

Official Publication of the Portage County Historical Society of Wisconsin

Covid-19

All of our projected 2020 events will be subject to Local, State, and National Health related proclamations!

Already Canceled

1. **Annual Meeting** schedule for April 8, 2020, has been canceled because of the closure of the Portage County Library System etc. We will discuss having it at a later date.
2. **One-Room School Project** schedule to begin mid-April is canceled for now.

Up in the Air

Our museums (Synagogue, Firehouse and Heritage Park) are all scheduled to open on Memorial Day weekend. Heritage Days scheduled for June 20-21 is in jeopardy also. The Rising Star Mill is facing the same decisions. Its too early for us to make a call at this point in time.

Hopefully by the end of May or early summer things will settle down.

How have Closures Impacted the Society

Because we work with all the County school districts, public and private, stopping school changes how our One Room School program operates. Our volunteer teachers are nearly all retired teachers, so health concerns played a major role.

The closing of UWSP impacts some of our plans.

People not allowed to work at construction projects directly delays many of our restoration and ongoing maintenance activities.

When is our next Business Meeting? And, how will it be conducted, face to face or by virtual means?

Lots of questions, not many answers. We'll survive! Forced to consider new approaches may ultimately improve our way of doing things?

Visit our web site and Facebook pages for up-to-date information!



Society Events

Annual Meeting has been canceled!

Synagogue

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

Historic Fire House No. 2

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

Heritage Park

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

Heritage Days: June 20-21.

Rising Star Mill

ANNUAL ART SHOW: May 23 - 24, 2020

DEKORRA: June 20, 2020

NELSONVILLE CHURCH PIE SOCIAL: July 11, 2020

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President's Report

Things are on hold for now but up to this point the Society's various projects have been moving ahead.

Thanks to our Collections Committee we have been able to purchase a number of electronic items so as to get a more complete record of the Society's collections.

Additionally, in Heritage Park the Society has been able to put a new roof on both the Church Museum (the old roof had started to leak) and the Depot roof. Both buildings have received a metal roof which looks like it would have at the time they were built.

Metal roofs had just come in about the time the church and Franklin house were build so they are, historically, appropriate. The Church is also seeing its old bell tower rebuilt, thanks to Heartland Homes. It is more than 1/2 complete. The exterior siding and some interior work on the tower, including putting up the bell still needs to be finished



Thanks to Mr. Anday, Mr. Abbreddaris and Mr. Jones the Print Shop is nearing completion. The floor, walls and ceiling have all been sanded (floor) and painted. Trim has also been painted and put into the Print Shop. Some of the equipment has been moved in. Mr. Anday is hoping to open the shop this spring but as of now the moving of the very large pieces of equipment is put on hold. It is his hope that with the opening of the Print Shop the work crew can move on to the Doctor's Office in the back half of the Post Office building. It is also hoped that the Church Museum can be painted yet this summer.

The World War II exhibit, which will use, at least, three building, is progressing. The Church Museum will have the military side of the display including a portion of the role of women in the conflict. The Depot will have an exhibit on the forced movement of people for the holocaust to the relocation of Americans of Japanese descent. The Engford house will have displays involving the home front with a wide variety of topics. Obviously, Church Tower construction is making the setting up of the display difficult to complete but it is moving ahead.



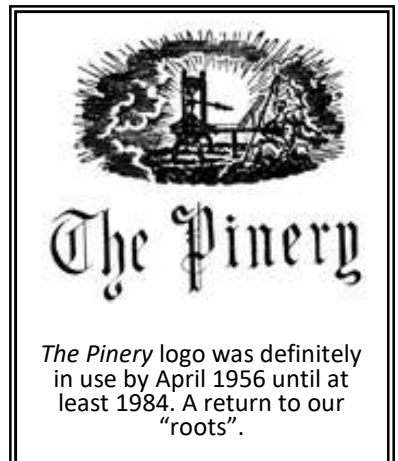
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PATCHOULI: August 8, 2020

CELEBRATE NELSONVILLE PIG ROAST: September 13, 2020, 10am to 4pm. (A public event & fundraiser)

HIGHWATER: September 19,

OPEN HOUSE & BARN OF PORTAGE COUNTY: October 2 - 3 - 4, 2020



A View of Stevens Point 1854

Appeared in the Pinery Nov. 1969

While reading through a typescript entitled "Potter-Crosby Letters 1843-1898" prepared by Ralph Kimball Potter, Dennis R. Bodem, State Archivist of Michigan, came upon two letters written in 1854 to Mr. Potter's grandfather by a cousin living in Stevens Point, Wisconsin. Knowing that this material would be of great interest to the president of our Society, Mr. Bodem offered copies of the letters and enough explanation from Mr. Ralph Potter's family story to establish the relationship between the Potter family and David C. Bailey of Stevens Point.

