



The Pinery

PUBLISHED NOW & THEN BY THE PORTAGE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Stevens Point, Wisconsin

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CALL TO THE ANNUAL MEETING

Thursday, April 20, 1972 is the date set for the annual meeting of the Portage County Historical Society. It will be held in the Home Demonstration room in the City-County Building. Coffee and cookies will be served at 7:30 p.m. The session will open at 8:00 p.m.

Professor Richard Schneider of the UW-SP Art Department will present a talk on Indian crafts. Professor Schneider teaches a course in Indian arts and crafts, taking his study and his craftsmanship direct to the Wisconsin Indian tribes, steeping himself in the lore, using the materials, tools and techniques employed by the native craftsmen. The talk will be illustrated.

There will also be presented an engaging short film on the Stevens Point Public Square. The film strip was produced by the UW-SP Audio-Visual Production Course and presented to the society by its instructor, Robert S. Lewis.

Come and bring families and friends, including young people and children.

ANNUAL DUES...

April 1 marks the beginning of a new year for the Society, with annual dues for the coming year payable then. Make payment of dues to the treasurer of the Society, Dorothy C. Kampenga, 301 Post Road, Plover, Wis. 54467

REGIONAL LOCAL HISTORY CONVENTIONS:

The Wisconsin Council for Local History has arranged regional conventions for the 1972 year. On Aug. 5, the North Central

Regional Convention will be held at Marshfield, celebrating that city's centennial year; on Sept. 9, South Eastern Regional, at Oak Creek; on Sept. 16, Northwestern Regional, at Balsam Lake. Others are to be announced.

Attendance at these summer-time meetings last year brought inside tours of the Gundry House museum and the Wisconsin Odd Fellows Museums at Mineral Point as well as a re-visit to the Cornish restorations including a talk by the director in the charm of the upstairs sitting room of Pendarvis House; at Marinette county Museum and the Mystery Ship Seaport; in Iron County, visits to the Upson and Ironwood (Mich.) museums, colorful walks to an old mining site, the highest point in the county for a panoramic view, and a stop at an ancient Lake Superior port at the tip of Iron County. These conferences offer wonderful first-hand adventures in local history. In 1973 the Portage County Historical Society will entertain the North Central Regional Conference in Stevens Point.

BICYCLING...

Springtime and the current enthusiasm for bicycling (pedal-powered) reminds historical-minded that it was in the 1890's that the bicycle as a means of transportation was at its height.

The ability to move at a 15 mile speed was heady. In fact, eighty years ago the faster set was already well organized into the Stevens Point Cycle Club, had built bicycle paths over much of the

county, arranged race-tracks, and made long trips going as far east as Pennsylvania. A year later (1893) the Wheelmen Club drew up its constitution and held its first meeting at the Rink Opera House (popular place of entertainment on Strongs Avenue, pre-dating the present Fox Theatre Opera House on Main Street), adopting a cycling uniform of blue knee pants and cap, black stockings and belt and a light colored shirt.

We list the officers of the club to mark the anniversary:

- L.R.Anderson, President
- John Rothman, Vice President
- J. W. Holt, Secretary
- J. R. Congdon, Treasurer
- W. L.Bronson, Captain
- H. C. Craig, Lieutenant

The following is a list of the other charter members of the club:

- Bosworth, F.E. Schuweiler, N.
- Butterfield, R.H. Sherwin, G.C.
- Cain, G.B. Sizer, D.A.
- Culver, A.J. Slender, G.A.
- Dillie, F.L. Smith, Dr.Jesse
- Ellertsen, J.C. Spaulding, H.E.
- Ellis, John F. Strope, H.W.
- Ennor, T.C. Stumpf, E.O.
- Gerhart, Geo. Sustins, F.A.
- Jones, C.L. Sweetman, G.L.
- King, F.Y. Vaillancourt,C.L.
- McDonald, W.S. Virum, O.E.
- Michael, Jos. Week, A.R.
- Mueller, W.C. Welty, H.C.
- Murray, F.H.

