



The Pinery

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CIVIL WAR CENTENNIAL MEETING

In observance of the Civil War Centennial, the Portage County Historical Society will mark the opening of its activities with a general meeting for all members and friends to be held Wednesday evening, February 15, 1961, in the demonstration room of the County-City Building at Stevens Point.

Malcolm Rosholt, president of the Society, wishes to make this meeting an informal affair in which everyone who has any letters, diaries, documents or pictures associated with their family in the Civil War may bring them to this meeting and either display these mementoes or read extracts from the documents.

While the society is mainly concerned with Portage County's own role in the Civil War, these documents, pictures or "tintypes" need not be confined to the county alone, but should be open to anyone now living in the county whose family had relatives in the war from other parts of the state or nation.

Mr. Rosholt will lead off the discussion with a talk on Portage County's role in the Civil War.

Anyone who has any souvenirs such as a musket, sword, flag or battle gear of any kind is urged to bring them to this meeting for exhibit. Typed identification of each item, where it was used and by whom will add to the pleasure of others.

Coffee and doughnuts will be served. And remember this meeting is open to everyone interested in the Civil War Centennial.

REMEMBER THE DATE - FEBRUARY 15th.
Social time - 7:30 to 8:00 P. M.
Meeting called 8:00 P. M.

MR. SWANSON'S REPORT ON OUR RESTORATION PROJECT -

The restoration of the old Pioneer School has been started. Foundations have been laid and the school building placed thereon. Floor joists and flooring are being installed and when this is done we will be ready to proceed with the exterior restoration.

The work up to now has been slow because a detailed examination of the building was necessary in order that the restoration be as true to the original construction as possible. Representatives of the State Historical Society gave us advice and counsel on three different visits to the building.

The restoration sub-committee of the Mayor's Committee is composed of:

- Mr. Gage Taylor
- Mr. Fritz Vetter
- Mr. Clifford Nebel
- Mr. Clifford Swanson
- Mr. Harry Groshek

Many interesting things were discovered in the attempt to determine how the original schoolhouse was built. For instance the sills (the heavy timbers supporting the walls) were hand hewn 10" square by 30 feet in length. The adze marks show how it was done. The sheathing (the wall behind the siding) was found in many cases to be 1" clear white pine 22" to 24" wide. Such lumber today would be priced out of this world. Only the poorest knot filled lumber is used for sheathing today.

The doors were put together with wooden pegs as were also the shutters. The shutters gave us an interesting time until we were convinced they were not on the original building but were installed

when the schoolhouse was converted to a cottage.

REMOVAL of the building board, plaster and wall paper on the walls brought us to the original interior wall surface. We found that the room had a wainscoating from the floor to the bottom of the windows. On the small part of the wall so cleared pencilled signatures of names on the original wainscoating were found - no doubt evidence that then, as now, youngsters signed their names in public places. Further disclosures are looked for when the walls are eventually cleaned up.

We also discovered that for a space of six feet from the front of the building the interior wall was covered with wainscoating from the floor to the ceiling. This posed a question until further examination in the attic showed that there had been a wooden partition across the room at this point. This was the cloak room where also was located fire wood and pail and dipper for drinking water.

We also found from examination of the roof as well as old pictures that there were at different times some three chimneys on the building. Further work convinced us that the original chimney was at the east wall. The State Society said that invariably the stove stood near the wall opposite the chimney. The reason was quite practical as some of you might know, namely that the long run of stovepipe across the room added substantial heat. Thus the stove stood at the west end of the room next to the partition.

The teacher's desk was at the east end of the room. The State Historical Society says that it was common to have the teacher's desk upon a platform raised 3 or 4 inches above the floor level. We have not as yet determined if such a platform was used in our school but will search for evidence of it.

Not all schools built in the 1840's and 50's had rear doors, but we are convinced that the door in the east wall was part of the original construction. The door while acting as a safety exit no doubt also led to the larger supply of wood in the yard as well as certain necessary out door accommodations.

It required real detective work to prove some issues. We learned how dark the original wood was in order to com-

pare with lighter colored wood installed at later and more modern times. Hand drawn nails in the original construction also served as valuable clues. So also with the plaster - the original plaster was hand mixed with hair as a binder. The lath was rough cut at random widths and lengths.

