



The Pinery

PUBLISHED NOW & THEN BY THE PORTAGE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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FOR THE RECORD

WE ARE BACK!

After a hiatus of three years we begin a new series of the Portage County Historical Society newsletter. The Board of Directors hope that through The Pinery a close contact may be maintained with the membership of the Society. Previous editors of The Pinery established a high standard of editorial excellence. The new editor will attempt to maintain a similar level by providing readers with important announcements, news notes, interesting historical tid bits and special features.

ANNUAL MEETING

The PCHS annual meeting will be held April 20 at 7:30 p.m. in room 116 (Helen Parkhurst Lecture Room) of the UW/SP COPS (College of Professional Studies) building. Park behind COPS in lots off Isadore or Franklin streets.

Wendell Nelson, local historian and PCHS Board member, will be the speaker. Mr. Nelson will present a slide-lecture on "Pioneer Women of Portage County". The Society's annual business meeting will be part of the program. All are welcome.

KUHL HOUSE

On March 2, Portage County Planner William Burke addressed a meeting at Century Auditorium on the present status of the Kuhl house. The meeting was sponsored by the PCHS as part of its continuing commitment to insure permanent preservation of this landmark building of Stevens Point with its distinctive and arresting "castle" architecture.

Mr. Burke explained that the state Division of Highways currently plans to shift the proposed College Avenue-Highway 10 route eastward to avoid running through the Kuhl site. Burke advised, however, that while the new route probably would insure immediate survival of the Kuhl house it would not guarantee long term preservation.

Burke cautioned that the economic attractiveness of the land site in conjunction with its proximity to the College Avenue-Highway 10 route might lead to the demolition of the building within a decade.

Permanent preservation, Burke suggested, would only be attained through public ownership (with the house being used as a senior citizens center and/or a museum) and moving the building slightly to the west. In conclusion, Burke urged a coordinated civic effort to effect public ownership and implementation of the original highway route.

ROTHMAN LOCAL HISTORY AWARD

Last summer the family of Win Rothman established a fund to support an annual award in his memory. The Win Rothman Local History Award is intended to promote research in the history of Portage County and Stevens Point. Competition for this years cash award of \$150 will conclude in April and the winner will be announced at the forthcoming Annual Meeting.

The committee of judges is composed of

representatives from the PCHS, the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point History Department and the Portage County Board of Supervisors.

Mr. Rothman died last April. He was nearly 90 years old. He was a member of one of this area's oldest families and had helped to establish the Portage County Historical Society. He remained both a friend and a contributor to the Society for many years.

HISTORICAL DISPLAYS

Members are encouraged to visit periodically the Church Street lobby of the County-City Building in Stevens Point to view interesting historical displays. Past displays prepared by the PCHS have dealt with Christmas toys for children and Christmas greeting cards; and with Valentines Day. The most recent display was prepared by city clerk Mrs. Mary Ann Bertotto and focused on political campaign memorabilia. A new Society display will be set up in April.

OLD MAIN BUILDING

Stevens Point State Normal School (i.e. Old Main Building) has been entered on the National Register of Historic Places by the Secretary of the Interior. Old Main is now entitled to the benefits and protections of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 and other applicable federal codes and laws. Listing on the National Register provides considerable--but not absolute--federal protection against the destruction of Old Main.

ADDITIONS TO THE COLLECTION

The PCHS wishes to thank Mrs. Win Rothman for the following donation to the Society's collection: 1) several public school class photographs taken in the 1890's, 2) a copy of the Stevens Point Free High School commencement program (June 11, 1897) and a photograph of the graduating class and 3) a school book of grammar rules handwritten by Mrs. Rothman and dictated by Frank S. Hyer (ca. 1906).

CLIO'S CORNER

PORTAGE COUNTY HAD MARTIAL SPIRIT IN '98

In 1898 war broke out between the United States and Spain. The reasons for this war are cloaked in mystery--a mixture of idealism and imperialism. Many men from Portage County were involved in what came to be called "the splendid little war". Some had caught war fever and joined units that were destined for immediate shipment overseas. Those who were in the national guard found themselves "nationalized" into federal service. Company I of the Fourth Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry was the unit from Stevens Point and the surrounding area.

