



The Pinery

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REGIONAL LOCAL HISTORY CONVENTIONS:

Programs and reservation forms for this summer's regional conventions are sent from the State Historical Society to your president. Two are at hand now:

August 12, 1972: Northeastern regional convention at New Holstein. Deadline for reservations, Wed., August 8th.

August 19, 1972: Southwestern regional convention at Reedsburg. Deadline for reservations, Monday, August 14th.

These one-day programs offer excellent opportunities for excursion to see other historical societies at work, to visit museums and historical sites that otherwise may be out-of-the-way. Luncheon, lectures and tours are usually included.

You may be interested in getting a party together for such a trip, or your family. If so, phone 344-5308 or 346-2586 and copies of the programs will be mailed to you. Time is short, note the deadlines for reservations.

Programs will be available later for the Northwestern regional at Balsam Lake, Sept 16; for the Southeastern at Oak Creek, Sept. 19.

ARNOTT ...

The village of Arnott is celebrating the 90th year of its naming. Sept. 16 & 17 are the focal days for the event, a time for carnival, parade and street dancing. A local committee is working on the collecting of documents and artifacts for display and are search-

ing for the personalities, facts and detail that make Arnott's history. A member of our society, Mrs. Gerald Zimmerman of Stockton township is hard at work on this occasion and would like to hear from people who have some association with Arnott and vicinity.

The Stevens Point Daily Journal (Sept. 23, 1882) tells the story of the beginnings:

"Arnott is the name of the new station in the town of Stockton on the Green Bay & Western Railway. It is located on William Plummer's land, near Calvin Richmond's, and will be a great convenience to farmers living in that vicinity. The new depot is already completed and trains now stop there. Cargill & Bro. of LaCrosse have built a large warehouse 30x60 and buy all kinds of farm produce. The farmers in that neighborhood, who will be mostly benefited by this new market can thank Messrs. Arnott, Richmond and Bremmer, as it was through their energy that the depot was established. They canvassed the country and raised the required sum \$500 for the company, together with one and one-half acres of land. The company has named the station 'Arnott' after the Hon. William L. Arnott, one of the prominent farmers of that town."

William L. Arnott, was prominent in political activities in Portage County, the station named for him because of his service as chairman of the Stockton town board and for one year, chairman of the county board of supervisors; Joseph A. Bremmer served as the first postmaster of the Arnott Post Office, established on November 2, 1882.

URBAN RENEWAL...

With talk of urban renewal in Stevens Point, renovation of Strongs Avenue in particular, it is good to turn again to Tap Snilloc (Pat Collins) who in one of his inimitable columns in the Stevens Point Daily Journal (March 3, 1928) took a look back at the Strongs Avenue of his boyhood. Pat Collins was 59 when he wrote this piece, looking back 45 years to the 1880's, It is now close to 45 years since the writing. We are looking at the Strongs Avenue of 90 years ago through Tap Snilloc's eyes, "the old landmarks rapidly disappearing..."

WHEN STRONGS AVE. WAS THE MAIN DRAG.

"Strongs Avenue has always been the main artery of travel from the south portion of the town. In my time, when the bus lines functioned from the old Wisconsin Central depot to the hotels up town, this thoroughfare was the 'main drag' of the city. Many changes have taken place on this historic old street since I was a boy. The old landmarks are rapidly disappearing and new faces have taken the place of the old ones..."

"Commencing at the corner of Main and the avenue, on the east side of the street, we start with the John A. Walker residence on the corner. To the south was the residence of A. Eaton and across the street was the home of Robert Newbitt where the Hardware Insurance now stands. The Nesbitt barn stood on the corner of Ellis and across the street was the home of William Collins and his good wife; Auntie Collins, as she was called by the children of the neighborhood, was a great favorite with the kids and her cookie jar was never empty. The next place, to the south was an oak grove and in later years W.H.Collins built his home here and lived for a number of years. This property is now owned by Mrs.Mansur. Years ago they held a celebration in the city, on the 4th of July, and the committee built a stand on the corner where the Frost Fishing Tackle shop is now located, to shoot off the fireworks in the evening.

