

October

# The Pinery

*A Publication of the Portage County Historical Society*

## President's Report

### RENDEZVOUS UPDATE

The 4th annual Plover Portage Rendezvous was a success. Thanks to the work of Mr. Jerry Rohlinger, Ms. Andrea Mielkes, and Ms. Bethann Laars the society was not only able to bring 1830's re-enactors but also a number of crafts people to demonstrate their expertise. The society was also able to bring a variety of music to the event and serve buffalo burgers.



Unfortunately the intense heat of Sunday afternoon put an early end to the event. The board of directors believes that the success of the variety of presentations should be followed up next year.

### PARK WORK

Members of the society have done a great deal of work on Heritage Park during this past summer. Mrs. Jean has done some touch up work on the exterior of the Franklin House painting parts of the house and working on the porch. Mrs. Jean has also done some work on the outhouse that goes with the Franklin House. In addition some of the exterior of

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the Engford House has been painted. The choice for the house is a light yellow as that is the color that the house seems to have been painted for a great deal of time. The back portion and some of the west side have already been painted. The society has also put a heat/air conditioning system into the basement as it will be needed for the research facility that is planned for the large basement area. Thanks to efforts of Mr. Rohlinger the Engford House has also seen some stability put into the structure with the addition of the porches that were once on the house. These structures have been placed on the front door and each side entry.



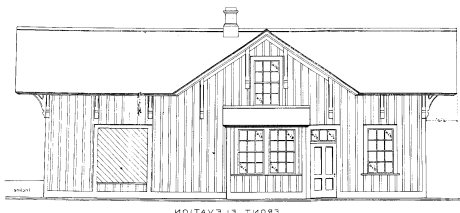
We would like to thank Paul and Chris Simms as well as Kathy Nations for all their work in the beautification project of Heritage Park.

Mr. Anday has been working on the floor of the Hie Corners School to try to fix the linseed oil coating that had been causing a great deal of trouble. We would also like to thank his wife, Mary Beth, for the help she has given in this task as well as work on the Yellowstone Cabin. The cabin is nearing completion thanks to the efforts of Mr. Anday. The exterior is painted and the windows nearly all installed. The interior has been

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# *Annual Meeting Oct. 16, 2002*

**This year's Annual Meeting will be  
held at the  
ex-Bancroft Depot  
located in our  
Heritage Park**



wall boarded and wall papered. The floor and back wall still need some work before the interior is complete.

The Central Wisconsin Model Railroaders, Ltd., organization has made great strides in fixing up the second floor of the depot. Once complete, the society will be able to use this area for railroad related artifacts. In a related item the Green Bay and Western caboose that the society has obtained is being worked on by Mr. Don Kottke and others. We wish to thank them for the efforts that they have put into this structure.



## NEEDS

- Flood style lights for our display areas. Several have burned out and need to be replaced.
- Military related memorabilia including papers/letters.
- Cleaning rags/white sheets
- Thanks to Jodi Cigel for the donation she gave to help supply the Synagogue with cleaning supplies and paper products.
- We need perennial plants appropriate to the time period of our Heritage Park. Yellow day lilies (bulbs) for example.

**Casting Bullets** sup-

## BOOKS

The society has 3 books in manuscript form ready for printing. However, funding has kept us from getting any of these to the printers. Anyone interested in helping us out with getting these books printed please send contributions to Books, PCHS, P.O. 672.

### **Sleep well, your National Guard is**

By  
Tim Siebert  
a personal reminiscence

On January 1, 1976 a group of Native Americans, mostly Menominee man, moved in and took over the Alexian Brothers Novitiate near Gresham, Wisconsin. The group called itself the Menominee Warrior Society. They claimed that the Novitiate and the land it sat on was part of the reservation. Furthermore, the Alexian Brothers had come into possession of the property by less than above the board means. They also stated, that since the Alexian Brothers were no longer using the Novitiate, the area in question reverted back to the tribe. The Alexians disputed the claim, saying that since they still had a caretaker on the property, their claim to the use of the land and building was still valid. Some negotiations were going on, at the time, between the tribal

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government and the Alexian Brothers, but it had not produced any results.

Shortly after the takeover began, the state moved to bring in the National Guard into the picture, so they could keep the peace between the two sides that had very quickly identified themselves. On one side was the Menominee Warrior Society. On the other side were the local Non B Indians. Some of these people considered the takeover plain wrong and/or illegal. Others felt, that the National Guard was sympathetic to the Warrior Society and that the members of the Society were just out to cause trouble. Several shooting incidents had occurred between the two groups, although no one had been seriously hurt. The standoff continued through the first three weeks of January without any progress being made to settle the issue.