Samuel Potter had come to America from England in 1843, and in 1854 was living near White Lake, Michigan. In his attempts to learn the whereabouts of whatever relatives he had in the United States, he had been given the address of the cousin, David C. Bailey, and had written to him to inquire about other members of that branch of the family. Mr. Bailey replied, furnishing some information on his sister and others. Included were some comments on his location in Wisconsin: (original spelling retained)

"I am in good health only a slight cold and that every one has in this changeable climate.. Mary lives in Chicago. I cannot come there for I think times are better here than there. The price of land is some thing here to what it is there.. ." Closing with "Please write again", the letter was dated April 16/54. (April 16, 1854)

When Samuel Potter received this letter, he did write again to David, saying that he would like to hear more about Stevens Point. The following is David's reply:

"Stevens Point May 26/54

Respected Cousins It is with pleasure that I sit down to answer your letter hoping these few lines will find you in as good health as they have me. Though they do not leave me in as good health as I wish for. I have a cold and have had ever since I came to Wisconsin and shall have if I was to stay here for ten years for the weather is so changible. It changes very suden though it is generally healthy. There is no fever nor ague here. Now about the country, it is level and very beautiful. The timber is principlly Pine but we have all kinds of hard wood that grows in this part of the country, except Beech. There is over 70,000,000 of sawn lumber run and to run down the river Wisconsin this season which brings from 15 to 20 per 14, and wages on the river is \$1.25 to 2.00 per day and pilots git from 3 to 5 per day just according to how hard they work. I live in this little vilage which 5 years ago there was 2 dwellings and now there is 200 acres nearly that is laid Out in vilage lots. There is 4 taverns, 14 or 15 stores, 2 saloons, a printing office, brokers office and lawyers offices any quantity and the land office here to, 2 black-smith shops and 3 or 4 carpenter shops. One is a steam shop. Cabinet shop and 2 or 3 shoe shops, 3 saw mills, a lath mill. o yes and a bakery. And there is a steam saw mill going to be put up in this sumer and there is a steam boat building now. There is not much prairie land here or none very near here. Though there is some open-ings the soil is very sandy. But there is heavy timbered land and there is plenty of land not far from here to be taken up yet. There is such a noyes in the shop that I cant write anything scarcely. I work at the Carpenters trade for 1.37½ per day and if I was master of the trade I could get 25¢ more a day. I would write this sheet all over if I could write in such a nois. There is one church and another building and 3 schools and plenty of other things accordingly. David C. Bailey"

"Well I have got rid of the boys and I will give you a little more history. There is a plank road coming in to town from Green Bay. It is nearly compleated and there is a rail road surveyed here from Milwaukee and 2/3 of the stock taken up and one of the contractors are here now. And there is steamboats run up the river in 80 miles of here and they run up from Green Bay up the fox river about 40 miles from here and a daily line of stages come in here. There is any quantity of sawmills but the sawyers are abused by the nuisances coming in here and sticking them selves up that they are good sawyers when they are not. All read and all write, yours Etc. D.C. Bailey"

(Many of our past newsletters are accessible from our Home page.)



Fire House No. 2 Report

PCHS received carved signs from Koerten Gallery that used to hang on building denoting Church Street Station.

Restored Frye "Mae West" visible pump - delivered and setup at Firehouse along with 5 glass display cases used in a cell phone store.

All were donated by Riiser Fuels along with several antique gas cans - also restored.



Living Through History

Documenting the Covid-19 Pandemic

Dan Hoppe - Social Studies SPASH

Dan is a member of the Board of Directors for the Society.

To the Board:

"I just wanted to let all of you know of a project I am having my students work on while we are doing "e-learning" days. I am having them document and create primary sources about their experiences during the Covid-19 pandemic. They have lots of options in what they would like to create, from a written journal, photo or video journal, scrapbook, painting or drawing, oral histories/interviews, or creating a podcast. I included in the expectations that I hope to use their primary source projects in my future classes and possibly donate some of the best projects to the Portage County Historical Society. This is truly a historic moment, and it will be interesting to see how teenagers document their experiences as they live through it.

This project could become historically significant for its insight into teenager's minds during this situation."



RISING STAR MILL

JIM WALKER

This is not how I envisioned this year, 2020, was to begin for the Rising Star Mill. Our planning and commitments were far and away, ahead of previous years. We were excited about the prospects of another successful art show and several of our most popular musical artist made early commitments to perform for our RSM fundraising concerts. However, the disruption caused by the Covid-19 virus has put a damper on those plans. The Mill has seen this kind of community viral attack before. The 1918-19 Spanish Influenza Pandemic caused 130 deaths in Portage County. With Nelsonville being in a sparsely populated rural area, social distancing was easier to accomplish. The current popularity of the Rising Star Mill as a destination, has complicated this and will force us to make hard decisions about our public events.

