



Portage County Historical Society

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

Dec. 2001

President's Report

Congratulations and we salute your dedication.

Annual Meeting

The meeting was held at Nelson Hall on the UWSP campus October 17, 2001 at 7:30 p.m. Thirty-one people were in attendance to hear Mark Seiler and Carl Rasmussen speak on the pro's and con's of saving Nelson Hall.

The reading of the minutes and the treasurers report were both waived. Jean Regnier was introduced as the new treasurer, pending board approval at the November meeting.

The Pine and Iron Award was presented earlier to Carla Boettcher. There were no submissions for the Rothman award this year.

Anton Anday, Marilyn Knuth, Bob Precourt, Milo Harpstead, Kari Simonis, Carla Boettcher and Elizabeth Trzebiatowski were all re-elected to another term on the board. Jeanette Perkins was elected to the board.

November Meeting

Election of officers was the first agenda item. Tim Siebert was nominated for President, Elizabeth Trzebiatowski was nominated for Vice-President, Jean Regnier was nominated for Treasurer, Karen Zinda was nominated for Secretary. All were unanimously elected.

HERITAGE PARK

The last few months have seen a great deal of work done on the Engford "Circus" house. The work has been coordinated by Mr. Anday and we would like to thank him for that work.

Because of the way the mover left the two portions of the structure we had to hire a contractor to "fix" the gap between the two parts. In addition the front porch has been fixed and the supports rebuilt. They had been rotted and begun to fall away from the front of the house. Because of the new setting of the house a couple of the exterior doors did not fit correctly and had to be replaned. The entire yard area has been leveled and seeded with new grass. In addition, hookups for gas and

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electrical utilities have been installed.

The plan for the basement is to develop this large area into an archival study area.

Finally, Mr. Anday has obtained from Greg Kurtzweil, a local antique dealer, the original wood burning stove from the house. Mr. Kurtzweil donated the stove to the society. We plan to do more work on the house in the summer.

Mary Egle and Irma Zimmerman have agreed to take on the general store project and are currently looking at estimates for the beginning portions of this project including a basement under the structure.

The society has also found it necessary to replace the front doors on the school. The original doors that we have been using have simply become too rotten to be used any longer. We hope to have this smaller project completed by the time winter sets in.

GIFTS FROM OUR FRIENDS

- ◆ Nelson Hughes estate — a number of small household items and many documents from the turn of the century
- ◆ Beatrice Boston -- a number of household items and WW II photos
- ◆ Bonnie Maher -- small lumber wagon from the folding furniture factory
- ◆ Mr. and Mrs. Sievwright -- a number of small household items.
- ◆ Mrs Diane Rohlinger — a ca 1950 radio/phonograph console.

NEEDS

- Military items, letters, documents of every kind.
- Murphy's Oil Soap and 409 cleaning fluid.

Florence Clara Engford

Florence Clara Engford, 92, a former Plover woman whose family ran a traveling circus, died Saturday, Oct. 27, 2001, at Jefferson Meadows Care Center in Baraboo.

Services were Wednesday at the Plover United Methodist Church in Plover, with the Rev. Diego Orsini officiating. Burial was in Plover Cemetery.

Visitation was Wednesday at the church until the services. Jensen-Jinsky Funeral Home in Plover assisted the family with arrangements.

Miss Engford was born Jan. 1, 1909, in Milwaukee, a daughter of the late Robert and Amanda Engford. She moved to Plover with her parents in 1923.

She was a lifelong member of Plover United Methodist Church in Plover. For many years she sang in the choir there.

In the 1920s and 1930s she was a part of the "Engford Family Shows," a family circus that traveled throughout Wisconsin. The Wisconsin State Historical Society recognized the Engford Family Shows as a pioneer in the motorized circus equipment industry and one of the first to tour Wisconsin in 1920 with motorized circus equipment.

She also worked for Weber Fly Tying Co. in Stevens Point.

The family home was built in 1850 by Miner Strope, a pioneer attorney and judge. It is the county's oldest house for which the age can be verified. The house was moved from Post Road in Plover to Heritage Park in Plover for historical preservation.

Survivors include one nephew, David (Mona) Engford, Baraboo; and one niece, Ruthie (Frank) Clark, Sarasota, Fla.

