



# The Pinery

PUBLISHED NOW & THEN BY THE PORTAGE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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## GENERAL MEETING

November 15, 1967 at 7:30 p.m. A general meeting of the Portage County Historical Society will be held in the Demonstration Room of the County-City Building. Social hour at 7:30, meeting at 8:00 p.m. We plan to have some entertainment we hope everyone will enjoy. We'll also run a repeat on the old scenes of Stevens Point since we will have more time. Let's make it a point to attend this general meeting of our Society.

## CALENDARS

The Portage County Historical Society has 250 of the State Historical Society's 1968 calendars for Christmas sale this year. Perhaps each member could make himself responsible for the sale of at least two of these. The local society makes a small profit in this that helps us to carry out our local history projects. The calendars are obtainable at the University Center Bookstore, the Stevens Point Public Library, or will be delivered to you upon phone call to 344-5308. Price \$1.00. There will be a supply at the meeting on November 15. They make excellent Christmas Cards that can be looked at and used all year long.

## STATIONERY

We also hope to have a new supply, with a difference, of the Pioneer School stationery we had several years ago. This is the DIFFERENCE: on the back of each fold of the note paper, that features the sketch of the school on the front, will be a print of the marker on the Citizens National Bank grounds which marks the site of the Pioneer School. We hope to have a supply of this stationery at the meeting also and we are sure you will all be interested in it.

## OUR FOURTH MARKER

On September 10, 1967, the fourth marker bearing the insignia of the Portage County Historical Society was dedicated and unveiled. It marks the location of Stevens Point's first public building. This marker is on the Citizens National Bank parking lot near the spot where District School No.2, Portage County's first public school once stood--a little frame building in 1850. The building was also used for pioneer religious services and was the place where the Common Council held its first meeting in 1859 when Stevens Point became a city. Sponsored by the Portage County Historical Society, the Marker became a reality through the generosity and courtesy of the Citizens National Bank. The inscription on the marker in white letters on a green background was written by Mrs. Win Rothman. At the top of the marker is the Portage County's seal and at the bottom a picture of the building it honors. There is also a notation on it that it is Wisconsin's Registered Landmark No.49.

## THE MARKER INSCRIPTION

### FIRST PUBLIC BUILDING

Here for 110 years stood District School No.2, the oldest public building in Stevens Point. Completed in 1850, its appearance reflected its New England heritage. It served the pioneer community as school, recreation and civic center, and oft'times as church. Here in 1853 the first Roman Catholic Mass was said, and here in 1858 met the first Common Council of the newly chartered city of Stevens Point. Mayor William Schofield presiding.

## A CONTINUED MARKER PROGRAM

There are several other landmarks of history in Portage County that have been suggested for the registered marker program. Some are:

1. At or near Polonia, one of the earliest farm settlements of the Polish people in the U.S.A.
2. At Jordan, a unique water power plant.
3. At Plover, the territorial court house that served all of North Central Wisconsin from the city of Portage to Lake Superior.
4. At Spiritland, a site marked in the folklore of the county.
5. In Stevens Point, a re-marking in Pioneer Park of the original George Stevens landing and hostelry site.
6. In Buena Vista, Lone Pine Tavern.
7. In Lanark, Fletcher's Corners.
8. In Grant Township, the Portage County Drainage District.
9. In Stevens Point, Albert G. Ellis and "The Wisconsin Pinery".
10. On the Big Plover River, the site of the first sawmill and dam.
11. In Plover, Springville.
12. In EauPleine, Crocker's Landing.

Perhaps you have an historic site or landmark you would like to see marked. If so, report it to your Society. We hope to make a State Marker of some of these sites, especially numbers 1 and 3.

### OTHER MEETINGS...

The Eighteenth Annual Institute for Local History and the sixth annual meeting of the Wisconsin Council for Local History was held at Madison on October 6 & 7, 1967. Mr. Clifford Swanson and Mr. & Mrs. Nelis R. Kampenga of our society were in attendance. Mr. Swanson attended the meeting of the Curators of the State Societies held at the same time.

The program featured a session on American and Scandinavian Preservation Practices. This was given by Mr. Raymond S. Sivesind, Director of the State Historical Society's Division of Sites and Markers. He was a member of a group of American historic specialists who toured Scandinavian countries in 1965.

