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Model Miniature Circus

Designed & Crafted Exclusively by Mr. and Mrs. Kachel

Donated to PCHS by Mr. and Mrs. Pelanek

By Anton Anday



Like all acquisitions, this also started with a phone call. On November 18th the call came from Philip Pelanek from Middelton, inquiring if the Historical Society would be interested in a donation of a model miniature circus for our collection. Mr. Pelanek, was informed that our current display at the Heritage Park museum was on the circus tradition of our county and state. Mr. Pelanek described the contents of the "Kachel Circus" collection and the eighty years it took to put this display together.

He indicated that Circus World came to see the miniature circus and asked if he would mind if they split the collection. Mr. Pelanek was not willing to do so. He, however, was willing to donate the collection if it stayed together. The response was that we certainly can use it, but it needed discussion and that we would like to take a look at it before we make any commitment. Mr. Pelanek was agreeable to this.

On November 20th, a phone call from Mr. Tim Tegge of Tegge Circus Archives, was received to alert us to the possible phone call on this subject. Since this has already taken place, we discussed the collection and his appraisal of it. Mr. Tegge believed that the collection would greatly enhance our work, because as he states "This is a fine example of American folk art, combining rare and unique antiquities with original creations, designed and crafted exclusively by Mr. and Mrs. Kachel. It offers an accurate glimpse of the American Circus during an important time in our nation's history, the years of both the Great Depression and World War II."

Our visit took place on November 21st and the collection lived up to all its expectations. We will have the ability to use it immediately in our display in the upcoming season. There are only two conditions to this gift: that it stays together and that a plaque be displayed with the collection, acknowledging the donors

As was our plan, we picked- up the collection bring it back to Plover with the help of CWMR members. The collection has been itemized, much of it photographed and inventoried for our use. The collection will be displayed at the Heritage Park church/museum.

We would like to thank Philip S. and Susan J. Pelanek for their generous donation of this unique artifact to the collection of the Portage County Historical Society, which will preserve the history, heritage and culture of 20th Century circuses in Wisconsin for future generations.

The Dinery

World Day of Prayer in Temple Beth Israel

by Mark Seiler

The Stevens Point 2014 World Day of Prayer service was conducted by Church Women United in Temple Beth Israel on March 7, with 85 people in attendance. It may seem strange that a service hosted by a Christian women's organization would be held in the former Jewish synagogue. But actually, interaction between Christians and Jews reaches far back in the history of Stevens Point.

This interaction was unique during a period when anti-Semitism was prevalent in Wisconsin, elsewhere the United States, and in the world. As early as 1907, only two years after the construction of the synagogue, the Jewish congregation advertised services for the Jewish Day of Atonement and stated "Everyone, Gentiles as well as Jews, are invited to attend these services and will be made welcome." (SPJ 9/17/1907) Over the years the Christian congregations reciprocated.

When Church Women United was founded in May 1940, its organizational luncheon was attended by "one hundred and twenty-two women, Protestant, Catholic and Jewish" (SPJ 5/4/1940). Women from Congregation Beth Israel were active in the organization--the rabbi's wife Louise Reach, Adele Schein (SPJ 4/1/1942), and Betty Lipman, who was treasurer of the organization (10/11/1943). In April 1943 a Lenten Study group met in Temple Beth Israel, led by Betty Lipman and Betty Winnig. The discussion topic, *Women's Place in the Bible*, was given by Rabbi Curt Reach.

In 1950, the Inter-Faith Council held a Thanksgiving Assembly at the Baptist Church, with Rabbi Isaac Lerer giving the Thanksgiving message (The Pointer 11/30/1950).

On WLBL, the Wisconsin Public Radio station, local clergy, including the Jewish rabbi gave 15 minute meditations (SPJ 1950). Stevens Point Mayor A.L. Jacoboski, a Catholic, spoke on the Hebrew radio hour on the college radio station. (SPJ 9/9/1950).

