

Official Publication of the Portage County Historical Society of Wisconsin

Back to Normal Operation!

Well, almost. Covid-19 has caused everyone to change at least some aspects of their life. Business, Museums, Libraries, Entertainment venues, Government all changed their approach to operation. Unfortunately some have not survived.

Now that vaccination has changed the landscape of the past 15 months, another change is taking place! PCHS will open its Beth Israel Synagogue, Fire House No. 2 and Heritage Park on its 'normal' schedule this year! But, we will still "Requires Masks to be Worn" for the time being.

Our Rising Star Mill is working its way through the process of re-opening. Its their hope to resume some activities sometime in August.

A large "Thank You" must go out to our membership and the general public for standing by us during the past 15-months! Without your continuing support things could have been very different!

Thank you for your ongoing support

**Beth Israel Synagogue, Fire House No. 2 and
Heritage Park will open on Memorial Day
weekend**

Stop in to see our displays



Society Events

Heritage Days have been canceled

Synagogue

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

Fire House No. 2

Open Memorial Day to
Labor Day
Saturday 9:30am - 1:30pm
By appointment 715-600-4930

Heritage Park

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

World War 2 display continues.

Rising Star Mill

Could resume activities
in August.



President's Report

From the President - May, 2021

This past year has been a trying time for the Society during the Covid-19 Crisis as it was for everyone else. The Society had to cancel two Annual Meetings, 2020 & 2021, because of limits on group sizes and no place to hold them. Our business meeting format underwent changes with the Board approving the Executive Committee meeting in its place to conduct business. This happened four times. Zoom meetings were held with varying success. Jerry Rohlinger, Secretary, opened the Synagogue basement for Zoom meetings with a limit of 5 in attendance. This helped several Board members who did not want to or could not do a Zoom meeting. Jerry had purchased a new Smart TV in December, 2019 and donated his old 42-inch TV to the Society. This was hooked up to our laptop and mirrors what is on the laptop's screen. This allowed everyone at meeting to see and hear the Zoom meetings Addressing the Board was another matter, but we managed.

Financially we did fairly well during the Covid-19. We did not notify anyone of their "dues are due" and carried people over. Most of the Annual Members renewed on their own. Donations of money increased. The result is we are not financially strapped, but, then again, only Heritage Park continued working on restoration and maintenance using funds that were already donated for that purpose. The Synagogue, Fire House and Rising Star Mill did halt work primarily because contractors were cutting back on work they would/could take on.

The biggest 'victim' of Covid-19 was our Cataloging effort. The Society had an individual that was willing to begin the process of entering items into our PastPerfect cataloging system He was to begin in March, 2020. Events took over and he could not help us. So, we lost a year.

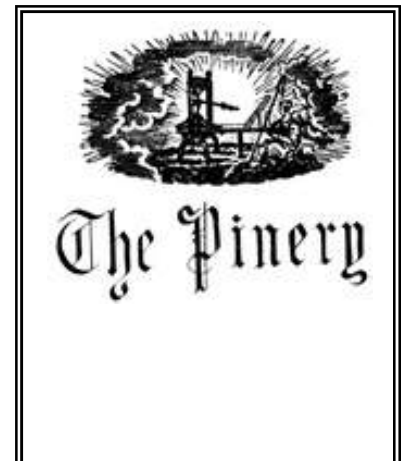
On the other hand a couple of things were accomplished. Jerry began interviewing Milo Harpstead in June. In addition to Milo being the 4th longest serving PCHS Board Member/Officer, he is also Professor Emeritus at UWSP's College of Natural Resources. Milo began at UWSP in 1960 and was one of the individuals that worked on creating not only the College of Natural Resources, but also established state wide recognition of the quality of the graduates, thus opening their job markets at the State level. Over nine months of work a History of the College of Natural Resources and a professional biography have been produced. Both these manuscripts will published in the near future.

The second major undertaking was "forced" on us by Covid-19! With people working from home or out of work, our web site had a radical change in viewership. Our site was designed to be a 'research' site. Our viewers remained at 75% using computers. Covid-19 changed all that. Now its 50% using mobile devices.

Our new look web site is fully mobile now. Technical stuff: we are using Bootstrap 5 as the framework for our site. Bootstrap is the most used framework for our type of site with 10's of millions of users. Its relatively easy to use and no programming is required. Just HTML and CSS, basic web stuff. Go give our site a test drive at: www.pchswi.org .