1941-1945 DISPLAY

This has become one of the society's most popular displays. Over the summer the display drew several hundred people. The display will still be up next summer. All of our displays are two year programs.

The society has also been able to interview a number of World War II veterans thanks to the efforts of Bob Precourt. The society now has the interviews of about 15 veterans from that conflict. We are looking for many more of veterans. If you know of someone please contact us with the name of the vet.

NATIVE REALM

The society has been able, with the help of Worzella Publishing, to reissue this popular book. If you wish a copy the cost is \$35. If you wish a copy of both Native Realm and Land and Lumber you can save \$10. The cost is \$60 for the two books.

**Early Railroading
in
Portage County**

by
Jerry Rohlinger

Early railroad history for Portage County is scarce, especially if you are looking at the 1850's. General Albert G. Ellis, Stevens Point's second mayor, established the county's first newspaper, The Wisconsin Pinery, on January 14, 1853. In 1857 Ellis, Tracy & Swayze Publishers prepared and printed a "Handbook of Stevens Point and the Upper Wisconsin". This was printed on the press currently housed in the Synagogue Museum, 1475 Water St, Stevens Point.

Source material for this article are the Handbook itself, "The Railroads of Wisconsin 1827-1937" copyright 1937, and the Portage County Historical Society's web site: www.geocities.com/pchs_54481. The Handbook can be read in its entirety on the above site. Of the seven railroads mentioned, I could only find information on three of them. This should not be a surprise as railroad fever was running wild at this time. Many roads were proposed, many accepted investments, most died before a spike could be driven, a few men made money, most lost their investments, and virtually all, those that survived in one form or another, were

A Plea !

Recently Tim Siebert received a phone call from a person handling an estate. He was able to retrieve 7 garbage bags of mostly paper items. Another 5 or so were already disposed of. This man family was related to the Nelson's of Nelsonville and the family kept virtually every receipt, bill and letter dating back into the 1800's.

Included in the items saved were some letters, family information, pictures, railroad maps from 1873, etc. We have no idea what was lost.

Please!! If your loved ones pass on or you know of another family, consider calling Tim Siebert at 344-7607 before items are discarded. A tremendous amount of

purchased by or consolidated with later lines.

The "Handbook" and excerpts below show profound optimism for the area. Stevens Point is the largest "city" in Portage County at 2,000 inhabitants, but Plover at 800 is the County seat and would remain so until 1868. Interestingly, the community of Springville, located between Point and Plover, is the proposed site of four railroads to pass through, one to cross the Wisconsin River at this point. The GBW and Wis. Central eventually did on their routes from Plover to Point. This "community" is only distinguishable today by its Springville Pond.

Stevens Point was the first community in Portage County to have a railroad. The first train arrived Wednesday, Nov. 15, 1871. Technically, Amherst and Custer (I'm being liberal here in calling it a community) then known as Dawson would have received trains first as construction proceeded from Menasha to Point.

La Crosse and Milwaukee Rail Road

Incorporated Oct. 13, 1856 a consolidation of the La Crosse and Milwaukee Railroad Company incorporated March 9, 1854 and the Milwaukee and Watertown Rail Road Company. This became part of the Chicago, Milwaukee, St Paul & Pacific Rail Road incorporated March 31, 1927.

Milwaukee and Horicon Rail Road Company

Incorporated April 17, 1852, deeded June 23, 1863 to Milwaukee and Saint Paul Railway Company. Eventually became part of the Chicago, Milwaukee, St Paul & Pacific Rail Road incorporated March 31, 1927.

Sheboygan and Mississippi Railroad

Incorporated March 8, 1852, sold to

Samuel L. Benson who organized the Sheboygan and Fond du Lac Rail Road Company.

Manitowoc and Mississippi R. R.

No information found.

Madison, Portage City and Lake Superior Rail Road

No information found.

Point Bas and Wausau Rail Road

No information found.

Milwaukee, Horicon, Stevens Point and Superior City Road

No information found.

