



The Pinery

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NEW PRESIDENT OF THE SOCIETY

Mr. N. R. Kampenga, Head Librarian at Wisconsin State College, Stevens Point is the new President of the Portage County Historical Society. He replaces Mr. Malcolm Rosholt of Rosholt who had served in that capacity for several years.

GENERAL MEETING, NOVEMBER 20

A general meeting of the Portage County Society was held in the Demonstration Room of the County City Building on Nov. 20th with a good attendance of members and friends. The program was relative to a development of a pattern of street numbers and names in the city which has been worked out by the Junior Chamber of Commerce as one of their projects. Two members of the organization, Richard Cable and Robert Worzalla, presented this plan.

They explained that the organization had started work on this in Sept. 1960 when they met with the city's Long Range Planning Committee when the benefits of a new pattern of street names and numbers was outlined and discussed. The Long Range Planning Committee was of the opinion such a plan, if it could be developed, would be very beneficial to the city, and the Jaycees decided to go ahead on the project.

Since then with a great deal of work, attention, contact of many people, keeping in touch with the Long Range Planning Committee and city officials such a basic plan has been developed.

Mr. Cable and Mr. Worzalla presented an over all picture of this basic plan. They discussed the house numbering which would be uniform throughout the city - black numbers on white tile and placed where easily seen.

The streets, they said, would intersect all other streets at the same numbered block, for example, Division Street would intersect all streets it crosses at the 1700 block, something it does not do at the present time. Also, under the plan streets that were interrupted would not take on a new name as many do today.

The plan provides that all streets running north and south would be numbered and all east and west named in alphabetical sequence.

There was considerable discussion of the plan and many questions asked. Many members expressed a wish that the old street names that had historical significance in the development of the city be retained and that others be used.

As a second phase of the program Mr. C. W. Nason, Jr. and Mrs. Win Rothman carried on a discussion relative to the old names, why they were used and mentioned some worthy of use that had not been used in the past and which would be a fitting commemoration of the city's pioneers.

Both discussion groups used maps of the city to point out names and streets.

In a short business session before the program the question of the city using the foundation placed in Pioneer Park at the foot of Main Street for a shelter house was brought up. This is the foundation on which the old Pioneer School, destroyed by the heavy snows of 1961, was placed.

Mr. N. R. Kampenga, President of the Society, presented this at the request of the City Park Commission Chairman.

After considerable discussion on the type of shelter house that might be erected and the landscaping of the same, it was voted to give the consent of the Society for the use of the foundation in the building of a shelter house, but

asking that the Society be allowed to participate in the design of the shelter house to be built.

Coffee and doughnuts were served at the meeting.

ANOTHER PORTAGE COUNTY MARKER

was erected this past summer. The plaque was erected by the village of Whiting at the site of the old mill near McDill Pond. This is the third plaque to mark a historic site in Portage County, the first having been erected in Rosholt, the second on the Market Square in Stevens Point.

These plaques bear the insignia of the Portage County Historical Society which is the same as that on the masthead of each issue of "The Pinery." It is the editorial masthead of the old "Wisconsin Pinery," our first newspaper, first published more than 100 years ago.

The plaque bears the following inscription:

WHITING VILLAGE

A Sawmill was built here in 1852 by Luther Hanchett and Amos Courtwright. It was purchased in 1864 by Alexander and Thomas McDill who later added a grist mill. The site was occupied after 1902 by Wisconsin Graphite Company and from 1916 to 1951 by the John Strange Sulphite Mill. This vicinity, platted as McDill Village in 1873, was incorporated in 1947 honoring George A. Whiting, founder of Whiting-Plover Paper Company.

MR. KAMPENGA ATTENDS MEETING

The Wisconsin Association of Teachers of College History hold its annual conference at River Falls on October 26, 1963. N. R. Kampenga, President of the Portage County Historical Society, attended.

The focal point of interest at River Falls was the Area Research Center developed on that campus and organization of the local history reading room in which this center is housed. Walker Wyman, now President of Whitewater State College, a strong advocate of local history study, and author of several studies was largely responsible for this special development at River Falls.

The Reading Room is a joint project of

the River Falls State College, the State Historical Society Area Research Center project and the Pierce County Historical Society.

Two papers delivered at the conference, while directed to college teaching, may have interest to members of the Portage County Historical Society: Grassroots History and the Behavioral Sciences by John Lankford, Archivist at River Falls, and The Role of the Area Research Center on the College Campus, by James T. King, of the History Department at River Falls. Reading copies of these titles are available at the College Library at Stevens Point.