In the last 2 months we have begun picking up Wendell Nelson's donated material. It has become apparent that a major work day is required to move all of the material. Whenever this can be set up a call for help from our members will be made unless another option comes up.

Progress is being made very quickly on the Doctor's Office/Post Office



building thanks to the effort of Jason Jones and Jim Abbrederis. We hope to have the structure open this summer. The park should be ready to open on Memorial Day weekend along with the two Stevens Point museums.

We will need docents to work at the Heritage Park site on weekends this summer. The hours are 1 - 4 each Saturday and Sunday. If you can help, please contact the Society (phone is 715-600-4930) as soon as possible. We are still in the process of working on a few small "touch up" items that need doing in several buildings but that will not affect tours. If you have a group that wishes to visit Heritage Park at a time other than weekends please contact us and we can make whatever arrangements that are necessary.

Thanks to Sarah Scripps we have a small grant from the UWSP to hire university students to work as docents at the Synagogue and to work on our efforts to upgrade our cataloguing of artifacts.

We have received a number of donations toward the Morgan House purchase. We are working on the details with the owners as to how to approach the purchase and the time frame but we must have funds available to continue. The asking price is \$375,000. This would include the main house, two garages (one of which we hope to turn into a much-needed workshop) and two other outbuildings including a small house on the corner behind the main house. We need financial help in this effort. Anything a person is able to donate to the project will be much appreciated. The Society address is Portage County Historical Society, P.O. 672, Stevens Point, WI, 54481. If you are sending a check mark Morgan House on the check. Thank you for whatever help you are able to contribute. (Property can be viewed on our web site. Capital Improvement.)

I would like to thank Eric McFarland, Beverly West, Diane Casselberry and Day Hoppe for renewing their position on the Board of Directors.

Help at Heritage Park

Due to circumstances, we will need docents to work at the Heritage Park site on weekends this summer. The hours are 1 - 4 each Saturday and Sunday. If you can help, please contact the Society (phone is 715-600-4930) as soon as possible.

Information about the buildings and Park are on our web site: www.pchswi.org.

Dates are in table below.

June	July	August	September
5-6	3-4	7-8	4-5
12-13	10-11	14-15	
19-20	17-18	21-22	
26-27	24-25	28-29	
	31		

Celebrating the 75th Anniversary of the end of World War II

This display at Heritage Park began in 2020. Something got in the way? But, we are open this year! Stop by this year to see the displays.

Will Lehner

Featured in one of our displays

FIRST SHOT

On December 7, 1941 the Japanese Empire struck the American naval base at Pearl Harbor. It was here that the pride of the Pacific fleet was anchored. Particularly the battleships, the most important (at that time) and biggest ships the U.S. had in its fleets. Tensions were high, the war in China had been going on for many years and the possibility of the U.S. being drawn in was real although no one really knew where and when. The U.S. Navy had surface patrols out to protect the entrance to Pearl Harbor. One of those patrol ships was the U.S.S. Ward (SS-139), a destroyer. One of the crew of the Ward was a Portage County man, Will Lehner. As fate would have it, Mr. Lehner was on the ship that would fire the first shot of the American involvement in World War II. As with most sailors on the Ward, Mr. Lehner had two jobs; his primary job was in the crew. During a chaotic situation he was designated looker on one of the deck guns. The Japanese sent a number of two-man submarines (one for every minute) the Pearl Harbor entrance with the plan to enter the harbor and sink as much havoc as possible.

The Ward was called to quarters (battle stations) about 75 minutes before the Japanese at places struck Pearl Harbor. A small vessel had been detected just outside the harbor and did not attempt to communicate with it. The Ward's captain decided to shoot at the vessel. The first shot missed but the second went through the conning tower of the two-man submarine.

This projectile killed the conning tower and sank the submarine in about 1,200 feet of water. Mr. Lehner would remain on the Ward until it was sunk by the Japanese during the fight to retake the Philippines.

Many were skeptical of the story Mr. Lehner told regarding the sinking. However, confirmation of the sinking of the two-man submarine, as related by Mr. Lehner, took place in the late summer of 2001 when the submarine was found in the sea bottom with a hole in its conning tower. Mr. Lehner, after his discovery, took a submarine down to see the wreck. After 61 years he was proven correct in his account of what happened that December 7.