By late January 1975 the rotation of various National Guard units had finally reached the two artillery batteries in Stevens Point. Battery B was called up to move into the area to replace units that were on duty at the location. Our unit left on January 27, 1975. Up to this point all the units assigned to the incident had been there for a specific amount of time, Sunday to Sunday, and then sent home. Battery B was informed, that it too would be there for a week. Later this was changed to the "duration". At the same time of our assignment, there were units also present from Marshfield and Wisconsin Rapids.

I was in Battery B at that time. My assignment was unit armorer. The job involved keeping the units small weapons accounted for and in good working order. This mostly included, M-16 rifles and some .45 pistols, although the unit did have some team operated larger weapons. Several things were going to make this a very interesting incident for our unit and for me in particular. First, the word "duration" had the ring of a "long time" to it and I was to be married in just three weeks. This meant blood tests and other papers had to be taken care of, plans also had to be finalized in Stevens Point. Second, our orders for the incident were vague. Just exactly what was to take place and how were we to go about accomplishing the mission?

Battery B was assigned to stay in the Christus Lutheran church basement in Clintonville. This was some miles from the Novitiate, but we were told that we should not venture into the town of Shawano. Many people there were angry at the Menominee for the takeover and at the National Guard for "protecting" them. The Clintonville church, that we were assigned to, was in the downtown area. As unit armorer, I was able to move around the community while trying to find items that we might need. We were assigned the three p.m. to midnight shift, so we had some time to explore the community. During this time I found, that generally speaking, the population of Clintonville favored the Menominee side or were neutral on the whole affair. The residents also provided additional food and amenities for the men on guard duty. They had hot drinks and cakes for the men. This was very different from what we had been told about Shawano.

Things were strange almost from the beginning of the deployment. Our battery was to work an eight-hour shift. The other two units would rotate with us for the other two shifts. This meant that each unit would have to check out a weapon to each man, for each assignment and then check it back in again at the end of the shift. It was my job to keep a close accounting of the weapons and staying in the room where they were

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stored in order to keep them secure. Unfortunately, some genius decided that all of this coming and going of weapons was a waste of time. The order was given that one unit should send out its rifles to the various checkpoints and observation points. The weapons would then stay at that point for as long as the units were at the Novitiate. This affected about a hundred men and a hundred fully automatic M-16 rifles. Nothing would happen to the rifles. What could possibly happen to them? Our unit's rifles were picked. Over the course of one week, that we were at the Novitiate, at least one of the M-16's disappeared. Somehow, this turned out to be my fault. After we returned to Stevens Point the F.B.I. would twice come to visit at SPASH, where I teach. They called me out of class to discuss with me what I have done with, or what had happened to the one weapon, that we all knew, had disappeared. To the best of my knowledge the rifle was never found.

The men of battery B were assigned to the graveyard shift for a couple of days. This meant that a hundred men and officers were to be out on the checkpoints during the night, at the time when there was no moon. The Alexian Brothers Novitiate sat in a middle of a bowl, with small rises on most sides of the two hundred and twenty five acre site. The key checkpoint, 6-B, was in a barn sitting on a rise above the road that led directly to the novitiate. This point was easy to find, but the other checkpoints scattered around the area were isolated places located on possible entry routes to the building. On a couple of occasions, locals would ride through the area on snowmobiles and take pot shots at the novitiate. On dark nights, without lights to give one away, this could become very dangerous for any guardsman moving around their assigned post. This was especially true, since some of the local population did not appreciate the presence of the Guard in the first place.

This brings me to the third night of guard duty. This night there were two of us

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## 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: \_\_\_\_\_

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Annual \$15  
Business \$25  
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Life \$100

