackner, "Records and Reminiscences," 14.
17. "About Mayo Clinic Health System in La Crosse." *Mayo Clinic Health System*. Mayo Clinic Health System, Accessed January 31, 2024.
18. Kurt Papenfuss, interviewed by Charish Badzinski via telephone, January 16, 2024.
19. Segelke & Kohlhaus was a manufacturing company in La Crosse that manufactured doors, blinds, hardwood floors, stairs and more.
20. Hackner, "Records and Reminiscences," 14.
21. *The Adolf and Helga Gundersen Cottage is located on US highway 14/61 and is also on the State and National Registers of Historic Places. As noted in Hackner's Reminiscences, Adolf Gundersen was also their family physician and friend.*



Interior view of Hackner Altar Co., circa 1925. Image courtesy of Murphy Library Special Collections/ARC, UW-La Crosse.

22. Hackner, "Records and Reminiscences," 17.
23. Badzinski, Charish. "Mary of the Angels Chapel: An Artistic and Architectural Treasure." *Wisconsin Magazine of History: Volume 90, Number 2, Winter 2006-2007 (Madison, Wis.)*
24. Mary Bracken, interviewed by Charish Badzinski via telephone, January 20, 2024.
25. Notes from Sister Jolyce Greteman, Franciscan Sister of Perpetual Adoration and former FSPA Archivist and Heritage Curator. Dated September 26, 2012.
26. Kurt Papenfuss, interviewed by Charish Badzinski via telephone, January 16, 2024.
27. "Robert "Bob" Hackner Obituary." *BlaschkeSchneider.Com. Blaschke & Schneider Funeral Homes*, Accessed January 31, 2024. <https://www.blaschkeschneider.com/obituaries/robert-bob-hackner>.
28. Smith, Lou. "'Tante Ann' Remembers Heyday of Hackner Co." *La Crosse Tribune (La Crosse, Wis.)*, March 19, 1980.
29. Janet Papenfuss, interviewed by Charish Badzinski via telephone, January 26, 2024.

Holiday Tours Great Success!

A very fun time was had by all at the December holidays program at Hixon House. A visit by Board Member and Boston resident Fred Hixon Glore made the event extra special. Fred shared stories of visiting the house with his step-great grandmother, Alice Hixon, before the house was given to LCHS. Here Fred is pictured in the parlor with docents and volunteers in their period garb.



Mark Your Calendars!

LCHS has an exciting line-up of programming coming your way in the next few months. We have two upcoming exhibitions at the La Crosse Area Heritage Center and a Civil War program at Hixon House. The best advertisement that we have is from family members and friends, so please spread the word!

A Walk Down the Aisle Now Open!

Step into a world of swirling tulle, cascading silks, and evolving fashions with *A Walk Down the Aisle* at the La Crosse Area Heritage Center! Journey through over a century of La Crosse history, as told through the exquisite garments worn by brides on their wedding day.

The exhibition features 12 wedding dresses donated and loaned to the La Crosse County Historical Society.

The exhibit opens on February 29 and runs through April 27, 2024. The La Crosse Area Heritage Center is open Thursday - Saturday, 10:30 am - 4:30 pm, with the last admission at 4:00 pm at 506 Main Street in downtown La Crosse. Admission is free for La Crosse County Historical Society members, \$5/adult, \$4/student, and children 4 and under are free.



Bernice Erickson Wheeler on her wedding day, April 23, 1935. Bernice's dress is on display as part of the wedding dress exhibit. Image courtesy of Eric Wheeler.

The Hackner Touch: A Legacy of Sacred Craftsmanship

Last winter, the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration reached out to collaborate with LCHS on an exhibit. We have been hard at work and are pleased to announce that this exhibition will open in May after the La Crosse School District's 2nd-grade history field trips.

Egid Hackner created a lasting legacy with his company's expertly designed and crafted church furnishings. For nearly a century, the Hackner Altar Co. of La Crosse built altars, statues, and woodwork for churches locally and nationwide, including the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration's Mary of the Angels and Perpetual Adoration Chapels in La Crosse.

This summer 2024 exhibition will feature the works of the Egid Hackner Altar Company and those of Egid's daughter, Franciscan Sister of Perpetual Adoration Marietta Hackner. Sponsored by the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration.

