

Official Publication of the Portage County Historical Society of Wisconsin

## Rail Builds a Road A Forgotten Rail Spur at Plover

I have always been fond of maps, old maps, new maps, and features on maps that have changed through the years. I am intrigued by the variations of boundary lines, road and river names and family names that transform from one version of a map to the next. Perhaps this was precipitated by growing up locally on the southwest edge of the Plover village, in the area referred to once as Rushville and only blocks from the former P-line (the old WC/Soo-line branch from Stevens Point to Portage, Wi). Pouring over local maps in my teen years, I was always puzzled by the old Business 51 corridor leaving Plover. Why was it at such an angle and why so straight? Was this all due to the topography of the area and the desire of past highway architects? It never dawned on me that anything else might be responsible for the path of the road which we travel today. That belief held true for me until an accidental discovery happened five years ago.

While doing research on Plover and major road-improvement projects that had taken place in the earlier part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, I stumbled upon the name of one company time and time again, The Cast Stone Construction Company of Eau Claire, Wisconsin. Portage County was looking to upgrade roads to concrete and The Cast Stone Construction Company had a reputation of getting roads built quickly. It was announced on April 30<sup>th</sup> 1921 that Cast Stone had been awarded the bids to Road 18 (today old Highway 10 West or County HH West) and Road 10 south (Hwy 51/54 south of Plover, formerly old 51). Their bid came in \$50,000 below the appropriated amount and \$5,000 less than the next lowest bid. Cast Stone explained they were able to do this as they already had heavy equipment residing in Portage County from a previous road construction job and would be saving the difference mostly in equipment relocation costs.

For the Road 10 south construction, the highway commission met with Cast Stone and determined the southernmost point for the concrete road improvement would start “200 feet north of the little culvert below the Coulthurst Farm in the Town of Plover” and “500 feet from the intersection with Bear Lake Road”. The project would then run about 6 miles north to the intersection of the Paper Mill road (now Tommy’s Turnpike). According to the project engineer F.F. Mengel, when completed this road would be one of the largest

*(Continued on page 3)*



### Society Events

The progress of the Covid-19 pandemic will ultimately dictate our schedule!

Tentative schedules for 2021!

Annual Meeting -- April

Heritage Days -- June

Museums to open:

Memorial Day Thru Labor Day

### Rising Star Mill

Mill dates and activities are too dependent on availability to project at this time.



# President's Report

Even though 2020 has seen a halt to all of our program activities the shutdown has allowed us to accomplish a number of things at Heritage Park. The CN RR has decided to make use of its right-of-way just north of the church museum and depot. They own 30-feet from the center of the tracks. What that has meant to the Society is the loss of a number of the large pines growing on that side of the church so things look a little bare at the moment. CN did move several of the small trees into the park that the Society had planted in someone's name or for landscaping. The CN RR has given the Society a couple of items from their recent rebuilding of the nearby RR crossing. Both items pertain to the running of a crossing. The lights and the accompanying control box have now been placed near the caboose.

The 40 et 8 train has been placed on a concrete slab and the tires raised off the ground to prevent them from deteriorating.

The Print Shop is now complete and will be open to the public when the Society can again open its doors.

Anton Anday, Jim Abbrederis and Jason Jones (Heartland Homes) have been working on the interior of the Post Office/Doctor's Office. One section of the building had some serious problems with its support structure so that had to be fixed to stabilize both the exterior walls and the floor. After that was accomplished, they set to work on the interior framing. This included setting up rooms for a doctor, a dentist and a waiting room in addition to the framing for the Post Office. The building has heat so it can be worked on over the winter months. The electrical needs of the building are also being taken care of.

As with any old structures a number of things still need to be done on the School, Engford House and Franklin House.

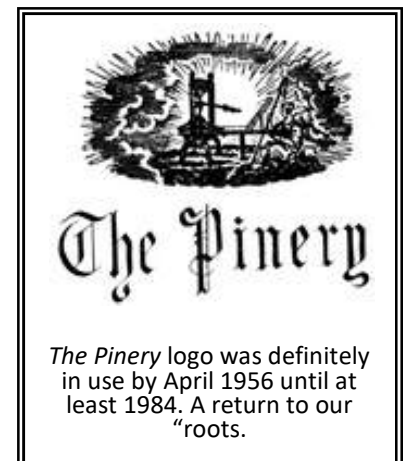
The School's front (east wall) needs to have a number of the exterior boards replaced and painted as the east facing wall has seen a great deal of weathering.

