



The Pinery

Annual Publication of the Portage County Historical Society of Wisconsin

President's Annual Report

The society's year runs from April to April. This past year has been our most productive. Heritage Park now has five buildings open on a regular basis—the depot, museum hall, smithy, school, and farm house. Our first Plover Portage Rendezvous was a great success with some 2,000 people attending. It was so great a success that we are now well into planning our second rendezvous for this coming July 17/18.

Our membership has increased each year for the past 6 years. 1998 saw a total of 233 life members and 155 annual members for a total of 388 members. We would like to welcome Bonnie Price, Terry Anderson and Janice Van Tassel as our newest 1999 life members in the historical society. This brings the total of life members to 235. We hope to continue increasing our membership this coming year.

Included in this year of success has been our foundation. With the addition of a nearly \$14,000 donation from Mr. Terry Anderson (for the Nelsonville Mill) the foundation has topped \$105,000. The interest generated is now included in our annual budget. This comes to about \$4,400 each year. The society's total budget for 1998 generated over \$35,000.

This included funds generated from the society's publications. The society has now published two "shadows" books and reprinted Justin Isherwood's booklet, *A Place*



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Called Plover Portage. The new history that the society is publishing is on track for release in the fall of 1999. The board also began the process of publishing a book on the writings of Casimir Sikorski.

The UW-SP museum class under Mr. Ed Marcks is in the process of completing its fifth display for the society. The theme for the next two years will focus on 100 years ago in the area. The Water St. site will also see a new display for 1999 focusing on communications ("Let's Talk").

GIFTS FROM OUR FRIENDS

The society's collections have also seen a large increase with the addition of a wide variety of items from photographs/papers to farm implements and military equipment.

1. Henry Korger-chest of drawers, guitar, man's coat, posters, small wood stove and travel trunk.
2. Mary Thurmaier-all paper work and related documents of the PABCO bus system.
3. Bonnie Price-Complete W.W.II uniform from her father. A collection of letters written between her father and mother during the war. A group of items related to her father's experience during the war.
4. Ida and William Frizzel-two 1960's T.V. sets and a 1930's radio.
5. We received some 50 farm items from a local farm. These included a stone sled, corn shucker and a wide variety of small items.
6. Zblewski Brothers Tree Trimming-free trimming of the trees at Heritage Park and grinding out of several stumps (\$800 donation)
7. Dave Cash- radios, repair manuals, tubes, tools for repairing TV's and radios.
8. Renken Energy Products - donated labor to insulate attic of church/museum (\$400).



Let's Talk

The 1999 Season's display at the Synagogue/Museum, 1475 Water St.

Features displays on movies and film projectors, phonographs, cameras, typewriters, radios, printing companies in Portage County, telegraph, TV's, Plover Telephone Company, Nelsonville Telephone exchange, radioptican projectors, and their impact on us.

June 12 thru Sept 5
Saturday & Sunday
1:00 - 5:00 PM





Books

OUT OF THE SHADOWS

In 1990, a collection of true stories reflecting the notorious side of Portage County, Wisconsin's past was published. *Portage County Shadows* brought to life some fascinating characters and events on the darker side of our county's history *Out of the Shadows* illuminates some of our nobler citizens, including Albert Ellis and Mandana Hale Bliss, pioneers in their respective fields of journalism and education. Heroes, we find, come in all walks of life, from war veterans and doctors to the less obvious: a tailor, a baseball player, an insurance man.

Written by many of the same authors from *Portage County Shadows*, these inspiring stories bring to life those who helped shape Portage County into the dynamic and progressive heart of Wisconsin. *Out of the Shadows* provides a valuable history lesson under the guise of entertainment.

The Eve of Revolution:

an antiwar memoir

by

Jim Missey

"Hardly a day goes by that I do not think of some aspect of the academic year that began in the fall of 1969 and ended in the spring of 1970, during which year I was an associate Professor in the English Department at what was then called Wisconsin State University, Stevens Point. I feel even now in some measure stunned by the experiences of that year and still have not fully settled them..."

Thus writes Jim Missey in 1985 of his experiences with the anti-Vietnam War protests in Stevens Point. Anyone involved with any aspect of the events of those years, be it as a veteran, protesters or onlooker, will enjoy Jim's recounting of that year.

Available now for \$2.50

A Place Called Plover Portage

by

Justin Isherwood

An Algonkin word, wabang-onigon was the name of Plover Portage long before axe and plow entered the region. The word means, east trail from the river, and refers to the portage route from the Wisconsin east to the Tomorrow.Waupaca River. How long before the white man this trail existed is placed at twenty centuries, 2000 years of comings and goings. A lot of things have come and a lot have gone; what remains is the elemental way people respond to land. A people whose lives, language, material wealth, is only as great as the land beneath them. We are land made Man. The land has shaped our population, our homes, our sports, our clothing, our roads, our vocations, our crops, and we might guess it shapes our thinking....

