



# Portage County Historical Society

Published by the Portage County Historical Society, PO Box 672, Stevens Point WI 54481  
Tim Siebert, Editor

---

## Feb. 2000

---

## President's Report

### STATE MATCHING GRANT

State Senator Kevin Shibilski has made it possible for the historical society to receive up to \$50,000 in matching funds on a dollar for dollar basis. In other words for every dollar given to the society's foundation we will receive a dollar at the end of the current budget year-about a year and a half from now. The condition of the grant is that the money must be invested and only the interest used for the development of the Heritage Park project.

To date, thanks to the generosity of many of our life members, the matching grant campaign has raised about \$7,000. Obviously, this is over 10% of our goal. The gifts have included one \$1,000 gift, 3 \$500 gifts and 37 \$100 gifts. We are deeply grateful to all who have contributed to this campaign thus far.

If you wish to make a donation to this campaign please make your contribution to the Portage County Historical Society, P.O. 672, Stevens Point, WI 54481.

Consider making a donation as a memorial to someone special to you or, perhaps, giving a life membership for a family member or friend.

A number of the \$100 donations include a number of new life members to the society and they include Dr. Paul and

Suzanne Koehl, Robert Whitmire, Jean Rumsey, Leonard Bannach, Tom Rath, Kevin Shibilski, Susan Trapp, Dean Swiston, Grace Borham, Joan Joerns, Mrs. George Anderson, William Jenkins, Mary Loomans, Vicki Reiss, Russell Haines, William Zimdars, Carolyn Weiland and Patti Rous.

This gives the society a total of 297 life members. The commitment to the preservation of this area's heritage and history on the part of all our members is important to all of us.

### HERITAGE PARK

Thanks to help from the Wisconsin Conservation Corps the handicapped access ramp has been completed to the church/display hall.

The biggest accomplishment at the park is the moving of an old Yellowstone

## Table of Contents

<u>Article</u>	<u>Page</u>
President's Report .....	1
PAHA Article .....	2
PAHA Newsletter sign-up info .....	3
Field Notes .....	4
<i>Land and Lumber</i> .....	5
Narrow Gauge Railroads .....	7
Annual Meeting .....	8
Matching Grant & Book Signing .....	9
Membership Application .....	9



Hotel cabin onto the park's site. These cabins most recently were part of the Burr Oaks Motel and, then part of the Gary Nations property. We would like to thank Kathy Nations for the donation of the building. The cabins were built early in the 20th Century and became part of the Yellowstone trail that came through this area from Illinois and made its way to the National Park. The motel area was a campground for many years and the cabins were moved in later. They were, later, moved back to the Burr Oaks motel site.

The society has been using the basement of the Franklin House for its office work and this has become crowded with a variety of other work being done at the site. We needed an office to conduct our park business and a place from which we can keep an eye on the park.

We would also like to thank Mr. Dan Kowalski for his help in moving the building to the site. We must do some work on the foundation and floor of the cabin but that will be, comparatively easy and give us a place to work.

Thanks to a \$5,000 grant from Consolidated Papers Foundation the society has enough funds to construct the remaining, north portion of the depot deck. We have the materials to do the work but weather intervened and we must wait until the spring thaw to begin the work.

### NEEDS

The society is still in need of a variety of items, including the following.

1. Wet/Dry Vacuum
2. Heavy duty shelving (\$18 each)
3. Paper items-towels, toilet paper
4. Liquid soap

### MILITARY ITEMS

The society has a continuing

interest in obtaining any items of direct or indirect pertinence to the military. This includes uniforms, letters, documents, accouterments. We have an excellent collection but, in order to tell the story of the men and women of this county and their participation in some capacity in the conflicts that this nation has been involved with we must continue to expand this collection. This would also include items that involve protest of various kinds to the conflicts. We are, for instance, looking for a Tony Tuna pin from the late 1960's period. Vietnam era 45 speed records of protest songs. We are also looking for both the 45 and long play records of Sgt. Barry Saddler (The Green Beret).

