

Chapter 16: Entertainment

The Pre-Television Era

Imagine a dark winter evening. The sun sets at 5 p.m. What's there to do? Dad read Bible passages to us last night, and the previous night, Mom read poems from Mrs. Edwards' book, "Leaves of the Almond Tree." Perhaps the neighbors will come over and spend the evening discussing local events.

There were some alternatives to this routine. So, how about going ice skating? We'll build a big fire on the riverbank and skate on the mill pond. But watch out for the thin ice below the guard locks where there is a current, and also where they have been cutting ice. Realizing the dangers associated with skating on the river, the village created an ice rink on the vacant lot at the corner of Market and Second Streets. In 1945, the rink was moved to Edwards Alexander Park and eventually to Ripple Creek Park.

So much for winter. What about summer? Weekly band concerts featuring the White City Band were held at the village bandstand. The 25-foot, elevated and roofed structure was located at the corner of First and Market Streets. The village provided funding of \$25 a month for the band. This was divided between director, members and music, although one old pioneer of the village questioned whether they used any music. He claims that their performance sure did not sound like they were following any musical arrangement, assuming that they could even read the notes. In 1937, the village offered the bandstand to anyone who would tear it down and clean up the site.

Swimming, which replaced a weekly bath, was done from a beach on the island just below the dam. It was in 1947 that a gift of \$50,000 made



A picture of the first White City Band taken about 1890. Members wore their Sunday best suits as uniforms.

Winter also brought great expectations for children and adults as they looked forward to the stupendous Christmas party held in the new school house. The village, the school and Lewis Alexander all shared the expense of throwing a party to usher in the holiday season. Mrs. John Alexander continued this yuletide party up to her death. Dorothy's parties at the YMCA were even more stupendous and were directed toward providing Christmas cheer for needy children of the area.

One of these earlier parties was described as including welcome talks, carol singing, a silent black-and-white movie entitled, "Moses' Flight Into Egypt," and a visit by St. Nick. Finally, a 20-foot Christmas tree was lit up outside the school building, and everyone walked home with a bag of candy and an apple.

possible a swimming pool for village residents.

Library service was available in the village at a very early date, when a branch of T.B. Scott Public Library was established in Port Edwards. Once a week, a wooden box, about the size of a small trunk, was filled with books at Wisconsin Rapids' main library and placed on the train for Port Edwards. A village librarian was paid \$50 a year to check out the books and get them back to Wisconsin Rapids. Frank Brazeau was the appointed librarian. Frank was also the village postmaster when the post office was located in the office of the John Edwards Manufacturing Company, later the original NEPCO main office. From this, it might be assumed that the distribution of books took place in the post office or from the general store located on the opposite side of the building.



There were several White City Bands over the years. This one was performing about 1910.

In 1937, the village appropriated \$200 to purchase new books for the library located in the new school, and village residents were invited to use the school library for their reading needs.

Summer activities for children were initiated as early as 1928 when the village approved spending \$150 for a summer program for youth. Miss J. Fritz, a teacher in the village school, was engaged to provide an entertainment program for the youth, using the town hall as the center of her activities.

The street car company provided two sources of entertainment for residents of the village, which at the same time provided increased revenue for their coffers. This was accomplished by the ball park they laid out at Kipp's Hill, where there already was a motorcycle climbing hill. Kipp's Hill was at the extreme north end of the village. The other attraction was the Moccasin Creek Pavilion located at the extreme south edge of Port Edwards.

In 1938, a root beer stand was erected by Wm. Randrup at the site where the old bandstand had been removed. A root beer stand in itself was not a big source of entertainment. But Randrup resorted to free movies on Tuesday nights to draw

A G R E E B L Y
tO An
ANciEnt CuStOM
ADOptEd By sOmEGuy wHo muStA bEEEn A INK
SAiLsMAN, iT BECOMEs nECcESsARY fOr US to GO tHru
the fORMALity of sEndIng YoU
THi SinvItAtion
TO bE OuR gUESTS At tHE
PORTeDWrdSTOWnHAL
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TAKE DUE NoTiCE
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A hometown production is described in this advertisement for an evening of entertainment at the Port Edwards town hall. Why the new auditorium was not being used is somewhat a mystery.

business to his concession. About dusk, a large bed sheet was attached to the outside of the nearby town hall, and people started to arrive right after supper in order to stake out a good place to spread their blanket for the best viewing. And all the while, the popcorn was popping and the root beer flowing. When the root beer stand was moved in 1947 to make room for the apartment building, the village appropriated funds to continue the popular program with the movies being shown at the school.

The excellent entertainment facilities of the YMCA have been discussed elsewhere in this book. A Port Edwards Men's Club, a Port Edwards Recreation Club and a women's Study and Recreation Club were organized to help pass the time in the pre-TV days. The Study and Recreation Club (S&R Club) is the oldest social organization in the community, and it is still healthy and meets on a regular basis.

But nothing boosted community entertainment for the village and the surrounding area more than the Port Edwards Auditorium. Spearheaded and partially financed by the Alexanders, the brick building was constructed as an addition to

**Nearly 600 Seats are
Already Sold
-for-**

The Grand Opening

of the

**Port Edwards
Community Auditorium**

Wednesday, Aug. 18

At 8:15 P. M.

WE WILL NOT SELL STANDING ROOM--LAST FIVE ROWS WILL BE ELEVATED.

Seats on Sale at Daly's

West Side

Phone 758

Carl Rupp says: "I'd be proud to put on this bill at the Congress or Blackstone in Chicago. The bill is full of thrills and surprises."

Newspaper advertisement for grand opening of the Port Edwards Auditorium. The event was a total sellout.



One of the three drop scenes in the Port Edwards auditorium. Side wings and appointments added to the setting.

the school. The grand opening was in June, 1920, and amounted to a three-day celebration. With a full capacity of 700 people, the first of the three-day event included a school student pageant entitled, "A Golden Day." The second evening was graduation night for 11 eighth-grade students. We had no high school at that time. L.M. Alexander was the master of ceremonies and led the group through songs, speeches, and musical selections. Finally, on the third day, a community dance was held on the spacious 4,000-square-foot floor. The orchestra performed from the balcony overlooking the main floor. Between 10:30 p.m. and midnight, a supper was served in the adjoining school hall. General admittance was free, the dance was a dollar, and the supper was 50 cents.

For a little village of 1,000 people to have a theater and sports complex of this magnitude was unheard of. The auditorium would hold the entire adult population of Port Edwards and still have room for many of the children! The stage was reputed to be the second-largest theater stage in Wisconsin, outdone only by the Davidson Theater in Milwaukee.

On the stage, there were three 40-foot-wide canvas drop scenes. One was a villa/garden setting. Another was a Dutch interior foyer setting, and the third was a spectacular Lake Como and surrounding mountain scene. The homes painted on the canvas had cut-out windows through which light from behind the drop created the effect of homes at twilight.

Two new carbon arc projectors, each capable of holding 3,000 feet of film, were capable of showing full-length feature films without interruption for reel changes.

