

South Wood County Historical Museum Gardens

Built in 1907 as the home of banker and papermaker, Isaac P. Witter and his wife, Charlotte, the museum is situated on a hill overlooking the Wisconsin River.



A private home until 1947, Isaac's brother-in-law, George W. Mead, purchased the home and grounds for \$15,000.00 and presented it to the city to house the T.B. Scott Public Library, which opened in 1948. After the McMillan Memorial Library was built and opened in 1970, the building and land were deeded to the South Wood County Historical Corporation for the museum, which opened in 1972.

More than a dozen garden beds surround this historic building, with changing vistas and moods depending on the interplay of sun and shade. Since 1996's master landscaping plan, Wood County Master Gardeners have designed and maintained these gardens. This site is a good example of the layering effect of trees, large shrubs, small shrubs, herbaceous perennials, bulbs, and annuals. Due to the Neoclassical architecture and surrounding lush gardens, the property is a favorite spot for post-wedding, pre-prom, and Senior Picture photo shoots.

Over the years, weather events, building renovations, and required changes to the property and adjacent roadways prompted changes to the gardens. Large trees that were lost and other trees and large shrubs that needed trimming or removal affected the presence of sun and shade. All of these situations provide challenges and opportunities. Through it all, our goal is to educate as we pay homage to this Great Lady



A Jim Lucas metal sculpture was donated to the Museum in October 2013 and is the centerpiece for the daylily garden.



This antique clock in the yard north of the portico was originally situated at the corner of West Grand Ave & 3rd Avenue in front of First National Bank. The bank was built in 1919; the clock was added in the mid 1920s, marking time for generations of citizens as they went about business and entertainment downtown. In the 1990s, it was moved to private property on East Grand Ave, but finally found its home joining its historical legacy with the Museum in 2024.



Ten large, classical, cast iron planters grace various corners of the property with stunning plantings designed by Yard and Garden Club members. In the winter, planting are sometimes replaced with seasonal greens.

A Romanticism inspired statue in the shade garden was original to the Witter family, but was sold years ago to the neighbor as part of an estate sale before moving from Wisconsin Rapids. Several years ago, the Museum was able to acquire it again when the latest neighbor wanted to dispose of it. The Nekoosa High School Woodworking Class constructed the wood lattice to serve as a backdrop for the statue, while Master Gardeners designed the shade tolerant plantings to complement it.

