

Official Publication of the Portage County Historical Society of Wisconsin

THE RISING STAR MILL Spring 2016

The 148-year-old Rising Star Mill in Nelsonville, Wisconsin has become, not only a focal point for the small village of 155 in central Wisconsin but, it has garnered renewed attention county wide and beyond. This grist mill has maintained its unique importance to the local community. One hundred and forty years ago this building serviced the local farmers who needed to process and store the grains they grew and barter or purchase the enriched animal feed they needed.

While the mill no longer services the agricultural needs of the local farming community, it does provide a center for community activity and pride. When the DNR purchased the RSM in 1984, it was their intent to raze the building. Local, forward thinking individuals recognized the uniqueness of the building and supported its salvation. In 1985, the DNR sold the mill to the Portage County Historical Society. Originally it was repurposed as an art studio and art teaching facility. Art shows and exhibits became an integral part of the mill's new identity. The local, long term and traditional thinking, residents of Nelsonville described those attempting to preserve the mill as "Hippies." They wanted nothing to do with them. It was reported that few local residents supported any of the cultural events occurring at the mill. That attitude is rapidly changing. A renewed sense of community pride has

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Society Events

Saturday June 18: "Bring Your Doll To a Tea Party" will be held at The Cottage, 2:00PM. See page 4.

Synagogue

Open Memorial Day to
Labor Day
Saturday & Sunday 1 - 4pm
By appointment 715-600-4930

Historic Fire House No. 2

By appointment E-mail to:
portagecntywhistsoc@gmail.com

The firehouse season schedule is still being determined. If you are driving down Strongs Ave. and see the open flag out, even if it is not a weekend, stop in. Someone will be there ready to give you a tour!

Heritage Park

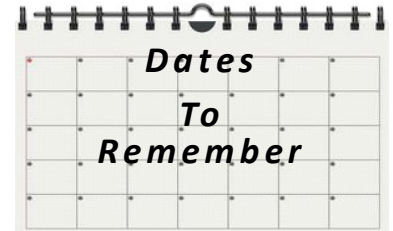
Open Memorial Day to
Labor Day
Saturday & Sunday 1 - 4pm
By appointment 715-600-4930

Heritage Days: June 18-19.
Doll exhibit at the Church Mu-

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President's Report



The past several months have been, for me, one of the most exciting periods during my time as president. The society is moving ahead on two major fronts as well as providing for our annual Heritage Days event.

On June 18 the society will be hosting a “Bring Your Doll to Tea” event at the Cottage Café in Plover. We are asking children to bring their doll (and parents) to the Cottage Café to enjoy a tea and lunch not just with their doll but also with Laura F. Keyes. Ms. Keyes will be presenting her portrayal of Laura Ingalls Wilder (the “Little House on the Prairie” series of books). If you wish further information about this event please contact the society or check (see page 4). In addition to the tea, as this is part of our Heritage Days celebration, Ruth Engford and Frank Clark will be on hand, at Heritage Park, to discuss their life in the circus. Please come and tour Heritage Park along with talking to these unique circus performers.

The barn project, Agricultural Museum, is moving ahead very quickly at this time. The structure is up along with the foundation being reinforced. The roof and cupola should be going up by mid-may providing the weather cooperates. The exterior siding should also be complete by Heritage Days so that we can show people what the project is all about. We still need to raise about \$50,000 to finish the interior items of the barn-such things as utilities, plumbing and interior siding to make the barn appear old as the original,

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seum.

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Rising Star Mill

Saturday & Sunday May 28th & 29th: Art Show 10AM to 4PM each day.

Friday June 17: 7:00PM: Art Stevenson & Highwater

Friday July 22: 7:00PM:

Bill & Kate Isles

Friday Aug. 5: 7:30PM Free movie: “Our Vines Have Tender Grapes”

Saturday Aug. 20: 7:00PM David Story Jazz Trio

Saturday Sept. 10: 7:00PM Dekorra

Sept. 30, Oct. 1 & 2: RMS Open House & Barns of Portage Cty. Exhibit





The Pinery

burned structure was. If you wish to help with the interior work by helping to fund it please send your donation to the society and indicate that it is for the barn.