A novel treat for the audience at the first non-school performance was the filming of guests arriving at the auditorium. At the end of the evening's program, the film was shown to the guests. Processing was done on site while the rest of the performances were taking place. This was quite a feat for those days when the VCR hadn't even been dreamed of. Eleven other numbers supplemented the special movie. They included

Right: A hometown production if there ever was one. How many members of the cast do you remember?

A Musical Extravaganza

Program of Pageantry-Patriotism-Pep
Port Edwards Auditorium
THURSDAY EVENING, SEPT. 22, 1921

Auspices of Parent-Teachers Association

Director—Anne Hocking Smith of the Chicago School of Expression

PART I—PAGEANTRY

The Throne Room of The Prophetess Mizraim

The Prologue by Mercury Miss Parks
Prophetess Mizraim Mrs. L. M. Alexander
Her attendants—Misses Josephine and Angeline VerBunker,
Mrs. Coline Carlson, Miss Dorothy Brazeau, Mrs. Lutjeans
The Fire Worshipers—The Misses Parks, Rossman, Bahr,
Krause, Reichenauer, Bannister, Baldwin, Fonstad and
Mesdames Bradley and Moulton.
Vestals Misses Myrtle and Anna Krehnke
Prophecy of the Sybil Mrs. J. A. Johnson
Entrance of the Goddess Mrs. F. H. Rosebush
Her Attendants—Mrs. Akey, Mrs. Jasperson, Mrs. Hinkley,
Mrs. Ross, Miss Elsie Ross, and Miss Reichenauer.
Crown Bearer Betty Hafenbrack

The contestants for the Laurel Wreath

Portia Miss Rossman
Marie Antoinette Mrs. J. E. Alexander
Sappho Miss Reichenauer
Pocahontas Miss Bahr
Topsy Dorsey Buckley
Mrs. Partington and Ike Mrs. G. M. Hafenbrack
Queen Elizabeth Mrs. Harry Bradley
Joan of Arc Mrs. E. B. Redford
The Vision Mrs. C. A. Jasperson
Mary Queen of Scots Mrs. E. L. Lynn
Queen Isabella Mrs. Thomas Howe
Sister of Charity Miss Olga Karberg
Maud Muller Miss Molly B. Smith
Florence Nightingale Mrs. Rupp
Miriam Mrs. Bradley and Miss Rossman
And Maids

ORCHESTRA SELECTION

Awarding the Laurel Wreath—Judges Mrs. A. J. Cammack,
Mrs. I. P. Witter, Mr. E. G. Doudna

The Bachelor's Reverie

1. A Smoker at the Club.
2. His Wedding Breakfast.

The Messrs. John E. Alexander, Jerome Farrar, Henry Ford, Glenn Shellhammer, Frederick Voss, Floyd Hinkley, H. V. Madden, H. C. Hage, G. F. Genberg, Ray Herzog, Harold Peterson, A. Lutjeans, E. J. Schwartz, K. B. Newton, A. P. Mulroy, F. H. Rosebush.

The Misses Rossman, Kraus, Reichenauer, Bahr, and Mesdames Rosebush, Bradley, Alexander and Rupp.

Just Like a Gypsy Mrs. E. B. Redford, James Jenkins
Accompanist — Mrs. I. P. Witter

Pawlona Gavotte. . . Mrs. J. E. Alexander and Dorsey Buckley
The Rest of the Week She's Mine. . . Mr. Herzog & Chorus
Why is the Ocean so near the Shore. . Mr. Peterson & Chorus

PART II—PATRIOTISM

The American Legion

England—(Tommy Atkins)—Ray Herzog
Scotland—(Harry Lauder)—James Jenkins
France—(Joan of Arc)—Mrs. Genberg
(St. Michael)—F. H. Rosebush

Memorial—L. M. Alexander—Battle Hymn of the Republic.
Peace. . . Mrs. E. B. Redford

Attendants—Mrs. Rosebush, Mrs. Jasperson, Mrs. Akey.
Conferring of the Croix de Guerre by Mr. L. M. Alexander
Star Spangled Banner led by Mrs. Carl Rupp, the audience standing.

Review of the Revue. . . Don P. Johnson
Solo. . . Mrs. Carl Rupp

PART III—PEP

Flirtation Court

Jack O' Hearts. . . Mr. James Jenkins
Folly. . . Mrs. John E. Alexander
Donna Esmeralda Santiago de Cuba. . Mr. Arthur P. Mulroy
1. Oh this is the Court. . . By the Entire Company
2. When Port Edwards was a Pasture. . .

3. Adalina Patti. . . Jack O' Hearts and Folly
4. Umh-Hum. . . By Mr. Mulroy and Chorus
5. Mammy. . . Mr. Mulroy and Chorus
6. Close Dat Eye. . . Mr. Mulroy and Chorus
7. Good Night. . . Entire Company
Accompanist—Cleve N. Akey. Stage manager—E. P. Gleason

PROGRAM SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT NOTICE



The Nepco baseball team of 1937 evidently won the game judging from the smiles on their faces. Left to right: Hinz, Driscoll, Gavre, Surprison. Front Row, left to right: Lampe, Osberg, Fairfield, Grayson, Parvin, Zurfluh.

the following:

- Pathe Weekly News Reel
- Concert by Rupp & Linden Symphony Orchestra
- Feats of Magic
- Songs by Vaudeville Singers, The Loos Brothers
- Classic and Interpretive Dances
- A Headline Comedian
- A Duet of Jazz Dancers
- Moving Picture Comedy

The auditorium wasn't just a theater for first-class traveling shows. Local talent played there for many years. These included the P.T.A., school dramatic and musical events, proms, and even the annual Boy Scout minstrel show. For years it was the school gymnasium. The balcony is gone and the orchestra pit is now part of the main floor. At least one of the drops was repainted. The dressing rooms of the stars (there were three) are now storerooms, and bats have inhabited the catwalk above the scenery rigging.

I do not want to be accused of neglecting one other place of entertainment, a place where most Port Edwards boys earned their high school spending money, so a few words about the Paper Inn. The bowling alley, billiard hall, soda fountain and restaurant were located in a building that originally was built as a barracks for mill workers during the 1919 strike. Six bowling alleys were

staffed by local boys who assumed that dangerous spot behind the pins. If you were really fast and had the ambition, you could set up pins in two alleys simultaneously. The Paper Inn was a concept of John Alexander, and he saw to it that the restaurant was recommended by Duncan Heins. No, not the cake mix company. Duncan Heins was a traveler who wrote a book about his "Adventures in Good Eating." The building was demolished when the NEPCO administration building was built in 1961. However, the restaurant continued operation for several years thereafter, operating from the basement of the YMCA. This has been a lengthy chapter, but it bears out the fact that there was always something to do in Port Edwards.



The Port Edwards Boys Club takes to the road for an afternoon at Nepco Lake. Transportation was furnished by NEPCO.