The Light Guard Recruits! A Civil War Experience at Hixon House

Over the last 165 years, Hixon House has been around for many major events including the Civil War. During the war in 1862, the Light Guard returned to La Crosse to recruit new members from the community. On June 15, Hixon House will host a Civil War recruiting experience for all ages. Throughout the grounds, there will be various stations showing the recruiting process, the daily life of a soldier, and more! Stay tuned for more details!



Wooden carved model for the Hackner family headstone in the Catholic Cemetery. Collection of LCHS.

LCHS recently honored two of its hardest-working staff with “Volunteer of the Year” awards for 2023.

Carol Nelson-Britten is an outstandingly resourceful person who is always thinking about ways to make what LCHS does better and to provide goods and services in both large and small ways. Carol works as a docent at Hixon House, but also as an organizer of hospitality at the house, managing all of the holiday treats and Visitor Center decorations, and helping in many small but vital ways with other gatherings. She also engages in critter control for the property! She and her husband Chuck devote time and energy to the gardens, including doing the heavy work of rototilling the beds in the spring. Carol watches vigilantly for objects that can be of use to LCHS, including small items for collections and programming. She is an ace shopper! Recently, Carol spotted an opportunity for LCHS to earn \$2,500 from a promotion through her credit union, Altra, and organized the application. Most critically, Carol is always “on call”: staff can ring her and ask for just about any assistance and she’ll provide it. Carol as a true friend of our organization. Thank you, Carol!

Mary Swingle serves as a docent at Hixon House and assists with other programming such as Silent City. She is particularly adept at telling stories about the Hixons and their home in a captivating manner. However, she focuses most of her energy on the gardens at Hixon House, putting in scores of hours on her hands and knees,



researching appropriate plant care and varieties for the garden, and contributing ideas at every gardening committee meeting. Mary Swingle works tirelessly to make the Hixon House grounds more beautiful every day. She diligently attended every (or nearly every) Monday evening work session through the summer and early fall. She has assumed special responsibility for planting, digging, and storing the dahlias, a favorite of Ellen Hixon. Mary shares her passion for flowers by learning as much as she can about the varieties that Ellen is known to have grown, and distributing that information to others. The grounds and gardens simply wouldn’t be the same without her – thank you, Mary!

LCHS Receives Best Life Community Award from Altra

Last fall you may remember that LCHS was seeking votes in an online popular vote for Altra Federal Credit Union’s Best Life Community Awards. One of our longtime volunteers and members, Carol Nelson-Britten, nominated LCHS for this year’s awards. We are delighted to share that LCHS received the 2023 Community Assistance Award and received \$2,500 to help fund our 2nd-grade history field trips with the La Crosse School District.

These history field trips are so important to our mission of sharing our community’s rich heritage and history. The Heritage Center was curated with the 2nd-grade curriculum in mind and covers many of the same topics that the students are learning in the classroom. At Hixon House, students learn about the Hixon family while touring both floors of the family home. They also make connections with how things have changed over time, like a telephone and curling iron. Outside, the students play historic games like croquet and gunny sack races. At the Heritage Center, the students start with a scavenger hunt and then split up into groups for hands-on programming including Ho-Chunk culture, mussels and the pearl button industry, lumber industry, steamboats, and Hmong storycloths.

Thank you to everyone who played a role in LCHS receiving this funding!



**Thank you to all
of our donors!**
Our community impact
and programming are
a direct result of your
generosity and support.
We wouldn't be able to do
it without you!

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Debra Wakeen
Mary Groeschner
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In memory of Sherri Gingerich

Ann Brice & Bill Haviland
Lara Duwe
Myron & Chris Swenson
Dennis & Cyndy Schaper
Laurie Ringstrom
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In memory of Donna Finn

Nancy Jones
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Doug & Karee Galster
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Patrick & Joanne Stephens
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In memory of Jane Beseler

Stephanie Opstad

IN-KIND SUPPORTERS



Helping LCHS for the Future

Was it a story from your grandpa, uncle, or aunt that first got you hooked on your family's personal history? The La Crosse County Historical Society is a public trust dedicated to preserving and sharing the combined heritage that has made our area so special for generations. Help us keep those stories alive as educational tools to inspire and create a sense of community today as well as in the future.