Our World War I project is moving ahead very quickly. We are looking to opening our exhibits on April 7, 1917 as the 100th anniversary of the U.S. entry into that conflict. To date we have published three books—"Mde. Schumann-Heink", "Songs from the Trenches" and "Letters from Boys under the Colors" (the letters of Seldon and Charles McReedy). Six more books are in the pipeline including a second book on letters home which we hope to have available in about 2 weeks. Many thanks to Sue Koehl for her efforts in both transcribing and raising funds for the publishing of these books. A video documentary has also been completed on the role of Portage County and central Wisconsin in the great war. The film highlights letters from men in the trenches read by local university veterans. Professor Sara Scripps' history class put together the film which premiered on Wednesday night May 11. The society hopes to be able to show the film to the public in a number of venues starting later in the summer. The film was made possible by a donation from Sentry Insurance Foundation and technical assistance from Sentry.

The society has also been able to involve a number of Pacelli students who are transcribing a good number of newspaper articles for use in our displays and books. Thanks to Mike Schmoll who teaches the classes.

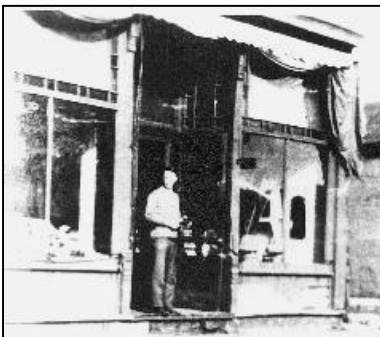
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surfaced. We have a wonderful group of volunteers who have generously shared their time and talents in support of the Mill's activities.

As a direct result of the renewed vitality witnessed in the Village of Nelsonville, one of its favorite sons, Jay Gordon, was inspired to submit an application to the Wisconsin Historical Society: Division of Historic Preservation-Public History, on behalf of the Rising Star Mill Committee, to have the RSM recognized as a State of Wisconsin historical landmark and also to be placed on the National Register of Historic Places. The result has been the approval by the state, of the Mills eligibility for recognition as a State historical landmark and we are now moving forward with the application to the National Register program. There will be more to follow.

Jim Walker
Rising Star Mill Committee

Portage County Agricultural Museum aka the Pierce Building



We've come a long way! This building has seen its ups and downs as a grocery store, butcher shop and general store in Plover over the years. Its move to Heritage Park in 1989; to the fire that destroyed the back 2/3's in 1994; to the restoration of the front portion by Don Kottke, Fred Haase, Larry Misiewicz, and Tim Victor; to now the rebuilding of the back portion.

The restoration of the burned 2/3's had been discussed more than a few times over the 18 years before this last committee was formed in 2012. In

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The Pinery the Fall of 2012 the Building Committee (Jim Abbrederis, Dave Simonis, Jerry Rohlinger) were looking over our buildings for its annual report. A long look and discussion about the "swimming pool" ensued with the decision to ask Tim Siebert to form a committee to "solve" the problem. Tim formed the Pierce Building Committee with Jim Abbrederis as chair with the addition of Anton Anday, Curator of Heritage Park. The 5 of us, Tim was included, began the process of either restoring the back 2/3's or filling in the basement lessening our exposure to liability. It was always understood we'd have to raise the money before any construction would take place.



Thanks to many generous donations we were able to begin the construction of the exterior. It should be ready for Heritage Days, June 18 & 19. The interior work will begin as soon as funds and/or materials are available. The front 1/3 will remain as originally intended, a print shop.

Our task will not be complete until both the exterior and interior are completed. For this to happen more funding is required. If anyone can donate any amount please make donations payable to PCHS and clearly mark the donation as intended for the Pierce Building or Agricultural Museum. For in-kind donations please contact Anton Anday at the Park any Saturday or Sunday 1:00—4:00PM following Memorial Day.