Although Company I never saw foreign service, they did have casualties. The unit was sworn into federal service at Camp Douglas, Wisconsin, and sent to Camp Shipp, Anniston, Alabama, for further training.

While at Anniston, a number of men in Company I contracted diseases, notably Typhoid Fever. Reports of the sickness among the troops filtered back to Stevens Point. Spurred by the articles in both the Gazette and the Journal, the mothers and sisters of the soldiers organized the Ladies Auxillary to Company I. These ladies began to sew and "...do whatever else may be necessary to make the boys at Camp Shipp more comfortable during the fall and winter".

The president of this auxiliary, Mrs. J.A. Cadman, led a group of local women to Alabama to nurse the sick. On November 12, 1898, Mrs. Cadman wrote to the Journal "The members of Company I, Davidson, Porter, Oberts, Miller and Larson, are better. None of them are in danger."

With the kind treatment coming from home, the boys from Portage County still tried to establish friendships among the Alabamans. They were successful, if the following story is to be believed.

It appears that the Southerners grew fond of the men stationed at Anniston and threw a big dance for them. The men from Portage County and men from Tennessee attended. As often happens, unit pride led to an exchange of blows and a short free-for-all. The Tennesseans had superior numbers until the ladies of Anniston joined the fray on the side of the Wisconsinites.

Frictions from the war between the states had eased, due to the friendly attitudes of both sides. Returning members of Company I retained fond memories of Anniston, their comrades and their great adventure.

FRAME BROTHERS WERE MISSIONARIES

The Frame Memorial Presbyterian Church in Stevens Point is named for Reverend Walter R. Frame, a popular pastor of the church from 1884 to 1890. Reverend Frame died of influenza, combined with pneumonia. Only 41 at his death, Frame was much respected by virtually the entire population of Stevens Point.

Frame's death was not the end of his influence, however. Two sons, John and Murray, were later involved with missionary activities overseas.

In 1901, Murray Frame graduated from college with the expressed vocation of becoming a missionary to Lahore, India (now Pakistan). At that time, his brother John was in medical school. He, too, became a missionary.

John Davidson Frame and his wife were missionaries at the American Presbyterian Mission, Resht, Persia by 1924. Various newsletters in the Portage County Historical Society collection report the good works that Dr. Frame, his wife and his family undertook in Persia.

Other letters among the collection record a return vacation to the United States by way of Russia in 1927. In this country, Dr. Frame undertook

an exhaustive tour of Presbyterian organizations. He and his family also visited Stevens Point to see old friends.

In his sons, the Reverend Walter Frame continued his good works. Each son chose an area in which to serve his beliefs. More information about the Frame family activities can be found in the collections of the Portage County Historical Society.

FEATURE:
LOST HOUSES OF PORTAGE COUNTY

Editor's note. The PCHS is pleased to announce that Mr. Wendell Nelson has agreed to write a series of articles that will appear regularly in The Pinery on the lost houses of Portage County. Mr. Nelson is a scholar on the architecture and history of old houses of Central Wisconsin and we are fortunate to be able to share in his knowledge. I

THE BOSWORTH-DUNEGAN HOUSE by Wendell Nelson

Probably Stevens Point's most expensive and elegant house, the Bosworth-Dunegan house stood where the U.S. Post Office is now, at the northwest corner of Main and Smith streets. It was a city landmark for over fifty years, and was the most imposing of the several fine old mansions that adorned Main Street near the business district.

Built in 1895 by Mrs. A.E. Bosworth, the house was designed by W.A. Holbrook, a Milwaukee architect who designed three Stevens Point schools, the Masonic temple (where First National Bank is now), and two other Main Street houses, the Boyington house at 2001, and the Gross-Kingston house at 2032. The contractor for the job was M.T. Olin, who supervised the construction of many other Stevens Point buildings, and whose house still stands at 1108 Smith Street.

The total cost of the completed Bosworth house was estimated at \$14,000 by the Stevens Point Journal of January 11, 1896, making it the most expensive house ever built in the city. (If \$14,000 does not seem

like much money, remember that in 1895, one could build a cozy cottage for \$500, and buy a whole iron bedstead for two dollars; also, that \$14,000 would be equal to more than twenty times that amount today.

