



# Portage County Historical Society

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Tim Siebert, Editor

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## January 2001

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*Our apologies for the long delay between newsletters. Many things have been happening and it slipped away. At this time most major new items have been settled.*

## President's Report

### HERITAGE PARK

#### Franklin House

The Franklin House is now nearly complete. The master bedroom has been plastered and papered. The furniture has been placed in the room.

The child's room has been plastered and the paper purchased. The weather has prevented additional work being done on the room and will be finished in the spring. This will be the last room of the house to be completed.

#### Engford/Barnsdale or Circus House

The Engford/Barnsdale House or locally known as the "Circus" House was moved to Heritage Park on Dec. 7, 2000.

The house was built in 1850 by Miner Strobe, a pioneer attorney and judge. It is the county's oldest house for which the age can be verified.

Strobe bought the property in 1850 and the deed verifies the age of the house, mentioning that the structure was

under construction at the time. He lived in it until his death in 1880.

He set up one of the early law practices in the county and Plover was the Portage County seat when he moved here from New York in 1850. He eventually served as district attorney as well as county judge. Later in life he was known as "Judge Strobe."

His widow eventually sold the house in 1888 and it went through a progression of owners until Robert Engford purchased it in 1923.

Engford was a pioneer in the motorized circus equipment industry and was one of the first to tour Wisconsin with that motorized equipment in 1920. He died in 1967, but his daughter, Florence, continued to live in it until recently.

The house will serve three purposes. Obviously, we will tell the story of the circus and its role in this county. Secondly,

## Table of Contents

<u>Article</u>	<u>Page</u>
President's Report .....	1
Plover Portage Rendezvous .....	3
Publications .....	3
Web Site .....	4
Membership Application .....	4
Calendar of Events .....	5

the house will allow the society to place some of its displays on the 1920's and 1930's into public view. Finally, we hope to use some of the area for much needed storage.

**Barn**

Since our last newsletter a post and beam barn has been obtained by the Society. This structure will be placed on the foundation of the back portion of the Pierce building.

Mr. Kawleski, who disassembled the barn, has generously donated flooring, sills, joists and siding. Mr. Perona of Country Craftsmen, Salem WI, will reassembly building at a reduced cost. This is scheduled to take place in the time period mid-March to mid-May. It will take 3 weekends to accomplish.

Our thanks to their generosity.

This will be used to house some of our farm equipment and other, larger items.

**Depot**

The platform was completed last summer. Since then the Central Wisconsin Model Railroaders have received a donation of a crossing signal from the Wisconsin Central Railroad. This, and the semaphore, will be erected this summer.

That leaves only the chimney and the second floor to be completed. No time frame has been set for this. Lack of funds being the primary reason.

**WATER ST. SITE**



Our next two year display will be a remembrance of the men and women who participated in World War II.

The society has received a \$1,500 grant from the Hotel/Motel tax in Stevens Point to help pay for the display.

**WE WOULD VERY MUCH LIKE TO OBTAIN PHOTOGRAPHS OF MEN OR WOMEN FROM THE COUNTY WHO WERE IN THE MILITARY DURING THE WAR. WE WOULD LIKE THE PICTURES TO BE OF THE PEOPLE IN UNIFORM OR AT WORK IN THE MILITARY.**

The photos will become part of the society's permanent collection. The display will have a section set aside for the photos to give a human side to the county's participation in the conflict other than just equipment and uniforms.

Anton Anday, Jerry Rohlinger, and myself will be attending the Allied Joint Council of Veterans Organizations of Portage County on Jan. 23rd. It is hoped that these groups will lend their support for this display as well as publicize it County and State wide.

**Mortgage**

In order to put the Engford (Circus) House on a good foundation and rebuild the barn the society has had to take out a \$60,000 mortgage from the Portage County Bank. This 30 year mortgage will allow us to accomplish a number of things.