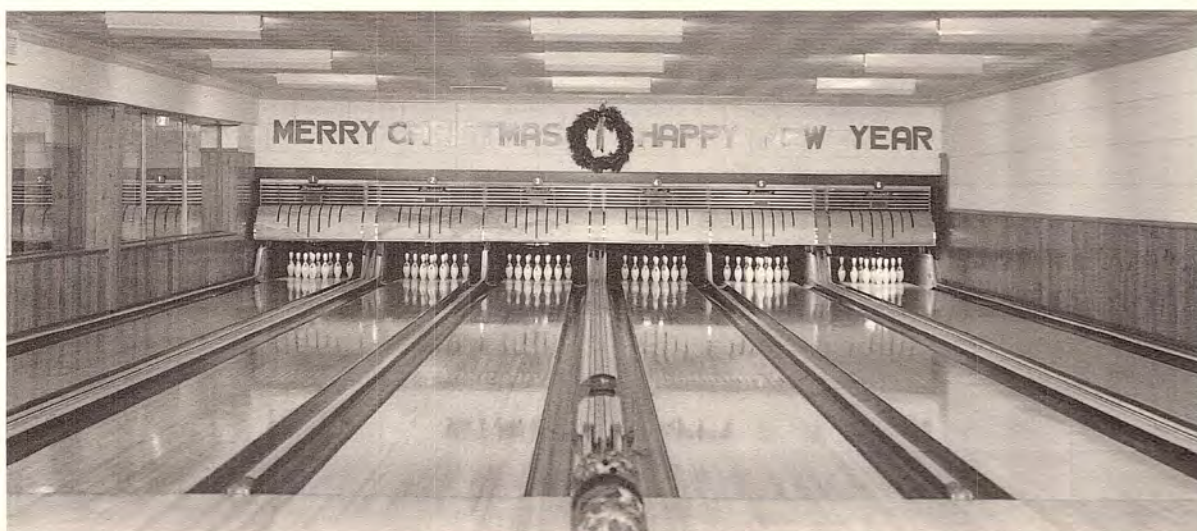


Top: The Paper Inn was a conversion of the old barracks at the Port Edwards mill.



Left: Known as the Fountain Room, this dining room at the Paper Inn overlooked an outdoor rock garden and pond.

Bottom: Six bowling alleys accommodated several leagues and teams. Just about every adult in Port Edwards belonged to at least one team.



Chapter 17: Schools

A Romantic Beginning

Prolog

This chapter turned out to be the last episode that I wrote. It is the longest of chapters and yet it leaves much to be told. In fact, a book could be written on just Port Edwards' school history.

But it was not just the amount of data that was available, but the difficulty of trying to sort out the governmental entities of the school district over the years. It seems like the local school administration was bouncing around in the geographic arena just like the ownership of the Edwards sawmill did in its formative years.

After studying the meeting minutes books of the school districts, I came to the conclusion that I was not really sure that I could accurately report on the district history. So, feeling that you won't really care whether we were a joint district, district number 4, 6, 1, or whatever, I decided to concentrate on the more human interest side of our schools' backgrounds. However, I will include some background on the district organization. Minutes in the formative years are sometimes sketchy, being only a single paragraph to cover an entire meeting.

One thing seems quite certain, and that is that our village had its first school in 1858, and it came about under a somewhat romantic circumstance. Children of Frenchtown (now Port Edwards) were attending school in Centralia (south side of Wisconsin Rapids), which was located near the hydroelectric plant. The settlement of Frenchtown was District #2 of Centralia School District. The Centralia school was being taught by Francis J. Morrill, whose family had moved to Wisconsin in 1856.

John Edwards took note of the Frenchtown students trudging their way on foot in the cold of winter to attend school in Centralia. He also took note of the young, attractive woman who was teaching there. His heart played a dual role as he pitied the students while at the same time admiring the teacher. Accordingly, Edwards offered to build a schoolhouse in Frenchtown if Miss Morrill would move here and teach in it. She agreed, and Edwards' mill personnel built a one-room school located about 200 feet west of the riverbank, between LaVigne and Washington Avenues. Francis Morrill taught in this school until her mar-

riage to Edwards in 1861, when she retired from active teaching. Thus, we had a school and Edwards had a wife.

Although Francis Edwards exited the education arena at this time, John Edwards continued to be involved with education, serving as school board treasurer, during which time he would have a financial hand in school expansion. It is interesting to note that in 1886, Edwards had to cope with a school budget of \$400.51; but then, some things become irrelevant.

The first of these expansions came about in 1878, when increased attendance (32 students in 1872) warranted a larger school house. The John Edwards Company was paid \$1,420.18 to supply the materials and to erect a new school. The Edwards business donated an acre of land at the west end of Edwards Avenue for the site of the new school. Incidentally, the building cost included the cost of a wood shed and a privy.



Port Edwards' second school house before it was moved and converted into a chapel.

In exchange for the property, the school district agreed to give the old building to John Edwards Company, which moved it 100 feet east to put it in line with other buildings in the area and converted it into a residence. It should be pointed out that the school board at first authorized sale of the building for \$40, but reconsidered this action later, giving up the old building in exchange for the property. After all, Edwards had already paid for it originally! The residence was moved to 970 Second Street, where it still remains.

In 1874, Port Edwards severed its connection with the Centralia school district and became District No. 1 of the Town of Port Edwards school district.

In 1876, nonresidents of the district could enroll in the Port Edwards school upon payment of a 25-cent weekly tuition fee. A practice that continued well into the 1900s made it possible for nonresident students to attend the Port Edwards school if their parent worked in the sawmill or, later, in the paper mill.

In 1874, there were three Turley women listed on the district payroll. One was the regular contracted teacher; the other two, Ann and Sarah, were substitutes. What would we have done without the Turley ladies? In 1877, the first male teacher was hired, although females were preferred. For several years, the principal was authorized to hire the teachers but to give preference to female teachers. This practice continued well into the 1900s. Some of the prerequisites for teachers was to have a background in orthoepy, orthography, (look them up in the dictionary—I had to) penmanship, mental arithmetic, written arithmetic, U.S. Constitution, and state constitution.

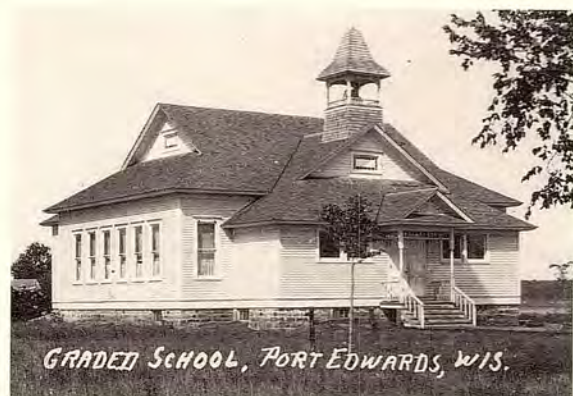
In 1882, the school tax levy was \$315.56, which was noted as even less than it was ten years earlier in 1872. In spite of this favorable school budget, non-resident tuition was raised in 1886 to 33 cents per week.

The year 1893 saw the district building an 18' x 24' schoolhouse at Bearse Marsh (Cranmoor). Although \$250 was appropriated for the building, the actual cost came in at only \$92. School term at Bearse Marsh was conducted on a six-month term basis instead of the usual nine months in other schools of the district. Perhaps a cranberry-rich diet enabled those students to learn at an accelerated pace. Incidentally, during a month in the fall, school was recessed for one month to accommodate the cranberry harvest.