One interior wall of the Engford bathroom needs to be finished with plaster and paint. The upstairs also needs to be plastered and painted along with electrical and heating systems put in so that the two rooms can be used for circus memorabilia.

The Franklin House north wall needs a great deal of work as a number of boards have seen better days and areas around a number of windows have deteriorated to the point where holes have opened up. All three of these projects will be somewhat expensive. If anyone can help financially with any amount that they can afford please consider sending us the funds, it would be deeply appreciated. It is our plan that once these projects are completed, then we can start work on the last structure in the park-the General Store.

We could not open the book store this season either but the books can be mailed. Just let us know what titles you wish and send a check for the amount plus \$7 for mailing. We can be contacted either by email (pchswi@gmail.com) or by telephone (715-600-4930).

The Society does wish to thank the members of PABA for donating their archives to the Society as the organization has closed up shop.

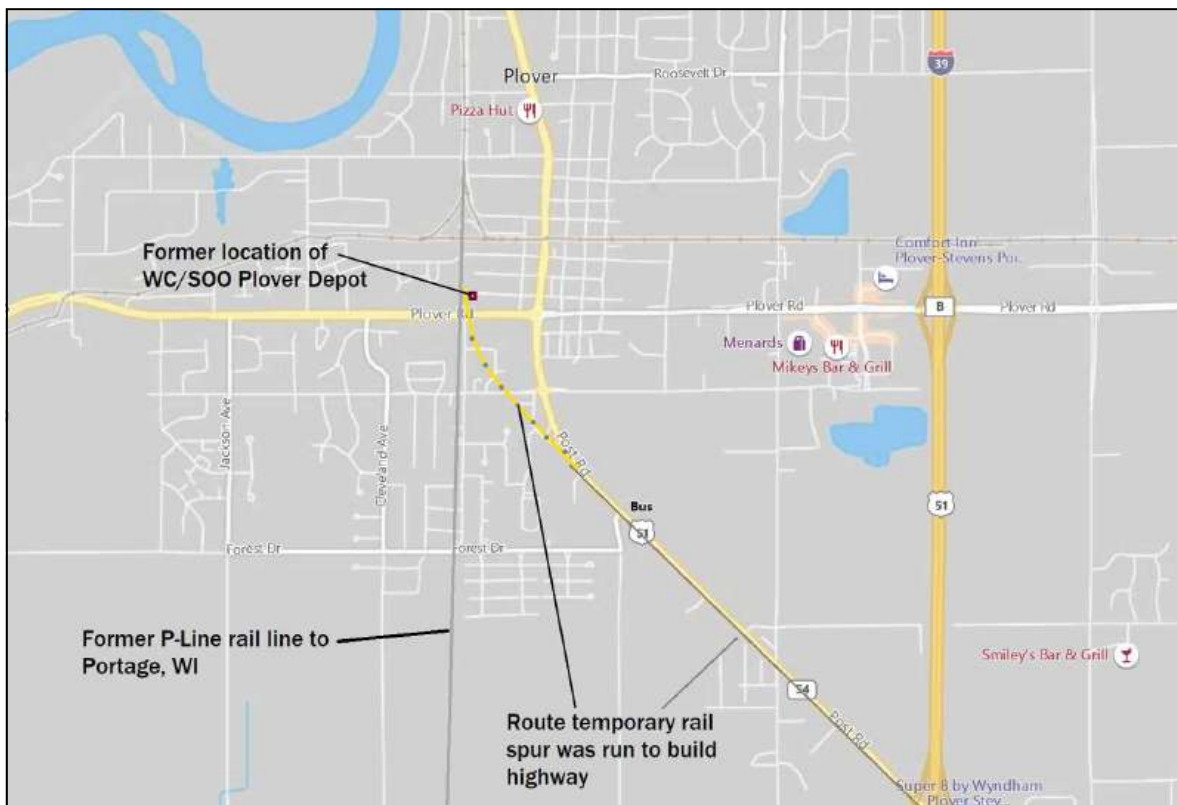


pieces of concrete in this area of the state.