Alex Wallace comments (Stevens Point Through the Years, chapter 276, *Stevens Point Journal*, Feb. 10,1945) on the event, "...unless one has passed through those frenzied bicycle days one cannot imagine the part that the bicycle played 61 years ago. Bicycle paths were built all over our county and many through the state. Bicycle races were held all over the country. The bicycle had come, giving man the opportunity to travel faster than he had ever traveled before, except by train. The bicycle brought the pneumatic tire, the chain drive and later on the shaft drive, those inventions paving the way for making possible the automobile that followed."

Back in 1893 on a nice summer evening there would be hundreds of people out on their bikes.

On the Wheelmen Club, Mr. Wallace noted further (Stevens Point Through the Years, Chapter 306, June 1, 1895):

"W. O. Lamoreaux and H.C.Welty returned Tuesday morning over the Central from a trip to Milwaukee on their bikes. They left for the Cream City last Saturday morning at 4:20 a.m., arriving at Ripon that evening. The next morning they proceeded on their 160 mile ride, arriving at the Kirby House in Milwaukee at 4:00 p.m. The distance between Ripon and Milwaukee via Fond du Lac, which is 84 miles, was covered in less than eight hours. To make the record an exceptionally good one Harry added 16 miles by taking a run out to Whitefish Bay and on his return to Milwaukee had covered 100 miles in just nine hours actual riding time. This record entitled him to wear the century bar and is the first century record ever made by a Stevens Point wheelman."

OUR TOWN, ANOTHER SPRING, THE ELMS AND OTHER SENTIMENTS

We turn again to Tap Snilloc (Pat Collins and his faithful record, for a look at the past, presenting below in full his picture of Stevens Point in the spring. Those of us who have watched the thinning of the arch of elms (without replacement) over Main St. and other avenues will appreciate especially the Way-Back Whenner's "Reminiscences", *Stevens Point Journal* June 1, 1929:

"The old timer has witnessed many changes in his home town. When the lumber industry dominated, nearly all the buildings were constructed of pine lumber and it created a wide comment when the first dwellings were built of brick or stone. It seems only a few years back when all the side-walks were built of pine and in the outlying districts there were no side-walks at all. No one shoveled walks in the wintertime, the inhabitants plowed through the drifts in the middle of the street to reach the down town district.

"The Public Square, so often noted in song and story, was a quagmire in the spring of the year and often times pedestrians were obliged to navigate this section in high rubber boots. To emphasize the deplorable condition of the square, one spring, some wag of the town anchored a boat on the east side and attached a sign, notifying the public that the price for a ferry across was 25¢. The Public Square, in the summertime, was a bower of pines. Every spring the merchants bordering this thoroughfare would set out young pine trees in front of their places and it gave the market a pleasant appearance.

"The business activity was confined to the two or three blocks east from the river on Main & Clark and the intersecting streets. All the store buildings were built of wood and when William Spraggon built the stone bakery on Second St., it was the wonder of the age. Later on when the Lauer Brothers built the Walker, McCulloch and White stores, from the native stone, we thought we were emerging into a metropolitan city. The Curran House was the center of attraction as it was the leading hostelry in the city. The drink emporiums were numerous and the Ocean Wave and the Star were most important. In the late seventies the city started to build substantial business blocks and the town took on a civilized appearance. The Cliffords built their stores on Main St. in 1877. A few years later the Masonic block was erected, a three story building and business started to move eastward. In the nineties the two national banks erected their homes, and from that period the city advanced as a commercial center.

"The streets were deplorable. In the spring of the year they were knee deep in mud and later on in the summer the sand was up to the hubs of the vehicles. Our early pioneers apparently gave very little attention to the condition of the streets in an early day. It was not until 1891 that Main Street was paved with cedar blocks. That was the beginning of street improvements in the city and from that time on, the city has advanced. The last section to get attention is the east side where the city is planning to install sewers and modern paving to give this section a place in the sun. Very few of our people realize the

beauties of the east side of the city. The writer wandered out to that section and was surprised to see the beautiful homes and handsome lawns that adorned that section. Where the circus grounds were located, in my youthful days, was all built up with attractive homes. It was difficult to locate the place where I had bought circus lemonade and peanuts long ago. Paved streets are the building of a city. If the old timers will visualize the condition of Strongs Ave., Church, Water, Plover, Pine and other streets before the street improvements were put in, and compare them with the present day appearance of the streets, he will realize what a great change has taken place in a very short time...

