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Society Awarded \$10,000 DAR Special Projects Grant



Photo by Sandy Bronk

Beverly West, Curator General NSDAR & member of PCHS Board of Directors (l) and Judy Mason (r), Stevens Point Chapter Regent, present Karen Zinda (c), PCHS Secretary with the letter confirming the PCHS was awarded a \$10,000 special projects grant from the DAR.

This grant was awarded for the repair and restoration of the Fire House roof. This will include putting a metal roof on the two story portion of the building, a new flat roof on the one story portion and construction of the bell tower. Total estimate for this project is \$50,000, of which the Society has raised almost \$35,000 with the award of this grant.

The Society thanks the Stevens Point Chapter of the DAR for their sponsorship in this process.

This is a matching grant and donations are being accepted towards this project. They may be mailed to Karen Zinda, 1880 Pine Bluff Rd, Stevens Point WI 54481

Volunteer Opportunities Abound

By Julie Richards

The usual catchphrases apply when it comes to volunteering for the Portage County Historical Society

“Community pride”

“Worthwhile cause” ... “Sense of accomplishment”

... “Rewarding experience” ...

All true, but the reason our volunteers help again and again is because it is fun!

Sure, it *is* exciting to explain the history of the building you are showing. What is really amazing is having a guest share a personal experience about the room you are standing in, or the glassware you were just discussing.

It is our volunteers that put a face to the historical facts.

They are what make our events, and our sites, so interesting and enjoyable. It is because of their hard work and enthusiasm that our visitors keep returning.

On behalf of the Board of Directors of the Portage County Historical Society, I would like to take a moment to thank our wonderful volunteers. You are the life blood of our Society. Thank you for your continued loyalty and support. Every year, our events get a little bigger, our sites get a little more attractive, and it is all because of your dedication. Your efforts are very much appreciated by everyone who visits us.

Whether it is for a 2 hour booth shift, or seeing a restoration project through to its completion, volunteering for your Portage County

Historical Society is a terrific experience! If you haven't volunteered for us before, please consider giving it a try this summer!

For more information, you can contact me at

portagecntywhistsoc@gmail.com

I hope to hear from you soon!

Getting The School Ready

By Mary Beth Anday

Anton and I spent three hours cleaning the Hie Corner School yesterday (*this article was written at the end of April, just before the Old Time School began for the year. Ed*). As we were doing that, I thought about Judy Lyons and Shirley Multhauf doing the very same thing every spring for the previous 10 years. And then I thought about all the other times it was cleaned when it was a school that the same children went to year after year. It probably smelled of freshly sawed wood, or maybe fresh paint, when it opened in 1898. Anton and I

used spray cleaner and microfiber cloths for the windows and a Kirby vacuum for the floors. A hundred years ago, the cleaning supplies were probably a bucket of cleaning water and rags from worn-out clothing and a straw broom.

We moved the piano to the north side of the building. One end of it was taking a beating from sun coming through one of the south windows and the wood was bleaching and drying out. A lemon oil treatment made it look better. We knocked down cobwebs and dusted. Each of the student desks also got a lemon oil treatment. We set out slate boards, pieces of chalk, and cloths for erasing. The Fourth Grade McGuffey readers are set on the upper right corner of every desk. Six geraniums that we wintered are in the windows. It's all ready for the fourth grade classes that will come during the month of April to experience an old time school.

This year 26 classes from 13 schools will come to Heritage Park. Each one will have about an hour of lessons in the school and then about another hour of touring other buildings in Heritage Park. We will be forever grateful to Judy Lyons and Shirley Multhauf for spearheading and carrying on this project for the first ten years. Not only did they do the cleaning, but