Also on April 30<sup>th</sup>, 1921 the Stevens Point Daily Journal reported that “the head of the Cast Stone Construction Company, a Mr. C.F. Childs was already in process of setting up a railroad spur from a switch at the Wisconsin Central Plover depot This included rails, cars and a locomotive.” The plans were to transport materials via the spur directly to the southern starting point of the job site and continue to move north as the road was completed. The Wisconsin Central Plover Depot was located at the former site of the Wimpe Ready-Mix, now a concrete septic tank manufacturer. A detour road was set up alongside the construction for traffic to continue as it was noted there was enough room to do so. Several more articles appeared in the Stevens Point Journal on the progress of the road being built.

By July 1<sup>st</sup>, a mere two months, the road had been completed and opened to traffic from the Springville bridge all the way south to the starting point. Completion of the last leg reached a standstill on this date as laborers who were hauling gravel went on strike demanding a 50 cent per day wage increase. This put the entire project into a shut down and it was decided to halt work until after the July 4<sup>th</sup> weekend, pending discussions between the laborers and Cast Stone Construction. While the laborers were originally hired to work for \$3 each per day, Cast Stone had voluntarily increased the pay to \$3.50 per laborer per day. They were now demanding \$4 per day. Following the holiday, work resumed with a fresh crew of laborers from the Minneapolis area as Cast Stone did not meet the striking laborers demands and subsequently moved on without the striking labor-force.

No other mention of the temporary rail spur was reported on. Due to the quickness of the fast moving project, the spur would have only existed at most two months. The skeptic in me might believe that it never came to fruition even though the SPDJ article said it was in progress of being built. Looking at a map today however I feel it more than coincidence that the angle of the road constructed leads right to the former location of the old Soo/WC Plover depot.



## Heritage Park 2020 Year End Report.

This year at Heritage Park, as everywhere, was unusual. Because of the pandemic many of our programs were canceled and the World War II exhibit, at four of our buildings, unfortunately has been under utilized. We, however, have completed most of our planned projects. They are as follows:

Church/Museum - The church steeple was completed. We did fix the aviary damage and painted the exterior of the building.

Yellowstone Cabin -Scraped and painted the building. Fixed the aviary damage. Thanks to Patrick Arneson's Eagle Scout Service Project.

Bancroft Depot -- Put a new metal roof on depot. Rebuilt GBW trailer and displayed two benches on the north platform, which were donations.

Placed and poured slab for the 40 et 8 World War I "train" and the CWMR exterior storage shed.

Print Shop --Interior artifacts, displays and posters were installed. Exterior signage and railing was installed.

Agricultural building - After two years of drying out, the building was stained and sealed. Slab was poured for the portable sawmill. The potato digger was moved to its permanent display area.

Hie Corner School - Reconstructed and painted storm cellar door

Post/Doctors Office - Installed electricity and heat, leveled floor of building, framed up interior walls. Installed exterior sign age and exterior doors. Restored decking and exterior benches.

Engford House - Fixed benches on east entrance. Restored bathroom window and bathroom interior.

Franklin/Calkins House - Removed and install porch decking on east side of building.

General Store - Washed the north side of building, installed steps on south side.

Landscaping - The Village of Plover installed sidewalk along Washington Ave. This greatly affected the CN property at Heritage Park. It removed ten very large trees that have been there for over eighty years. We were able to save three young trees that were replanted. We will have to do a lot of landscaping in 2021, which has positive as well as some negative impact on the Park. All flower barrels and walking paths have to be replaced & will require a lot of thinking.

Thank you for all the volunteers, who made this unusual year a success. To Tim Siebert and Sue Koehl for the World War II exhibit. To Jim and Pat Abbrederis for their commitment to the Park - be it construction or landscaping - it is greatly appreciated. To Jason Jones, without whose guidance and skills, our accomplishments would be greatly reduced. We would like to express our thanks for all financial supporters, who quietly support our goal to preserve the heritage, culture and history of Portage County for future generations.