\*\*\*\*\*  
*(From the Polish American Historical Association's October 1999 newsletter. Thanks to Barabra J. Paul.)*

### A FEW WEB SOURCES OF INTEREST TO POLONIA

By  
Dr. Karen Majewski

Visit the online exhibit of photographs of Milwaukee's Polish South Side done by Roman Kwasniewski in the period before 1945. It is part of the **University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Golda Meir Library** collection. <http://www.uwm.edu/Library/arch/kwas/kwasgo.htm>. The library's Polish American collection can be viewed at: <http://www.uwm.edu/Library/arch/polishag.htm>

The online catalog of the **Balch Institute for Ethnic Studies** is searchable at: <http://www.libertynet.org/balch/html/emily.htm>

**Central Connecticut State University's** collection of Polish American imprints can be searched online at: <http://library.ccsu.ctstateu.edubwolynska/>



polampub/polam1.htm

The **Biblioteka Narodowa** (National Library) in Warsaw is searchable at: <http://www.bn.org.pl/>

Web site dedicated to the **Lattimore (Pennsylvania) Massacre** of 1897, in which nineteen immigrant miners were killed by local deputies: <http://www.icontech.com/baldeagle/lattimer.html>

The **Greater Detroit Polonia and City of Hamtramck Genealogical Website**: <http://www.rootsweb.com/~miwayne/hamtramck.htm>

**Polish Roots** is a new website dedicated to the collection, preservation, and dissemination of research materials relevant to Polish genealogy: <http://www.polishroots.com>.

<http://members.aol.com/orzel1944/poland.html> and <http://www.essexl.com/people/cfaivre/blazejack/surgepolonia.htm> are the websites of two American groups devoted to keeping alive the memory of WWII Poland's 1st Independent Parachute Regiment. Members give living history demonstrations for the general public.

The **Polish Arts and Culture Foundation**, based in San Francisco: <http://home.earthlink.net/~pacf/>

**Polish American Cultural Society of Metropolitan St. Louis**: <http://members.xoom.com/pacsstl>

There are many sources of Polish and Polonian books, in Polish and English, on the internet, but for those of us looking for used, often obscure, and out-of-print books, there are several particularly good databases which consolidate the offerings of many booksellers, making searching for a book on the web simple: <http://www.bookfinder.com> (which searches several main bookselling databases), and <http://alibris.com> (Alibris is not among the databases searched by Bookfinder, so it can be useful to try searching your book at both sites). A search using the word Poland or Polish at either of these sites

will turn up hundreds of hits. And if you're looking for a particular book, it will often show several copies in varying condition offered by different booksellers, so you can comparison shop. These are the same databases that Amazon.com uses to supply out-of-print books to its customers, at a markup, of course!

On the subject of e-commerce, the E-bay auction site often turns up Polish and Polonian items, including the occasional interesting historical artifact. Among the items I've seen offered on E-bay are the script and promotional materials for the film "Polish Wedding," advertising items from Polonian companies, military medals, turn-of-the-century Polish American textbooks, paintings, and religious artifacts; not to mention the ubiquitous dolls, postage stamps, wooden boxes, and Radko ornaments. Warning: E-bay is addicting! And please don't bid against [profkaren@aol.com](mailto:profkaren@aol.com)!

## **PAHA Newsletter**

ISSN-0739-9766

© Polish American Historical Association  
1999

Edited by  
Karen Majewski

The *PAHA Newsletter* is published quarterly by the Polish American Historical Association, and is distributed to members of the Association. Individual memberships are available at \$20 per year, or institutional memberships at \$35 per year, by sending a check made payable to the Polish American Historical Association to the following address:

Dr. Karen Majewski  
PAHA Executive Secretary  
St. Mary's College  
Orchard Lake, MI 48324

## FIELD NOTES

By  
Anton Anday

In September of 1998 the publication *Loggers Shopper North*, reprinted the story of *The Petrified Captain D' Artagon* - "which after further research turned out to be a remarkable gold brick fashioned on one January afternoon in 1926 in Ladysmith, Wisconsin." One assumes it was by a reporter who was not ready for his deadline. Professional ethic forbids that this should ever occur, or that the press knowingly should ever mislead a gullible public under any circumstance. In any event, to the amazement of everyone, it created a nationwide stir before it was revealed to be a hoax. In fact, this story appeared in a number of anthologies over the years, dealing with legends in Wisconsin history and literature.

We were discussing this reprinted article over a family dinner, wondering how these legends developed in the lonely isolated logging camps that spread across the Wisconsin wilderness at the turn of the Century? It was at this point that my brother-in-law, Mike Fulk, told me of a small logging camp from the turn of the Century, in the present day Nicolet National Forest that still had a Dray - [Logging sled] - at the side of an old lake bed. We decided that the five of us would set forth in the spring to explore the remnants of this old camp which Mike knew from his youth and where he still hunts today.

