

## Inside this issue:

Albert G. Ellis	P. 2
Annual meeting	P. 4
Board make-up	P. 6
Synagogue Notes	P. 7

# The Pinery



## FROM THE PRESIDENT By Tim Siebert

2013 has been a very good year for the historical society. I would, first, like to thank everyone that has helped us this year. Without the help of the board of directors and a number of volunteers much that we accomplished this year would simply not have happened. Our Heritage Days, moved to June to avoid competition from the many events taking place in mid-July was very successful, especially, with Ruth Engford and Frank Clark on hand to give tours and discuss circus life. Three of our four sites saw a many visitors and we feel the season was a great success. The fire house was closed this season while we put a new roof on the back portion of the fire house. The site also saw new doors put on the back entrance. If you have not seen it please stop by and take a look at new, old style entrance.

The Society would like to acknowledge a generous bequest it received from the estate of Bill and Ann Stielstra. Ann was a teacher in the Stevens Point schools and Bill was an administrator and professor at the university. This bequest will help the society as it continues to preserve the history of Portage County.

On another topic I would like to thank everyone for the recycle items donated to the society. However, because I have been overwhelmed by the donated material the society will, now, only take a few types of items. *We no longer can accept TVs, computers and vacuum cleaners.* We will still take aluminum cans, Christmas lights, any brass or copper pipes/plumbing items and, especially, any cords or wires. We will also take micro wave ovens.

Finally, if anyone is interested in becoming a member of the board of directors please contact the society by mail, email or at its telephone (715-344-4423). We have two open positions and would like to have volunteers for the board to consider as new board members.

# The Pinery



## ALBERT GALLATIN ELLIS

August 24, 1800 - December 23, 1885

by Anton Anday

Mayor of Stevens Point

April, 1860 - April, 1861; April, 1864 - April, 1868;  
April, 1869 - April, 1872.

In 1983 George Rogers described Albert G. Ellis as "a missionary, teacher, surveyor, Indian Agent, territorial agent, printer and newspaper man". In one sentence, he summarized the remarkable life of a colorful man of the Nineteenth Century in central Wisconsin. He could have added historian and citizen legislator to make the description complete.

A man of faith, a natural leader and a gifted writer, who was an ambitious, serious, and practical person, left for us a valuable historic picture of the early settlers and development of the pineries as well as the City of Stevens Point. He was the printer of the first newspaper in Wisconsin and later, in this area, he established

the "Wisconsin Pinery". Ellis also held the title of "General", since he served as surveyor - general of the Wisconsin - Iowa territory.

If we consider William Scholfield the Organizer of the City, then Albert G. Ellis should be looked upon as the Founding Father of the Community. For a decade, as an elected official, he guided the growth of Stevens Point. He was Mayor for eight years between 1860 and 1872. Between terms of office, he also served as Alderman and Common Council President. In that capacity, in the absence of the elected mayor, he often took on those responsibilities as well as representing his constituents from the Second Ward. He also served on the School Board and was Senior Fire Warden, during that interesting and tumultuous time.

Ellis was a small town "Yankee" from the East coast. He was born on August 24, 1800 on a farm in Verona, Oneida County, New York. He would live there in splendid isolation for the first fifteen years of his life. His father, who engaged in farming, also home schooled his children. In 1815 Ellis became an apprentice printer. His only formal education was obtained at the age of eighteen when he enrolled in a grammar school for six months. Beginning in 1819, for three years, through the Missionary Society of the Episcopal Church, he would be a teacher to the Oneida Indians from whom he learned the Mohawk language. In 1821 he accompanied the Oneida to Green Bay to look for new tribal land. One suspects that this had to do, in part, with the policy of the Federal Government to remove Indian Nations from the East further to the West. A year later, he returned with the Oneidas and attended to their Christian spiritual development for the next seven years. In 1830 Ellis negotiated a treaty between the Federal Government and the Menominee Indians on secession of their lands. He also established a boundary line between the Menominee and New York Indians in the new territory by 1832. The trust in him by all parties must have been considerable for him to have accomplished this task. From 1843 to 1848, Ellis served as sub-agent for the Indians in the Wisconsin and Iowa sections. In 1824 Ellis returned to New York state to marry Pamela Holmes, with whom he had four sons and a daughter during their twenty-three years of marriage. She died in 1847 of natural causes.