After his discharge, Mr. Lehner, with his wife Florence, came to Stevens Point and made their home here. He died in January of 2020.

A book entitled Legacy of a Pearl Harbor Survivor was published on December 7, 2011 which details his experiences during the war. It is written by Paul Dierke in conjunction with Mr. Lehner.

Malcolm Rosholt

Featured in one of our displays

MALCOLM ROSHOLT AND THE FLYING TIGERS

Malcolm Rosholt was born in a small Portage County town of the same name on September 28, 1907. He had no military experience of any American civilian and soldier before and after World War II. After college, Mr. Rosholt worked in China as a reporter and photographer for The China Press. He would remain there from 1931 to 1937, working from Shanghai and covering the Sino-Japanese War which would eventually expand into the Pacific Theater of World War II. He left the city when the Japanese started bombing it. During this period he briefly returned to the U.S. to marry Margaret Njaa (1915). The couple returned to Shanghai. It was in Shanghai that their daughter, Mei-foi (giving her a Chinese name) was born in 1936.

Mr. Rosholt was commissioned a 1st Lieutenant in 1942. He would return to China in 1943 to work as a liaison for General Chennault who was commander of the 14th Air Force, otherwise known as the elite volunteer team, the Flying Tigers. The Flying Tigers were integrated into the 1st Air Force as the 23rd Fighter Group in June 1942. Most of the pilots flew the P-40 Warhawk fighter. Their goal was to defend China against Japan.

He was one of only four officers who could speak the official Chinese dialect, Mandarin. He quickly became a liaison for General Chennault, the Rosholt would move to the inner circles of both the American air arm in China and with the inner circle of the Kuang Ming Tang (KMT) or Kuomintang, as the Nationalists led by Chiang Kai-shek. His job became one of keeping the Air Force informed regarding what the KMT was doing so as to help coordinate the efforts of both militaries. During his last year in China he was attached to the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) which merged into the CIA after the war. Rosholt was discharged in December 1945.

Mr. Rosholt would briefly return to China in 1949 as a civilian working for the Civil Air Transport. He was the last American to leave the Nationalist capital, Chungking, as the Communists moved in.

Clendenning Brothers

Featured in one of our displays

THE CLENDENNING BROTHERS

Four brothers from one family, the Clendenning, would join the armed forces in response to the need to defeat the Axis powers. Raymond and Orville were in the Army Air Corps. Lyle was in the army. Carl also joined the army and would be involved in the Normandy invasion and the Battle of the Bulge.

Lyle was born on 19 March, 1923 in Mehan. He would serve in the Coast Artillery from the beginning of the war in 1942 to his death in 1945. Lyle passed away on 9 November, 2014.

Carl was born on 19 March, 1923 in Mehan. He would join the army and participate in both the Normandy invasion and the Battle of the Bulge. He would pass away on 6 January, 2006.

Orville was born on 23 April, 1920 in Mehan. He would be inducted into the army air corps in 1942. The Army Air Corps would become the US Air Force in 1947. He would become a crew chief in the 508th Bomb Squadron (nick-named the Red Devils), 8th Air Force Group, 9th Air Force based in Polesbrook, Northhamptonshire, England. He supervised aircraft maintenance and major repair on planes such as the B-27. He would keep a record of all the flights of his bomb squadron as they flew some of the most dangerous missions of the war ever necessary. Orville passed away on 15 March, 2011.

Ray was born on 4 August, 1916 in Plover. Ray would join the Civilian Conservation Corps in 1936 and he is in for two years. On 28 October 1941 he joined the Army Air Corps. He would serve in the Army Air Corps and later the Air Force until his retirement in 1976. His group would be temporarily assigned to the 9th Air Force in North Africa. He would receive the Purple Heart, Silver Star and Air Medal for his efforts in North Africa. The Purple Heart was received when his B-24D was severely damaged over Bizerte, Tunisia on December 11, 1942. At the time he was the wing gunner and was wounded. He refused medical attention and remained at his position during repeated attacks by enemy fighters. He would go on to serve in Korea. He passed away in 1989.