School in the village school started on the first Monday of November and continued four months with a month off at Christmastime. A summer semester started on the first Monday of May and continued "until funds were exhausted."

The city of Nekoosa withdrew from the district in 1895, and Port Edwards followed in 1902. Cranmoor and Seneca also separated from the Town of Port Edwards district; the Seneca residents voting on the issue at the "Poor Farm." Thus in 1902, the joint district of the Town of Port Edwards and village of Port Edwards was recognized. Cranmoor would rejoin the fold in 1941 and eventually close their 1926 school. However, it did offer elementary classes for several years after rejoining the Port Edwards joint district. The Green Grove School and Pine Grove School were two rural schools west of the village that were closed after joining the joint district.

By 1898, the need for a new schoolhouse in the village (still a part of the Township of Port Edwards) was realized. The John Edwards Manufacturing Company donated land just north of block eight in the village; the present site of the high school complex. A building consisting of two classrooms and a common anteroom was built. This wooden structure experienced a bad case of growing pains, resulting in several additions over the next 30 years of its use. The old schoolhouse was sold to L.M. Alexander and Mrs. Edwards for \$1400. They, in turn, moved it to the corner of Letendre and Wisconsin River Drive. After enlarging it, adding a basement, and decorating the building, it was presented to the community for use as a community church.



The third school in Port Edwards looked like this at its dedication. There were two rooms.

A third classroom was added to this school, and then two more classrooms were added. In 1915, an assembly room and office were attached and, in 1920, a gym and auditorium completed the complex. Electric lights had been installed in



The third school in Port Edwards looked like this after several expansions.

1911 when a line was strung from the paper mill to the school. There was no meter and the school paid a flat fee of \$1 per month, a practice that lasted for several years.

In 1912, a basement was excavated under the building. Therein was placed a coal furnace for central heating. Plumbing was installed at the same time with water from the new village line, and the sewer discharged directly to the river two blocks away. Also, in 1911, the school board decided to contribute \$1 per year for each teacher's retirement fund.

In 1903, a used foot pump organ was purchased for \$25. Five years later it was replaced with a new foot-operated organ at a cost of \$61.

Let's take a look at some more human interest facts. A teacher's salary in 1883 was \$30 per

month, and she was required to do the janitor work and build the heating fire each day. A missing dictionary was the subject of a board meeting in 1889, and the board authorized the teacher to purchase a new dictionary, but only after first making a diligent investigation as to what happened to the old one. In 1892, two new privies were built. John Edwards Company had the building contract, and the outlay of capital was \$13 for the two of them. Two bags of lime were an add-on at a cost of \$1.60. Epidemics, most likely influenza, closed the school in 1873, 1920 and 1921.

As an accommodation for its single teachers, the district purchased a house at the southwest corner of LaVigne and Third Street, remodeled it and made a boarding house for teachers. The home is still referred to by old-timers of the village as the "teachorage." A new principal's house was built by the district in 1923 at the corner of Second and LaVigne Streets. It has since been sold to a private owner.

In 1917, the school board decided to pay street-car fare for students attending the closest high school. In almost all cases, this was Lincoln High School at Wisconsin Rapids. When Nekoosa added a four-year high school, it became the closer school and, accordingly, students completed their schooling there.

The year 1919 was a milestone year in Port Edwards school activity. People were experiencing post-war inflation. Education costs were ris-



A 1930 view of the Port Edwards school and the auditorium. This building had only two more years to survive when this picture was taken in 1930.



Port Edwards Junior High School band. Members still wore their homemade capes and caps.

ing. L.M. Alexander was not in a position to support the school in his old ways. And to culminate it all, a \$25,000 expansion to the school was being proposed. The new addition would include a gym and a recreation center or auditorium. It became a public issue, and at the annual meeting in 1919, it was put to a vote. Eighty-six people voted, but Harlow Schinn's vote was tossed out as he was not a resident taxpayer of the community. Harlow was the chauffeur for L.M. Alexander. Men and women voted separately, and during the voting and tally, the time was spent in community singing. The dedication of this new facility has been covered in another part of this book.

The next big step came in 1932 when a proposal was made to district residents to build a brand new school. Selling this idea to a depression-affected community required a super sales job. But it was presented to the voters in a referendum, and they approved the issuance of \$125,000 in bonds to support the building of a colonial-style building. The new facility was absolutely necessary since it would permit the district to round out its education program by incorporating a four-year high school.

A junior high school (grades 9 and 10) was being conducted in the basement, where they were flooded out in the spring and following heavy rains. A state survey determined that the present facility was operating at only 68 percent efficiency. There was no laboratory nor library. No room

was sufficiently lighted and the temperature in the classrooms was known to vary as much as 30 degrees during the course of a single day. The village school, which in 1902 had been boasted as being comparable with the finest in the state, was now taking a rear seat to the rest of the state. But not only would the deficiencies of the old building be eliminated, but two more grades (11 and 12) would be added to create a complete high school program.

The bond issue was supported by the district voters, and a new building was dedicated in 1933. The first graduating high school seniors received their diplomas in 1935.

Incidentally, a junior high school band was organized during the 1930-31 term. The group of arduous musicians attended their first tournament in 1931, wearing homemade capes and caps. After an exceptional performance at the tournament, Mr. and Mrs. L.M. Alexander and Mr. and Mrs. John Alexander decided that the new high school band should have proper uniforms and, accordingly, they personally purchased a West Point style black-and-orange uniform for each band member.

Two recent attempts toward consolidation have surfaced. The first was initiated by the City of Nekoosa and was aimed at cost cutting for the city. At that time, Nekoosa needed additional school space, and Port Edwards had an excess of space. After a public meeting at the YMCA, a hand

vote indicated that the village residents wanted to preserve their independence and, accordingly, the proposal was not pursued. Some years later, another attempt was made to consolidate with Wisconsin Rapids. The motive this time was to enable Port Edwards students to partake in a broader class and sports curriculum. Again, the residents of Port Edwards district accentuated their overall preference to remain independent. School pride appears to be the motivating factor to make Port Edwards people react as they did.

This chapter has rambled on long enough. So let me quickly bring you up to date. In 1955, a \$10,000 addition added six classrooms to the school on Second Street. Another addition in

1961 saw the addition of a new gym, music department, manual arts classroom and laboratory. Then, in 1969, a new building was added to house the elementary grades. The building was built three blocks west of the high school.

A personal note: After having served as a member of the school board and the village board, I have often stated that being on the school board was much more demanding than being on the village board. The school board required more time, more research, and had more people registering their concerns. Now, after going through the minutes of both boards as well as supporting documents, I am even more convinced that school government is much more complicated than village government!



The John Edwards High School band poses in the new uniforms provided by the Alexander families.



Operettas were always popular at Port Edwards schools. Usually the entire junior high student body was involved as in this production of "Miss Cherry Blossom."

Chapter 18: Churches

We Thank Our God

Four religious denominations have established worship edifices in our village, and it is at these places of worship that the majority of our residents gather to say, "Thank you, God, for the blessings you have bestowed on Port Edwards."