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The Dinery

Synagogue Notes

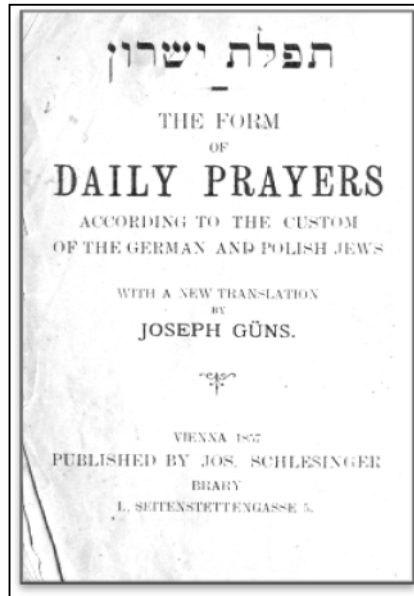
By Mark Seiler

On April 8 a Friday evening Shabbat service was held in the Temple Beth Israel Museum on Water Street. Rabbi Dan Danson of Mt. Sinai Congregation in Wausau, assisted by Melanie Kuolt, cantor, led the traditional Sabbath service for some 30 participants from Wausau, Stevens Point and New London. A Saturday morning Shabbat service is planned for June.

Judy and Ashley Slomann donated award plaques--now on display in the Synagogue--which Ashley's father, Peter Slomann, received for his civic involvement in Stevens Point. "Pete" Slomann, the founder of Northwest Liquor, one of the largest such enterprises in Wisconsin, was a leader in the Jewish Community, and well known in the Stevens Point community for his generosity. Thank you Judy and Ashley!

David Shafton donated an 1857 prayer book, which belonged to his grandfather, Israel Shafton, founder and first president of Congregation Beth Israel, who most likely brought it with him when he immigrated from Russia in 1891. The prayer book,

whose title page is pictured here, is now on display in the Synagogue.



Former members and descendants of Congregation Beth Israel continue to visit the Synagogue Museum. On April

End of an Era

David Shafton passed away on April 26. With his passing it is the first time in 120 years that no member of the Shafton family resides in Stevens Point. The Society extends heartfelt sympathy to David's family and friends.

20 Phyllis Shafton Katz and her daughter Julia, from Aromas, California, with Uncle David Shafton of Stevens Point, spent an afternoon studying the exhibits, many of which deal with their own family history and the many contributions of the Shafton family to the city.

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they scheduled the classes and recruited the volunteer teachers. Each of them also taught several lessons and helped with the tours each year. Shirley has offered to help us again, if we get in a pinch.

We are lucky to have several other people to help us with this project. Carl Whittaker helps every day with the tours, and he's done this for a few years. He specializes in the train depot and the caboose. Our volunteer teachers include many who have helped us in previous years. They are Eileen Payne, Santha Bickford, Joyce Chekouras, Joyce Polson, Suzanne Fee, Fran Vollrath, Pat Abbrederis, Arlene Meyerhofer, and John Knowlton. Our thanks to all of them for their time and talents.

From the President

By Tim Siebert

The Society's annual meeting took place on April 13th at the Public Library in downtown Stevens Point. The agenda included a *Pine and Iron Award* for Judy Lyons. Ms. Lyons spent some 10 years putting together the "Old Time School" experience for local fourth graders. This required some two to three months work on her part putting together the various parts of the program. As a sign of its success and her hard work the program has grown to include students not only from the Stevens Point School District but from other county districts and, at least, one from Marathon County. It has also included many of the local private schools. We are very much indebted to Judy for her years of work.

Four people were elected or re-elected to the Society board. They include Jerry Rohlinger, Mary Egle and David Simonis being re-elected. Merida Houser was newly elected to the board. Thank you to these four people for committing themselves to the preservation of this county's history and heritage.

The main program was a presentation by Gary Hess and his cousin Jim Hess. They are the descendants of Frank Hess

who opened what became of the largest and last cooperage in the U.S. The three generations of Hess family members working at the cooperage in Madison were discussed as well as the details on how the various sized beer, wine and whiskey barrels were put together. The Hess's brought a large number of photos on the cooperage along with a number of tools used in the making of the barrels. The Hess presentation was without cost to the Society and we are appreciative to the two men for their efforts.