Jerry Rohlinger
Pierce Building Committee



**BRING
YOUR
DOLL
TO A
TEA PARTY**

AT THE
COTTAGE CAFÉ
2900 POST RD.
PLOVER, WI 54467
715-544-0370



June 18, 2016 2:00PM

**SPECIAL PRESENTATION
BY LAURA F. KEYES**

**"HEAR THE REAL HISTORY
OF LAURA INGALLS WILDER
AND DISCOVER THE TIMES,
PLACES, AND PEOPLE WHO
INSPIRED HER
WONDERFUL BOOKS."**

**LIMITED TO 44 GUESTS
RESERVATIONS A MUST!
\$11.00 FOR ADULTS
\$8.50 FOR CHILDREN**

**MENU:
ADULT - CUCUMBER SANDWICHES & COOKIES
CHILDREN: PB&J SANDWICHES & COOKIES
TEA, MILK, JUICE**

**SEND RESERVATIONS TO: P. O. Box 672, STEVENS POINT WI 54481
MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO: PCHS**

Amount

Adult's Name: _____

Child's Name _____

Total _____



JAMES S. YOUNG
1821 - 1885 (?)
Mayor of Stevens Point 1868-1869

The one year term of mayor of James S. Young in 1868 is somewhat of a mystery, as is the person himself. Why would Albert G. Ellis, after holding the office of Mayor for four years, take a hiatus from this position in order to return for three more years after the tumultuous term of 1868 -69? Was it the issue of the location of the County seat between the communities of Stevens Point and Plover, which will remain a controversial issue between the two municipalities to some degree or an other for the next hundred forty years? Every decision maker knew it was coming and its possible consequences. It was a contentious, controversial issue. Ellis never shrank from controversy be it as a public official, or as a newspaper owner and editor. Did he believe that he would be a more effective advocate on this issue if he was not holding public office? Did Young take on this task for one year as a civic responsibility? After all, he was the president of the City Council at the time of his election. Or, was he a victim of a consensus by other decision makers (Ellis & McLean), that he should take on the administrative duty of the City during this controversial year? Certainly he was well rewarded with public office after his term and had no difficulty being elected City Clerk two years later. However, the concept of victim in this situation is difficult to comprehend, since Young certainly was not a novice to politics. He was involved in the process most of his adult life. Maybe his term was his commitment to civic duty and public service to the community. After all, there is not an iota of public record or a hint that something was amiss. Whatever the reasons, it shall remain for ever a mystery.

Although we do not know the date or place of his birth, census date indicates that Young was born in the year 1821 and came to the area of Stevens Point in 1838. He must have been sixteen or seventeen years old when he reached the booming lumber town of the Wisconsin River. He was probably a lumber man. In the Rogers Collection in the fall of 1850, Young is referred to as a lumberman or perhaps part owner of a lumber company, and as a hotel keeper. Approximately 1847 - 48, he married Nancy at the age of twenty-six or twenty-seven. Census data tells us that Nancy was born in 1829. There is no record as to her last name, or where she was born in that year. She is probably from Portage County, since the 1850 census records him to be twenty eight years old and she was twenty one. Subsequent census records of 1860 and 1870 do not record any children born to the couple.

By the fall of 1850 the Village of Stevens Point had a population estimated at two hundred people. The business directory for that year included " ... J. Young and O. Wiswald, hotel keepers". In the same publication, under "lumber Dealers - Young and Maybee" is listed. He seemed to have different partners both in lumbering and as keeper of the United States Hotel. Young was considered as one of the early landlords of downtown Stevens Point. He obviously saved and invested his money to start his various businesses. Other than the lumber and hotel business, Young is also recorded as an original member of the Stockton Insurance Company which had an annual assessment of four dollars. By 1858 the tax roll of the Town of Stockton also lists Young. Here he may have owned property or had lumber interests. The Plover Times reported, in May of 1868, that he went to Kilbourn "looking for hop roots without success". This may well have been another business interest that he wanted to participate in, since the brewery business was growing in the community. In December of the same year, it was reported, that he "badly hurt his foot, working in the woods ...".



From the sketchy facts one gets a broad outline of this Irish, New York Yankee, (purely speculation - his name is Irish, the hop plant was brought to Wisconsin from New York and many early settlers came from the same state). He is an outgoing, energetic, imaginative, hard-working person, who was very much committed to his community. His commitment was not only for business, he also demonstrated civic responsibility and service to the public.