In May of 1999 we set out under the guidance of Harry (Mike) Fulk. His wife Nancy, my sister-in-law Patti, my wife Mary Beth, and I looked forward to this excursion. Mike by evocation and choice is a lumberjack. In order to make a living he has been working in the forest product industries most of his life so that he can enjoy his other life as a hunter and

fisherman. On weekends, if one can find him without a scheduled hunting, fishing or camping trip, you might be able to locate him cutting timber somewhere in the forest. Mike as he likes to be called, knew from his youth the location of this small logging camp outside of the Village of Argonne, WI. To be exact on the Forest County Platt Map the area is located at .....(not for your life). It is to this area that Mike took us.

We hit the trail at 9:00 AM proceeding through some logging roads at a slow and careful speed in a four-wheel drive truck. It is amazing to drive into the forest 2.5 to 3 miles on a logging road that God has never intended a motor vehicle to travel on. The road forked in front of us. Mike parked the truck and we kept going on foot further into the forest for another 2 to 2.5 miles. What amazed me about this walk, was the size of the trees in the depth of the forest and the size of the terminal moraine that the glacial period left behind. The awesome power of nature tends to remind us of our limitations. We followed the deer path that traversed the top of the ridge. Deer signs were aplenty on our route.

Mike carried a shovel that he used as a walking stick. I carried a small side bag, which contained a small camera as well as a 25' tape measure, a notebook, pens and a cell phone in case of emergency. (So I cheated. None of us were 20 years old anymore!) We threaded through the trees till Mike said, "we are here". I looked between the undergrowth to see an old lakebed overgrown with grass, through which a shallow 3 to 4 feet wide creek wound its way towards the distance. I found out later that this creek was a tributary to the central branch of the Peshtigo River. Mike went into high gear searching for the abandoned Dray's

(Continued on page 6)



# *Available Now*

## Land & Lumber

A History of Portage County

Get yours at Little Professor or the Society -- \$35.00

### Introduction

The history of any place is the story of people, ideas and resources. It tells how the people of a community used the resources present to realize their ideas. In Portage County the key resources were--and still are--water, land and lumber. They were used by native people to build a culture, much of which is lost today, but whose remnants give evidence of a people of spirit and Imagination. The white pioneers of the county came here specifically because of its resources of water power and lumber that they would use to establish a 19th Century industrial center. Along with the lumbermen came those for whom the land was enough and who built an agriculture based on the distinctive nature of the county's soil and water resources.

After a century and a half, the basics have not changed. Water and lumber are still basic to the county's industrial base. Farmland, and a relatively new method of using the water beneath its surface, still make a distinctive agriculture. Each generation brings its own ideas but still uses the same resources as its forebears.

While the raw material of the county's story does not change, the story itself changes with the times and the storytellers. A work of history reveals as much about the time in which it was written as it tells of the period written about. Simon Sherman, the county's first historian, collected pioneer reminiscences. Publisher Edward McGlachlin and others assembled the big history book of 1919. Pat Collins and Alex Wallace specialized in anecdotes and yarns, as did John Anderson a generation later. Wendell Nelson focused on the architectural, Justin Isherwood emphasized the personal and agricultural, the present author celebrated the county's largest ethnic group and chronicled its environmental history. Malcolm Rosholt, the dean of county historians, researched hard and long to make his word the definitive one on just about any subject he covered. A debt of gratitude is owed to each of these authors, on whose work this book is built.

Thanks is also owed to university archeologist Tom Willems, who is actively pursuing evidence of the county's prehistory, and university archivist Bill Paul, who is just bringing to a close a career in which many hours were devoted to the preservation and organization of the county's historical material.

A special word of thanks is owed to Tim Siebert and other members of the Portage County Historical Society, who have worked long and hard to preserve the county's heritage in many forms, including building a pioneer village, filling a museum with artifacts and an archive with documents. The archives of the county historical society, housed in the Area Research Center at the university in Stevens Point, are among the most extensive and best organized of any community of equivalent size in the state of Wisconsin.

A final word of thanks goes to the benefactor who underwrote the cost of the book, so that all proceeds from its sale will go to the Portage County Historical Society. They will enable the Society to continue its work of preserving the county's history for those who will retell the story in the future and those who will enjoy it and learn from it once again.