PORTAGE COUNTY SHADOWS

In this colorful collection of true stories, seven well known local historians and writers remember the notorious side of Portage County, Wisconsin's, past. Wendell Nelson writes of Stevens Point's turn-of-the-century "Madame Extraordinaire." George Rogers tells the story of a conniving wheeler-dealer who now as local street named after him, and Justin Isherwood reflects on the intense relationship between the river and the river pilot. Other local contributors include John Anderson, Roy Menzel, Virgil "Pete" Peters, and Malcolm Rosholt. *Portage County Shadows* brings to life some fascinating characters, places and happenings out of the traces of our past.

"The editor has gathered some of Portage County's best and most entertaining authors to give the reader a sample of what has made this county unique and always intriguing to read about. This is an excellent sampler."

Available now at \$10.00

Recipes of the Nationalities

This volume was first printed in 1948. It done as art of the Wisconsin Centennial celebration that year. The recipes included were gathered by the home Economics Department of the Stevens Point High School, P. J. Jacobs, and printed in the school's print shop. The Portage County Historical Society is reprinting the book as part of its attempt to keep this county's ethnic heritage and variety alive.

Available now at \$1.00



Books

The History of Portage County

by
Mike Goc

After his highly successful *Native Realm*, Mr. Goc will again spin his magic as a writer in the first comprehensive history of our county since Malcolm Rosholt's 1958, *Our County, Our Story*.

Topics will include Geologic History of our county, Business History, Immigration, Early Settlers, and a wealth of information not before published in this format.

This book will be available in early fall of 1999.

The Writings of Casmir Sikorski

A favorite local writer published in the Stevens Point Journal in the late 70's, early 80's, Mr. Sikorski wrote on a wide range of topics, always with an interesting view point.

Available in spring 2000

Portage County of Place and Time by Maurice Perret

Who is John Baptiste Dubay, and, why is his name attached to the largest lake in Portage County? Just how did an insurance company like Sentry come to be based in Stevens Point? What did the county look like thirty million years ago?

Are you curious about how Portage County came to be? Within these pages Maurice Perret takes you on a journey into the past of central Wisconsin.

Be a spectator at the first automobile race in the United States. (They drove 200 miles and it took just under 34 hours!) Meet George Stevens, the founder of Stevens Point. Watch as the glaciers plow past the central part of Wisconsin.

It's all here. Historical figures and colorful stories mix with facts and scientific data to give a multifaceted view of this corner of central Wisconsin. There's something for every reader.

Available now for \$5.00



The Legend of "The Safe"

by
Anton Anday

It was the seventeenth day of July in the year of our Lord 1998. In a place called Plover, Wisconsin. A large group of persons gathered together for purposes of recreating life as it existed in the years from 1780 to 1840

These good people came in good faith to trade with the flatlanders and to educate them concerning their heritage. The Plover-Portage Rendezvous was visited by approximately seventeen hundred people from all walks of life. One of these pilgrims happened to have knowledge of history concerning RR depots of the past. Upon visiting the restored Bancroft Depot (1898), he took particular interest in the artifacts of the waiting room. From here he proceeded to the dispatchers station within the depot.

Upon careful examination of the historical memorabilia located here, he demanded to know as the where about was the "safe"? Since, according to him, no depot existed without one.

Upon hearing the demanding request, my gracious Lord Tim, immediately conjured up a new project which was to be carried out forthwith without discussion or debate. His Lordship recalled, in the recesses of his memory, that such item did exist in the archives located in the basement of the museum. According to his Lordship, this beast of an item weighed approximately five hundred pounds and was carried to its present location by four persons down the steps into the archive. Upon examining the artifact in question, we humble servants came to the conclusion that those four alleged humans must have had genetic contact to previously unknown superhumans and/or gorillas. However, since his Lordship decreed this immediate project, based on the logic that a lot of muscle was available for this purpose, immediate implementation commenced.

A large two inch rope, approximately a hundred feet long was secured, wrapped, and tied around "The Safe". Two, 2" x 6" full dimensional planks were obtained and laid on the steps to create a ramp for the extrication of "The Safe" from this pit of hell. His Lordship immediately called upon the aid of his two trusted lieutenants for organizational purposes and detailed planning. They came without question wearing their maroon T-shirts emblazon with the yellow crest of the Society. It looked like a platoon ready to go to war. A rail bar was called for, the rope shortened and attached to the frame of the Chevy S-10, a modern contraption that some people call a toy, others refer to it as truck. The plan called for lifting "The Safe" with a rail bar using the steps as a fulcrum to guide the item on the makeshift ramp. Every time this was implemented the "truck" would move forward tightening the rope and making the prying activity somewhat lighter. Two communicators were used for relaying signals. Stop!! Go! etc. Anton deposited his rotund, well planned for and maintained mid section, behind the wheel since it was his truck. Everything looked good on paper and it should not have been a major project but then reality set in.