The first clergyman to visit this area was probably a Jesuit priest, Father Rene Menard. But alas, he did not come here (if he did come here at all) to establish a church. Father Menard had an air of mystery surrounding him. In 1661, he came down the Wisconsin River from a mission on the shore of Lake Superior. Having heard that the Native Americans along the Black River were in need of help, he set out from Lake Superior in company with a companion. Somewhere along the journey, he dismissed the companion, sending him back to Lake Superior along with his journal. His last entry stated that they were spending the night on a high bluff along the river, about 50 miles from the Black River. He recorded that they had passed through a series of rapids that day, and in the morning he would set out for the Black River, across a very marshy terrain. He was never heard from again, but his cassock and breviary were later found in the hands of the Native Americans

who treated them with religious awe.

The geographic description not only fits the tri-city area, but also an area near Merrill, Wisconsin. So, there exists this dual mystery. Was Father Menard the first member of the clergy to pass through this area, and secondly, what happened to him?

So much for speculation. Now for some facts. Several missionaries, representing several religious denominations, may have passed through Frenchtown, stopping off long enough to offer services for the rough and sometimes rowdy lumbermen. These included Rev. James Miner (1829), Rev. Cutting Marsh (1849), Rev. Von Don Brock (1837), Rev. J.S. Hurlburt (1842), and Rev. Jesse Edwards (1856). But the scope of this chapter is to shed some enlightenment on the established churches in Port Edwards.

Our first church structure was unique in that it was formerly a schoolhouse in the village. When the school population outgrew the building, it was purchased by Mrs. John Edwards, who donated it to the village, moving it from a site on



The Community Chapel in Port Edwards shortly after being converted from a school building.

Edwards Avenue to the riverbank at the corner of Wisconsin River Drive and Letendre Avenue. At this location, it became the Port Edwards Community Church. This was 1898.

Catholics, Lutherans and Methodists took advantage of the chapel, each group conducting services in the church at a different hour each Sunday morning. Ministers came from Wisconsin Rapids or Nekoosa.

METHODISTS

With the completion of the interurban line in 1910, Lutherans and Catholics moved out as they now had a convenient means of traveling to Nekoosa or Wisconsin Rapids to attend services. However, the Lutherans would return some years later. The chapel in Port Edwards was presented to the Methodists and became the Community Methodist Church.

Through a gift on the part of L.M. Alexander, the church was enlarged, a used organ was acquired from Milwaukee, new pews were installed, and a stained glass window made it really look like a church.

The very active congregation of Methodists was happy with their little church, but on December 14, 1946, the members had a setback when their church was demolished by fire. A faulty oil burner was the cause of the fire. Intense heat was noted when choir members entered the building around 4 p.m., so authorities were called and the burner was turned off. Noting excessive heat in the chimney area, members carried water from the downstairs kitchen to help cool the chimney upstairs until the volunteer firemen arrived. Plaster surrounding the chimney was torn off as a thorough inspection was made. The bricks were found to be red hot, but there was no evidence of fire or smoke. After cleaning up the building, the members left. An hour later, when the building was checked, smoke and flames were discovered in the attic. The fire department was again called, and the fire whistle sounded for the second time. The Nekoosa department was summoned to help quell the flames, and the combined forces pumped water from the river. As the fire attacked the steeple, the bell fell and sounded

one final clang as it hit the ground. Then came silence and the feeling of sadness.

It was 1 a.m. by the time the firefighters had the fire extinguished. By then, the roof had collapsed and the walls were gutted. However, the basement survived and it was roofed over, converting it into a sanctuary to be used until a new church could be built. And even after the church was complete, the basement served as a social hall for many years.

Ground was broken for the present church on August 27, 1948, and the cornerstone ceremony was held on October 24, 1948. Dedication of the \$151,000 church was completed in October of 1949. A Hammond organ, carillon bells, and the large stained glass window were given by the Alexander family in honor of Lewis and Lida Alexander.

A parsonage was added in 1963, and a few years later a church addition was added. It included education facilities, social lounge, a dining room and a kitchen. It is interesting to note that the addition cost \$185,570, or \$34,000 more than the original stone church!

In 1968, the name was changed to United Methodist Church of Port Edwards.

CATHOLICS

Catholicism enjoyed the advantage of using the community chapel until about 1910, when they began riding the streetcar to attend services in Nekoosa. But after 21 years of travel to Nekoosa, the "Porters" decided that there were enough of them to support their own congregation. After a general meeting in March 1941, the group voted to petition the Bishop of La Crosse to designate Port Edwards as a parish and assign a pastor to the new church. Rev. Thomas Mullen filled the post and immediately set about to build a church. This was begun in December 1941, and the cost was \$47,000. Saint Alexander's, named in honor of Bishop Alexander McGavick (a coincidence?), is remembered for its gigantic picnics that were held for years in an open lot at the south end of the village. Over 1,000 guests were served a ham dinner at a cost of 50 cents for adults, and children at half that price.

At first, Sunday services were conducted in the Port Edwards school until such time as the church was completed.

A parsonage was added to the church in 1947, and in 1976, an education building was added. Saint Alexander's church has since lost its resident pastor and now operates as a part of the Catholic church in Nekoosa.

LUTHERANS

The history of this congregation goes back to 1947 when a meeting was held in Immanuel School in Wisconsin Rapids, the purpose which was to discuss the advisability of forming an organized church in Port Edwards. In March 1950, followers met in the basement of the Community Methodist Church and decided to adopt the constitution of the Northern Wisconsin Missouri Synod. Pastor Lloyd Goetz of Nekoosa was issued a call to serve the new church as part of his Nekoosa congregation.

In 1950, the members began conducting regular weekly services in the basement of the Community Methodist Church. In May, Pastor Goetz was installed as the official pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church. Goetz and his energetic following immediately started planning for their own place of worship and, in June 1950, bids went out for construction of a basement only. This was completed about five months later, and the mem-



For several years, Trinity Lutheran Churchgoers used this entrance to enter the basement chapel of their church. Meanwhile, the church was being built right over their heads.

bers used this facility until 1953 when the church proper was built over the basement.

Due to experienced growth as well as projected growth, it was deemed feasible for Trinity to consider an expansion. The project was begun in 1969. The parish complex includes a matching stone rectory for its pastor.

TLC not only identifies Trinity Lutheran Church, but also Tender Loving Care Nursery School, a program offered by the church and used to good advantage by residents of the area.

CHRISTIAN LIFE FELLOWSHIP

Christian Life Fellowship celebrated its initial service in November 1979. Gayland Hendrickson was the founding pastor and served the congregation until 1991. The church began in the little stone building in Nekoosa that had previously been Bethlehem Lutheran's building. Because of continual growth, CLF outgrew the building in Nekoosa and selected Port Edwards for a new structure in 1986. In 1994, the church purchased one of the units in the Port Plaza shopping center and converted it into a Teen Center to serve the youth of the community. Dean Anderson became the pastor in 1991, and still fills that capacity today.

Christian Life Fellowship's church is well known for its theater-like nave and, as such, has been the scene for many musical programs. Some of these are produced by the members under the direction of a Minister of Music, while others are professional groups that have been subsidized for a performance in our village.