In 1827, "...he executed at Green Bay the first printing in Wisconsin". He printed a thousand lottery tickets, for a benefit for sufferers from a fire that hit the area. By April of 1831, he contracted in Detroit for a Ramage Press (No. 356 or 357), which was the first printing press in the State. On this press, on December 11, 1833, The Green Bay Intelligencer became the first published newspaper in Wisconsin.

In 1827 Governor Cass appointed Ellis as government inspector of provisions for the District of Green Bay. A year later he was appointed deputy surveyor of government lands. Between

# The Pinery

1833 and 1836, he surveyed a large tract of the country near Green Bay. His appointment as Surveyor General of Wisconsin and Iowa occurred the following year. Ellis held that position under President Van Buren until 1841, when he resigned.

In 1836 Ellis was elected from Brown County to serve as representative to the first Wisconsin Territorial Legislative Assembly in Belmont. He was reelected from 1840 to 1843 to the same position and served as a legislator with distinction. In 1842 he was chosen as speaker of that body.

By the time Ellis visited Stevens Point in 1851 to survey land in the town of Linwood with his son, he had already served as surveyor, publisher and legislator in the new territory. In 1852 he relocated his family from Green Bay to Stevens Point "apparently in anticipation of his appointment as receiver of the new government land office which opened here in June of 1855." The appointment was made in 1853"... In this position (he) had a hand in the opening of central and northern Wisconsin to settlement." With his new wife, Eliza Brenninger whom he married in 1847, Ellis continued his religious work by conducting services in his home and later in the district school house at 420 Clark Street. He organized the first official parish in December of 1852, at that location, in the City of Stevens Point.

On January 14, 1853, Ellis founded the Wisconsin Pinery, the first newspaper published in Portage County. "Although he only owned the paper for a short period of time, he contributed articles and editorials to it for the rest of his life". The paper was printed on the Ramage Press, which had made its way from Green Bay to Stevens Point by wagon. He used his gift of writing and knowledge of printing to advertise the development of this area. Ellis "tried to paint a picture that was stubbornly serene in his pamphlets" of Handbook of Stevens Point and the Upper Wisconsin and Portage County Takes Shape, which make interesting reading of this time. Other works published by Ellis enhanced the knowledge of History. Some Accounts of the Advent of the New York Indians Into Wisconsin, The 'Upper Wisconsin' Country, Recollections of Eleazer Williams, (who was a character in his own right), and Fifty-Four Years of Recollection of Man and Events in Wisconsin, were published for that purpose. His manuscript, Recollections of a Busy Life, was never completed due to his death on December 23, 1885.

Ellis "in the midst of his editorial and literary labors" continued as receiver of the land office for some nine years while participating in business and other ventures by operating a saw mill, flour mill and participating in community development in the plat known as "Strong, Ellis, and Others". In 1853 he also donated "a part of the land what is now Forest Cemetery at the of his four oldest daughters". This is where he and his family are now buried.

In 1860, Albert Gallatin Ellis was elected the second Mayor of Stevens Point at the age of fifty-nine. He was reelected to that same position in 1864, 1865, 1867, 1869, 1870 and 1871. Those years were some of the most tumultuous in United States History. In November of 1884, Ellis founded the Wisconsin Eagle, which was his second newspaper in this community, "not for money - but to further his political views and democratic discussion." To point out his commitment to this philosophy, one must remember that four other newspapers were being published here at that time. The Stevens Point Journal Stevens Point Democrat Portage County Gazette and the Wisconsin Pinery.

On December 23, 1885, Albert G. Ellis died at the age of eighty-five, leaving behind seven daughters and one son from his thirteen children. The field of printing was at the heart of this citizen legislator. As was stated about him, "journalism was his chosen profession". In 1885 at the South Side fire station the fire fighters named the new fire engine "The General Ellis". Ellis Street, the unincorporated community of Ellis, the Ellis Room in the Charles M. White Memorial Public Library and a window in the Church of the Intercession currently retain the memory of this man of faith and civic commitment.