Michael J. Goc



remains at the foot of the hill, which he could not locate right away. Looking around, Mike picked a spot on the other side of the lakebed. With him leading the way, we moved toward it with his assurance that the old lumber camp was located just on the other side of the tree line.

Following him into the shoreline, we soon found ourselves standing on a small plateau in the middle of the camp. Now the work truly began, I took pictures of the site. Took out my tape measure and with help measured up the camp area. Mike dug around with his shovel turning up artifacts one after the other. All five of us dispersed around the campsite looking, marking and speculating. The unusual part of this camp was the leftover berm of soil that served as a foundation for the log cabins, of which there were two. The size of the two buildings, 18' by 26' for the cooking lodge and 18' by 18' for the bunk lodge would indicate that the camp was a minor, small camp of ten to fourteen people. The corral area measured 12' by 20' further indicating a small operation.

More than likely both buildings were burned when the camp closed down. The small, cleared area must have been for livestock. Both the cooking stove and the barrel stove of the bunkhouse was found broken and rusted through outside of the living areas. The doors and parts of the cooking stove, including the warmer, were scattered over the area. I photographed the items where they laid. The cook's steel bed was found half bent and buried in grass. A wash tub/basin was found behind the bunk lodge. A tree has grown through its bottom. From tree size and growth rate, one would come to the conclusion that this small camp must have been used in the late 1910's early 1920's. This speculation would be further supported by surrounding overgrowth, as well as the make of the stove, coffee pot, tin cup, cooking pot and

the top of a "red wing" jug with a very wide mouth.

There were also enameled pots rusting in the area. A narrow gauge railroad was built in to the sight for removal of lumber. Once the camp was closed the tracks were picked up as loggers moved out of the forest. Everything without value to the loggers was left behind and is protected by Federal Law against removal. (That is why I did not give you the exact location.)

The question is how did they move all the logs to the tracks from the forest? Looking at the old lakebed from the campsite, Mike picked a spot on the other side and confidently walked to it. Since we could do little more at the campsite, we walked back towards the trail. Mike by now triumphantly pointed out the find, the remnants of the sled that we originally came to see. The runners and central brace were entwined by trees and shrubs. We photographed it and made measurements. The length of the runners were 8' while the elevation of the curve in the front was 8" tapering back 54" to the runners where they were bolted together for an other 6". The width of the runners was approximately 4" to 5". Bolts were at an interval of 3", 12", 21", 36" and 5' - respectively on the length of the runner. The two runners were at two different spots about 10' of each other. Further examination of the undergrowth revealed the central brace made out of iron, not of wood, supporting the idea of the early 20th century campsite. At last it gave us the idea how the logs were moved to the rail. Its length and dimensions gave us the approximate load size as well. Some of those old pictures of loaded log sleds were lying or were made up for propaganda purposes so that legends could be verified,

*(Continued on page 7)*



or may be they were made to relieve boredom.

The mystery of the camp was an artifact that none of us could identify. It was a metal piece that looked like an axle but there was no rotation to this metal object. The 1" depth of the metal work indicates that boards were held together vertically by this item. We have no idea what this artifact is.

After a long walk with our pictures and memories we found our truck for the return trip which was uneventful. It was an interesting and exciting excursion in to the forest to find the past.

## Narrow Gauge Railroads

By  
Jerry Rohlinger

Anton's *Field Notes* alludes to a narrow gauge roadbed near his phantom logging camp. He is understandably vague as to its precise location. I can tell you that if one follows his directions you will find nothing. His mention of this roadbed does open a line of investigation that could eventually lead to one's locating this camp. I'm not going to give you enough information to do this. This brief article is about narrow gauge railroading in Wisconsin, in particular the Thunder Lake Narrow Gauge Railroad.

What is a narrow gauge railroad? Standard gauge is based on the old Roman chariot axle length of four feet, 8 and one half inches. An odd size to say the least, but that's only because of our English measuring system. Why a 2000 year old axle? Because the Roman chariots (the messenger service of the Empire) used these roads extensively. The roads became rutted to this size, thus making the axle length the most convenient size for other users of the roads. Over time this just became the standard size for an axle. English railroads, after playing around with gauges up to 8 feet, settled on the old

standard for ease of manufacture and they could also convert existing stagecoaches to rail use.