Sylvester K. Stevens, director of the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, who was appointed chairman of the National Advisory Council on Historic Preservation by President Johnson this past Spring, spoke on the work of the Council and its implications for Wisconsin Historical Societies.

Awards were presented at the luncheon: The Reuben Gold Thwaites traveling trophy was presented to the Milwaukee County Historical Society for its outstanding program of activities.

The Peshtigo Historical Society received the Local History Certificate of Commendation for its new three-frame mural of the Peshtigo fire.

Local History Awards of Merit for outstanding service in their fields were presented to Mrs. George Swart of Ft. Atkinson for her research and writing on local history, to E. Marvin Raney of Evansville for his technical and advisory service to the Rock County Historical Society and the Early Janesville Restoration Society, and to Robert Gard, a University of Wisconsin professor for his use of state and local history folklore in literature and dramatic arts.

The Fifth Annual Convention of the North Central Region, Wisconsin Council for Local History was held at Merrill, Wisconsin on September 23, 1967. Miss Marie Swallow and Mr. & Mrs. Nelis R. Kampenga attended this Luncheon Meeting at the Hinz Cork & Dyne Restaurant. There are 15 Historical Societies in this region and nearly all had representatives there who gave reports on their year's activities.

A report on the Wisconsin Council for Local History was given by Mr. Carl Dietenberger, Chairman and Mr. William J. Schereck from the State Society who is the executive secretary of the Council.

The welcome was given by Mr. George R. Gilkey, Regional Representative, who is President of the Lincoln County Historical Society and author of a history of Merrill.

After the meeting, short tours, one through part of the former Scott Mansion on the hospital grounds and one to a small private museum, were enjoyed by most of those present.

ADDRESS BY MR. HAMILTON VIETS, a member of the Board of Directors of the Portage County Historical Society at the dedication of the Pioneer Building Marker:

Let us test our imagination and travel together 117 years back into history to the year 1850, to a city of about 200 residents nestled closely to the east bank of the Wisconsin River and to a time of the year when the temperature is --- degrees less than it is today, for the month is December. This community, later to become the city of Stevens Point, is now a part of the Town of Middletown of Portage County whose county seat is still at Plover.

We find here a community whose industry and commerce is based on logging and lumbering. The retail establishments cater to both the lumberjacks and lumbermen. The men work hard in the forests and mills and they play just as hard in the area's six saloons. As the Wisconsin River is the artery for the commerce, the business places and homes are situated near the river, with the Public Square as the hub and extending east to what later became Water Street.

As we glance around us at the names on the mills and stores--Brawley, Knox, Strong, Weston, Avery, etc.--we realize that these pioneers are British, Norwegian, French Canadian and Irish. (The Polish settlers were not to make their appearance until 10 or more years later).

But, we have come to this community in this December of 1850 to visit their only schoolhouse, which has just this year been completed. We will use a horse and sleigh for our trip as the schoolhouse is located outside the eastern boundary of the community--where we are gathered today. As we travel along the snow covered road at the leisurely gait set by old Dobbin, we have the opportunity to study the exterior features of the white frame schoolhouse of which the community is so proud.

Someone on the sleigh, more knowledgeable about such matters than the rest of us, remarks that it has the Ohio River style of architecture. Someone else points out that, with its low pitched roof, if it had pillars at each corner from its heavy cornices it would give the appearance of a Grecian temple. Its perfect proportions belie its backwoods surroundings. It is about 30 feet long and approximately 24 feet wide. Its 18 foot height is capped by a red brick chimney placed near the rear of the building.

The roof, with its handmade wood shingles, gently slopes down to the 10 foot high sidewalls.

Dobbin has come to a stop, and as we alight and approach the school stoop, one little girl runs ahead of us for the teacher has apparently rung the hand bell--there is no belfry. We notice that the child's running is somewhat hampered by her dress and coat, which come down onto the calves of her legs, leaving exposed only her high buttoned shoes and boots. (No mini-skirt, slacks or sport jacket here).

We enter the front door, which is located to the right. There are two windows to our left. Just inside the door is a cloakroom 6 feet wide extending across the entire front of the building. Here the children are busy hanging up their coats, scarfs and stocking caps. On the floor beneath they have placed their boots. In this cloakroom also is a waterpail which has been filled this morning from a pump in the schoolyard.