left at the church to guard the unit's equipment. We received news that a group of local people were going to try to enter the novitiate's grounds through a particular check point. Along with the news came the order, that we were to pick up and deliver four thousand rounds of M-16 ammunition and six flak jackets to that designated location. The strategy was that the men on duty were to try to block anyone trying to break into the grounds. However, with only two of us at the church it meant that one had to stay to guard the remaining equipment, while the other, alone, would deliver the items to the designated place. Through a strange piece of logic, concerning my training and assignment, I was chosen to deliver the ammunition and flak jackets. I proceeded to the local armory, that was used as a supply point, checked out an army pick up truck and filled it with what ammunition they could give me and six flak jackets. Army regulations state that anyone driving must have an assistant driver, but this regulation was not to be followed, as we did not have anyone else to spare. My job was to drive dark that is with no lights, to a checkpoint, the location of which was only dimly described to me by the officer in charge. Off I went into the dark. After driving for a while in the general direction I was given, I decided that I needed directions to my destination. I pulled into the parking lot of a local bar and went in to ask where the checkpoint was located. As it turned out it was the basement of a farmhouse. This action on my part, of course meant leaving all the equipment in the back of the pick up unguarded. Needless to say, this caused me some discomfort at the time. I don't even want to think of the other implications of my action, since the locals now knew exactly what was going on. Fortunately, no one bothered the truck and after returning to it, I continued on my way. The checkpoint was found, the equipment delivered. As it later turned out, the original report was wrong and nothing happened in the area that night. I still shudder looking back on that night assignment, riding around in unfamiliar country with no lights, on back roads, with all that stuff in the back of the truck and the locals knowing exactly where I was going. That seems to be the way the whole Novitiate takeover incident was managed.

In any case, I still had my personal affairs to deal with. The guard did let me take a day to go back to Stevens Point to get my blood test and fill out some forms for my upcoming wedding, which was now just fifteen days in the future. My family and I still did not know how long my unit would be in the Gresham area and would I be allowed to go to Sun Prairie to be married? By late that afternoon of that same day, I was back at the Clintonville church and on duty.

B Battery had been in Clintonville for nearly a week, when the tension began to build, as the word came that Marlon Brando and Father James Groppie were coming to the Novitiate to see if they could negotiate a solution. Mr. Brando was an advocate of Native American rights. It was feared that his visit might cause more trouble. By this time, I had not been lax in expressing the opinion that perhaps, the Warrior Society had a point. The site was theirs. They had good ideas for its use and they had a right to occupy it as the Alexians had not used it for quite some time. This was not the popular point of view among the various men in the unit. They did not want to be there and they felt that the Menominee had taken them from their families and jobs. They were irritated and my position did nothing to appease them. The unit also had at least one

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person, who felt that he could, single handedly, resolve the problem. To that end he carried, not only his issued weapon, but a large caliber pistol and at least one hunting style knife hidden in his clothing. This persons gung ho attitude had several of us very nervous. Would he take things into his own hands and endanger the whole unit? As it turned out, his bravado was just all talk, for which we were all grateful.

Toward the end of our week at the Novitiate, the unit officers decided that I should have a turn at guard duty. Apparently, because of my expressed sympathy to the Warrior position. It was also decided that I should be placed at checkpoint 6B, in the barn. Since my position was so “radical”, it was likewise decided, that I should not be allowed to carry a weapon that actually shot something. I was given a riot stick to stand guard with. Now if that did not look foolish B standing guard on top of a hill, with several rifles aimed at that point and carrying only a stick. Furthermore, as unit armorer I was not usually issued a helmet and liner, since most of the time I was supposed to be back at the base. However, at point 6B I was required to wear a helmet. A helmet was found, but there was no liner available. To add to the previous image, there I stood with my stick and a steel helmet balanced on my head, hanging down over my nose and half way down my ears, guarding a checkpoint. What a sight!! The assignment proved to be interesting. In the barn the guard had set up trench glasses, so as to get a close up of the front of the novitiate building. As one looked through the glasses, it was unnerving to see several rifles aimed right back at you. Furthermore, the area of the barn, where the glasses were located, also had a rather large number of bullet holes in it. So it was obvious that the people in the novitiate were not disinclined to fire at the barn. I, of course, could shoot back with my stick.

Despite some very uncomfortable situations B both weather and situational B our unit did not suffer any adverse circumstances during our stay at the novitiate. The whole affair came to an end on February 2, 1975. We packed up and came home. We, of course, came home one rifle short.

Me and my future wife’s family were rather happy as we could now proceed with the wedding without having to worry about my being called up to go back to Gresham. Later, as a joke, one of our sergeants gave each of us a campaign ribbon, which consisted of a mushroom. The idea being, that a mushroom grows in the dark after one spreads a great deal of manure around. That was our impression of the way the National Guard ran the whole affair. In the dark and a lot of manure. The popular recruiting slogan of the National Guard in the sixties came to mind, “Sleep well, your National Guard is awake”. Many of us left the last word off.

## **A Little Nostalgia - The Whiting Hotel**

By  
Everill Quist

Located at the corner of Clark St. and Strongs Avenue, the present Noel Group building is historically known as the Whiting Hotel, dating back to 1923 when the city fathers were in need of a downtown hotel. While visiting with an elderly gentleman

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known as "Sarge," in the lobby of the old Whiting Hotel, I heard stories about the history of the hotel where he went to work as a bellhop in 1942.