A NEW STORY ABOUT AN OLD STORY

"Was there such a place as Eau Pleine?" The challenging question was contained in a letter from Professor Merrill Burlingame, Chairman of the History Department of Montana State College at Bozeman, one of the component institutions of the University of Montana. Professor Burlingame's letter was received in early April by the Stevens Point City Clerk and was referred to Mrs. Win Rothman, of our Society, for attention. The story follows.

Fate had placed in the hands of Professor Burlingame a copy of a little book called "A Cave on the Yellowstone or Early Life in the Rockies" which had been published in 1902 by Helen Wilmot Sherman (at one time a member of a pioneer family in Portage County). It purported to cover the early experiences of a man named Bleau who was in Montana in the 1830's, "later settling in Eau Pleine in 1862, which was on the Wisconsin River near an old Indian Trading Post," so the letter read. To answer this letter proved a most interesting assignment.

The little book - "A Cave on the Yellowstone" - with its chapter on the old Wylie school, Wylie tavern, and Du-Bay Trading Post, has been known to our Portage County Historical Society for many years. Local search and inquiry has failed, however, to produce a copy. Here it had come to life, hundreds of miles away, where it had kindled an interest in the story it had to tell.

To trace the records required to tell the Wisconsin story of Mr. Bleau meant a

search of land records, tax rolls, cemetery and church records and old newspapers. Bit by bit the ownership of land in Eau Claire in the 1860's by Louis Blow (apparently the Yankee spelling of Bleau) and his wife Lydia was established and its proximity to the old DuBay Trading Post - a part of the American Fur Company of John Jacob Astor - now identified by a State Historical Marker. An early check of cemetery records, both Catholic and Protestant yielded no information. Then, paging thru 1880 items in "Stevens Point Through the Years" appeared the following: Stevens Point Journal December 8, 1883 "Louis Blow, one of the early pioneers of this section who came here in the forties, died on Monday evening last and was buried on Tuesday, the funeral being held from the Methodist church. Mr. Blow gave his age as 84 but those who know him best say he must have been 90 at least. He came over from Canada in 1830. ...He is survived by his wife. Mr. Blow was among that small number of French Canadians coming into Stevens Point in the early days, many settling in the Eau Claire Township and were neighbors."

The records of the Methodist Church, available today, did not start until 1888, five years after Louis Blow's death. A recheck at Forest Cemetery did not change the earlier report. Then, one day in early July while idly inspecting old tombstones near a family lot in Forest Cemetery, I discovered one broken from its base and in danger of being damaged. I tugged it over near the base and could hardly believe my eyes to read:

LEWIS BLEAU

D. December 3, 1883

Here was the verification of the name that we had been searching for. The date of death was the same as in the obituary notice. Checking again with Forest Cemetery Association, a record of the purchase was found in the Cash Book of that date. The grave lies in Block 2 - Lot 11. It is possible that Lydia who survived him may also be buried there.

In sending the information to Professor Burlingame we wrote: "This book (The Cave on the Yellowstone) has been a long lost item in our community and one that we have searched for among the pioneer families. Would it be possible to have this book

photostated?" He replied with the name of the owner of the book, commenting "this is one book in a large collection which her (Mrs. Loggott's) late husband acquired and whether she will sell this as a separate item I don't know. A query to Mrs. Loggott brought a disappointing refusal to sell the book individually. So the matter rested until the October meeting of our Board - my first opportunity to report the circumstances. Mr. Swanson, Curator on the State Historical Society Board, is checking the interest of the State Historical Library in Mrs. Leggett's collection. It is too soon to know the result.

Helen Wilnot Sharman taught the Wylie School shortly after the close of the Civil War. She roomed at the Wylie Tavern, which is not at all strange for there is a strong possibility that she was a granddaughter of Melancthon Wylie, who built and operated the old inn. Her book was written and published in 1902, in Chicago. Her home at that time was in Salt Lake City, Utah, the family having moved west in the early 1870's. In 1905 she returned here for the "Old White School" reunion and appeared on the program. Can anyone give us more information about Mrs. Sharman and does anyone have a copy of the book?

- Edith B. Rothman

CALENDARS

The Society has 1964 State Historical Society "Wisconsin Calendars" for sale again this year. Makes a nice Christmas gift. Contact Mr. N. R. Kampenga at Wisconsin State College for one.

DUES

Are you paid up to April, 1964? That is the beginning of our membership year. Mrs. N. R. Kampenga, R. 1, Box 148, Stevens Point, Wisconsin is our Treasurer.

