

Paramount Web site an award winner

Wisconsin Historical Society honors efforts of Grafton residents

By Tim Carpenter
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Grafton — In recognition of the efforts of author Alex van der Tuuk and Grafton's Patrick and Angela Mack to educate the general public on the village's rich musical legacy through their Web site www.paramountshome.org, the Wisconsin Historical Society has selected the trio as the first recipients of its Web Site award.

The award is given to the creators of the Web site that the society feels made the most valuable contribution to presenting Wisconsin history during the previous year. A formal awards presentation for the recipients is in the process of being planned for sometime in the near future.

"Part of our criteria was to find a site with a real love for that historical topic," said WHS Information Technology Director Paul Hedges, who was part of the three-member panel that selected the trio for the award. "It's very evident by the site that they are very dedicated to presenting the history of Paramount and the music that was created there."



Submitted photo

The Web site www.paramountshome.org, dedicated to news and information about the Paramount Recording Studio, was honored by the Wisconsin Historical Society.

The trio created the site in January 2005 out of a desire to provide a comprehensive educational resource on the extensive collection of influential Jazz, blues and gospel albums recorded in Grafton under the Paramount Record label between 1928 and 1932. A year and a half after originally setting out to accomplish this task, the site is considered one of the premier sources for information on the early Para-

mount legacy, providing a extensive collection of well-researched articles, photos, historical documents and a forum for visitors to post comments.

"It was really exciting to find out we won this award because we have literally put thousands of hours into the site," said Angela, who along with van der Tuuk provide the content for the site while Patrick does the Web design. "I think paramountshome.org has really opened people's eyes by giving them the education they need to really understand the Paramount legacy."

The partnership between the Macks and van der Tuuk was established in 2004 when Angela contacted the Dutch author after reading his award-winning book, "Paramount Rise and Fall." During his 10 years of gathering research for his book, van der Tuuk made a number of visits to Grafton. Van der Tuuk said when

he first came to Grafton in 1997, hardly anyone knew about the record company and its connection with the village.

"I thought there must be some way to throw it open and make this information available to anyone," said van der Tuuk, who spends anywhere from five minutes to three hours a day updating the site's content. "There was still a lot that could be told (about Paramount), especially to the people of Grafton. One of the major advantages of the Internet is that it makes this information available to anyone with a computer, so it gave us a perfect opportunity to wake up the community and make them proud of their history."

Those sites eligible for the WHS award had to be nominated, publicly accessible and contain substantial content relating to Wisconsin history. From there, the judges looked at the quality of the site's storytelling, sources and documentation, web design, ease of use and innovative technology.

"The other sites that were submitted were good, but it was the overall package, the breadth of content that we found on the Paramount site that really impressed us," Hedges said. Hedges added that the selection committee was extremely impressed by the site's strong community focus and encouragement to visitors to contribute to the content. "This was very much a grassroots effort to promote the historical part of Grafton that is really unique and interesting."

The Macks have accepted an invitation by the historical society to present a lecture in Madison at the WHS museum on Oct. 6 from 7 to 9 p.m. at an event titled "The Wisconsin Blues Connection."

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