In 1955 when Jews celebrated 300 years in the United States, there was a year-long celebration in the Stevens Point community, beginning with a program at Central State College (today UWSP). Participants included the Stevens Point mayor, the president of the college and local clergy. The mayor stated "Our city has grown and prospered because it has always been a place where all kinds of people could live and work together." Father Lewis of the Episcopal Church of the Intercession stated "Mankind owes an eternal debt to Judaism. Jews have shown the world time after time, and especially in our time, just how much it means to be a Jew." Rabbi Matzner, a survivor of Nazi concentration camps, said "My thoughts went back 10 years ago to my liberation from persecution. More than anyone else, I know how much I owe to my adopted homeland. America was founded by many people who came here to serve God, unmolested, according to the dictates of their hearts." (SPJ 1/6/1955)

In 1965 the eight day celebration of Hanukkah in Stevens Point began with an ecumenical service in Temple Beth Israel with eight Catholic and Protestant clergy from Plover and Stevens Point



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joining Rabbi Emil Klein, pictured here. (SPJ 12/20/1965)

When the B'nai B'rith Council of Upper Wisconsin held its conference in Stevens Point, the Rev. Perry Saito, pastor of St. Paul's Methodist Church was chosen to deliver the keynote address. His wife Fumi performed several vocal selections. In Perry and Fumi Saito the Jews saw someone who, perhaps more than others, understood their condition. The Saitos, Japanese-Americans, met during WWII in a "relocation center", in which Japanese Americans were interned after the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941. (SPJ 2/19/1959)



Ben Garber, a prominent member of Beth Israel, was a member of the Catholic hospital's board, and an enthusiastic participant in Panacea, the fundraiser for the Catholic Pacelli High School. The Stevens Point Journal's description of Garber in an editorial could be said of a number of the members of the Stevens Point Jewish community: Garber is "...a generous contributor and great-hearted participant in many events and projects to benefit worthy causes, whether Jewish, Catholic, Protestant or non denominational". (SPJ 5/4/1951)

Synagogue Notes

By Mark Seiler

Temple Beth Israel Museum hosted a Shabbat oneg service--a religious service followed by symbolic drinking of wine, eating unleavened bread, and socializing-- on Friday evening April 18, which this year fell on Good Friday in the Christian world. The service, led by Rabbi Dan Danson of Mt. Sinai Congregation in Wausau, coincided with Passover.

In attendance were more than 50 individuals from Wausau, Plover and Stevens Point, including a visitor from New Jersey, high school and UWSP Students, a former member of Congregation Beth Israel, as well as young families with toddlers and even a 2 month old baby, whose great grandmother during World War II was sponsored by members of Congregation Beth Israel, making it possible for her to escape from Europe and find a new home in the United States.

Those in attendance participated in various readings and joined together in the many musical elements of the service, led by Melanie Kuolt.

The Pinery

From the President

by Tim Siebert

The 2014 museum season is about to begin. The season will build on some big successes in 2013. Thanks to a bequest from the Ann and William Stielstra estate the society was able to pay off the last, roughly, \$12,000 of the Heritage Park mortgage. This is very exciting for us as it now makes the park free and clear. We received a \$1,000 matching fund grant from the Viet Nam Veterans organization in Plover. The funds will be used to purchase archival materials to help preserve our military collections. This is very important as the collection is large and in need of a significant amount of materials to protect the collection. This matches the \$700 we received from the state society in the summer of 2013. The society was given a large miniature circus, hand built in the 1920's and based on the Ringling Brothers circus. The circus will be placed on display this summer at the Heritage Park display hall as part of our two year focus on circus life and the circus in Portage County. In the summer of 2013 the society was able to re-roof the backroom of the firehouse. Finally, 2014 began with our annual meeting in mid-April. Dianne Peplinski was recognized by the society with the Winn Rothman Award for her extensive work on a variety of topics in local history based on newspaper research.

The board is looking forward to a number of events this summer. Heritage Days at our Plover park will take place on the weekend of June 21st and focus on the circus. The one room school house program is under way and is serving a wide variety of both public and private schools as well as some home schooled students. The average for this program is about 700 students. The Nelsonville Mill will hold its annual art show on May 24 & 25th. The society will have a booth at the Farm Tech Days in August. The event is expected to draw about 60,000 visitors and we hope to expand our visibility. As in the past our sites will be open starting Memorial Day, each Saturday and Sunday.

I would like to thank everyone who has been leaving aluminum cans, aluminum materials, copper & brass fixtures/pipes as well as wires/cords. The funds have been put toward archival materials. I would like to encourage you to continue to leave such materials at the side door of the Synagogue.

Volunteers are Needed!!!

With the coming of the summer we are looking for volunteers to help keep our sites open. If you would like to volunteer for an afternoon (1-4 p.m. on Saturdays and Sundays) please email us at www.portagecntywihistsoc@gmail.com.

With your help we will be able to keep all three sites in the Stevens Point/Plover area open from Memorial Day to Labor Day.

Thank you!