A narrow gauge is anything less than standard gauge. This usually means 3-foot gauge. Other narrow gauges exist, but most were of this size. Narrow gauge railroading is best remembered for Colorado railroading. Lines like the Denver & Rio Grande, Silverton RR, Florence & Cripple Creek, and Uintah Railroad are legendary for their engineering accomplishments and unique equipment. Narrow gauges were usually used in areas that require sharp curves, uneven roadbeds, and steep grades. In Wisconsin that meant logging.

Thunder Lake Narrow Gauge and Robbins RR were closely tied to each other from 1893 to 1941. Robbins RR is listed in "*The Railroads of Wisconsin 1827 - 1937*" by the Railway & Locomotive Historical Society as the only narrow gauge RR in Wisconsin. This refers to its' "common carrier" status. Many narrow gauge logging RR's operated in Wisconsin. Some examples of narrow gauge railroads near Stevens Point are the Dessert Lumber Company of Mosinee and the Walt-Spaulding Lumber Company operated the Big Falls Railway.

During the 1840's logging developed rapidly along the Wisconsin River. The river provided a natural waterway for log drives. However, one-third of the stands of pine in the state was to the north of Grandfather Falls. (36 miles below Rhinelander. The falls were then known as Pelican Rapids.) Fox & Helms Lumber Co. of Stevens Point undertook to supplement the waterway by an overland route. In the winter of 1857-58 a road was cut along the east bank of the Wisconsin River north from Jenny (Merrill) to Pelican Rapids, cut

(Continued on page 8)

across country following the Ontonagon Trail, past Sugar Camp Lake and Indian Lake to Eagle River.

In 1859 John Curran, a 21-year old employee of Fox & Helms at Eagle River, opened a trading post at Pelican Rapids, the junction of the Wisconsin and Pelican Rivers. He became the first white settler at what was to become Rhinelander.

In 1874, Edward O. Brown who, with his sons, Anderson, Webster (later a member of the Congress) and Edward O., had been engaged in logging near Stevens Point, bought hundreds of acres of land at Pelican Rapids from the State of Wisconsin. Because of the difficulties in navigating the Wisconsin River in that area, the Brown family offered half the land to the Milwaukee, Lake Shore & Western Railroad (part of the Chicago & North Western), then building northward from Milwaukee to Ontonagon, Michigan, on Lake Superior, in return for building a branch line to Pelican Rapids. The branch was built west 14 miles from Monico Junction, and was put into operation in

1882. A town site was laid out, and the community was named in honor of F. W. Rhinelander, the president of the railroad.

In 1886 S. H. Baird and F. S. Robbins organized a partnership that would be the original firm of the various partnerships and corporations that owned or operated what would become Thunder Lake Narrow Gauge RR.

It was the spring of 1893 low water in Pine Lake Creek prevented the usual Baird & Robbins log drive. The result was the construction of 5 miles of narrow gauge track. This was the modest beginning of the only narrow gauge common carrier in Wisconsin.

For additional information read Harvey Huston's, *Thunder Lake Narrow Gauge*, published in 1961. The Rhinelander Museum has a narrow gauge engine, passenger car, and freight car on display.

---

# A n n u a l M e e t i n g

 Place: CenterPoint Market Place 

Date: Saturday April 15, 2000

Agenda: Annual Business Meeting, Election of Board Members

 



## Matching Grant and Book Signing

Several events are in the planning stages regarding our \$50,000 matching State grant. Currently Mr. Anton Anday is developing a fundraising dinner at the Sky Club in Plover featuring State Senator Kevin Shibilski with Michael Goc present. This would provide an opportunity to meet Senator Shibilski and Mr. Goc, the author of *Land and Lumber*. Mr. Goc will sign all

purchased books. This dinner is planned for sometime in March. Please watch the papers for announcements.

Our ever busy Mr. Anday is also working on a similar event to take place at Bernard's Supper Club in Stevens Point. Sate Representative Julie Lassa and Michael Goc would be in attendance at this function. Again, please watch the papers and this newsletter for additional information.

**Carla's Collectibles**  
 Antique Mall  
 Upper Level CenterPoint Connection  
 Main Street  
 Stevens Point WI

All Portage County Historical Society Publications on hand

Carla Boettcher owner

## 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



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

Non-Profit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
Permit No. 92  
Stevens Point,  
WI  
54481