The Society has, over the past several months, received about \$3,000 from various sources to purchase archival supplies. These materials include folders for papers and photos (about \$35 per 100), negative boxes (\$13 each) and clothing boxes of various sizes (ranging from \$20 to \$35 each depending on the size needed). This is a good start but the Society still needs much more to continue to secure the Journal negatives and photos along with our clothing collection. We would appreciate any donation toward this project. If you wish to purchase 100 folders or a couple of boxes or much more please send a check and note to the Society's address. Thank you.

Historic Fire House N^o 2 announces new hours

For the past year the PCHS was lucky enough to have a paid docent at the Fire House, and this allowed it to be open 20 hours per week. After scheduling hours for this summer, and having the art show on May 7th, the docent's employment was terminated with the PCHS by his host agency. This has lead to a decision to have the Fire House open the same hours as the Synagogue and Heritage Park, Memorial Day thru Labor Day, Saturdays and Sundays from 1—4 p.m., and the art gallery portion has been closed.

As always, we are looking for docents to help out in the summer and if you would like to volunteer (see related article on p. 2) call or email us.

At the May meeting the following officers were elected:

Tim Siebert—President
Mark Seiler—Vice President
Karen Zinda—Secretary
Jeanne Regnier—Treasurer

Also at the May meeting the Board accepted the resignation of Jessie Michelson, and appointed Jim Abbrederis to fulfill her unexpired term.

The Pinery

Society Members Honored at WSDAR Convention

On May 6th in Madison Wisconsin the Wisconsin State DAR presented two prestigious awards to Portage County Historical Society members. The first, the DAR Service for Veterans award was presented to (former PCHS Vice-President) Phil Kallas and was presented by Shirley Multhauf of the Stevens Point Chapter of the DAR who also is a board member of the PCHS. Here is her introduction:

"I present Phil Kallas.

He was nominated by the Stevens Point Chapter as a candidate for the Outstanding Veteran Serving Veterans Award because of his care and concern for our veterans. He was selected as the first place winner for the state of Wisconsin. His nomination has been forwarded to the North Central Division.

Mr. Kallas was awarded the Purple Heart Medal and numerous other medals for his outstanding service in Vietnam as a member of the 191st Airborne Division. He puts forth much time and effort in his desire to serve other veterans.

He is a life member of many local and national veteran organizations and has held office positions in them.

He helped organize the celebration and parade, Welcome Home From the Sand, for members of the 32nd Red Arrow Brigade and their families following the units return from Iraq in 2010.

He serves as a mentor for veterans who have experienced diffi-

culty in dealing with Justice Works Ltd. This assists them with their adjustment back into civilian life.

He is a graduate of the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point with a MAT Degree.

Mr. Kallas is listed in WHO'S WHO IN U. S. WRITERS, EDITORS & POETS 1986 – 1989.

Among his other interests are Family History and Old Cemeteries.

I must say that we are extremely proud of you, Mr. Kallas, and thank you for your service to our country."

The second was the Historic Preservation Award, presented to current PCHS Vice-President Mark Seiler, by Beverly West, NSDAR Curator, Stevens Point Chapter DAR member, and PCHS Board Member.

"Mark Seiler retired from UWSP after 35 years of teaching German. While at the university he was involved in Historic Preservation on the campus. In retirement he has been working on his own Swiss-German-Norwegian genealogy, is a member of the Downtown (Stevens Point) Historic Design

Committee, the Historic Preservation Committee at UWSP and is active and currently Vice President of the Portage County Historical Society. He researched the history of the Stevens Point Jewish Community to facilitate the application of the local synagogue, Temple Beth Israel, being

listed in the

National Register of Historic Places. In 1985 the PCHS purchased the Synagogue for \$1.00. The building had not been used for many years due to the members of the Jewish community moving away or dying. I remember many Jewish families living in Stevens Point when I was growing up/attending school. Most all people of my generation went away to college, then moved to other locations, did not return to Stevens Point. With the dwindling congregation, the Synagogue ceased having services. Mr. Seiler spent hours, months doing the research to be able to complete the documents for the building to be recognized on the National Register of Historic Places. He contacted decedents of the congregants to gather needed information. He planned a reception/reunion for the unveiling of the plaque ---- many family members returned for this celebration as well as a former Rabbi who had served. All the research led to the publishing of this book – The Jewish Community of Stevens Point. Mr. Seiler has been responsible for the restoring the interior of the Synagogue to original décor so that services are now held, Jewish children who attend an area summer camp come for their weekly prayer service and visitors from all over the country visit to see photos and hear the history of their families who formerly lived and worked in

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the community.