This Spring we plan to put a fresh coat of paint on the front of the mill. Also, through a generous donation, we were able to order a sign commemorating the Rising Star Mill being placed on the National Registry of Historical Places. We had hoped to have a dedication ceremony prior to the Art Show. That ceremony may be in jeopardy. We also plan to have the Leffel Turbine, that sits in front of the mill, sandblasted and painted to offer a better presentation.

The Tomorrow River still courses behind the mill and when it overflows its banks, as it does each Spring and Fall, it reminds us of the historical importance that that body of water has been to the life blood of the Village of Nelsonville. The river powered the mill, thereby contributing to its commercial viability. In later years the banks behind the mill have been used for fishing, and launching kayaks and canoes.



Early History of Wisconsin/Portage County

The territory of Wisconsin was established by an act of Congress in 1836. That same year a treaty signed with Menominee Indians gave a strip of land called “the Indian strip,” three miles (4.8 km) wide along both shores of the Wisconsin River, to the Americans. In 1839 the land was surveyed by Joshua Hathaway, divided into lots and, in 1840, put up for sale by the U.S. Land Office in Mineral Point. In Portage County “the Indian strip” was renamed “the Pinery” because of its rich timber resources. Sawmills were built on the Wisconsin River and on some of its tributaries. Logs were floated down the Wisconsin to the Mississippi River and to St. Louis, an important market for lumber. Both the Southwest and the Great Plains were in great need of lumber to build houses and other structures. There are some indications that even before 1840, sawmills had been built on the Wisconsin River and possibly on Mill Creek. Rapids on the Wisconsin River made floating and navigation difficult. George Stevens, an Illinois lumberman, concluded that a site before the rapids was a suitable location for a warehouse. He built one on the left bank, and this place became known as Stevens Point.



The first Council and House of Representatives of the Wisconsin Territory meeting in Belmont established Portage County. At first the area was small, but in 1841 an act extended its boundaries to make it the third largest county in the Wisconsin Territory which extended east and west across eight townships and north through the central part of the state to the present Wisconsin-Michigan line. In 1846, Columbia County with the town of Portage, was separated from Portage County. Later other southern counties also became new counties

The village of Plover, located on the trail between lower and upper Wisconsin, was at first named Plover Portage; it became the first county seat when it was detached from the southern counties. Portage County was divided into four precincts: Plover Portage, Grand Rapids, Little Bull Falls and Big Bull Falls. These precincts corresponded to the areas around Plover, Wisconsin Rapids, Mosinee and Wausau. In 1847 there were three more precincts: Stevens Point precinct, DuBay precinct and Eau Claire precinct.

At first the county seat was vaguely indicated as Plover Portage, the area used to bypass the rapids, where a tavern had been built and became the established site of the village. Although Plover had been designated as a county seat in 1841, it was not until 1849-1850 that the courthouse was ready for occupancy, and only in 1857 that the village was incorporated.

In 1849 the county board divided the county into three townships: Plover, Middletown and Bull Falls. Plover occupied the southern part; Bull Falls (which later became the core of Marathon County) occupied the northern part and Middletown occupied the middle section between Plover and what is Mosinee today. In 1850 Marathon County was formed, annexing the northern part of Middletown. The township of Plover was divided into Plover and Grand Rapids.

The first post office in Portage County was opened in 1845 at Plover Portage. George Wyatt was the first postmaster. It was officially shortened to Plover in 1850. Plover served as the county seat until 1869 when it was officially moved to Stevens Point.



The Pinery

Is the official publication of the Portage County Historical Society, Inc. of Wisconsin published March 20th, May 20th, Sept. 20th and Dec. 20th of each year.

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CWMR, Ltd

A monthly business meeting is held the second Wednesday of each month, except for December, at the Synagogue Museum, 1475 Water St. Stevens Point, WI., unless otherwise announced.

An Annual Meeting is held the second Wednesday of April at a location to be announced. An annual report and election of Directors occur at this meeting

The membership and public are welcome to attend any meeting.

Visit our website at:
www.pchswi.org

Visit us on Facebook



"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 (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: _____

Mar. 2020

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

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

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

Online Payments

Now accepting online Dues Payments, Donations and Ticket Sales to Society Events.



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



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Photo to Remember

This year is the 75th Anniversary of the end of World War II!
We survived that, we'll survive this!