During the entertainment a spark ignited the fireworks and the whole thing went up in smoke. Fire rockets were flying in all directions, and the crowd stampeded in great excitement, but no one was injured. After the 'blow-up' it was found that every pane of glass in the Cahill House had been shattered by the rockets..."

"In the next block was located the county court house and around this historic old building centers many events. It was built in the early 70's and at the time was considered the last thing in county buildings..."

"In the dome of the old court house is recorded the names of many of the younger generation, who in bygone days, carved their names in artistic style, high up on the rafters of the crow's nest. It was considered a great stunt, when I was a boy. to climb the long stairway that led to the top of the building and then climb the long ladder that led to the circle on the top. From this high pinnacle you could get a fine view of Rib Hill to the north, the Stockton hills to the east, the big marsh to the south and the winding 'old Wisconsin' as it threaded its way toward the Father of Waters. This spring, when the weather is fine, take this trip to the top of the courthouse, and you will be surprised at the fine view that will be unfolded. In early days the courthouse grounds were well laid out and a turn-stile was located at each corner. A fence of peculiar architecture was built around the grounds. It consisted of three stands of 4x4s, laid on edge, painted and sanded. I suppose they were laid on edge to keep the boys from sitting on the fence and the sand was put on to keep them from using their knives. I remember sitting on this old fence and watching a ball game on the commons to the south and I assure you the sitting process was not comfortable. The county fathers knew their business when they built that fence.

"To the south of the courthouse was the commons. This place was used for ball games and sports of all kinds. It was on these commons that the early day circuses pitched their tents. Burr-Robbins, Sell Bros., Adam Forepaugh and many others entertained the people for miles around with their fine exhibition of acrobatic skill.

"It was in these old shows that they featured the tumblers who tossed somersaults over the backs of lumbering elephants. The modern circus has stunts that are difficult and thrilling but to the old timers, the tumbling acts of the early-day shows had them beat a mile...

"On the next corner south of the commons was the home of Nicholas Knope, and in the hollow was a small cottage occupied by a Mr. Phelps. This is now the home of Frank B. Roe. On the corner beyond lived John Christianson, who drove a dray in early days. On the next corner was the brick home of George Huth and then followed the homes of James Rice, Hanford and William Calkins. The South side engine house was next and on the corner was a small house where Chris Geisler's home is now located. In the next block were several homes occupied by many people. On the corner of Park and Strongs avenue was the celebrated saloon run by Fred Hoffman. On the triangle beyond was another saloon that catered to the thirst of the Southsiders. At the end of the street was the little red depot of the Wisconsin Central. When this ancient old relic was torn down and the new depot erected, we thought we were quite metropolitan. This building was disposed of and the Soo erected the present structure... A great array of railroad talent occupied the old depot building. Guy Campbell, Fred Waldo, M.B.Cutter, C.O.Wheeler and A.R.Horn were early superintendents.

"Coming back on the west side of the street, the old Curran house was located across the street from the depot. This was one of the first hotels built on the South-side. When it burned down the St.James hotel was erected on this site. Al Wadtke ran the St.James for a time and when he quit, Garrett Cleary took his place as landlord. This old hotel had a tragic ending. It was destroyed by fire in the spring of 1889 and two lives were lost in its ruins. As you wander north on the street the first residence you passed was the home

of John D. McLean. This home was on the site of the Moose temple. John McLean was an officer in the Union army and served the city as Mayor. In the next block lived the old war veteran, Walter Frazer. He conducted the only book bindery in the city. I always had a sentimental regard for kindly Walter Frazer. It was always customary in early days to fire a salute to the states on the morning of the 4th of July... Walter Frazer and Harry Isherwood always had charge of this part of the celebration. As I remember 36 salutes were fired to represent each state. It was some celebration and it always made a deep impression on the kids.