In addition to all the work that Mark has done for the Synagogue, he also wrote the application for the Rosholt Home, in Rosholt, WI to be listed in the National Trust of Historic Places. Mark, I am honored to present you with Historic Preservation Recognition Award with this certificate and pin in recognition of your outstanding work in Historic Preservation.”

Other Portage County residents honored at the banquet were: Dave Suchon of Dave’s Body Shop for his Community Service, (Dave has been very generous in helping many organizations in Portage County, including the PCHS), Dean Christine Thomas of UWSP, Judy Mason Stevens Point Chapter Regent

Karen Zinda who, on behalf of the Society and Historic Fire House No 2 successfully wrote a grant request for \$10,000 for the Fire House roof, was also a guest at the banquet.

The Society congratulates all the honorees.

Calendar of Events

Memorial Day weekend, Heritage Park, Synagogue Museum and Historic Fire House No 2 open Sat. & Sun. 1 –4

Memorial Day weekend Rising Star Mill Art Show on Saturday (10—6) and Sunday (10-4)

Canon Ball concert Rising Star Mill June 11

Timmy Kash concert Rising Star Mill July 8

Heritage Days Heritage Park July 16 & 17th 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. The A.I.R. Project presents “Happenings” Rising Star Mill July 22

Eddie Biebel & A.J. Srubas concert Rising Star Mill July 30

Bill & Kate Isles in Concert Rising Star Mill August 20

Civil War Encampment, Pfiffner Pioneer Park downtown Stevens Point Aug. 27 & 28

Free Movie “Sweet Land” Rising Star Mill Sept. 16

“The Barns of Portage County” Rising Star Mill Sept. 30, Oct 1 & 2nd

Trick or Treat in the Park/ Victorian Funeral Heritage Park Oct. 29

Still pending Haunted House at Rising Star Mill the last weekend in October

For details on these events please visit our calendar at www.pchswi.org/events/calendar

Seeing your name on the list to the right is as easy as donating! Once the roof work is completed, work will begin on the heating system and the windows, restoration of the porch, and finally restoration of the front façade.

This is an ongoing project and all donations will be listed on the permanent plaque which will be installed in the Fire House.

Our thanks to those who have already donated!

Historic Fire House N^o 2 Levels of Giving

Over \$50,000	Chief
\$25,001 - \$50,000	<i>Assistant Chief</i>
\$15,001 – \$25,000	<i>Deputy Chief</i> Seramur Family Foundation
\$5,001 - \$15,000	<i>Battalion Chief</i> DAR Special Projects Grant
\$1,001 - \$5,000	<i>Bureau Chief</i> Warren & Nancy Lensmire & family* Chief John J. Zinda (Ret. SPFD) & Karen J. Zinda
\$501 - \$1,000	<i>Captain</i> Bushman Electric*
\$301 - \$500	<i>Lieutenant</i> Barbara Bartkowiak
\$201 - \$300	<i>Motor Pump Operator</i> Skyward Steve A. & Helen M. Bogaczyk
\$100 - \$200	<i>Firefighter</i> <i>Anonymous</i> <i>Charles & Aralda Larson</i> <i>Shirley E. Multhauf</i> <i>Greg & Julie Richards</i> <i>George & Jeanette Rogers</i> <i>Sam & Grace Skibicki</i> <i>Stevens Point Chapter Daughters of the</i> <i>American Revolution.</i> <i>Sandy Bronk*</i> <i>Reid Rocheleau</i>