We still have a mystery to solve. Why is the siding on one side of the building one inch wider than the siding on the other? Incidentally, the original siding had squared edges, each board simply overlapping the other. They were not beveled or tapered as is modern siding.

We have not solved the question of shingles but will do so in the spring. We as well as the State Society believe that the shingles were hand made shakes common in this area in the 40's and 50's.

The restoration has not been without its tragedy however. Vandals crawled under the building before the foundation was laid and from the inside methodically broke out 96 panes of 100 year old glass. The exterior of the windows was protected by boards but our juvenile delinquents were not to be denied.

Public solicitation of funds will shortly be made to carry on with the restoration work and we hope that sufficient money will be found to completely restore the school to its original pioneer state.

IN CHARGE OF EXHIBIT CASE

Miss Edna Carlsten and Miss Marie Swallow have taken over the display of Materials in the Society's exhibit case in the County-City Building for the year.

Information and materials relative the Presidential inauguration of one hundred years ago - 1861 - will be on display shortly.

Then in April the display will feature materials relative to the beginning of the Civil War.

After a rather general display we would like to feature Portage County in the Civil war and will appreciate having owners of Civil War mementos loan them for display. They will be handled carefully and will be perfectly safe in the case. Contact Miss Carlsten or Miss Swallow at any time.

HISTORICAL PLAQUE FOR ROSHOLT

A historical plaque commemorating the founding of the village of Rosholt will be erected at the east end of the mill pond this spring. This plaque, already executed, is now on display at the State Bank of Rosholt, the sponsor of it.

Above the legend appears the official seal of the Society, beautifully done, and surrounded by the name "Portage County Historical Society". This seal means that the information contained on the plaque has been documented by the society and is historically accurate.

Work will begin in the spring on a foundation and stone emplacement to hold the plaque. It will be located at the east end of the mill pond, next to the highway leading to Hill Park, because it was here that the first saw mill was built by John Gilbert Rosholt in 1884-85 which led to the founding of the village in 1907.

The County Historical Society hopes to interest other communities in erecting similar plaques - in Plover, Whiting, Almond, Amherst, Junction City, the Public Square in Stevens Point, Polonia, and other places and sites of historical interest in the County.

Meanwhile the State Historical Society has approved the state highway marker commemorating the DuBay Trading Post on the Wisconsin River and work on the marker to be erected on Highway 51 in the town of Dewey is expected to begin this spring.

OTHER MEETINGS

A General Meeting again in March? Yes, if some group or community would like to sponsor it and will provide a short program of historical content and interest. There is so much of interest in our county that we ought to be able to hold two of these general meetings every spring and fall to get better acquainted with our historical background and one another.

THE ANNUAL MEETING

Will be coming up in April and dues will be due again then - Lets keep that in mind.

WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT PORTAGE COUNTY'S PAST -

The following materials are in the Library of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin - also in the Central State College Library.

Biography:

Beers, J. H. & Co - Commemorative biographical record of the upper Wisconsin counties of Waupaca, Portage, Wood, Marathon, Lincoln, Oneida, Vilas, Langlade and Shawano, containing biographical sketches of prominent and representative citizens and of many of the early settled families. Chicago, 1895

Directories:

Post Printing Co. - Portage County directory, containing history of Portage County and the city of Stevens Point, Wisconsin by Hon. Geo. W. Cate, Stevens Point, Wis., 1896.

Foreign Population -

Sanford, Albert Hart - Polish People of Portage County, in Wisconsin Historical Society, Proceedings, 55:259-288.

History:

Cate, George W. - as listed above.
Ellis, Albert G. - History of Portage County, Wisconsin, read at the centennial celebration held at the city of Stevens Point, July 4, 1876, Stevens Point, 1876.

First Polish settlement in Wisconsin at Polish Corners in the Town of Sharon in 1857, in Stevens Point Journal, March 4, 1936.

The above are just a few of the many historical writings about the county done many years ago.

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REMEMBER THE GENERAL MEETING at the County City Building on February 15th.