

January 2003

The Pinery

A Publication of the Portage County Historical Society

President's Report

HERITAGE PARK

Yellowstone Cabin

Mr. Anday has nearly completed the Yellowstone Cabin. It now has a fire resistant vault so that the society can store some of its papers in that area. In addition the structure has been converted to the park office. We now have a place where the various needs of the park can be dealt with in an area prepared for that purpose.

This becomes more important in light of the fact that in June of 2003 the area tourism bureau will be hosting a statewide celebration of the Yellowstone Trail that went through this area. A major part of that celebration will take place at Heritage Park. It is hoped that this event will draw a large number of people to this area and, specifically, to Heritage Park.

Bancroft Depot

The board of the society has signed a 20-year rental agreement with the Central Wisconsin Model Railroaders. The terms of the contract are the same as the previous

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10-year agreement. This involves the CWMR using the basement of the depot and a small storage room on the second floor in return for in kind rent. During the past 10 years the "rent" has involved fixing up the depot to the point where the whole building can now be used as display space. The new contract will involve continued maintenance of the structure.

Caboose 617

As you know, last summer we have received Green Bay and Western Caboose 617. It is our plan to restore the outside of the Caboose in 2003 and proceed with internal restoration in 2004.

We have received a proposal \$8,155 to restore the outside of this artifact. This would include washing the entire caboose exterior with spinner tip and soap to remove loose rust, dirt and oils. Grind rusted areas to eliminate rust on surface and feather edges. Needle gun and wire brush as necessary. Prime all bare metal and entire caboose, including wheels, undercarriage, steps, landings, ladders and roof. Paint entire artifact two colors, one for landings, ladders, wheels and undercarriage, while color two will be for walls and roof.

In checking around, we find this proposal the most reasonable. If any one knows of foundations, societies, organizations or individuals who might be interested to help financially to restore the caboose please let us know. Donations for this project can be sent to Portage County Historical Society earmarked for the G.B.&W. Caboose.

We thank you in advance for your consideration in this matter.

Hei Corners School

Mr. & Mrs. Anday along with help from some others have, over the past three months, completely redone the floor of the school. The floor had to be completely stripped down to the raw wood, sealed and made scratch resistant. The whole process was labor intensive and we would like to thank the Anday's for the effort.

Church/display hall

The society is again working with the UW-SP museum techniques class to construct a display for the next two-year period. The preliminary plan is to do a display on the 1920's/1930's. This would focus on the domestic aspects of life at that time and would provide a backdrop for the Yellowstone Trail event that will take place in June.

SYNAGOGUE SUMMER DISPLAY

The society has received a \$1,800 grant from the Hotel/Motel tax for the next two-year display at the Water St. Museum. The two-year display period will see the 100th anniversary of the Synagogue that houses our museum. With that in mind the society has decided to put on an exhibit entitled *We Believe*. This will involve photos and short

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histories of the religious institutions in the county. The history of the religious movements in this county and its various places of worship have been a neglected part of this county's history.

The Synagogue was the place of worship for many people in this area between 1904 and 1988. We feel that its 100th anniversary deserves recognition both by itself and as part of a larger, important religious aspect of this county. If anyone has photos of the interior of any of the area's churches (or early exterior photos) and wish to share them with the society please contact us at PCHS, P.O. 672, Stevens Point, WI 54481.

FINANCES

The stock market has hurt the ability of the society to meet some of its financial obligations. The society has four outstanding non-interest private loans. The four loans total about \$25,000. The four loans involve funds to move the Engford House, to publish Land and Lumber, put the basement into the Pierce Building and develop the Yellowstone Cabin site. The board would greatly appreciate anyone able to help us pay these loans back. Any contribution toward any one of these loans would be of great help. If you wish to help please designate which of the four loans you wish to help pay back. Thank you.

CANS

To those who continue to drop off your aluminum cans at the Water St. site, thank you. The cans have become a source of income for us and is the primary provider of funds to publish this newsletter. Again, thank you and please keep dropping the cans off.

ROTHMAN AWARD

Every year the society presents the Winn Rothman Award. This award is to go to someone who has done a new and different project, not necessarily written, about local history. The funds for this award were provided by the Winn Rothman estate years ago and allows for a \$150 prize to the winner. The society solicits works each year to compete for the prize. This past year Mr. Anton Anday was the winner with his new book entitled Echoes of Portage County's Past. This is a series of essays/interviews of people around the county and asks them for their most memorable experience in a given decade. If interested the book is available through the society for \$10. There are, however, only about 40 copies left

Yellowstone Trail Days

This event will take place on June 14, 2003 at Heritage Park in Plover. It will be a one day event that will take place from 12:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.

