



# The Pinery

PUBLISHED NOW & THEN BY THE PORTAGE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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## *General Meeting - November 20th*

Please read the letter enclosed with this copy of your PINERY. It tells you all about the November meeting, which promises to be interesting and entertaining.

The program will focus on the 75th anniversary of the founding of the Stevens Point Normal, the beginnings of Wisconsin State University at Stevens Point.

Remember these meetings are open to the public and you are welcome to bring friends.

*1969 State Historical Society Calendars  
and the Portage County Historical Society's  
First School-House Commemorative Note-paper.*

The Portage County Historical Society is again selling these handsome calendars, still only \$1.00 each. For the benefit of the Society, the calendars are available at the Public Library, at the Book Store in the University Center, or by calling 344-5308.

The Society's own note paper commemorating the first school-house of Portage County is also available at \$1.00 per box.

## *Members attend meeting*

Five local society members, Mr. & Mrs. N.R. Kampenga, Mrs. Mildrede Williams and Misses Susan Colman and Marie Swallow attended the Sixth Annual Convention of the North Central Region, Wisconsin Council for Local History, at Wausau on August 17. 60 Regional members were in attendance at the meeting which began at 10:30 a.m. with registration, coffee, a tour of the museum and the showing of short films produced by the Marathon Historical Society for its educational program. Luncheon was served at noon at the Wausau Club ballroom after which reports of the

year's activities were given by the president or representative of each of the 15 local societies of the region.

Mr. Edward T. Schoenberger, Director of the Marathon County Museum gave an interesting report on the museum activities. Wm. J. Schereck, of the State Society, spoke briefly on the Tax Exempt Status of the Societies and Mrs. Robert Jacobson, Chairman of the Wisconsin Council for Local History gave a talk, "Accent on Youth", the Council's theme for the year. Special emphasis is to be placed on the teaching of local history in our schools and in the training of teachers in this subject.

## *The Jordan Dam Marker*

The Portage County Historical Society nominated the Jordan Dam site as a Wisconsin Registered Landmark and it was approved by the Advisory Committee of the Wisconsin Council for Local History. It will mark the site of one of the first diversion power dams in the United States and also the fact that a sawmill existed at Jordan more than 100 years ago.

The committee in charge of this marker, Hamilton Viets, Chairman, Had Manske and Paul Yambert, report it well under way.

The 30x42" marker made by a Marietta, Ohio firm is being underwritten in cost and erection by the County Park Commission. It will probably be erected next Spring. Like the "First Public Building" marker erected a year ago in the Citizens National Bank parking lot, the Jordan marker will have a number assigned to it by the Wisconsin Registered Landmarks Inventory.

*The Public Square Marker*

This marker was erected before the state registered landmark program was inaugurated. As this site is one of the most significant, in the area and especially in the city of Stevens Point, the Portage County Historical Society plans to have it registered.

*19th Institute for Local History*

This meeting was held October 18th & 19th. Nelis Kampenga, local society president, and Dorothy Kampenga attended.

The first day of the meeting was "A Day in Old Madison" and was an introduction to historical architecture in Madison with a tour to selected houses in the city chosen for their architectural significance, and a musical evening spent in one of the homes which the Taychopera Foundation of Madison hopes to save from destruction.

Saturday's program included talks on political buttons as a specialized collection in a museum and maps as a specialized collection in a library.

At noon on Saturday the seventh annual luncheon of the Wisconsin Council for Local History featured the presentation of awards to groups and individuals having made some outstanding contribution. Marathon County Historical Society received a certificate of commendation for its education program.

*Tid-Bits From the Pinery of Vesteryear*

*Marriage Announcements-- 1853*

The following verse accompanied the marriage announcements of several pioneer couples:

"Friend you've got your choice at last  
The marriage o'er, you've got her fast,  
I trust you will enjoy true happiness  
together  
Whatever may be the storms you meet, or  
What may be the weather."

And this at the marriage of John Tuttle and Mary Slosson:

"We wish you and your fair bride  
Much happiness, Friend Tuttle,  
And think you've done extremely well  
And hope it soon will double."

Or this, at the marriage of Mr. George Strowbridge to Miss Harriet Davy:

"May you enjoy the married life  
be happy and content,  
Your sons be true Americans  
Tho' in part of Welsh descent."

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*Fashion -- 1866*

June 28, 1866 - "The tilting hoops now worn by the ladies come in for a round share of abuse from the different journals in the country. We think the new spider-legged pants of the gentlemen are entitled to as much derision as the "tilters". Ladies, if you admire the "tilters", go on and wear them.

August 16, 1866 - (On this date the editor changes his mind)

"Tilting hoops: Whenever we see some lady going along the street wearing the latest style "tilting hoops" we are reminded of the couplet of the old English poet:

"Their petticoats short, that hoop  
eight yards wide,  
Might decently show where their  
garters are tied."

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*Trivia - -*

October 23, 1856. "These two lines so lonely and solemn, Were put down here to fill up the column."

October 1, 1858.

"Conundrum: Why are the sidewalks on Main Street like music? Answer: Because if you don't C sharp you will B flat."

Contributed by - Mrs. Edith Rothman

*The Wisconsin Pinery* from which Mrs. Rothman garnered the above tid-bits is the pioneer newspaper for our area. Our Society's newsletter is a name-sake to it; our newsletter masthead is designed after one of the newspaper's masthead emblems.