* denotes an in-kind donation

Schuman-Heink

By Mark Seiler

For many years *Schumann-Heink* was a familiar name in Stevens Point. The Schuman-Heink Memorial Bell stood on the grounds of the city hall and Chapter No. 30 of the Disabled American Veterans (DAV) was prominent in parades in the city, driving an automobile emblazoned with the name

Schumann-Heink. Today many residents of the city probably do not know who Schumann-Heink was, and might assume it is the name of a decorated member of the armed forces. For more than a half-century Ernestine Schumann-Heink was internationally

acclaimed as the greatest contralto of her time. She sang Wagnerian roles in Bayreuth, performed with Gustav Mahler in London, under the baton of Richard Strauss at the premier of his *Elektra*, and sang with the Metropolitan Opera in New York from 1898 until 1932. She started recording "gramophones" in 1900, was heard on radio throughout the country each Christmas Eve singing *Stille Nacht*, appeared in motion pictures, and was honored with a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame.

Born in 1861 in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, she became a naturalized American citizen in 1905. World War I was a difficult time for Schumann-Heink. She had three sons serving in the American Navy and another who died serving in the German submarine service. She campaigned

nation-wide for her adopted country, entertaining the troops and selling US *Liberty Bonds* to finance the American war effort. Because of her

devotion to "her soldier-boys", she was to be known as "Mother of the American Legion".

This international super-star had a special connection to Wisconsin and especially to Stevens Point, which she visited on numerous occasions in the last decade of her life. Although her first appearance here was in 1923 in the Normal School (UWSP) Auditorium, on one of her numerous concert tours (*Stevens Point Journal* 5/16/1923), her special connection to Stevens

Point began four years later through a prominent Stevens Point citizen, Ferdinand Hirzy.

The Hirzy family emigrated from the Austro-Hungarian Empire, where they had been acquainted with Ernestine Schumann-Heink. Ferdinand Hirzy, and his father before him, operated a jewelry store on Main Street established in 1913. Ferdinand was a veteran of World War I and active in the American Legion, the DAV, the 40 et 8, and the Reserve Officers Association. In 1927, when the local American Legion post was raising funds for the construction of a Memorial Hall, Hirzy offered to ask the assistance of Schumann-Heink, who was coming to Wisconsin to receive an honorary doctor of music from Lawrence College in Appleton.



Hirzy surprised Schumann-Heink by appearing unannounced as she arrived in Appleton. When she saw him, she exclaimed in

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German, "Mein Gott, was machst du hier?" [My goodness, what are you doing here?]. When she learned about the American Legion's building program, she offered to perform in Stevens Point free of charge (SPJ 4/11/1927). 1,000 people attended the concert in the Emerson High School auditorium, and the Legion grossed more than \$1,000 for their new building. At the concert, the Berens Post of the American Legion announced that it had awarded Schumann-Heink the status of

"permanent guest and member", the Governor of Wisconsin sent greetings, and Hirzy presented her with a ceremonial silver sword and scabbard, "in token of the local legionnaires' love for her" (SPJ 8/20/1927). The following day Hirzy accompanied Schumann-Heink to Marinette, where she was to sing before the state convention of the American Legion (SPJ 8/22/1927). Schumann-Heink came to Wisconsin again in 1928, accom-

panied by her granddaughter Ilse, to receive a "Certificate of Life Guest" from the Wisconsin American Legion (SPJ 4/4/1928). Ilse, the daughter of Schumann-Heink's son who died in a German submarine during World War I, travelled with her grandmother and served as her personal secretary. Two weeks later Ferdinand Hirzy and Ilse announced their

engagement (SPJ 7/23/1928), and were married in July in Elcho, Wisconsin (SPJ 7/10/1928).

