



The Pinery

Annual Publication of the Portage County Historical Society of Wisconsin

President's Report

MATCHING FUNDS

The matching funds program that the state of Wisconsin has granted to the society is well on its way with just under 25% of its goal of \$50,000 or \$14,000 already reached. As a result of this program the society's number of life memberships has grown by over 30 people in the first few months of this year. The \$14,000 includes 2 donations of \$1,000 each and 3 of \$500 each. The remaining donations have been between \$100 and \$300 contributions. We would like to express our deep thanks to everyone that has helped us in this program.

Our newest life members include the following supporters of the historical society: Dr. Rob Salvin, Julie Salvin, Ron Roth, Jessie Weivel, Bernard Weivel, Peter Trapp, Shirley Cooper, Judy Cable-Anderson, John

(Continued on page 2)

From the first Newsletter of the Society April 18, 1956

The Insignia

You will perhaps recognize it as the editorial masthead of the old "Wisconsin Pinery", our first newspaper. The copy we used came from the issue of Nov. 23, 1857. The Wisconsin Pinery's close association with our pioneer times and early history was the reason for its adoption. The masthead shows the light of knowledge silhouetting the printing press and a seated figure



Table of



President's Report	1	Stevens Point's First School	6
Let's Talk	2	Portage Cty Lifestyle 100 Years Ago	6
Budget	3	Rendezvous	7
Nelson Cabin Becomes General Store	4	Book Reviews	8

Messing, Helen Bogaczyk and Cindy Eagon. This brings our total life membership at this time to 274.

We must make a correction in that it was reported that Dr. George Anderson had donated a life membership for himself and his wife. Dr. Anderson donated \$500 as a memorial for his wife. We are sorry for the misunderstanding.

The funds have all been invested and will earn interest that the society can then use for its various projects.

FRANKLIN HOUSE

The society has received a \$3,000 donation from Suzan and Peter Trapp in the name of Mrs. Trapps parents Clute. She has requested that the funds be used to help complete the last two bedrooms upstairs in the Franklin House.

Anton Anday and Cheryl Jean have been stripping the paper from the master bedroom and will begin the same process on the last room. Mr. Anday has received an estimate on how much it will cost to plaster the master bedroom (\$995). Once this portion is complete, depending on the weather, paper can be hung and the rooms filled with the appropriate furnishings. This generous donation should bring the whole project very close to completion. When complete the upstairs of the house will include Mr. Perret office, a master bedroom, a sewing room and a children's room.

We would like to express our appreciation to the Trapp family for their donation to this project.

DOCENTS

We are in need of "museum sitters" for this coming summer-we would ask everyone to consider a couple days at Heritage Park as a docent. The society will provide

(Continued on page 3)



Let's Talk

The 2000 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 there impact on us.

June 10 thru Sept 3
Saturday & Sunday
1:00 - 5:00 PM

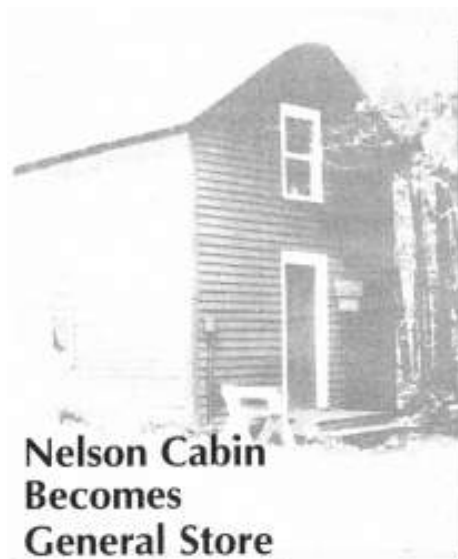


Foundation

Our foundation continues to grow. Ours funds are distributed into four separate Vanguard Funds. This is done to even out any fluctuations in the various markets. The figures below indicate values of our funds on those dates.

12/31/1998	12/31/1999
\$90,916.35	\$98,316.81

Keep in mind that with the State matching grant our Foundation can double in size by October 2001.



**Nelson Cabin
Becomes
General Store**



Mark Nelson

BECOMES GENERAL STORE

by
Patty Dreier
Director
Central Wisconsin
Environmental Station
First appeared in the *Sunset Gazette*
a newsletter of the
Central Wisconsin Environmental Station
(UW - Stevens Point
College of Natural Resources)

On your next visit to the Central Wisconsin Environmental Station (CWES), we invite you to step back in time by visiting our new (or should we say old?)

Trading post now called the Nelson General Store. It is located in the original 1920's cabin of Mark Nelson who, around 1900, purchased the land on which CWES now stands. He also owned and operated a general store about three miles down the road.

Shortly after purchasing this land on Sunset Lake, Mark built a seasonal hunting cabin and in 1923 he began living in it year 'round. Nelson Cabin, as we have referred to it for many years, was originally located in a grassy meadow along the southwest ridge of the CWES property overlooking Sunset Lake. We can still find the spot where the cabin once stood when there were only three buildings around the lake. These were the days when Mark got his water by carrying buckets up the hill from Sunset Lake.