This newspaper, edited by one of the most celebrated of Wisconsin's early newspapermen and printers, Albert G. Ellis, was published in Stevens Point from 1853-1886. The file of newspapers forms the basic record of Portage County's pioneer years.

The actual printing press used by editor Ellis in turning out the early issues of the newspaper stands on display inside the entrance to the new Stevens Point Public Library building, a permanent picturesque monument to an instrument of great political, economic, social and cultural force in our community history.

#### *Early School Board Records Found in Attic*

In the winter of 1963-64 some Nelsonville residents interested in the early history of the village met every two weeks for discussion, doing some research, and producing an outline for study. The Portage County Historical Society was invited to a meeting on April 15, 1964 to share some of the findings. I agreed to find out what concern these pioneers had for education. I searched and searched but could find no early records. About six months later, Eva Wimpe, a real local history fan, appeared at my door with a dirty, dilapidated cardboard box found in the corner of an attic in a Nelsonville home. What a find! In this box I found a school register, some class books, a treasurer's book which also contained the original contracts of early teachers.

No one in our community had known about the minutes of annual meetings beginning in 1868. There were census reports and other materials that gave a picture of the schools of that era. Space permits giving only a small amount of the information given in the records:

School census lists and family names in the class books show that the very earliest settlers were not of Norwegian descent, though in the late 1860's, 70's and 80's

the development of the village and vicinity was carried on by immigrants from Norway or their sons. The people who came to work for Jerome Nelson, the founder of the village, in his mills and other business in the locality, originally came from the East or other parts of Wisconsin. We find listed the family names of Darling, Snyder, Creed, Staley, Mitchum, Joseph and Metcalf.

Jerome Nelson secured the site on which his first mill was located from the U.S. Government, Nov. 28, 1854. On Sept. 10, 1855 he arranged with Claus and Anna Stoltenberg to build a dam and create a pond on part of their land along the Tomorrow River. The first mill was built in 1855. A School must have been important to the early settlers for in 1857 a small building, 14x20, with hand-made seats and benches, was erected on the land of Johannes Christianson, east of the present school building. The first teacher was Sarah Nelson, a sister of Jerome Nelson. This building served the district for 16 years, for the minutes of the 1872 annual meeting show that \$300 was to be raised in 1872-73 for the purpose of building a new school 21x34x12.

This second school was built across the Nelsonville pond and is now the dwelling of Bernard Stanke who operates a garage near his home. This new building, according to the records, was occupied in 1873.

Jerome Nelson purchased the first school for \$25 and presented it to Johannes Christianson. He used it for storage. Mr. Nelson sold the site for the second school to the district for \$20. In 1904 when the present school, then consisting of one room, was built; the second school was sold to Ben Frederickson for \$450. The district purchased the site for the third school from John Loberg, son-in-law of Jerome Nelson, for \$400.

Minutes of the annual meeting show that early businessmen, prominent in the community, served as members of the school board--as clerk, director, treasurer or as chairman of the annual meeting. Jerome Nelson served on the board and was frequently "in the chair" at an annual meeting. John Moen, Henry Darling, Oscar Snyder, A.A. Peterson, who was

Postmaster and a maker and seller of boots and shoes, Lars L. Loberg who had a general store and was engaged in many business activities in the community, and Ole Iverson are listed as school officers.

Teachers of this era usually boarded in various homes in the district.

The records show that early teachers boarded in the Nelson home. April 10, 1868, to M. A. Nelson (Marrilla) for "boarding" \$24. March 8, 1869, to J. Nelson for "Boarding" \$30. May 14, 1859 to J. Nelson for teacher boarding, \$20.

From 1868 to 1886 the amount of money raised by the district averaged \$180 a year. A low of \$100 and a high of \$225. In 1879 the district raised \$150, the County \$20 and the State \$23.56 for the school. In 1886 the district raised \$200, the County provided \$56.90 and the state \$64.

According to the treasurer, very little was provided each year in the way of equipment and supplies. Pupils furnished their own books and slates. A common item of purchase was a box or two of chalk, a pail and dipper and a broom were frequently furnished. Wood was purchased each year for \$1.00, \$1.50 or \$2.00 per cord. On Sept. 22, 1857 a large dictionary was purchased from the state superintendent for \$7. On Nov. 11, 1881, 26 school desks were purchased for \$98 and a teacher's desk for \$8. Other purchases were: Sept. 7, 1894, a map for \$6; Jan. 7, 1902 a suspension globe for \$16; Nov. 3, 1897 a bell and a flag for \$21.35.

In 1886 the school board was instructed to purchase school texts and sell to pupils at cost. In 1897 they voted to furnish books free of charge to the school children. School books for \$32.20, \$7.06 and \$9.12 were purchased in 1897 and 1898.

The original contracts from 1867 to 1902 list the names of 22 teachers employed in the district at different times. Voters decided if there would be a five, a six or a seven months term.

Winter terms began in September or October, Summer terms began in April or May.

There was a Christmas vacation of two or three weeks.

Voters decided if a male teacher or a "good female teacher" should be hired. Men teachers usually taught the winter term, firing the stove and shoveling snow also. Women taught the summer term. Big boys, seventeen, eighteen and nineteen years old attended school in the winter term and this called for a man teacher.

The average salary of teachers from 1867 to 1902 was \$28 per month. August Miller in 1867 received \$17 per month.

-- Alice Gordon, Nelsonville  
October 15, 1968