Other religious groups have followers in the village, and I respect those faithful members. They are not included in this chapter since they have not as yet built an edifice in the village. Perhaps when the sequel to this book comes out in 2112, this chapter will be much longer.

Village residents can take well-earned pride in these four beautiful churches and the healthy congregations that stand behind them.

Chapter 19: War Years

The Effect of War on Port Edwards

War is hell! We only have to look at the Middle East turmoil. We have been very fortunate in our community. No destructive devastation has occurred here. But that didn't mean we did not become involved in war efforts.

Archival papers at Alexander House indicate that during the Civil War (1861-1865), 124 Wood County men were recruited for military service. Of these, 20 were from Centralia and, at that time, Frenchtown (Port Edwards) was a part of Centralia, the west side of the present Wisconsin Rapids. That's a pretty impressive response to the military call, whether it was voluntary, drafted, or paid subscription. The Centralia population was only 800 in 1859.

Wood County passed a resolution that paid wives of servicemen \$3 a day and \$2 for each child under the age of 12. In 1863, nearly 200 people were receiving such payments. One source states that half of the men did not return.

World War I brought about the formation of a Wisconsin National Guard unit. The First Wisconsin Cavalry was organized early in the post-war years. Since practically all the members saw active duty during the 1914-1916 skirmishes, there was little interest on their part in rejoining an army unit on their return from overseas. Thus, the group was disbanded. However, in 1920, the Service Battery 120th Field Artillery of Wisconsin National Guard was organized. Fifty-nine men and

four officers (is there a difference?) took training at Fort Custer, Michigan. The men were equipped with four French 75mm cannons and 32 horses to pull their equipment. The three stable sergeants were paid \$80 each per month to care for the animals and clean out the stables.

Although the group was phased out in the late 1920s, there is indication in the village board minutes that the original Company G of the First Wisconsin Cavalry was reactivated in 1945. The National Guard unit at Wisconsin Rapids seems to have replaced these Wisconsin Guard units.



Most cities have a memorial cannon in their park and Port Edwards was no exception. This one was alongside the flag pole in the mill park. It was built in the mill machine shop. However, its barrel may be authentic. It was moved to a site at Nepco Lake and then given to a veterans organization.



The Port Edwards contingent of the National Guard boards a special train at the Port Edwards station.

And that brings us up to the war of wars, World War II. This little dispute seemed to have a more noticeable effect on the local citizens. The mill was affected by shortages of raw materials, primarily chlorine gas and dye stuffs, the latter being predominantly a product of Germany. Since the mill machine shop was engaged in producing



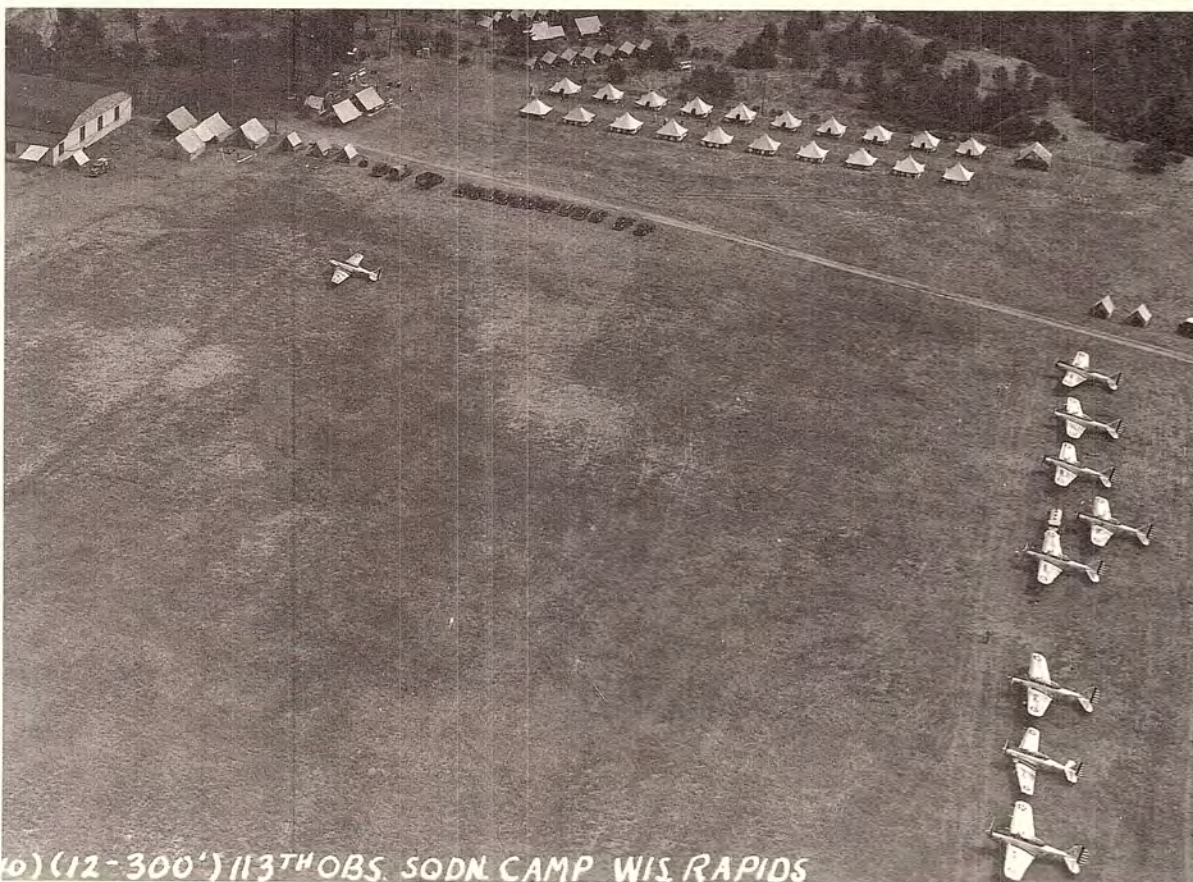
Headquarters of 38th Division of Air Corps just prior to United States entry into World War II. Scene is at Alexander Field.

parts for submarines and bombs, a security fence was erected around the property with a 24-hour guard at the gate.

Many men left for service, far more than the 20 in the Civil War. A gigantic victory sign was erected on the lawn at the mill. Each person who left their employment in the mill for military service had their name enrolled on the sign, and NEPCO's president, John Alexander, took it upon himself to write letters to these service people and send them cigarettes when they were available.

Whether there was a threat or not, the village board deemed it advisable to establish a civilian defense unit with a village coordinator. Twenty-five dollars was deemed sufficient to train these air-raid wardens. One village-wide practice black-out was conducted in 1943.

Since food was rationed in the stores, the paper mill encouraged its employees to raise a victory



U. S. Air Force training base located at Alexander Field. The tents would be replaced with barracks to make it a year round facility.



This mammoth victory sign had listed on both sides all the men and women employees of NEPCO who entered military service during World War II.

NEPCO VICTORY GARDENS

DATE.....