Mrs. Bosworth was apparently well able to afford the price. An article from the December 23, 1893, Stevens Point Journal tells us that she and her son Frank gave \$8,000 to the Church of the Intercession building fund. Also, after she died, the July 12, 1905, Portage County Gazette estimated that her estate "will exceed \$100,000 dollars in value," and noted that among her bequests was "\$10,000 to Church of the Intercession, Stevens Point, for a permanent fund for current expenses."

If we can judge from the article that described the house when it was finished (January 11, 1896, Journal), Mrs. Bosworth got her money's worth. It contained most of the modern conveniences that we now take for granted but assume that most older homes did not have. The house had hot and cold running water, complete plumbing of "all solid lead and... fixtures of the latest pattern," central hot-water heating with the temperature "controlled and equalized by Power's Automatic heat regulator," and complete electric wiring for "incandescent lighting and call bells."

But the most lavish part of the house was the interior, which, the Journal reporter says, was "a model of the decorator's art." The decorator in this case was H.M. Harmon of Oshkosh, who also had charge of decorating the interiors of the old McDill-Crosby house, which stood across Main Street from the Bosworth house until it was razed in 1968, and the Pfiffner house at the southeast corner of Strongs Avenue and Court Street, both of which were built in 1898-99. According to the paper, the Bosworth "parlor and library were finished in curly red birch and the hall and dining room in quarter sawed oak." There were several "beautiful designs in parquetry flooring," and the kitchen had sinks of Tennessee marble. Upstairs, the decor was just as elegant. The five bedrooms were finished in "curly red birch, white ash, and quarter

sawed white oak," which woods were "beautifully tinted" (stained?). "Three of these rooms" were "fitted with fire places and mantles," as were "the rooms of the lower floor. The bathroom is finished in quarter sawed white oak with white tile wainscoating and tile floor. The bath tub is solid porcelein /sic/ and the slabs /? / Italian marble." The basement was divided into a "laundry, two store rooms, closet, vegetable cellar, furnace room and coal room. The floors are all cemented and the laundry is fitted with three tubs of solid slate."

Outside, the house was of frame construction, "modestly colored in red and green creosote shingle stains with trimmings of green." (Not all old houses were white, contrary to the stereotype that many people today have of them.) The architecture of the house is typical of that of houses built in the late-19th century, the Victorian eclectic or gingerbread age, and the house can be classified as a rather plain example of a Queen Anne house. Besides its conspicuous tower and turret on the front corners, the house boasted tile roofs in places, metal spires on the tower and turret, ornamental cresting on the ridgepoles, carved laurel wreaths under some eaves, leaded panes in some windows, bricks laid in patterns on the chimneys (to imitate clusters of chimneys in medieval European castles and manor houses), ornate pilasters (false columns), Tuscan columns on the verandas (wrap-around porches), and a decorative iron fence around the large yard that included the whole end of the block from Main Street to College Avenue. The columns on the veranda and the use of shingles on parts of the outside walls show the influence of both the Shingle and Neo-Classical Revival Styles, both of which reached their peak of popularity near the turn of the century.

Mrs. Bosworth and her son were the first of only two families to live in the house. She and her husband came to Wisconsin from New York State soon after they were married in 1865, settling first

in Fond du Lac. He had worked in a bank and mercantile store in New York, but in Wisconsin he was involved primarily in the lumber business, in which many Wisconsin fortunes were made. After accumulating property and money in business in Fond du Lac, A.E. Bosworth entered into partnership with an Irish lumberman, James Reilly, in 1877, and they both came to Stevens Point and bought the Knox Brothers lumber mill. The Bosworth and Reilly mill, according to Bosworth's obituary in the Stevens Point Journal of December 20, 1890, "was recognized everywhere as one of the most substantial and honorable of which the Wisconsin River could boast." (The company no doubt was "substantial," which means "prosperous," but its honor is more suspect; 19th-century obituaries are notorious for their inevitable flattery of their subjects.) But the firm was also innovative; it "was one of the first lumbering concerns in this part of the state to establish a system of regular cash payments to its employees." Bosworth also held stock in the North Side Lumber Company (later the John Week Lumber Company), and was a founder and the first president of the First National Bank of Stevens Point.