With her granddaughter now living in Stevens Point, Ernestine Schumann-Heink had good reason to visit here frequently, especially with the birth of great-grandchildren. The Stevens Point community followed Schumann-Heink's activities from 1928-1935 in no fewer than 50 articles in the *Journal*. One such event was the christening at St. Stephen's Church of



Hirzy's niece Leona Hein, for whom Schumann-Heink and Hirzy were god-parents (SPJ 10/4/1928). While visiting the Hirzys in 1932, Schumann-Heink was hospitalized in St. Michael's Hospital with a case of bronchitis, which made front page

headlines (SPJ 3/30/1932). Whenever possible Schumann-Heink met with "her boys", as she called the veterans of World War I. In July 1933 she had such an opportunity--she attended an American Legion baseball game in Goerke Park and pitched the first ball (SPJ 7/15/1933). She returned to Stevens Point a month later to visit the Hirzys before departing for

national convention of the American Legion in Chicago (SPJ 9/20/1933). She was to travel to Chicago on a special Soo Line train named after her. To honor her, a parade was organized, starting at the Hotel Whiting, led by the high school band, a National Guard honor guard, and a color guard escorting Schumann-Heink down Strongs Avenue to the railroad



station, followed by "many cars" (SPJ 10/2/1933). In 1934 Schumann-Heink sang the Star Spangled Banner at the opening of Wisconsin's tercentennial celebration in Green Bay. At that time she announced that she had sung her last official public concert (SPJ 7.13.1934), only to embark on another career in 1935: motion pictures. On November 17, 1936 the great Ernestine Schumann Heink died

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in California, where she resided. Fittingly she was given the last honors of the United States Army with a military funeral in the American Legion Hall of Hollywood, and a day later a second military service in San Diego. In Stevens Point Schumann-Heink's name lived on. The local post of the Disabled

located next to the Clark Street bridge, where it stands today. Ferdinand and Ilse Hirzy raised their children in Stevens Point and in 1934 Ferdinand was appointed Stevens Point Postmaster. With the outbreak of World War II Hirzy enlisted in the Army and became an intelligence officer and was a commandant of special intelli-

gence troops in the European theater for two years. He retired from the army in October 1945 with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. He died 1954 after an extended illness. Ilse continued to live in Stevens Point until her death in 1990.



American Veterans was named after her and the DAV erected a memorial for her in 1941 on the grounds of the city hall (the former Washington School) on the Northeast corner of Strongs Avenue and Clark Street. When the city hall was demolished in 1960 to make way for a new library, the memorial was re-



Thank You

Thanks to the Golden Sands Home Builders Association and Duralum Siding Windows Sunroom, the Franklin-Calkins house has a new metal shake roof. Labor was donated for this project by the Home Builders Association, and the roofing material was provided at cost.

Thank you also to Julie Richards, who coordinated volunteers for the lunch served to the workers both days. Special thanks to: Tim Siebert, Anton Anday, Jerry Rohlinger, Mary Beth Anday, Maggie Fletcher, Janet Zblewski, Karen Zinda, Beverly West, Shirley Multhauf, Jim Abbrederis, Pam Zinda, and everyone who helped with this project.



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Mark Seiler—Vice President
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| Julie Richards (volunteer coordinator) | Jerry Rohlinger (webmaster) |
| Dave Simonis | Sam Solberg |
| Beverly West | |

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Karen Zinda and Mark Seiler, Editors
Masthead Design by Jessie Michelson



How to read your mailing label

Like all non-profits we have had decreased or lost funding over the past year - funding which has always helped us to operate our four sites in Portage County: Heritage Park in Plover, The Rising Star Mill in Nelsonville, Beth Israel Synagogue Museum and Historic Fire House N^o 2 in Stevens Point. That’s why we ask that you read the codes on your mailing label, and if it says “donor” consider making another donation this year, if it says “complimentary” - consider joining, if it says “elected official” - well ... support us in every way you can, if it says “life”, you have made a one time payment large enough to entitle you to this designation, however, continued support is always welcomed, if it says “Jan-11” it means your annual dues are due and we appreciate your continued support (dues run on the calendar year ((Jan-Jan))).

Thank you for your investment in Portage County’s history. Together we can keep growing the Portage County Historical Society.

Thank You for your Continued Support!