"Conrad Zimmer lived to the north of the Frazer bindery. His old horse, 'Prince' was one of the familiar sights on the streets in early days. E.A.Williams lived in the next home. He was the city surveyor and knew more about lots and blocks than any man in the city. Ellison Scott lived in this block and in later years Jim McCadden lived on the corner. Mr.Densch lived on the corner to the north and John Campbell built the home where George Altenburg now lives. Louis Miller had his home in this block and Jim Hubbard and William Andrews lived to the north. Eugene Tack lived on the corner. Across the street lived Mr. Ambrose and his good wife, who had a truck garden and sold vegetables to the natives. George Huth had a cooper shop in the hollow and made beer kegs for the breweries. The Taylor family and their daughter Flora, lived to the north. The corner was vacant. In the next block the corner also was vacant and the next place was the Homestead cottage. Homer Blanchard lived here in later years. The next place was vacant and was used by the circus people when they showed on the lot across the street. In later years J.H.Carlisle built the brick house where W.J.Clifford lived in later years. George Stenger built the home now owned by John Murat. The home that George Wakefield lives in was the Orrick home and was moved from the corner of Third & Clark by Philip Rothman and remodeled by him and he lived there until he built his residence on Clark St. This was re-built by Mr.Wakefield. Wm. Walker, who came from Almond, lived in the next place and on the corner lived George Maine, a pioneer lumberman. On the corner to the north Martin Cahill built the Cahill

House, now the Arlington. Martin Cahill came here from Waukesha in the early seventies and worked as a stone cutter on the new court house. The Cahill House was the rendezvous for the Irish of the county in early days. It still retains its hospitable reputation under the able management of Col. James Welch and his wife. John Stenger lived in the next home and after he left for the west John Finch lived there. Vincent Betlach bought this home in later years and it has recently been moved up on Clark St. and remodeled into a modern home by George Hoppen.

"On the corner where Gullikson garage is located, the old planing mill stood, a relic of bygone days. In the middle 80's the property was purchased and the mill torn down and the big rink built on this site. It was the last thing in roller rinks. The skating craze was at its height and the rink was the gathering place of crowds of people. Many a social gathering was held in this old relic. In after years the rink was converted into an opera house and for years was the only show house in the city. The Lutz golden wedding, the Midway Plaisance, the masque balls of the Einrachts Verein, the parties of the Hesperus club, the first Elks ball, the Junior prom were held in this building. It was after the party given by the Junior prom pupils that the old building caught fire and was totally destroyed.

"On the corner, across the street, Mrs. Gross had a boarding house. Mrs. Sennett and her mother lived in the next home and in later years this property was owned by J.P. Dorsey, who had a livery stable to the north. Where the Whiting Hotel is now located, was vacant property. On the corner across was the old Methodist church and north of that

was the home of Mrs. Julia Aich and on the corner of Main was the millinery shop of Flora Tack.

"This completes the record of Strongs Ave., when I was a youth. This description is written wholly from memory and while the writer makes no claim as to his infallibility, he still thinks it is fairly accurate description of the avenue when he was a callow youth. TAP SNILLOC."

STRONGS AVENUE RE-VISITED...

Re-reading Pat Collins' Strongs Avenue minds-eye stroll, retracing his steps block by block, house by house, setting it against your own yesterday and your own today is fascinating.

The piece calls to mind the Division-Pine-Wisconsin Street neighborhood childhood stroll Edith Rothman gave us in the March 18, 1968 issue of The Pinery.

Pleasure is double when this is placed against the Strongs Avenue photos the Society has collected:

Some excellent views from the Court House tower.
The Court House building itself.
The Soo Line Station, the second one.
The old Post Office at the end of the street.
The Public Library
The view before the Hardware building.
The Arlington House, two excellent views.
The Betlach House.
Etc.

The Society wants photos of Stevens Point and Portage County--then and now, streets, residences, and people. Bring in your pictures, snapshots or postcards. Duplicates will be made for the society files, and the originals returned to you.

Take pictures of the scene today for the Society's record.

THE PINERY is issued by the PORTAGE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY,
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