The Pinery

Gilbert Lafayette Park

8/31/1825–6/5/1884

Mayor of Stevens Point

4/1/1861–12/14/1861

By Anton Anday

Gilbert L. Park and the City of Stevens Point had to face the burning issue of secession in 1861. Like other communities, Stevens Point held large public rallies in support of the Union and provided its share of volunteers for the Union Army. The national depression of 1861 also deeply affected the City. It was in this year that Gilbert Lafayette Park was elected mayor. At the outbreak of the Civil War he resigned his office, (the first Stevens Point mayor to do so), and joined the 18th Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry, which was mostly raised in Portage County. This unit was commanded by James S. Alban, Park's old law partner from Plover.

A portrait of Park shows a physically strong person with deep set eyes and a melancholy look and gives the impression of an intelligent man who knows and has seen too much. He was born on farm on August 31, 1825, at Scipio, Cayuga County, New York, with a pedigree that reached back to the American Revolutionary War. At age fifteen this naturally intelligent and educated young man, with a rebellious nature against farm life, left home and joined the Hudson Bay Company in Canada. He was eager for adventure, exploration and looked to experience life. He was a lumberman in the Hudson Bay area and went as far north as Port Churchill on the Severn River. From this experience, he learned how to survive in the hostile environment of nature and men.

A year later, after his return home by way of Georgian Bay, Park enrolled at Millville Academy in New York, where he spent three years completing his education. While in school, his family relocated to Port Dover, Ontario, where he joined them for the next two years. Here he found employment as a lumbermen and because of previous experience was successful at it. In 1848, Park had the misfortune to lose "a large raft of logs" on Lake Erie. It went over Niagara Falls. This shipment represented most of his wealth, working capital and inventory.

It was this disaster that turned him to the study of law in the office of N. A. Balch at Kalamazoo, Michigan, where he was admitted to the bar in September of 1851. A few months later he moved to Grand Rapids, Michigan, where he worked for Timothy Hurley and spent that winter's logging season in the northern Wisconsin pineries, with the intention of

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accumulating enough money to open a law office.

In 1852, Park moved to Plover, Wisconsin, and joined the firm of James S. Alban as partner and thereby became a pioneer member of the Portage County bar, at the request of his partner on September 9th, 1852. During the next three years of law practice in Plover, which was then the county seat of Portage County, Park was involved in the civic and political affairs of the Community. The naming of Amherst township may have been his doing. However, a clearer record does exist on the dedication of the first flagpole in Stevens Point on the 4th of July of 1853. The pole flew a hand-stitched flag created by the women of the village. On the occasion "An oration was given by Gilbert Park, ...a picnic dinner followed in which some three hundred people participated. The piece de resistance was roast pig." The tax role of 1854 "reveals that G. M. L. Park was the town clerk..." of the town of Plover. As one of the first lawyers of northern Wisconsin, he accumulated a large business and he was well known by the public. As a result, Park was elected as Portage County District Attorney in 1854 and held that office till 1858.

In 1855, Park moved his law practice from Plover to Stevens Point. The following year, on February 26th, he found time to marry Mary D. Beach in Kalamazoo, Michigan. In the next decade, this union added three children to the Park family. Byron Beach Park in 1858, Gilbert Lafayette Park in 1862 and Ann Park in 1866.

When the City of Stevens Point was established in 1858, Park was appointed city attorney and "was instructed to draw up a code of by-laws for city government". He served his community well in this office, but by 1860 the war drums and the national depression forced the "War Democrat" into a greater leadership position. 1861 became a pivotal year in Park's life. On January 11th, the *Wisconsin Pinery* reported: "G. L. Park left as editor of the *Pinery* ... not replaced ... hope to receive articles in the future (from him) ... ". The writer was unable to find information on Park and the *Pinery* connection, but he resigned as contributing editor since he was carrying on a political campaign. On February 16th, Park was given a license to practice law in the Wisconsin Supreme Court. In March, he recorded in his diary: "Our Charter Election ... on March 4, 1861 - went off quietly with little or no excitement". On April 1, 1861, G. L. Park Esq. became the third mayor of Stevens Point.