According to research conducted by graduate student, Marci Oltman in 1985,

Mathias Gjefsen (Mark) emigrated from Norway in 1889 at the age of twenty-one. He began working for James J. Nelson's General Store in Amherst. J. J. Nelson grew fond of Mark and referred to him as "my boy, Mark Nelson." Mark later took the name of his new family. After more than five years of commercial experience and three years as farm hand and post office clerk, Nelson bought the Benson Brothers General Store at Benson's Corners in the town of New Hope. According to the "History of Portage County," Nelson conducted a "thoroughly modern store, handling all the commodities required by the surrounding community."

As cited in Marci Oltman's master's thesis, Jonas Roe, then 93 years old, recalled visiting the general store as a boy to buy candy from Mark Nelson. Jonas described the general store as a place where people gathered for social purposes as well as business. He also recalled that flour and sugar were in barrels and there were also cracker barrels and bologna. While we don't have any of these commodities for sale in our Nelson's General Store today at CWES, we can promise you a wide array of T-shirts, caps, totes, books, nature study materials, and "fun outdoor stuff."

With permission (and blessings) from Mark's grandson, Gordon Nelson of Fort Wayne, Indiana, we'll be giving the cabin a gentle makeover to create an even more authentic General Store experience for our visitors. We'll look forward to the time in the next few months when Gordon Nelson will come to CWES to hang out the "Nelson General Store" shingle to honor his grandfather's memory. And, we will also look forward to the time when Gordon will share more stories about his boyhood adventures with his grandfather here on the shores of Sunset Lake.

STEVENS POINT'S FIRST SCHOOLS

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

-as told by Mrs. G. B. Clark in 1927

Originally published in The Pinery, April 1964

Stevens Point's first school was taught by Miss Mandana Hale in 1846-47. At that time Stevens Point consisted of five families and some lumber camps. These families decided to club together and hire a teacher. One of their number, a Mr. Bangle, was going to Belvidere, Illinois for his family, and he was authorized to bring a teacher back with him, which he did.

Miss Hale was an excellent horsewoman and she drove one of the loaded ox teams from Belvidere, Illinois to teach a four-month's term of school at Stevens Point.

The building used for school purposes was a hastily improvised board shanty, and could be used only during the warm weather. Miss Hale taught again the next year although married at that time.

In 1849 a district was formed and a building erected at a cost of \$600. In 1858 the White School was built where the Lincoln School (currently site of Lincoln Center) now stands. There were seventeen pupils in the White School at that time, counting what few came from Linwood.

In 1908 the 50th anniversary of the old White School and Pioneer Days was celebrated by a great Home Coming in which some of the first teachers and old pioneers came back to the city.

Note - Miss Hale became Mrs. N. F. Bliss, the mother of Geraldine Bliss Clark.



Docents

Our museums are again open on Saturdays and Sundays from June 10 thru Sept 3. 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

Eland Historical Society

This newly formed group is attempting to save the rich railroad heritage of this little community. In the 1920's as many as 60+ trains a day traveled through this town. It sported turntable fueling facilities, and eleven tracks bisected the town. Only the depot remains.

They are having an open house May 13-14 and May 20-21.

3rd Annual

Rendezvous



Rendezvous

July 15-16, 2000

Heritage Park Plover, Wi.

Corner of Willow Dr. & Washington Ave.

Authentic Foods

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

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
(715) 344-4423



Our 3rd Annual Plover Portage Rendezvous will be held July 15 & 16 at the Heritage Park in Plover, WI.

This year we have music. The Loose Strings Quartet will play at 2:00 PM and 7:00 PM on Saturday. Traditional & Contemporary Bluegrass and Folk Music.

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.

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.

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 10 thru Sept 2
Thursday & Saturday
1:00 - 5:00 PM**



Books

Land & Lumber a History of Portage County

by
Michael Goc

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.

Available now for \$35.00

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.

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



Books

Union Cemetary

by
Millicent Hild

Begun in 1988 at the request of the City Engineering Department of Stevens Point Wisconsin, revised in 1996, Millicent A. (Zindel) Hild has researched the records to put together a comprehensive listing of all people buried in Stevens Point's first cemetary. Not only is this a list of names but also a brief biography of the person is included.

A must for genealogists.

Available now for \$10.00

Journey Through Portage County Past

Dedicated to the Children of Portage County

Initially published by the GFWC Stevens Point Woman's Club this book is an adventure story with Hunter and his dog Nova, two magical time travelers, who take two children from Portage County present on a journey to Portage County past. It provides entertaining reading and little known historical facts to supplement studies of local history at the 3rd and 4th grade age level.

Available now at \$10.00

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

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

Every heart harbors a Hometown on the River

by
Roy Menzel

A book that covers one man's remembrances from childhood through retirement in Stevens Point. Roy was instrumental in getting our Green Trail started and profits from this book provided the seed money.

Mr. Menzel has donated 100 books to the Society.

Available now at \$10.00

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 2001



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

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Stevens Point, WI 54481

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