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The purpose of the event is to bring visitors to our community and to raise money for the PCHS and PABA. Advertising is well on its way in statewide and nation wide publications. Posters, pamphlets and magazine articles already have been published and distributed by the Convention and Visitors Bureau. The events for that day will hopefully include a Craft Fair, blacksmithing, entertainment by Barber Shoppers, Sweet Adeline's and Folk Singers. Dr. John Ridge will make two presentations on the history of the Yellowstone Trail. Food will be available from buffalo burgers, brats, corn dogs, french fries, root beer and root beer floats. Kids games. The Museum will showcase life in the 20's & 30's. A possible raffle will be looked into.

It is family fun and a historical experience, so mark your calendar for June 14th and we will see you at the Park for Yellowstone Trail Days. If you have an antique care of the 1920's vintage bring it along. It will be so happy to see its friends.



HOMICIDE IN BELMONT

The Kent Murder Case

The Waupaca Post, dated August 11, 1904, reported: "Ed Kent takes the life of his son, Walter, as a result of a quarrel and straggle between the two men. Due to the elder Kent's age and military service, he was not charged." This report was wrong. Edward Kent was charged with first-degree homicide. After further investigation, on March 29, 1905, the district attorney tried to change the charge to second-degree homicide, however the judge would not allow it.

On August 5, 1904, Edward was arrested by William Ward, deputy sheriff, and was charged with murder of his son Walter. On Saturday, August 6th, after further investigation, Coroner Boston held an inquest. "After hearing the testimonies the coroners jury brought in a verdict that the 'said Walter Kent came to his death by means of a knife wound inflicted by his father, Edward L. Kent, in the town of Belmont, Portage County, Wisconsin, on the 5th day of August, 1904.'" (The Gazette - Aug. 10, 1904) Edward was brought to Stevens Point and put in the county jail Justice G. L. Park, accepted the plea of not guilty to the charge of murder and the case was postponed to August 19th.

Edward L. Kent came to the United States when he was seven years old from Portsmouth, England, where he was born on May 19, 1831. He worked on a farm and attended school in Ontario County, New York and Oakland County, Michigan. Eventually he entered the lumbering business in Saginow County, Michigan. In 1854 he came to Milwaukee as a fisherman. Here he married Sarah L. McGwin who was born on November 26, 1832. In the summer of 1854 Edward ran the Mississippi River with lumber to St. Louis, while his wife taught school. In the fall they came to Marathon

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County where he worked in the lumber camps, while she cooked for the men. At the end of the lumber season they came to Belmont Township in Portage County. Here he purchased eighty acres in Section 20 of that township and began farming by clearing the land and building a log cabin. The family started living at this location in 1856. Here Edward and Sarah raised seven children, the first arriving in 1856 and the last, Walter I. Kent, was born on November 19, 1873. Winters were spent working in lumber camps and farming took the rest of the time. From December of 1861 to March 16, 1865, Edward served in Company E, 18th Wisconsin Volunteers. He was slightly wounded at Shiloh. After the war he returned to his family and farm continuing the farming profession till the end of his life.

Walter I. Kent was born in Belmont and lived there his thirty-one years of life. He was married to Josephine in 1895 and they had four small children, the oldest being six years old at the time of his death. The father and son quarreled, Edward had raised a stove poker against his son and on two occasions the elder Kent threatened Walter with a knife. The father had objected to the "habits of Walter" and quarreled over the final disposition of the property given to Walter by his mother whose name was on the documents indicating that she owned the land. Walter farmed the land with his father and got two-thirds of what was raised. Edward and Walter lived on opposite side of the road from each other, "according to some of the neighbors, bad blood existed between the two men for some time past".

On April 6th, 1905, the case came to trial presided over by Judge Webb. District Attorney G. M. Dahl and George B. Nelson appeared for the state, Byron B. Park and Fred J. Carpenter for the accused. The original panel of thirty-three man jurors was exhausted before a panel of twelve could be chosen; so twenty-five more were impaneled

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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: _____

State/Zip: _____



Annual \$15
Business \$25
Contributing \$50
Life \$100

for duty. This was necessary since the state was entitled to twelve peremptory challenges, while the defendants were privileged to twenty-four. The state did exhaust eleven and the defendant twenty, before a jury was impaneled and sequestered. After jury instructions by the judge, informing them of the alleged facts, the state indicated that the only witness to the tragedy was the widow, Josephine Kent. The defendant admitted being responsible for the death of his son, but claimed self-defense. It seems that Walter Kent was a hard drinker and abused alcohol for a number of years. While under the influence, he often physically abused and threatened his father to the point that Edward who was seventy-four years old, feared for his life. The claim of the defense, that the killing was justifiable, was based on this fear. Was it then murder or self defense? The jury will have to decide.