The fiscal restraints of the national economy did not force Park to abandon his priorities. "Government must help the poor despite the depression." and "Local government is not a road builder." To him people came before infrastructure, but just being in office for three weeks did not stop him from organizing with B. L. Sharpstein a military company in Stanton, a name which the Village of Plover was called that year. The defense of the Union was a duty and a priority. On December 14, 1861, Park resigned to join the 18th Wisconsin Infantry as its adjutant. Eventually he was promoted to the rank of Captain of G Company, which he commanded for the next three and a half years. "The record of the regiment is largely that of his own participation in the war. He was in the siege of Vicksburg, the battle of Corinth, at Lookout Mountain, the Atlanta campaign, and while never wounded, experienced many

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narrow escapes." The Civil War "was by far the most tragic in the number of men from the county killed, or (who) died of wounds, or disease, or as prisoners in confederate camps". Park was erroneously reported killed at Pittsburgh Landing (also called Shiloh), where James Alban lost his life. During the war his horse was shot from under him, while another bullet broke part of his sword blade, but he returned unharmed.

During the war years his family moved to Kalamazoo, Michigan, to the Beach household, where they lived with Mrs. Park's family until the spring of 1865. They returned to join Park, who had resumed his practice of law in Stevens Point. Although he was an outdoors man and fond of adventure, Park was also a passionate and intense student of the law. Through the next ten years, he was a very successful member of the legal profession.

Park was an active participant of things relating to public interest. Being the local, some say regional leader of the Democratic Party, he kept the organization together throughout the post-war years. He was a man of personal integrity that served him well in law and politics. Park participated and ran for office in numerous political campaigns. During the war years "he was nominated, without his knowledge or consent, and run by his party for state senator on two or three occasions." It must have surprised him. In 1866 and in 1882 he ran for Congress, but was defeated by C. C. Washburn and Isaac Stephenson respectively. In 1882, his loss was decided by some 300 votes. In 1867, Park was placed on the State ticket for Lieutenant Governor and was defeated. In 1870, he was elected Portage County Supervisor from the 2nd Ward of Stevens Point and the records indicate that in 1873 he served as president of the School Board.

In 1875, this very active legal and political advocate was appointed by Governor Taylor as the 7th Circuit Court Judge at the resignation of G. W. Cate, who had been elected to the House of Representatives of the Congress of the United States. In the following year's spring election, he was picked to fill the unexpired term by defeating J. O. Raymond for that office. Two years later, Henry Hyden of Grand Rapids (Wisconsin Rapids), tried to unseat Park for a full term on the 7th Circuit Court. By then, the popular judge convinced even his previous opposition that he was the right person for the job. W. S. Munroe, owner and editor of the *Waushara Argus*, who bitterly opposed Park's appointment and election, published the following comment on March 8, 1872: - " Mr. Park has done his work well. ... We have heard no complaints in regard to his judgments and decisions, and even his most bitter opponents of three years ago have been won by his fairness, candor and dignity while on the bench ... and has done much to improve the morals of the circuit, a change that will work no injury to him in the canvass (election)". *The Pilot*, a short lived local newspaper, recommended in its editorial that Park be elected to the Wisconsin Supreme Court, when an amendment to the State Constitution increased the number of Judges on the Court. "He is both capable and

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honest, besides possessing, in an eminent degree, the peculiar qualities of mind requisite in a judge of a court of last resort." In 1878, Park was re-elected for a full term on the bench.

In 1883 he was forced to resign his position due to ill health, "... suffering from an acute stage of Bright's disease". For the next year he traveled west to try to recover his health. In 1884, Park returned to Stevens Point before he entered a sanitarium in Waukesha in January of that year. He died on June 5th, 1884, of sudden pulmonary hemorrhage, two months before his 60th birthday.

On June 8, 1884 the funeral service took place in Stevens Point in the "driving rain" and burial was in the Forest Cemetery. *The Wisconsin Pinery, The Grand Rapids Tribune, The Lincoln County Advocate, Wausau Weekly Review, The Sunday Telegraph, The Central Wisconsin*, all covered the event and reported that "The remains of the deceased were followed by thousands".

In March of 2003, the writer had a chance to observe the pictures of Judge Cate and Judge Park. The two portraits were brought to the Court in November of 1907 and represented two self-made men. Both were pioneers in the Wisconsin River Pinery. They worked in the saw mills and logging industry. Both were extraordinary lawyers and able jurists. They were leading citizens and servants of the community for many years. Reading Park's speeches, with his nineteenth century flowery language and Shakespearian cadence, recognizing his sense of duty and bravery in war, his curiosity and thirst for adventure and observing how he watched over the Court, one develops the desire to have dinner with this man. That would be an unforgettable experience.