The truck was not on a level ground. It was setting in a whole in front of the door. Furthermore it was a sand pit and there was no weight at the back end of the truck. The operation commenced with a lot of hollering. The wheels spun freely and smoke billowed from the engine compartment. It was not a pretty sight. By now we attracted quiet a audience from the campers. A number of them showed up looking over the situation. Few of them got into the spirit of the thing. After a number of advices some jumped in the back of the truck, others put pressure on the rope and slowly "The Safe" emerged trough the narrow opening of the door. One more jerk and it was out side. Everyone jumped clear, while loudly instructing the driver, "DON'T STOP". The truck eased forward, picking up speed while the item in question took a huge bounce and merrily dug a furrow in the lawn as it was dragged in front of the depot. The mission was half accomplished!

The question was, how to elevate this artifact approximately two and a half feet to the platform. Since most of these person involved in the activity often think two elaborately, they recalled the famous axiom of Archimedes - "Give me a fulcrum and I

will move the world". It was decided that wood blocks will be used under the wheels tipping "The Safe" from side to side until the appropriate height was reached, then role the artifact unto the platform. At the third height the structure collapsed sending reenactors in loincloths with bare feet scampering out of the way. All recorded for posterity by "Duke" with his famous camera. Enough is enough, we rolled "The Safe" to the edge of the platform. Two people hung on to the top while three people lifted the bottom. After a lot grunting this exercise was successful without anyone having to go the hospital for emergency hernia operation.

It now laid on its back on the platform. The Buckskinners now really got into it. With a rope tied to the top and the rail bar wedged on the bottom with a mighty pull "The Safe" came upright on to its wheels. Two planks were put in the doorway and it merrily rolled into the Depot over a three inch incline. Two people could easily maneuver her now. Into the dispatchers room it went. It was positioned in its place of honor, wiped clean and everyone stood around sweating, grunting, shaking their heads for it was a beastly hot day. Every one asked each other if they were OK? Finally some one proposed that we open it up to see what is inside of this thing, whereupon our Gracious Lord informed us that at one time he had the combination for "The Safe" but that he misplaced it and has long ago forgot the sequence of numbers. The crowd departed silently, thinking under their breaths unmentionable, hurtful things, that they hoped would inflict his Lordship.

Everyone returned to their campsite to sit and enjoy some refreshments and another legend was born.



Portage County Lifestyles 100 Years Ago

Weber Band Portage County's Opera House

Do you remember these, try recalling how the following items were important 100 years ago?

Potatoes

Bicycles



Give Up? Then come to the Portage County Historical Society's Heritage Park in Plover to find out.

Located between Madison Ave. and Washington Ave., on the south side of the railroad tracks. Open:

**June 12 thru Sept 5
Saturday & Sunday
1:00 - 5:00 PM**

Rendezvous

Our 2nd Annual Plover Portage Rendezvous will be held July 17 & 18 at the Heritage Park in Plover WI. This year we have several new traders, a schedule of events that include weaving, wool processing (carding, spinning, etc.), competitions: tomahawk & knives throws, native bow shoots; blacksmiths, kettle corn (popcorn made over an open fire), musket displays, and many other period displays.

The following poem was taken off the Internet and captures the "flavors" of



Rendezvous.

What The Hell's A Rendezvous
by
Doc Grizzly

"What the hell's a Rendezvous?"
I asked myself, just two short weeks ago.
So I packed up my Mercedes Benz
And went to where the Aspens grow.

Well I put up my one pole,
It took six poles to do it.
We're gonna' put steaks in all the corners
When we get around to it.

They said, "You can't wear your jeans!"
So I put on my painter pants.
I turned my shirt inside out,
I wanted to stay for the dance.

They said, "Sir you look like a cowboy."
I said, "No, I'm Southwest.
With my cowboy hat, my cowboy boots,
My cowboy shirt and vest."

Yesterday I saw my first hooter.
I din't know how to flush it.
They said, "A truck comes and empties it."
I said, "A truck should come and crush it!"

I bought everything I needed,
A trip to traders row was a must.
I even bought a pair of buckskin pants, with a zipper.
It's made of brass, so it won't rust.

They gave me this big long rifle,
To the range I was sent.
They said, "A flintlock shoots every time."
It's still loaded in my tent.

We spent the night a trappin' Naugas.
The little suckers will warm your heart.
We wove 'em into Naugahides,
And covered 'em with a blue plastic tarp.