A complete basement will be put under the Engford House and we can then use it for storage as well as making the house sound. This amounts to approximately \$13,000.

Disassembly and reassembly of the barn, other materials come about \$39,000.

**MATCHING FUNDS**

The matching funds project will be concluded at the first week of June. To date the society has been able to raise, roughly, \$30,000. This is 60% of the total needed.

Obviously, we are still some \$20,000 short and anyone wishing to contribute please consider doing so. Simply send a check to PCHS, P.O. 672 at Stevens Point and put matching funds in the memo blank.

An acknowledgement of all of the contributors will be published after the campaign is complete. We wish to thank everyone who has contributed to the program.

Judy Lyons and Shirley Multhauf are contacting local businesses and organizations in an effort to reach our goal. It should be noted that a recent proposed sports complex was able to raise \$1.2 million, give or take, in about 3 months.

**GIFTS FROM OUR FRIENDS**

- 1 Mrs. Koniecki - series of smaller house hold items from her mother. This includes cloths, tools and kitchen items.
- 2 SPASH Library - has given the Society



a number of items that fit our communications collection.

**NEEDS**

- 1 Strong shelving to be used in the Water St. site.
- 2 Military equipment, uniforms, letters or other related memorabilia.
- 3 Rags

**Annual Meeting**

The Board has instituted a by-law change moving the Annual meeting from April to October. This will become effective this year.

The rationale for this was the many conflicting events in April that have developed over the years. We found ourselves trying to squeeze in a meeting around Easter, Trivia weekend, Cultural Fest, tax time and other events. The result was a dramatic decline in attendance and difficulty in finding a place to have the meeting.

Moving it to October will get away from these other events and will allow us to present a report on the recent museum 'season'. An added feature may be better weather for an outside meeting?

**Publications**

**Plover Portage Rendezvous  
July 14-15**



Returning are the

- Loose String Quartet Blue • Pie & Ice Cream Social hosted by
- Children's games, and • Annual tomahawk competition

**Mark it down, bring the family**

Sales of *Land & Lumber* have been steady. We have plenty of copies for sale.

Look for the republishing of *Native Realm* in February 2001. Worzalla Publishers was going to reprint this fast selling book.

As an extra value, we are packaging both for \$65. Regular price is \$35 each. Contact the Society for more information or to purchase these fine books.

Recently a compilation of letters written during the Korean War was published with the assistance of our own Tim Siebert and Anton Anday. Originally it was hoped that the Society would publish this. Circumstances prevented this.

**Web Site**

[www.geocities.com/pchs\\_54481](http://www.geocities.com/pchs_54481)

Our web site now has over 225 articles in its Archive section. This represents approximately 1,000 pages if printed out. It is the largest single source of information on Portage County history.

As large as this sounds there is still

many areas inadequately covered. Research continues and anyone able to lend a hand is welcome.

We are visited each week by about 50 people. Rosholt School District will begin using this site for 4th grade Wisconsin history research. No word yet if Stevens Point District or other districts within the County will begin using this site.

A railroad history site is being developed. I'm doing it this way for several reasons: 1.) We have lots of RR history; 2.) I can place a RR history site on several web rings that will increase viewers.

All members that do not have Internet access at home are urged to visit the Public Libraries, ask for assistance and enjoy reading about Portage County. You never know what you'll find. Maybe even some of your family history is there.



Jerry Rohlinger  
Web Master ?  
jad1@g2a.net

**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



# Calendar of Events

## Heritage Park

Recreation in Portage County 100 years ago.

Plover Portage Rendezvous  
July 14-15

## Synagogue Museum

In Memory  
of Portage County's  
World War II Veterans

Featuring photos, maps, items, videos, and more.

Open Saturday and Sunday  
1:00 to 5:00 mid-June thru Labor Day.

## Rising Star Mill

The only event set at this time is the Arts and Craft show held during the Iola Car Show weekend, July 13-15



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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