According to Sarge, a radio station, WLBL, started in the basement of the Whiting Hotel with its transmitter on the roof and an amateur night program on Saturday evenings in 1924. In 1930, WLBL moved their location to the University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point campus.

Originally owned by Kingston Hotel group, with hotels in Duluth, Milwaukee and Rhinelander, the Whiting Hotel became independent under the name of Midwest Hotel Company in 1941. Remodeling added a penthouse to the roof where the finest parties were held. The elegant Jacobs House, located just to the west of the Whiting Hotel where a service station now stands, was used as an annex for guests when the Whiting was overcrowded and lodging was needed for the overflow.

The Whiting Hotel was known throughout the Midwest as a convention center, hosting about 35 conventions per year. Those conventions were not the weekend type as we know today, but weeklong meetings where guests arrived by train on Sunday evening and stayed until Friday. The Whiting Hotel provided free transportation to and from the Soo Line station 24 hours a day in a hotel car.

The main lobby, facing the street to the north, had large towering pillars holding up the ceiling, paintings on the walls and oriental rugs. This is now the cocktail lounge. Ladies and men's apparel shop, a barbershop, a beauty shop, soda fountain and cigar counter surrounded the lobby. The Whiting headquartered Western Union and a Greyhound bus depot that handled at least 75 departures daily during World War II.

Many of the walls at the Whiting are adorned with magnificent life size paintings. College students stopped by the Whiting to see the painting of the bar room scene with the maidens head painted on the floor. Other paintings included a bar room brawl, square dancers, loggers on the river, barber shoppers and a horse and carriage at a gala event.

It was customary in the early days of the hotel cigar counter for salesmen to pass out expensive cigars to their clients -- an impressive gesture. Sarge pointed out how the length of the cigar counters in hotel lobbies were directly related to the elegance of it's hotel - the longer the cigar counter, the more elegant the hotel. Because of the 24-foot long cigar counter in the lobby, the Whiting Hotel became known to travelers as one of the more elegant hotels on the Soo Line.

Cultural groups, including the French Symphony, Russian dancers, a Polish musical group, Vietnamese monks as well as groups from almost every country in the free world were guests at the Whiting while performing at the University. Over the years the Whiting was also home to various civic organizations such as the Kiwanis, Lions, Toastmasters, Rotary and Business & Professional Women.

In 1942 Whiting hotel fees were normal for an elegant hotel. Rooms were \$2.00 without a bath, \$3.50 with a shower and \$3.75 with a tub. Cocktails were 35 cents, a bottle of beer was 20 cents, haircuts were 50 cents, and a steak dinner was \$1 .75.

The Whiting was staffed with over 60 full-time employees serving as bell hops, chamber maids, bus boys, ice makers, cocktail and dining room waitresses and waiters, pantry girls, salad girls, a main chef, first and second cooks, bartenders, electricians,

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engineers, custodians, desk clerks, dishwashers and office staff. The exquisite dining rooms offered seven-course gourmet meals using the best silver and china.

The Whiting Dance Club, formed in 1943 and still in existence today, met six times each year for a formal dinner dance. In its heyday membership was limited to 200 couples, required tuxes, long evening gowns, and all the glitter. For eight dollars a couple had dinner, cocktails, and danced to big bands with 14 or more pieces like Art Castle, Ron Harvey and the Hawaiian War Chants.

Many VIP's were guests at the Whiting Hotel over the years. Abbott and Costello visited for a bond drive in 1942 while President-elect John F. Kennedy and Jackie, and Robert Kennedy and his wife Ethel, were guests during the 1960 Presidential campaign. Other guests included Robert Laird, Alexander Wiley, Governor Rennebaum, and Governor Nelson.

Due to heavy enrollment in 1971 and 1973, the University housed as many as 70 female students and 40 male students at the Whiting Hotel. The Soo Line Railroad boards as many as 30 men per day from their crews at the Whiting. Because the hotel desk is open 24 hours, the desk clerk notifies the men when the Soo Line Yard office phones in a call to work. For the past 40 years the Greyhound regular and extra drivers have called the Whiting their home while they layover in Stevens Point.

There are still many more tales to tell, and Sarge is still telling them in the Whiting Hotel lobby, so stop in and look around at one of the finest historical hotel lobbies located in Portage County when you have a chance.

# Caboose on the Move!





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

The Society at (715) 344-4423 or email to [pchs\\_54481@yahoo.com](mailto:pchs_54481@yahoo.com)

See our web site at [www.pchswi.org](http://www.pchswi.org)

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