He was a true "Citizen". During one of the most tumultuous years in Stevens Points history, he served as Mayor. Some of his critics could and did argue that during his term the city government was not very responsive to the needs of the public, since the Council seldom had enough members to hold a meeting and the mayor was rarely present. Indeed, the record shows that of the seventy official meetings of the Council thirty-eight had no quorum and the Mayor was often not present. This does not mean that the issues and business of the community were ignored or neglected. The previous year was a great deal worse. Young's commitment to civic responsibility started a long time before and continued for five years after his service as Mayor.

In 1850, at age twenty-nine, he was elected town clerk for the Township of Middletown. In 1851, he served as clerk of election for school tax purposes. In June of 1853, he was in Appleton for a meeting concerning the Stevens Point Plank Road. (Since the majority of travelers approached Stevens Point from Gills Landing, this would be in the communities best interest.) He continued to be involved in Town and Village affairs and at the age of thirty-six, in 1858, he was nominated to the State Assembly. In October of 1861, Young attended the Union Men's County Convention, where he served on the Resolution Committee and adopted seven proposals supporting the Union. In the Civil War he served in Co. H, 3rd Cavalry and made the rank of Sargent. He was probably discharged at the end of the conflict in 1865. On his return Young served as Alderman for the 1st Ward and was President of the City Council. He resigned from this position in 1867 and became the first building inspector of the City. He served as Mayor for the 1868-69 term. There is no record that he ran for reelection and one suspects that he did not do so, but he continued to serve. In 1869, Young was sworn in as Justice of the Peace from the 1st Ward. In May of 1869, he became the City Street Commissioner, as well as the first Assistant Engineer of the Fire Company. In April of 1872, Young was elected as City Clerk. It would be difficult to question his dedication and commitment to his community.

From the Plover Times, it is reported that Young visited San Francisco in 1872, but he must have returned, since the Odd Fellows - Shaurette Lodge, No. 92 listed him as a charter member in December of that year. There is no record as to what happened to the fifty-one year old Young after 1872. A report in the Wisconsin Pinery on June 26, 1885 states that " ... Mrs. Jas. S. Young of San Jose, Cal., arrived here Mrs. Young is the widow of the late Jas. S. Young, who went to California and died there some years ago, ... ". When and where the article does not say. Search for an obituary in California has been unsuccessful. What he did in California is also unknown. In spite of all efforts, this well documented public person, certainly succeeded in keeping the privacy of his private life.

A complete success. No birth, marriage or death certificates. No discharge papers, no memoirs of likes/dislikes. No pictures of him or family. Local records know so much of him, but history knows nothing about the man. Young tends to remind the writer of W. H. Auden's, The Unknown Citizen and maybe that is how it should be.



"The purposes of this organization are exclusively educational and shall be to preserve, advance, and disseminate knowledge of the history of Portage County, Wisconsin."

Joining the Historical Society couldn't be easier! Just fill out the form and mail it today. Membership runs from January - December of the calendar year. Please circle the level at which you are joining or renewing.

Student (ages 17-21)	\$15/year	Senior (ages 62 & older)	\$20/year
Individual	\$25/year	Family	\$40/year
Business	\$50/year	Pioneer	\$100/year
Patron	\$200/year	Sustaining	\$300/year
Benefactor	\$400/year	Life	\$500

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

City/State/zip: _____

Phone Number: _____

Email address: _____

No thanks, I don't want to become a member, but here is my tax deductible donation to the Society \$_____ Please circle your preference. —>

- General Funds
- Synagogue Museum
- Rising Star Mill
- Heritage Park
- Historic Fire House No. 2
- Other - specify

I'm interested in Volunteering, please call me at:

I have an artifact I'd like to donate, please call me at:



Mail this form with check made out to:

Portage County Historical Society
P O Box 672
Stevens Point WI 54481

Or contact us at:
Phone: 715-600-4930
E-mail: portagecntywihistsoc@gmail.com



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Phone: 715-600-4930
E-mail: portagecnywihistsoc@gmail.com
www.pchswi.org

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Photos to Remember