Siebert Boys

Featured in one of our displays

THE SIEBERT BOYS

Joseph (1910) and William (1911) were both born and raised in Stevens Point. Joe was born on 17 November, 1906 and Bill on 23 February, 1910. Joe would join the army and was rejected with the first try but the army turned around and drafted him in 1931. Bill was assigned to 42nd tank destroyer unit for the duration of Europe and later the 24th combat engineers who Joe was assigned to the 10th Division (Big Red One) as part of a postal unit. Two of Joe and Bill's brothers, Dick would also serve during the war. Dick was George and Frank Siebert.

As was true of most of the men who served in the war, neither brother was willing to let his experiences during the war be most of their lives. Bill would enter Europe on D-Day, June 6th 1944 during the first stages of the invasion on Omaha Beach. Joe would enter Europe five days later.

The only two men in Joe's squad, besides himself, that did have some experience from life with the Stevens Point Journal. His unit did have a few stories as Bill talked to service buddies. On the trip over to Europe the war never took a break and he had to be on the ship and fly high. The man on the bottom bunk really "caught it" as the four men above him got up sick. During the Omaha landing the war was even rough and Joe was one of the men going into the landing with all in the sea and shores. When the door of the landing craft was down at the beach the front row of men were shot immediately. Bill followed a man ahead of him and made it to the beach. He would spend his first night in France in a shell hole covered by two bodies. Two other stories Bill told were, first, during the Battle of the Bulge being told to take a cross (PVP) to the beach in the rear (it was never told) and the back in two hours. He refused. Someone else was back in two hours. The other comment he made was that he was involved in the liberation of Biechenwald.

Bill did not talk about the war much either but did share some his experience from life with the Stevens Point Journal. His unit did have a few stories as Bill talked to service buddies. On the trip over to Europe the war never took a break and he had to be on the ship and fly high. The man on the bottom bunk really "caught it" as the four men above him got up sick. During the Omaha landing the war was even rough and Joe was one of the men going into the landing with all in the sea and shores. When the door of the landing craft was down at the beach the front row of men were shot immediately. Bill followed a man ahead of him and made it to the beach. He would spend his first night in France in a shell hole covered by two bodies. Two other stories Bill told were, first, during the Battle of the Bulge being told to take a cross (PVP) to the beach in the rear (it was never told) and the back in two hours. He refused. Someone else was back in two hours. The other comment he made was that he was involved in the liberation of Biechenwald.

Both men would return to Stevens Point. Joe passed away on 5 February, 1980 and Bill on 14 October, 2006.

Christmas on the Railroad At One Time, Just another Day

Christmas time sparks many stories of mirth, frustration and joy, the birth of our savior and many other tales that surround the season. When it comes to the Railroad, such tales involve getting stuck working the holiday, wishing one were home with their family.

When I was much younger, I vividly recall Dad having to go to work on Christmas Day when he was still an Operator for the Soo Line Railroad. Most all Operators were required to be on the job back in those days (pre-1980) and if Christmas fell on a weekday, at one time the Railroads required a Switch job to be on duty to service the Customers that required it. That changed over the years so that by 1976, most all of the US Railroads were completely shut down for the Holiday. That has changed again with the coming of a new philosophy on transporting the nation's goods.

Dad never said much about having to work Christmas Days, but you could see he would have preferred not having to work. By the time I was born, Dad had worked 19 Christmases for the Soo Line and spent 4 of those either over-seas in the Service of the US Army during the Korean War or stateside in the US Navy in WWII. It was "Old Hat" to Dad to work a holiday as he once told me when I was 5 years old when I complained about Dad going to work on Christmas Day, "There is no such thing as a Holiday on the Railroad".

I remember the Soo Line Switch Engine in Marshfield having to work on Christmas Day. There were cars of Coal to Deliver to the Municipal Power Plant, switching work to do at Weyerhaeuser and a part of # 26, the Nekoosa Line local, to be built for the next day, so the switch crew could keep busy for 8 hours in those years. Of course, the crewmen that caught a Christmas Day switch job weren't exactly jumping up and down with joy, no matter how much overtime they might be getting---if they got any at all. If the men called to work were Extra Board employees, chances are Christmas Day was Just another Day on the railroad at straight time.