Following are excerpts from the Handbook:

KILBOURN CITY

(Now known as Wisconsin Dells) is located on the east bank of the Wisconsin River, at a point where the La Crosse and Milwaukee Rail Road crosses the River -- in the Town of Newport, Columbia Co., Wis. It was laid out by the Wisconsin River hydraulic Company: platted last season; and the first sale of lots was made last August. A year ago last January, there was but one family on the plat. -- Now there are over 30, besides those of Railroad hands -- with every prospect of a rapid increase during the coming spring and summer. About 500 lots have been sold -- nearly half of them for improvement. There are about 80 dwellings, which are generally neatly finished, costing from \$500 to \$3,000 each. Arrangements are going on for putting up an extensive steam sawmill, a furnace, sash, door and blind factory, shingle machine, &c.; with a prospect of various other machinery during the coming season. There are two stores, one good tavern, a fine schoolhouse, which

cost \$1,000, with various kinds of business; and other traders and mechanics will begin business as soon as suitable buildings can be prepared. The grading of the La Crosse and Milwaukee Railroad is already going on rapidly here, and there is no doubt but the Cars will be running to this point by the 1st of September next. The Railroad bridge contract has been let at prices which will amount in the aggregate to above \$70,000 to be completed the 1st of September next; and part of the timber is already on the spot for the structure.

GRAND RAPIDS

The Milwaukee and Horicon Rail Road Company have it in contemplation to run a branch of their Road to Grand Rapids, and there connecting with the Manitowoc and Mississippi R. R. A large amount of stock has been subscribed by the citizens of Grand Rapids. The Madison, Portage City and Lake Superior Rail Road, will also make this a point in its route. There is a deposit of the best of Iron Ore, occupying some three sections of land, including the village Plat and adjacent lands. The above is communicated by an old resident of the village, and may be regarded as reliable.

PLOVER

The whole population is estimated at 800, not including the adjacent village of Springville, spoken of separately below. The Milwaukee and Horicon Rail Road will pass through Plover, and the Grand Rapids Branch will diverge from the main trunk at this place, which will of itself make it a place of business.

SPRINGVILLE

Situated as this place is, being the point at which the Milwaukee & Horicon R. R. strikes the Wisconsin river, surrounded by abundant water power, and

being in the heart of a portion of the very best farming country in the State, it presents one of the most inviting localities for the mechanic and others who desire a healthy, pleasant and central location. The village, in addition to this grist and sawmills, contains 1 store, 1 tavern, 1 blacksmith shop, and some 12 dwellings. It is at this point that the Point Bas and Wausau Rail Road branches off from the Milwaukee and Horicon Rail Road. It is also the point at which the Sheboygan and Mississippi railroad will cross the Wisconsin River. There are other railroads now in process of construction, which from its location must pass through this place.

STEVENS POINT

The Steamer *Northerner*, at present runs daily from its dock at the foot of Main Street, to Mosinee; (Little Bull Falls) 30 miles above Stevens Point. Rail Roads are projected and building from the South and East, one from Green Bay, one from Menasha, one from Portage City: But that from Milwaukee, via Berlin, the – Milwaukee, Horicon, Stevens Point and Superior City Road, is the main one, on which we depend for the first connection with the southern and eastern world. The citizens of Stevens Point have evinced their confidence in it, by subscribing and paying some \$500,000 to its stock. The cars are now running twice a day from Milwaukee to Ripon: - the track will be finished to Berlin in July next, and the contract for building the Road from that



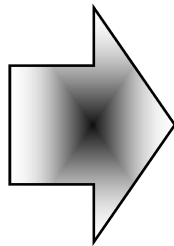
Season's Greetings



Can anyone help Bob??
He has contributed several articles to our web site.

Here is a wedding photo taken at a Stevens Point photographer's studio circa 1890. As in a previous e-mail I asked if this could be inserted into your web site, preferably on the St. Martin's - Ellis page. I am convinced it was a wedding performed there featuring people who lived in Ellis. I am looking for the names of all people EXCEPT the man in the upper right, who is my grandfather, August Wundrock. None of the others are related to August, so they must be neighbors.

Thanks for your help



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

email pchs_54481@yahoo.com

Visit our web site at www.geocities.com/pchs_54481

For contributing articles or comments on the Newsletter:

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

Portage County Historical Society
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