# The Pinery

## The Win Rothman Local History Award by Mark Seiler

The Win Rothman Local History Award is being given to four students, who served as volunteer docents at the Portage County Historical Society's Temple Beth Israel Museum during Summer 2013. Together, the students volunteered 132 hours.

The recipients are: Destiny Barton, a native of Port Edwards and a graduate of Assumption High School, Wisconsin Rapids, is a junior at UW-Stevens Point majoring in History with a minor in Religious Studies. In the future Destiny hopes to attend graduate school. Robin Woong Ho Lee, a native of Jinju, South Korea, is a graduate of Brookfield High School. He completed two years at UWSP majoring in History and has transferred to UW-Madison to complete his degree. Gwin Pearce, a Junior from West Bend, is majoring in History with a minor in Religious Studies. Gwin plans to attend graduate school to prepare for teaching History at the college level. Rachel Maslakow, a native of Plover and a graduate of Pacelli High School, graduated from UWSP in December 2012 with majors in Spanish and History and a minor in Anthropology. Rachel plans either to attend graduate school or seek employment in Washington D.C. Summer 2013 was the second time Rachel served as a docent at the Synagogue museum.

The Society was very fortunate to have these talented students serve as docents. They steeped themselves in the history of the Stevens Point Jewish Community which enabled them to explain the exhibits to the some 200 visitors over the summer. The students, themselves, found this experience to be a valuable learning experience, as reflected in their own words: "I've truly enjoyed volunteering at the synagogue museum for the past two years and learning about its history", and, "It was an amazing learning experience and has given me so much inspiration for future writing projects, as well".

The Rothman Award, first given in 1977, is administered by the UW-Stevens Point History Department and the Portage County Historical Society. It is awarded annually to individuals from the Stevens Point area who promote the dissemination of knowledge about the history of Stevens Point and Portage County. The Award was created in 1976 by Edith Rothman in memory of her husband Win.

Win Rothman (1886-1976) was born into a prominent Stevens Point family. His father Philip was a well known businessman and served as Stevens Point mayor in 1902/3. Win continued his father's business ventures, was a member of the Stevens Point Businessmen's Association (today the Portage County Business Council), and served on the Stevens Point Vocational School Board. He was a passionate, lifelong amateur historian and a founding member of the Portage County Historical Society.

### **Annual Meeting Wednesday April 9, 2014 7 p.m. 333 UWSP Communication Arts Bldg.**

Plan on joining us for this interesting presentation!

#### **Thomas Jefferson's Declaration Desk: An 18th Century Laptop**

Edward Zappen, retired circuit court judge in Wood County is an amateur historian and 18th century furniture maker who has made several accurate reproductions of the little laptop writing desk that Thomas Jefferson used when he wrote the Declaration of Independence.

Judge Zappen uses the desk as a springboard to tell the history American Colonies leading up to the signing of the Declaration in 1776.

Zappen's reproductions can be found at the American History Museum in Los Angeles and Independence Hall Historical Park in Philadelphia.



# The Dinery

## Make-up of Board by Karen Zinda

Who makes up the local historical society? Is it only people who were born and raised in an area? Through the years of talking to people who are interested in history (at various PCHS events), but don't belong to the local historical society I have often heard them say "I'm not from this area." I then ask if they live here, more often than not the answer is yes, but they weren't born or raised here. I then tell them I didn't move to Portage County until I was nine, and I belong to and volunteer at the PCHS; they shrug.

After thinking about this issue for quite some time I polled the current board members and asked them four questions.

Where you born in Portage County?

Did you graduate from high school in Portage County?

Did you marry someone who was born in Portage County?

Did you marry someone who graduated from high school in Portage County?

The results were:

Of the 14 board members surveyed, three were born in Portage County and 11 were not.

Four graduated from High School in Portage County.

Two married someone who was born in Portage County.

Three married someone who graduated from high school in Portage County.

Eight members were not born in Portage County, nor did they graduate from high school Portage County.

The results of this small survey show that you don't have to have been born and raised in Portage County to become a member and/or serve on the board.

Think about this; You like what the Society does, You are interested in history And the survey proves You don't have to be local to join.