As we step inside the schoolroom itself, we catch an aroma which we soon realize arises from wet mittens which were placed too near the hot pot-bellied wood stove located just beyond the center of the room. We notice the stove-pipe goes from the stove near the center of the room to the chimney at the rear of the building, thus taking advantage of the additional heat radiation from this rather long length of stove pipe--a bit of engineering to meet a specific need. The exposed chimney is supported by brackets on the wall, instead of extending down to the floor.

Glancing around the room with our mind's eye, we notice that there is wainscoating on all four walls up to the height of the windows of which there are three in each of the side walls. These six windows furnish the only illumination for the room except that the teacher's desk holds a candle holder and candle for use when the teacher must work later than the daylight hours would otherwise permit.

Most of the 66 children enrolled are already at the long benches which serve as desks, with boxes as seats. One of the students has already opened his McGuffey's Eclectic Reader.

The teacher quickly approaches us from her desk, which is on a raised platform at the front of the room and introduces herself as Miss B. McLaughlin, the school's first teacher.

She is anxious to tell us about her school. She informs us that the land for the school was acquired on January 3, 1850 for \$10.00 by the Stevens Point School House Building Committee of Middletown. Its construction was authorized by a resolution of the Portage County Board of Supervisors as School District No.2. The community known as Stevens Point, although as yet unincorporated, comprised School District No.2.

The School was constructed at the magnificent cost of \$300 and opened in 1850 as the first school house in Portage County. Miss McLaughlin points out that this first public and tax-supported school will remove the burden of teaching reading, writing and arithmetic in the home--which had been customary in most of these smaller frontier communities.

For Miss McLaughlin's services to the community, including the building of the wood fire on these cold winter mornings, she received the handsome salary of \$20 monthly.

With Miss McLaughlin's good-bye and the waves of the children, we must leave the new white school house. But there is more to the saga of this school house that needs to be told to bring us back to the present day. Miss McLaughlin apparently taught only for four years, because in 1854 John Charles Maloney became the first male to teach in Stevens Point.

We find that the school house played a role in the community not only as a school but also as a community hall--it being the first public building in the County. It was here in 1853 that the first mass was celebrated for the Catholics of the community which group served as the nucleus for the formation of St. Stephen's Catholic Church.

In 1858 the building ceased to function as a school in favor of the larger 3-room school, known as the white school, a few blocks away. It continued, however, as a public building; in fact, in it the historic first meeting of the Common Council with Mayor William Schofield presiding, was called to order on July 1, 1858 to perfect the organization of the city of Stevens Point. Also, it served as a meeting place for the Methodists until their original edifice, St. Paul's Methodist Church was erected on Strongs Avenue.

Eventually the little school house ceased its service to the public, after having accomodated everything from social gatherings to political caucuses, and was converted to a cottage. For some time it served as the dwelling of Miss Lizzie Cadman. Later it served variously as an auto repair shop, real estate office, justice of the peace office and local distribution office for a newspaper.

To preserve its features and to revive its past for present and future generations, the Portage County Historical Society in 1959, in cooperation with the City, undertook its restoration on a site in the area now being developed as a park on the east shore of the Wisconsin River. It was moved to that spot, funds were solicited and plans were drawn for its restoration. Before that could be accomplished, however, it collapsed on February 27, 1962 under the weight of record snow falls and snow from a blower, to bring its very full 112 year history to an inglorious end.

#### THE NAMES IN OUR COUNTY:

LANARK - this name probably came from Scotland. Undoubtedly given it by families whose place of origin was Scotland.

NELSONVILLE - named for Jerome Nelson, an Englishman and pioneer who purchased land to erect a mill and build a dam on the Waupaca river for power to run the sawmill.

AMHERST - according to legend named for Amherst in Nova Scotia, reputedly the native place of an early settler by the name of Urline.

ALBAN - bears the name of a Civil War regimental commander, James S. Alban who was mortally wounded at Shiloh in the battle of Pittsburgh Landing, Apr. 6, 1862.

STOCKTON - to quote Malcolm Rosholt in "Our County, Our Story" the derivation of the name Stockton is uncertain. Several men in American History bear this name, one of whom signed the Declaration of Independence. Sherman believes it was named after Com. Stockton, presumably Robert F. Stockton an American Naval Officer before the Civil War. It is more likely that the township was named after the city in Durham County, England.