NAME
Print

STREET ADDRESS

I request sufficient garden space for the following size family: I have my own garden plot,

Adults Children under 10 years of age

Children 10 years or older

Please fill in on the line opposite adults, and children, the number in your family. We should have this information so we will know what size garden plot you will need. No plot will be smaller than 50 feet by 100 feet, or approximately 1/8 acre in size.

All garden plots will be properly staked out and numbered, with paths between all plots for access to and from the plot.

Each garden plot will be properly fertilized, plowed and prepared ready for planting.

If you have any additional information which you think we should have concerning your case, please use the back side of the sheet for full explanation.

Please return this sheet in the attached envelope so it reaches this office not later than April 5th.

Please enter my name in the Victory Garden Campaign for Fall Harvest Festival and Flower Show

Application for a garden spot submitted to NEPCO during World War II.



A typical victory garden in the village. The depot can be seen in the background.

garden. To promote the program, the mill made land available after first plowing the plots, all as a courtesy to their employees. In order that the local gardeners might better preserve their bounty, a village canning center was started in the school kitchen. By appointment with its director, one brought in their harvest where it was placed in cans, cooked and sealed. Started in 1945 as a war measure, the village canning center survived for several years after the war, but eventually it was replaced by the home freezer.

Port Edwards Boy Scouts conducted periodic waste paper drives while the school concentrated on scrap metal drives, piling the scrap in front of the school, surrounding the flag pole. Students were encouraged to help support the cost of the war by their weekly purchase of defense stamps. The 10 cent stamps were pasted in a folder and when full, it could be redeemed for a war bond. School classes were recognized for their efforts in purchasing enough stamps to equal the cost of an army jeep. Accordingly, the army sent a jeep to Port Edwards in 1944, offering rides through the woods that is now the center of the sports track. The two accompanying GIs couldn't give rides to students, but it seems that some of the younger, more attractive feminine teachers had the privilege of experiencing this thrill.

There were wars after World War II, but they did not seem to affect the village to the same extent. There was no personnel draft, no rationing, no shortages of raw materials in the mill, and no victory gardens. The plots all had homes built on them now. There were no bomb threats.

Oh yes, there was a threat of a possible bomb, and that was during the so-called Cold War with Russia in the 1950s. Thank God that nothing ever came of it, but the mill basement and parts of the school basement were designated as fall-out shelters. At least two village residents built their own shelters, stocking them with food, blankets and booze. But over a span of many years, the food spoiled, the blankets rotted, and the booze—supposedly it gets better with age.

Chapter 20: Catastrophes

We Have Been Fortunate

Communities that have their roots in lumbering, at some time or another, experienced a devastating fire. With piles of lumber, frame buildings, sawdust piles and ever-burning refuse burners, it is no wonder that fires broke out, often destroying entire communities or at least large sections of it. Marshfield, Sherry, and well-publicized Peshtigo are examples of some of these cities.

A second threat that Port Edwards was vulnerable to was flooding. Being located on a major river of the Midwest, we could have been devastated by floods as were many such cities along rivers. Although controlled very effectively today, there was not always this rein on the high water. One only has to go to our neighbor to the north to hear about the effects of a major flood; a catastrophe that they experienced in 1880.

Oh, there were inconveniences, but hardly anything that could be called a citywide flood. We already read about the river flooding the village water wells, and water in basements was quite common when the river rose above the sewer outfall to the river.

High water has besieged the paper mill since its inception, the worst being in 1880, when John Edwards and Company lost about \$1 million worth of logs, booms and dams. A river flow of 100,000 cubic feet per second was recorded. Normal river flow is about 3,000 cubic feet per second.

In 1912 and 1925, severe flood conditions prevailed, and again in 1938 flood waters caused considerable damage. The groundwood pulp mill had 54 inches of water standing on the floor. Two paper machines were out of service for two days. High water had been an annual spring and fall occurrence. As the river rose, it was often necessary to suspend operations due to the mill basements being flooded. Boats were often used for getting around in the basement of the mill. From these boats, the electricians would disconnect motors and electric switch gear and move them to higher places. However, the improved dams, the building of reservoirs on the river, and the redesigning of mill sewer systems have practically eliminated the annual spring damages due to flooding.

The southern portion of our village is protected from high water by a somewhat simple facility, but one that has proved effective over the years. At the Port Edwards dam, the structure that connects the mainland with the island is referred to as the guard locks. By means of four-inch-square timbers, about ten feet in length, the flow of the river into the mill pond can be restricted. Referred to as needles because of their tapered end, these flow retarders are inserted into special frames in the guard locks. These needles have kept the southern extreme of the village dry in many a high water. However, there have been instances when men worked throughout the night under floodlights, placing the needles in position, all because of an unpredicted flash flood.

Only one tornado is on record as doing extensive destruction to our village. Again, there have been trees downed, sometimes on a building roof. But the only storm classified as a tornado occurred on a July afternoon in 1883. The newspaper recorded the event as follows:

"At Port Edwards, the destruction to property was great and the life of one man was taken and three others escaped death miraculously. The work of the storm was complete. It passed through the village in a northeasterly direction, destroying the John Edwards and Company planning mill, uprooting the store, blowing their piled lumber into the river; and destroying many thousand feet; also demolishing their drying house and a fine lot of choice lumber. Mr. Edwards' private residence was considerably damaged by wind and rain and his shade trees were completely destroyed.

"The actual loss to the company will be about \$8,000. The death of Frank Fey and the injuries received by others, who were piling lumber, are the saddest misfortunes which occurred.

"The storm crossed the river, passing over Barker Town and demolishing about everything including the Barker mill and his little hut." (Barker Town was a small settlement at the mouth of the Four Mile Creek, now within the village limits.)