I remember 1971. Dad was in his fourth month as a Traveling Agent, having taken over Traveling Agency # 10 in mid-August that year. Within a week of Christmas 1971, Soo Line would shut down the Greenwood Line for almost a month (Merry Christmas from the Soo Line Railroad, Spokeville, Loyal and Greenwood!) because of the snow conditions, and the ability of Jordan Spreader # W80 to leave the track 35 times in the first 5 miles of the Greenwood Line while attempting to plow the Greenwood Line's track.

But what sticks out in my mind from that year was the Switch Engine itself. The engine that week was Alco RS1 # 352, an engine I had gotten a ride on one year before (from the Depot, back home), but that wasn't the significant aspect, it was what the crewmen had done to decorate it: cut off a significant portion of a pine tree branch (I know from where along the Marshfield & Texas spur that they got it from---the west side of the M&T behind the Marshfield Canning Company) and stuck it in the casting hole of the coupler knuckle, where it led proudly for the entire week including Christmas Day, with the switchmen taking the pains to "change ends" when one end of the engine led or the other, making certain that pine branch was always forward.

I recall the day it appeared. I had watched the Switch Engine scuttle past my home going to the Power Plant with 7 cars of coal. It was just the "usual engine" (back then, it seemed like the Soo's RS1's would be around forever) and cars, but when the train returned a half hour later, there was that pine branch stuck in the casting hole on the knuckle.

Many people in Marshfield noticed this, and thought the idea and effort were "cute". The crewmen did no more, they did no decorating. Just a pine branch that when sitting upright in the casting hole on the knuckle resembled a tree. Apparently, the Red & White colors of the engine were enough decoration. That branch stuck there on the coupler had enough symbolism of holiday spirit that no more was needed. I've al-

ways been struck by the fact that, this engine was also used as the 2nd and 3rd Trick Yard Engine, but that pine branch stayed with the engine throughout. You'd have expected some grouchy trainman on one of the yard jobs to have tossed that branch aside at some point, but it didn't disappear until the holidays were over.

I remember seeing the 352 switching at Weyerhaeuser one day not long before Christmas with that pine branch stuck on the true front end of the locomotive as the crew switched the Silvaplex plant of Weyerhaeuser. It looked as incongruous as it was unique, and somewhat "Christmassy".

The following story I cannot corroborate, nor can I vouch for the truthfulness.

Supposedly, when the Switch Engine worked that Christmas Day in 1971, sporting the pine branch stuck on the coupler, an elderly lady that lived along the Marshfield & Texas spur at Park Street waited for the Switch Engine to pass her home on the way to the Power Plant. It did so in the early afternoon, so this lady waited to hear the train returning. She supposedly flagged the train to a stop, and invited all the trainmen in to her home for Egg Nog and cookies.

The tale goes that this Lady was a widow and her family were scattered to the four winds, and they weren't going to be with her on that Christmas Day, and she wanted to do something nice for the trainmen whom she saw on past Christmases (not to mention twice each day) passing her home, so, without family on that day, she stopped the Switch Engine on it's way back to the Depot and asked the trainmen in to celebrate some Christmas Cheer with her. The trainmen graciously accepted her generosity, had a glass or two of Nog and helped clean up the cookie tray, said their thanks, wished her a Merry Christmas, and then re-boarded the 352 for the trip back up town and tie-up time.

A few days after Christmas, the Switch Engine paused at Park Street on their way to the power plant with loads of coal, to let one Switchman drop off the engine to run to this woman's home with a pristinely-wrapped package, which he deposited on the doorstep. He rang the doorbell and jogged back to the waiting engine. With a blast of the air horn and a wave from the crew when the lady opened her door, to her astonishment, this lady had her kindness returned by the train crew. I know not what it was they gave her, only that the spirit of giving was heavy in the air. Kindness given and kindness repaid.

In essence and in practice, The Spirit of Christmas was alive and thriving.

Keith Meacham

Keith is a longtime RR historian having written many articles. He also operates several Facebook Pages on Railroads and the history of Marshfield, Wi.

Bancroft Depot Heritage Park





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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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: _____

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May 2021

- | | |
|------------------|---------------------------|
| 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.



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Portage County Historical Society

P O Box 672

Stevens Point WI 54481

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Phone: 715-600-4930



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The Pinery

Photos to Remember

World War II scrap metal, old tires etc drive