I learned to cook on an open fire,
Next to a coleman stove,
Sittin' on a styrofoam icechest,
In a plastic aspen grove.

Now, yesterday they had a parade.
They said they was Scottish Klans.
But them wasn't kilts, them was dresses,
Cause they was a holdin' hands.

2nd Annual

Plover Portage Rendezvous

Rendezvous Located at: Heritage Park, Plover WI
July 17 & 18, 1999



Re-enactment of:
Wisconsin Frontier Life 1760-1840
Period Crafts and Arts
Tomahawk and Knife Throws
Traders

Authentic Foods

Adults \$2.00 Children \$1.00 Family \$5.00
Saturday 10:00 AM - 9:00 PM
Sunday 10:00 AM - 5:00 PM

This Event Hosted by:
Portage County Historical Society



Thanks to Some of Our Sponsors:



This Rendezvous thing is fun,
I think I'm gonna stay.
They've even offered me a job,
Next week I'll be Booshway

The original poem was written at the National Western Rendezvous, southwest of Grand Junction, Colorado in 1993. Two verses were added in 1995 at the Original Western Rendezvous on the same site and another added later at the College Rendezvous 1995, South Park, Colorado.

This is a works in progress and will grow whenever the appropriate material strikes me.

We need volunteers to man the three entry ticket booths, act as docents for our buildings, and generally assist in the set up and take down for this event. If you and/or your family can dedicate a few hours to assist us please call Mary Egle at 592-4284 or Tim Seibert at 344-7607. You will receive free entry, a chance to meet the re-enactors, and if you are there on Friday, perhaps, witness another legend being born. (see The Safe, page 4)

Docents

Our museums are again open on Saturdays and Sundays from June 12 thru Sept 5. We need your assistance in manning the sites. If you can and/or your family can volunteer a day please call Tim Seibert 344-7607. Thank you!

Hobbyists

We still have openings for those interested in displaying their collections, hobbies, or craft skills. We are interested in spinning, traditional woodworking (no power tools), old cars, collections of early 1900's artifacts, quilting, and memorabilia.

Please call Karen Zinda at 341-3398



Membership Application/Renewal

The Society needs your support! Your renewal or new membership is necessary for the Portage County Historical Society to continue the preservation of our past.

Mail To:
Portage County Historical Society
P.O. Box 672
Stevens Point, WI 54481

Renewal _____ New _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State/Zip: _____



- Annual \$15
- Business \$25
- Contributing \$50
- Life \$100



**Summer Events at the Rising Star Mill
Hwy 161 Nelsonville**

June 5th: Frank Hornberg Chapter of Trout Unlimited will again be sponsoring an Introduction to Fly Fishing Workshop. The fee is \$50. For more information call Stu Grimstad at (715) 677-3454.

June 11th: Music with Joe Ebel and Ken Bonfield. Witness for yourself the synergy between these two outstanding musicians. Ken Bonfield's original acoustic guitar-work is extraordinary. Back that with the precise and sensitive musicianship of Joe Ebel and you can't go wrong.

July 9th, 10th, & 11th: 14th Annual Open House - Art Show. 13 years of successful art shows guarantee an enjoyable visit. Stop in and tour the building while seeing some great artwork.

July 17th: Music with Highwaters. Bluegrass bonanza! Highwaters faithfully returns to enliven the Mill with a rich repertoire of bluegrass, country and old timey tunes. Don't miss it.

August 14th: Music with Bill Machecknie. Songsmith Bill Machecknie will grace the Mill with a mix of witty original songs and a sweet collection of poems he has put to music by the poet Naomi Shahib Nye. A unique evening for central Wisconsin.

August 28th: Music with Kay Hansen. From California, Kay brings with her the musical heritage of the wild west. Enjoy the history of outlaws, cowhands, and vaqueros and the lure of life in a by-gone era.

September 11th: The Rising Star Mill will end its season in a big way with a tribute to all of its supporters! Join musicians L. J. Booth, The Can't Lie Low Trio, Barb Achten, Joe Ebel and more for a night of fun and great music.

All music concerts will begin at 7:30 PM and the admission will be \$6.00.



The Society holds a monthly meeting on the second Wednesday of each month. Meetings start at 7:30 PM and are held in the basement of the Synagogue Museum, 1475 Water St., Stevens Point, WI 54481, Phone # (715) 344-4423. All Members and the general public are welcome.

To contact the Society write to the address below or call:

Tim Siebert (715) 344-7607

or

Carla Boettcher (715) 344-6383

For contributing articles or comments on the Newsletter:

PCHS Newsletter, 1418 Wisconsin St., Stevens Point, WI 54481

Portage County Historical Society
P.O. Box 672
Stevens Point, WI 54481

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