"One of the outstanding features of our city is its beautiful trees. The visitor standing in front of the post-office and looking east, beholds an arch of elms and maples that line Main St. east to the Normal. Our early settlers prided themselves on their tree culture. As soon as their homes were completed, they set out the trees along the edge of the street and today these stately monarchs of the forest beautify our streets and make the city look like a bower of evergreens. These stately trees impress the stranger in our midst and as he strolls along through the residential sections he is delighted with the perspective as it unfolds itself to his vision.

"The white pine, a native of this section, has nearly disappeared. In my youth, an old and ancient pine tree stood in front of the Eaton home on Clark St. Its far reaching branches covered a wide area and it was the admiration of the natives. It was the trysting place, in the warm summer evenings of long ago, for the younger generation, and many tender words were spoken under the spreading branches of this old tree. Another old pine tree stood down on Water St., opposite the residence of Max Krembs, and this old tree if it could speak the language of us humans, could tell many an interesting tale of bygone days when youth was young and maidens fair.

"How many can remember Wadleigh grove at

the end of Prentice St? This grove was a natural forest of stately pine trees and it was here that the members of the past generation held their picnics and communed with nature. This was the meeting place for the schools of the city to hold their picnics and many a Fourth-of-July celebration was held in this old grove. An old timer would hardly recognize the place now. The old pine monarchs have disappeared and this whole section is now covered with commodious homes of a thrifty people. Another grove that was beautiful to the eye was located near the old water works and was known as the Grant grove. Past generations of pleasure seekers will recall with grateful memory the beauty of this virgin forest on the outskirts of our city. The only cluster of pine trees left within the confines of the city, to my memory, is the grove known in early days as the Phillips grove on Water St., in the sixth ward. These ancient sentinels of a bygone age, are all gone..."

STEVENS POINT CENSUS NOTE

As noted by the Stevens Point City Clerk in June 1875: population, males 1766, females 1558; "of these one is colored, six deaf and dumb, one blind, one insane." *Stevens Point Journal*, June 12, 1875.

GREEN BAY & WESTERN RR, CENTENNIAL YEAR

In 1871 the Central came to Stevens Point. In 1872 the GB&W (then GB & Lake Pepin RR) came into Plover.

On April 30, 1872 people of Amherst cast votes upon the proposition of \$10,000 aid to the GB & LP conditional that a depot should be established near the village.

The stout people of Amherst defeated the proposition roundly, much to the disgust of President Ketchum "who stamped the dust off his feet as he departed declaring that the town need expect no favors from his road."

In Oct. 1872, the Village of Plover welcomed the railroad more readily, the railroad setting its sights on the shortest line possible between two points, driving the railroad through the middle of the town directly through the portion that had been dedicated in the original Moses Strong plat to the village's public square. To quote the *Plover Times*, Oct. 25, 1872: "Hurrah! Ring the bells! Fire the guns! Bring out your fire crackers and pop-guns! ...for sixteen long and weary years the inhabitants of Plover have been looking, toiling and hoping for a railroad...but now we've got a RAILROAD."

MARIE SWALLOW...

We grieve the passing of Miss Marie Swallow, charter member of the society, long-time member of the board of directors. As Vice President for many, many years, Miss Swallow planned and organized the society programs, edited *The Pinery*. Her devotion to Portage County and Wisconsin State history, her quick and dedicated assistance in the objectives of the society, her companionship are sorely missed. We are fortunate to have some of Miss Swallow's writings on Wisconsin history, but most especially it gives us pleasure to have the voice record of some of her talks as presented over radio in the 1940's. These came to the Society through the benefit of recordings preserved from the now defunct CSTC radio station, managed by Gertie Hansen and Robert Lewis.

The Pinery is issued by the PORTAGE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
Stevens Point, Wisconsin. Members of the Board are:

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