You can make a lasting commitment to the activities of LCHS through a variety of estate plan options. These include bequests in a will or trust, charitable gift annuities, charitable remainder trusts, IRA designations, and gifts of life insurance. Please consider joining this dedicated group today by making LCHS a part of your legacy plan.

If you are 70½ or older, you can donate to LCHS directly from your Individual Retirement Account (IRA) without it being considered a taxable withdrawal. And if you are over 72, the gift can count toward your Required Minimum Distribution (RMD). To complete your donation, our legal name is La Crosse County Historical Society, and our mailing address is 145 West Ave S. La Crosse, WI 54601. Our federal tax ID number: 39-1228755.

2023 Year-End Donations

Thank you to everyone who donated! We exceeded our goal, received our generous donor's match, and are off to a great start for 2024!

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In Memoriam

LCHS lost three remarkable women recently. We mourn their loss as dedicated friends of the La Crosse County Historical Society. They will be missed.

Jane Beseler passed away on February 24, 2024. Jane served as LCHS's Director of Development and later as Executive Director until her retirement in 2012. Jane is fondly remembered for the lovely doll cakes that she created for LCHS events. You name it she could do it and she did it well. She took care of everything before you even knew you needed it.

Donna Finn passed away on February 22, 2024. Donna was always fun to work with and loved to share stories about what her children, grandchildren, and grand-dog were doing. Donna went the extra mile for LCHS many times, including working in the garden and painting the gallery room in the House. When she was needed on the LCHS board, she served there as well, acting as secretary and working on the financial committee.

Sherri Gingerich passed away on November 10, 2023. Sherri was always willing to help! If she didn't know the answer, she would find out. She helped train many docents over the years by having them shadow her tours. Jean Skemp recalled that she was the sweetest person and very pleasant to work with.

LCHS sends heartfelt condolences to the families of these devoted volunteers and staff.



Jane Beseler



Donna Finn



Sherri Gingerich

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It's back!

It's back! The Hixon House guidebook by Catherine McNamara and the late Sue Hessel has been reformatted as a photographic tour of the house featuring beautiful photographs and updated text. It's available for \$20 through our website, lchshistory.org, by calling our office at 608-782-1980, or by visiting the La Crosse Area Heritage Center. LCHS members receive a 10% discount when they purchase in person at the office or at our gift shops.

LCHS Mission, Vision & Values

Our Mission Statement:

La Crosse County Historical Society discovers, collects, preserves, and shares the history of La Crosse County, Wisconsin.

Our Vision:

Enriching lives through engagement with the heritage and continuing history of La Crosse County and surrounding region.

Our Core Values

Responsibility
Integrity
Stewardship
Education
Service

We believe that history provides a sense of place that builds community by understanding the shared history that connects us. Knowledge of history is essential to civic engagement, helping us understand the issues we face today.

Past»Present & Future

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www.lchshistory.org

Readers are invited to submit articles for publication; however, the LCHS reserves the right to edit for clarity, brevity, and accuracy. Articles should pertain to regional history.

Mail articles to 145 West Ave. S., La Crosse, WI 54601, or email to admin@lchshistory.org

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La Crosse WI, 54601

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Museums

La Crosse Area Heritage Center

506 Main Street, La Crosse, WI

Thurs-Sat, 10:30 am - 4:30 pm
(Last Entry 4:00 pm)

Admission: \$5.00 adults,
\$4.00 students

Free with LCHS membership

Hixon House

429 7th St. North • La Crosse, WI
(Corner of N 7th and
Badger Street)

Closed through May 31.

Upcoming Events

*A Walk Down the Aisle:
Twentieth-Century Wedding Dress Exhibit*
La Crosse Area Heritage Center, 506 Main Street
Now through April 27, 2024

*The Hackner Touch:
A Legacy of Sacred Craftsmanship*
La Crosse Area Heritage Center, 506 Main Street
Coming Summer 2024

The Light Guard Recruits!
A Civil War Experience at Hixon House
Hixon House, 429 7th Street North
June 15, 2024

**For more information go to
www.lchshistory.org, or call 608-782-1980**