

Save the Mini Octagon House

RESTORATION OF MINIATURE OCTAGON



The Watertown Historical Society is launching a campaign to repair and restore the miniature wooden model of the Octagon House. Built by local craftsmen in the 1930s, the little house has been on display on the lawn just north of its famed eight-sided counterpart. Over the 70 plus years it has stood it has become one of the highlights of a visit to the museum. Countless tourists and school children have had their pictures taken standing by the little house. Not to have it on the grounds would be like, well, it just wouldn't be the same.

After having been exposed to over 70 years of Wisconsin weather, the model is sorely showing its age and the historical society's board of directors decided now is the time to try to save the little house.

In the early fall of last year, Thomas Gates, groundskeeper at St. Bernard's Catholic Church, approached our society with a proposal to restore the piece of Wisconsin folk art. After some discussion, the society decided to go ahead with the project.

The restoration is proving to be much more extensive than initially thought and as a result, the cost of the job has risen dramatically. Therefore, the Watertown Historical Society is appealing to the public to donate funds for the project. Donations to the restoration fund have been received through the generosity of many but we still need to come up with the remaining balance.

The goal is to have the model of the Octagon House completely overhauled and placed back on its pedestal by the time of our annual ice cream social on Sunday August 5, 2012.

**WPA** The model was built, according to photographic evidence, by local craftsman Henry Martin, with assistance from Paul Mohr and William J. Creapo. Other evidence points to the house being created in 1936 as a Works Progress Administration (WPA) project.

The model was used as a float in the 1936 Watertown Centennial parade before being moved to its present location next to the museum. At one time the model served as a reminder of how the Octagon House appeared when it had its original porches. The famed eight-sided landmark had its original porches removed due to age and neglect around 1924.

**WPA:** A federally funded program intended to put the unemployed back to work and stimulate the economy during the Great Depression.

To address the crisis, in 1935 Congress authorized the **Works Progress Administration** to create jobs and stimulate the economy.

In 1939, the program's name was changed to **Works Projects Administration** but the abbreviation remained accurate.

WPA projects were required to have a local sponsor who paid a portion of the cost and to recruit their workers from the ranks of the unemployed and those on relief.

USA  
WORK  
PROGRAM  
WPA

Henry Martin,  
builder of  
Octagon House  
miniature,  
receiving  
pay check  
from  
paymaster



LEFT, left to right  
William Creapo,  
painter, and  
Henry Martin,  
carpenter



RIGHT  
Temporary display,  
possibly part of the  
1936 Centennial



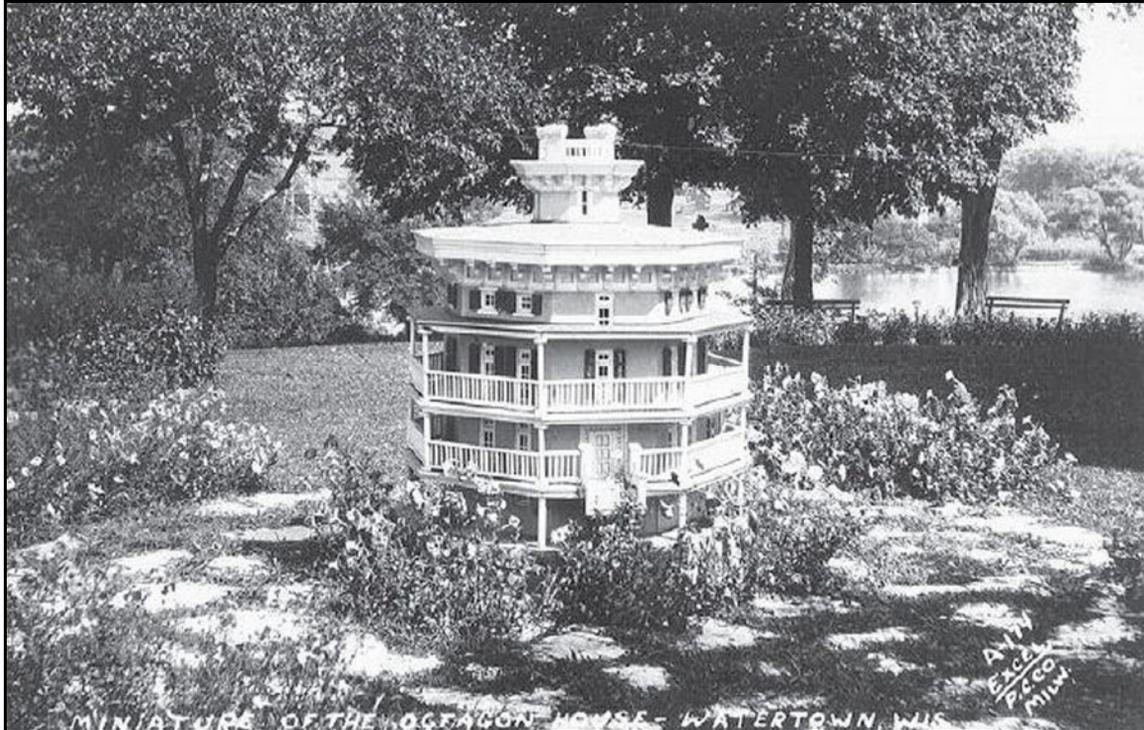
1993 Renovation Project  
by a group of  
Watertown seniors:

- [left to right]  
Clarence "Bumps" Schumann  
Pete Colletti  
Gerald Schubert  
Phil Paulsen

Over the years, the miniature has been painted from time to time, its verandas being damaged by children climbing onto the model and some of the glass windows, trim and moldings have been damaged.



Miniature Restoration Specialist Tom Gates displaying one stage of his master craftsmanship. The model is of 1/12 scale, that being 1 inch = 1 foot. Miniature is 48" tall and 60" wide.



The total cost to bring the little Octagon House back from the brink is \$5500.00. We are hoping that you, our members, will also consider, when writing out that check to renew your membership, to include a donation designated to the cause. You will be happy that you did and you can also have the satisfaction of knowing that you helped to preserve a piece of the city's rich history for future generations. We hope that the little house can be unveiled and placed back on its pedestal by the time of our annual ice cream social on Sunday August 5, 2012.

Those who would like to support the project can donate to the "Save the Mini Octagon House Fund" by sending a donation, however large, to The Watertown Historical Society, 919 Charles St., Watertown, WI 53094.

= All donations are tax deductible =