Thank You

Anton Anday

# Portage County Historical Society Receives Award From the Wisconsin Historical Society for World War I Community Program

BY KRIS LEONHARDT

PORTAGE COUNTY - A collaborative project of the Portage County Historical Society and UWSP students shows the connection between veterans of World War I and those of today.

"What we tried to do with the video is have UWSP Iraq/ Afghan vets reading the World War I letters the 'connection' between the men who wrote the letters and those today is apparent as you go through the tape. I think the film does a good job of showing what the commitment to the military/country means and the toll it can take on the soldiers whether in 1919 or 2020. As an example the end of the film deals with what today we call PTSD, then it was called shell shock," said PCHS President Tim Siebert.

The video was part of the "Over There - Portage County in the Great War" program, which recently received the 2019 Public Program Award from the Wisconsin Historical Society.

The award recognizes "outstanding work in a new Wisconsin public history program."

The retrospective on "The Great War" consisted of seven months of events and programs that evolved from a range of partnerships and included exhibits, published books, speakers, and a park dedication.

"The Public Programs award is one of several award categories that the state historical society presents each year. They include a publications award, museum displays award, Thwaites Award for overall programming and can only be won every 20 years; we received it 19 years ago," explained Siebert.

Siebert said that the award reflected the contributions of local volunteers and those who served from Portage County.

"First, it reflects the many hours of work that a number of people put in, particularly Sue Koehl, Sara Scripps, Anton Anday, and Tim Siebert. Thanks to their efforts the society was able to engage the help of a variety of organizations and schools in the area to make the whole Great War Remembrance presentations very much a county wide effort," he said.

"Secondly, I think, the award helps to recognize the contribution that the people of this county contributed to the war effort.

"Finally, the award is the recognition of the wide variety of presentations the historical society put together as a remembrance of the county's contribution to the war effort."

The "Over There - Portage County in the Great War" video is available by contacting PCHS at P.O. Box 672, Stevens Point, WI, 54481, or 715-600-4930.



On Behalf of the Officers, Directors and Rising Star Mill Committee  
of the Portage County Historical Society

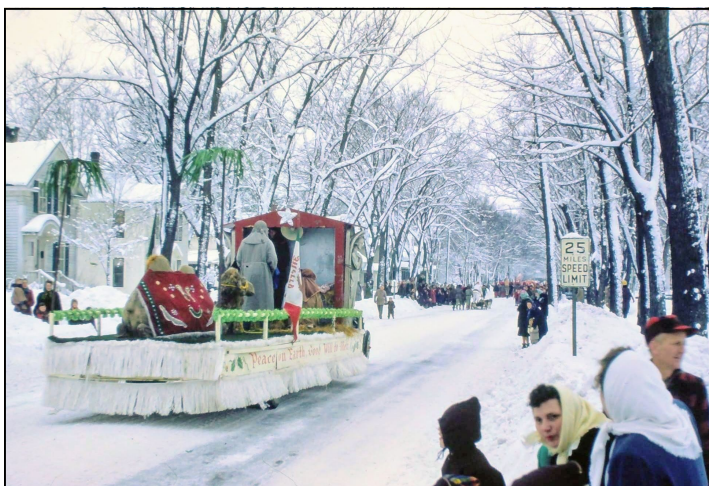
# Happy Holidays!



Photos Taken by Dr. Burdette Eagon in the 1950's

Appeared on Facebook earlier this month.

Wish we could present these in color, but just one page in color would add \$300 to the cost of newsletter printing!





# 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.

### Officers

President: Tim Siebert  
Vice-president: Dave Simonis  
Secretary: Jerry Rohlinger  
Treasurer: Janet Zblewski

### Directors

Jim Abbrederis    Anton Anday  
Mary Egle        Milo Harpstead  
Dan Hoppe        Diane Casselberry  
Eric McFarland    Mary Beth Anday  
Sarah Scripps    Beverly West  
Jason Jones       Brad Casselberry  
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](http://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: \_\_\_\_\_

Dec. 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 Main Street, Stevens Point