Consider joining the Society, or getting your friends and family who are interested in history to join. We have members from: Indiana, Florida, Kansas, Missouri, California, Arizona, Virginia, North Carolina, Illinois, Kentucky, Washington, Texas, Minnesota, Maryland, District of Columbia, Nevada, Iowa, Michigan, Wyoming and South Carolina. In Wisconsin we have members in: Stevens Point, Plover, Nelsonville, Madison, Amherst, Appleton, Rosholt, Iola, Almond, Amherst Junction, Oconomowoc, Mosinee, Elmwood, Waupaca, Wisconsin Rapids, Custer, Glendale, Medford, Cambridge, Bancroft, New London, Middleton, Manitowoc, Milwaukee, Wisconsin Rapids, Eau Claire, Port Washington, Mayville, Junction City Cottage Grove, Mequon, Park Falls, Vesper and River Hills.

Some of our members belong because they grew up here, some because their parents did, and some because their grandparents did. Some join because they are interested in preserving the history of the area they live in.

What's your reason? Join and let us know. It would make an interesting follow-up article for the newsletter!

# The Pinery

## SYNAGOGUE NOTES WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

by Mark Seiler

When visitors to the Synagogue Museum learn that Congregation Beth Israel disbanded in 1985 and deeded the Synagogue to the Historical Society, they usually ask: "What happened to the Stevens Point Jewish families? Where are they now?" My answer is that there are still four of the "old" Jewish families living in Stevens Point and Wisconsin Rapids. And there are a number of families, who came to Stevens Point since 1985 who are members of Congregation Mt. Sinai in Wausau. The story of most of the "old" families is more complex. The younger generation went off to college, married, and found employment elsewhere, and when the older generation retired, they often relocated in locations all across the United States.

A recent article in the Stevens Point Journal illustrates "what happened" to one of the "old" Stevens Point Jewish families--Andy Fickman is the producer of the new Disney Channel series "Liv and Maddie," which premiered Sept. 15. The show is set in Stevens Point, and depicts life in a small-town, which Andy recalls from visiting Stevens Point as a child.

Andy's grandparents, Albert and Adele Schein were, until their deaths, well known members of the Stevens Point Jewish Community. They were active in civic affairs and were New York Life Insurance agents. Albert was a founder of the United Way, a member of the American Legion, the Stevens Point Music Council, the Chamber of Commerce, the Elks Club, Masonic Lodge, Boys Scouts and president of the Central Wisconsin Underwriters Association.

Andy's uncle, Jerry Schein, a well known golfer in Stevens Point, ultimately settled in California, where he recently passed away. Andy's mother, Ruth Lederman, lives in Texas, where Andy and his brothers grew up.

So, where are they now? Like the Schein family, descendants of other Beth Israel families live in at least 14 states, as well as in Israel. They are in New York and New Jersey on the East Coast; Arizona, Colorado and California in the West; Florida, Louisiana, Missouri and Texas in the South; Michigan, Iowa, Illinois, and Minnesota in the Midwest--and now, they are even on the Disney Channel.



As a part of the flat roof project at the Fire House, new custom made doors replaced the old overhead door in the back.

The door design was based on the original doors from the front of the building and built by Stud Brothers Construction.



# Portage County Historical Society

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Non-Profit Organization  
US Postage Paid  
Permit #92  
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Tim Siebert—President  
Mark Seiler—Vice President  
Karen J. Zinda—Secretary  
Jeanne Regnier—Treasurer

Return service  
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Anton Anday  
Mary Egle  
Milo Harpstead  
Julie Richards (volunteer coordinator)  
Dave Simonis  
Beverly West

Mareida Houser  
Shirley Multhauf  
Jerry Rohlinger (webmaster)  
Diane Lang

The Pinery, A publication of the Portage County Historical Society  
Karen Zinda and Mark Seiler, Editors  
Masthead Design by Jessie Michelson



## Events 2014

For a full list please check the calendar of events on our website.  
(Events will be added when they are confirmed).

### April 9

Annual Meeting

### April 18

Shabbat Service at Synagogue

### May 10

Portage County Cultural Festival at SPASH

### May 24 & 25

Annual Art Show Rising Star Mill

### June 21 & 22

Heritage Days at Heritage Park in Plover

**May 24—Sept. 7** Summer season at the Synagogue, Heritage Park & Fire House,  
open Saturdays & Sundays 1—4