On April 15th, the "Classy Hat-titudes", a Red Hat Chapter from Wisconsin Rapids visited the Beth Israel Synagogue. Their tour was given by PCHS Board V.P. Mark Seiler, Synagogue curator. The ladies really enjoyed themselves! *Photo submitted by Julie Richards*

The Dinery

Calendar of Events

Events are added to the calendar as they are confirmed. For a complete, up-to-date listing of events please go to our website: www.pchswi.com/calendar

May 10—Portage County Cultural Festival, SPASH, Stevens Point WI

May 24 & 25—Opening weekend at Heritage Park, corner of Washington & Willow, Plover WI. The park will be open Sat. & Sun. from 1-4 p.m. through Labor Day weekend.

May 24 & 26—Opening weekend at the Synagogue Museum, 1475 Water St., downtown Stevens Point WI. The Synagogue will be open Sat. & Sun. from 1-4 p.m. through Sept. 1 (including Memorial Day Monday and Labor Day Monday).

May 24 & 25—Opening weekend at Historic Fire House N^o 2., 1949 Strongs Ave, Stevens Point WI. The Fire House will be open most Sat. & Sun. from 1-4 p.m. through Labor Day weekend.

May 24 & 25—Rising Star Mill Art Show, Rising Star Mill, Cty Rd Q, Nelsonville WI. Open Saturday 10 a.m.—5 p.m. and Sunday 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

June 21 & 22—Heritage Days, Heritage Park, corner of Washington & Willow, Plover WI. Open Saturday & Sunday 10 a.m.- 4 p.m.

Concerts at the Rising Star Mill—Admission fee

Eddie Biebel/Vicki Basar -- Saturday, June 14, 2014 starting at 7:00 PM.

Eddie Biebel's distinctive guitar playing and varied repertoire blends perfectly with Vicki Basar's soaring vocals. Together, they create fresh and dynamic Bluegrass music for an evening of pure enjoyment.

Bill and Kate Isles -- Saturday, August 16, 2014 starting at 7:00 PM.

This duo from Duluth is among the most popular performers at the Rising Star Mill. They are highly respected singers and songwriters who present down-to-earth poetic reflections of life experiences.

Dekorra -- Saturday, September 6, 2014 starting at 7:00 PM.

The songs of Dekorra reverberate sounds of country, swing and light-rock genres. The objective of this multi-talented group is to present an entertaining variety of live music in a relaxed setting.

The Dinery

PCHS Annual Meeting

Some 60 people attended the annual meeting of the Society on April 9 in the UWSP Communication Arts building. In a short business meeting, the Society elected 4 individuals to the Board of Directors: Mary Egle, Merida Hauser, Jerry Rohlinger and Terry Wick.

The Society presented Dianne Peplinski with the Win Rothman Award for local history. Ms. Peplinski has conducted research in the local newspapers and assembled more than 30 carefully edited collections of news articles on a variety of historical topics, including fires, floods, murders and fatal accidents in Stevens Point. She has these collections published and donates them to the local libraries.

Four UWSP students who received the Rothman award for volunteering as docents at the Synagogue Museum last summer were also introduced: Destiny Barton, Robin WoongHo Lee, Gwin Pearce, and Rachel Maslakow.



Dianne Peplinski

The Rothman Award, first given in 1977, is jointly administered by the UW-Stevens Point History Department and the Portage County Historical Society. The Award was created in 1976 by Edith Rothman in memory of her husband Win (1886-1976), born into a prominent Stevens Point family, who was a successful businessman, civic leader, amateur historian, and a founding member of the Historical Society.



Following the business meeting, Edward Zappen gave a presentation entitled *Thomas Jefferson's Declaration Desk: An 18th Century Laptop*. Mr. Zappen is a retired circuit court judge in Wood County, 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 used the desk as a springboard to tell the history of the American Colonies leading up to the signing of the Declaration in 1776. One of his reproductions can be found in Independence Hall Historical Park in Philadelphia.

Judge Zappen (holding desk) with PCHS VP Mark Seiler

Jefferson desk unfolded to show writing surface





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

The Pinery



Are you current in your membership?

Check your mailing label “Jan-14” means your annual dues are due and we would appreciate your continued support (dues run from Jan—Dec). If it says “life”, you have made a one time payment entitling you to this designation, however, continued support is always welcomed. 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.

Like all non-profits we rely on our volunteers, with out their help we would not be able to hold the events we host or have our sites open. THANK YOU VOLUNTEERS!

And like many non-profits we have or lost funding for the coming past year - funding which has 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 the Historic Fire House N^o 2 in Stevens Point. 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!