In 1879 Bosworth bought the property bounded by Main, Brown Street (now College Avenue), and Smith Street (Lots 8, 9, and 10 of Block 2, Smith, Briggs and Phillips Addition), from Andrew Warren, Jr. Warren was apparently a land speculator, because his name appears in many tax-roll books between 1865 (which is about as far back as Portage County tax-roll records go) and about 1880. Warren seemed to own only unimproved lots, if we may judge from the small valuation set for them, and he frequently did not pay the taxes on them (they were unpaid for the future Bosworth property, for example, for 1876 and 1877). All this is evidence that he bought land in large parcels, only to sell smaller pieces off for profit, not to build or live on it.

A.E. (for Albert Earl) Bosworth fenced his new property, and planted shrubbery on it,

but he died in 1890, before he got a house started on it. (In an article on the razing of the house, in the July 21, 1952, Stevens Point Daily Journal, older residents were quoted as recalling that "in early years the Main Street frontage" of the property "had a high cedar hedge, which attained a height of 12 to 14 feet." That same article says that "Mr. Bosworth built the Main street home for his family," and Frank Bosworth's obituary, in the April 5, 1941, Daily Journal, says that he "had always lived at the Main street address, a home his father built," but both accounts are obviously incorrect.)

After her husband's death, Mrs. Bosworth not only had the house built, and helped the Episcopal Church, but also managed her property and financial interests, which included, according to an article in the Daily Journal of April 8, 1901, a farm by the Little Plover River near Springville. She died in 1905, leaving her only son, Frank E., who was unmarried and lived in the house until his death in 1941.

It was apparently because Frank lived alone in the house that the Dunegan family came to occupy it with him. According to the tax rolls for the house, J.W. Dunegan did not buy the house until 1945, though he lived in it for over thirty years. The explanation seems to be that Dunegan was executor of the A.E. Bosworth estate after Mrs. Bosworth died, and he oversaw such items as paying the taxes on the house. Because Frank was alone in the huge house (three stories and twelve rooms, not counting closets), the Dunegans apparently had an agreement with him, whereby they lived in the house with him, in return for taking care of him and managing it and other properties. While the 1912 Stevens Point City Directory gives Frank's identification and address as "Capitalist--Sellers Hotel," an article from the March 18, 1916, Daily Journal, reporting that he had broken his arm, makes it clear that both Dunegan, who took him to St. Michael's hospital for treatment, and Bosworth were living in the house.

James W. Dunegan was a lifelong resident of Stevens Point, and the grandson of Irish immigrants who first settled in Canada. His father, Ed, was first a pilot on lumber rafts on the Wisconsin River, later town marshal, and, still later, a member of the city's growing police force. J.W. was born in 1864, attended local schools, and began his business career as a clerk in Henry Hoeffler's dry-goods store on Clark Street, according to his obituary in the December 7, 1951, Daily Journal. Dunegan began working in the First National Bank as office boy soon after its founding in 1883, and rose gradually to become president in 1922; he held that office for thirty years. He was one of the city's best-known figures, not only as a banker and member of many local organizations, but also as a benefactor of poor families, a supporter of agriculture (he not only gave loans to many farmers, but also owned two farms himself), and a compiler of various collections of Irish ethnic stories. He married Minnie Jane Cahill in Waukesha, Wisconsin, in 1904, and had two daughters, one of whom still lives, in New Hampshire. J.W. died in December of 1951; his wife died in 1937.

The family lived in the house until 1952, when J.W.'s sister Mary (a retired public librarian) died, and then the house stood empty, but not for long. The Nigbor Fur Company had bought the property from Dunegan in 1947, and in July of 1952, it had the house torn down, to make room for a new company building, according to the Daily Journal of July 21, 1952. But the proposed building was never erected; the lot was vacant until 1955, when the City of Stevens Point bought it and used it as a parking lot. In 1960, the United States Government bought the property and built the new post office on it.

Now only the older citizens of Stevens Point remember the splendid mansion that once stood so majestically on the site and, along with other lost houses and their tall, arching trees, graced Main Street in the early days of our history.

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The Pinery is the official newsletter of the Portage County Historical Society.

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