On the 5th of August 1904, Walter went to Almond to attend an Old Fellows' funeral. He hoped to return by 1:00 p.m. instead he arrived at home at 10:00 p.m. under the influence of alcohol and a sleep in the buggy driven by Charlie Butolpf. Edward took care of the team, by which time Charlie walked Walter home. Edward soon followed to Walters home with a pail of milk for the baby. The front door was jammed; as a result, the back door was opened by Josephine. Here the story takes two different tracks.

An argument started between father and son. Whither it was over the comment; "All right Josie, let the drunken brute in" or as Edward claimed; "Open the door and let this drunken pup in", or other perceived insult is difficult to determine. A pushing match ensued. Walter wanted his father to leave him alone and "go home", while Edward claimed that he pleaded for his life, "Walter do not kill me, for God's sake, do not kill me". "When he got me down, I commenced to holler and he then got me by the throat and shut my wind off, putting his knees on my stomach and holding me until his wife took him off." Edward then left to go home. For some reason he returned, after reaching into his pocket and pulling out a knife, which he claimed he could not remember. On reaching the screen door of the back porch Walter pushed Edward demanding to know what he was doing there. It was at this time that Edward stabbed him. "That is what you are trying to do, you are trying to kill me" Walter exclaimed. When his wife, Josephine asked what was the matter, Walter responded, "father stabbed me" and he fell in front of the stove. Josephine ran for help to Edwards's wife, passing Edward on his way home, she said - "you have killed Walter". He responded, "I guess not". Edward quickly returned to Walters house and found him dead. "Walter's exterior jugular vein was nearly severed, and the interior jugular vein was about half cut off. The cause of death was severing of the jugular vein and the victim bled to death." (Gazette - April 12, 1905) Edward hurried home from where he called the doctor, the sheriff and a neighbor to come to his home and then went to lie down. He later surrendered to authorities and was jailed for trial.

The jury retired and after deliberation found Edward Kent no guilty of first-degree homicide. There is no information whither the verdict was based on the evidence, the age of the defendant, his service and reputation in the community, or that the District Attorney charged him incorrectly. It does not matter, the jury found him not guilty. At the time of the trial Edwards's children were present. His son Frank and

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son-in-law James McInroe came from Walla Walla, Washington. Cora Hamel was also there. Family members and courtroom observers congratulated Edward on his acquittal. Edward Kent shook hands with the District Attorney and told them; "I have no hard feelings against you; you did your duty like a man." (April 13, 1905 - Stevens Point Journal)

The homestead at Belmont was rented out after the trial and the parents moved to Plainfield. The family of Walter was provided for by Frank and other relatives. Another chapter of tragedy was closed in the history of Portage County.



Portage County Historical Society

Presents the 6th Annual

Threads of History



Plover Portage Rendezvous



Vendors & Demonstrators:

- Quilters
- Spinners
- Tatters
- Weavers
- Lace Makers
- Basket Makers
- Soap Makers
- Butter Maker

Call Andrea Mielke
715-344-4104
andrea@mielkesfarm.com

Re-enactment of:

- Wisconsin Frontier Life 1760-1830
- Traders
- Period Crafts
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Call Bethann Laars
715-677-3104
hrtwks@wi-net.com

July 19-20, 2003

Saturday 10:00 AM - 5:00 PM Sunday 10:00 AM - 4:00 PM

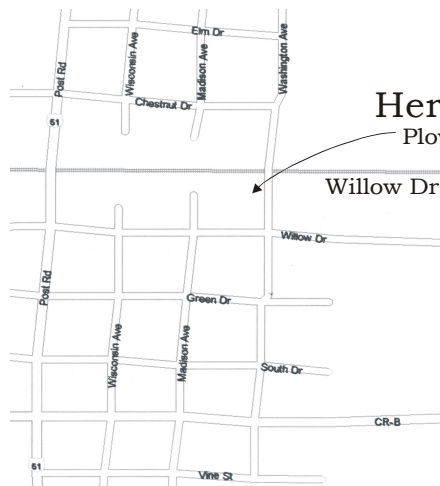
Admission: Adults \$2.00 Children \$1.00 Family \$5.00

Entertainment Daily
Refreshments Available



Buffalo Burger Sale
hosted by
Phil & Ione Hausler's
Low Land Bison Ranch
lowlandbison@tznnet.com

Sat: 11:00 - 4:00
Sun: 11:00 - 3:00



Heritage Park

Plover Wisconsin
Corner of
Willow Dr. & Washington Ave.

This Event Hosted by: Portage County Historical Society www.pchswi.org



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

See our web site at www.pchswi.org

For contributing articles or comments on the Newsletter:
PCHS Newsletter, 1418 Wisconsin St., Stevens Point, WI 54481

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