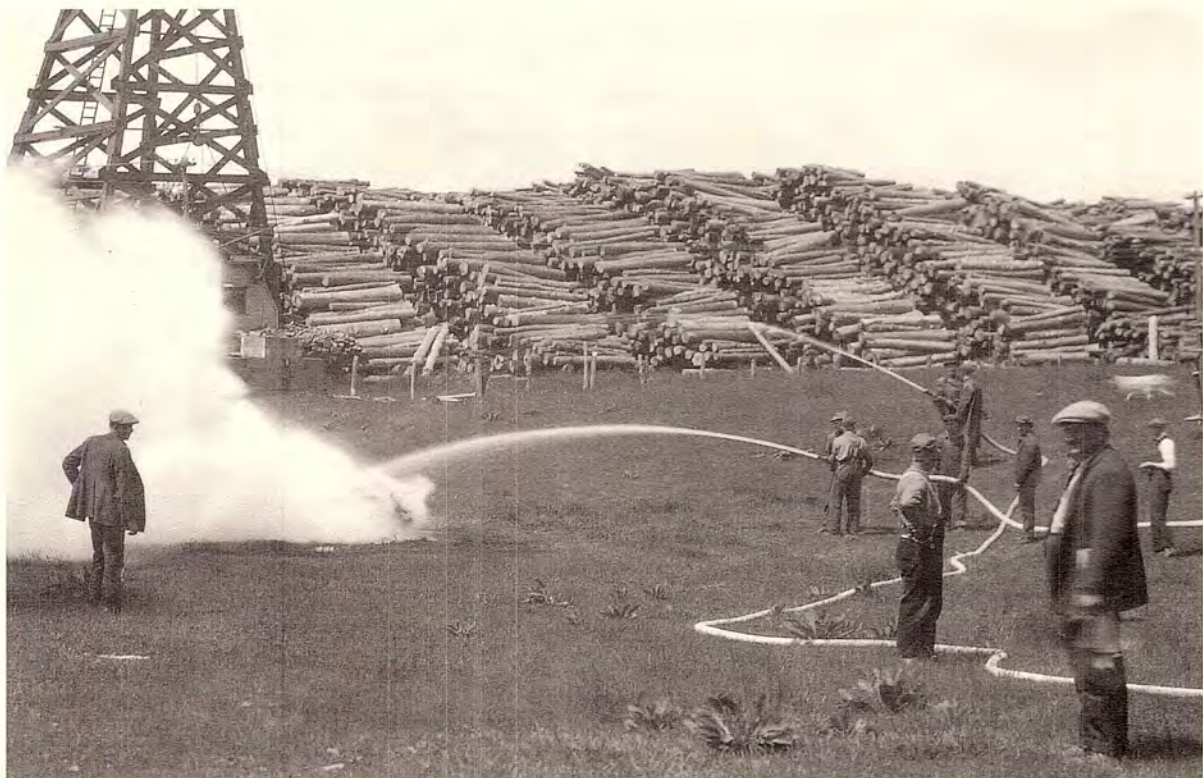
In the fire category, once again we have been fortunate. Homes have been destroyed, barns, of which there were several in the village, have burned because of the storage of green hay. Each was a blow to the owner, but the village was spared.

A consideration made to unfortunate families who were victims of a house fire was to permit them to move into the village town hall. Here they set up housekeeping until they had replacement accommodations. In at least one case, the privilege was extended to a family that resided just outside of the village limits. The breadwinner of the family was a loyal employee of the paper mill in Port Edwards. L.M. Alexander became the intermediary between the village and the family, with the result that these fire victims spent a summer in the town hall while building a new home.

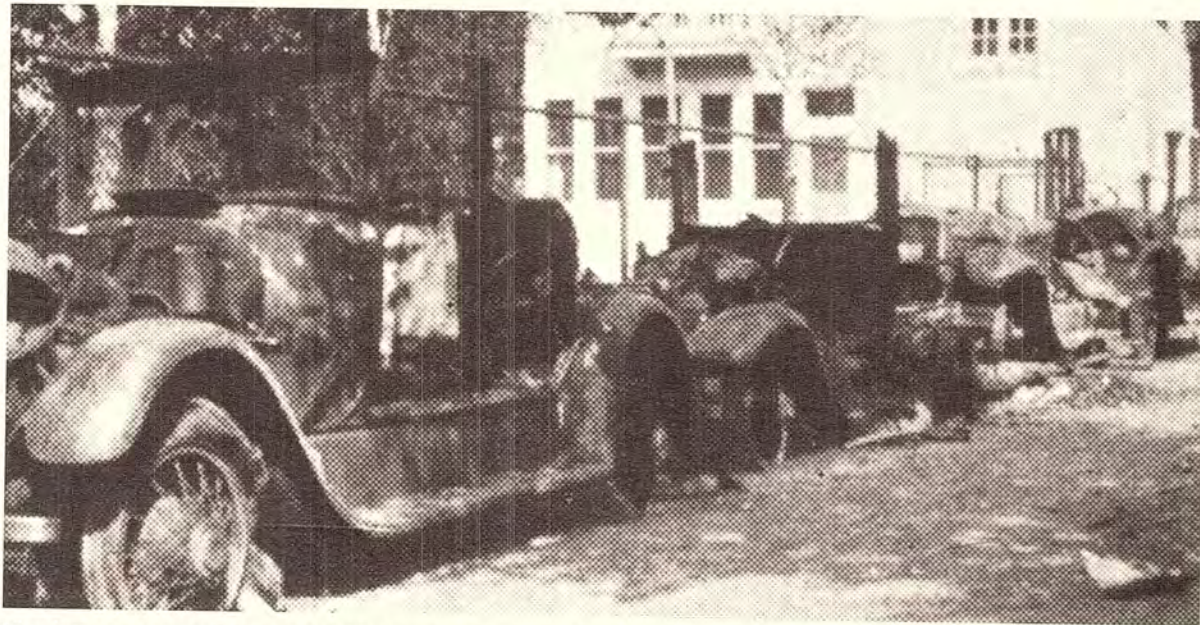
But now we come to the conflagration that Port Edwards can claim as its worst: the log yard fire of 1922. It's believed to have been started about noon one hot, dry summer day by sparks from the steam switch engine. The pulpwood piles were

soon ablaze, being fanned by a strong wind out of the south. Sparks and burning embers were blown northward where they settled down on the village. Some 20 houses and other buildings were set afire by the flying embers, most of them resulting in minor roof fires. Village residents took fire watch vigils, sitting on the roofs of their homes with a pail of water, waiting to quench a live ember that might land on their roof. Port Edwards had no effective fire protection at the time. Thus, firefighting equipment was dispatched from Nekoosa, Wisconsin Rapids, Stevens Point and Marshfield, the latter two cities sending equipment by train.

One other fire worthy of mention is the blaze that destroyed L.M. Alexander's garage. The result of gasoline vapors and a blow torch caused a flash fire in this structure. Although the destruction to the building was not a complete loss, there was the complete destruction of five automobiles, including a Lincoln, a Buick, a Cadillac, a Rolls-Royce, and a Pierce Arrow. The event was reported in the NEPCO BULLETIN as follows:



Although this is a drill, it is the scene of the west log yard fire at Port Edwards. Not only logs burned, but several homes in the village incurred damage due to wind-blown burning embers.



Five luxury autos pulled out of L.M.Alexander's garage the day after fire had partially demolished it.

"The alarm was quickly turned into the mill, but it seemed a day of obstacles. The old green Pierce Arrow fire truck, warrior of many a historic battle, refused for several minutes to respond to any kind of an alarm. She seemed to take the attitude that her days of service and excitement were over, for she called for more air than could be given her, and only after frantic cranking did she overcome her crankiness and begin to roar.

"The captains and lieutenants ran around in circles giving orders to one and another. Water pressure was not sufficient to brew a cup of tea. The fire truck headed for the town pump but ended up on a branch section of the water main. Our chief was off somewhere. The fires always occur when he is gone. All in all, we resembled a fire company about as much as Cox's army."

Some other fires that were very serious in the eyes of the victims were the Bruener lumber yard fire, the burning of Roger's gas station, and the loss of the Community Methodist Church.

All catastrophes are serious and resulted in hurting someone. We are fortunate that our entire village has been spared, at least to date, from devastating floods, fires and tornadoes.



The Community Methodist Church the morning after a fire did considerable damage to the structure. The basement was salvaged and used for a few years until a new church was built.

Chapter 21: Facts and Fotos

Last-Minute Notes of Interest

In 1912, the village board had to deal with the problem of village residents along Wisconsin River Drive throwing their garbage in the river.

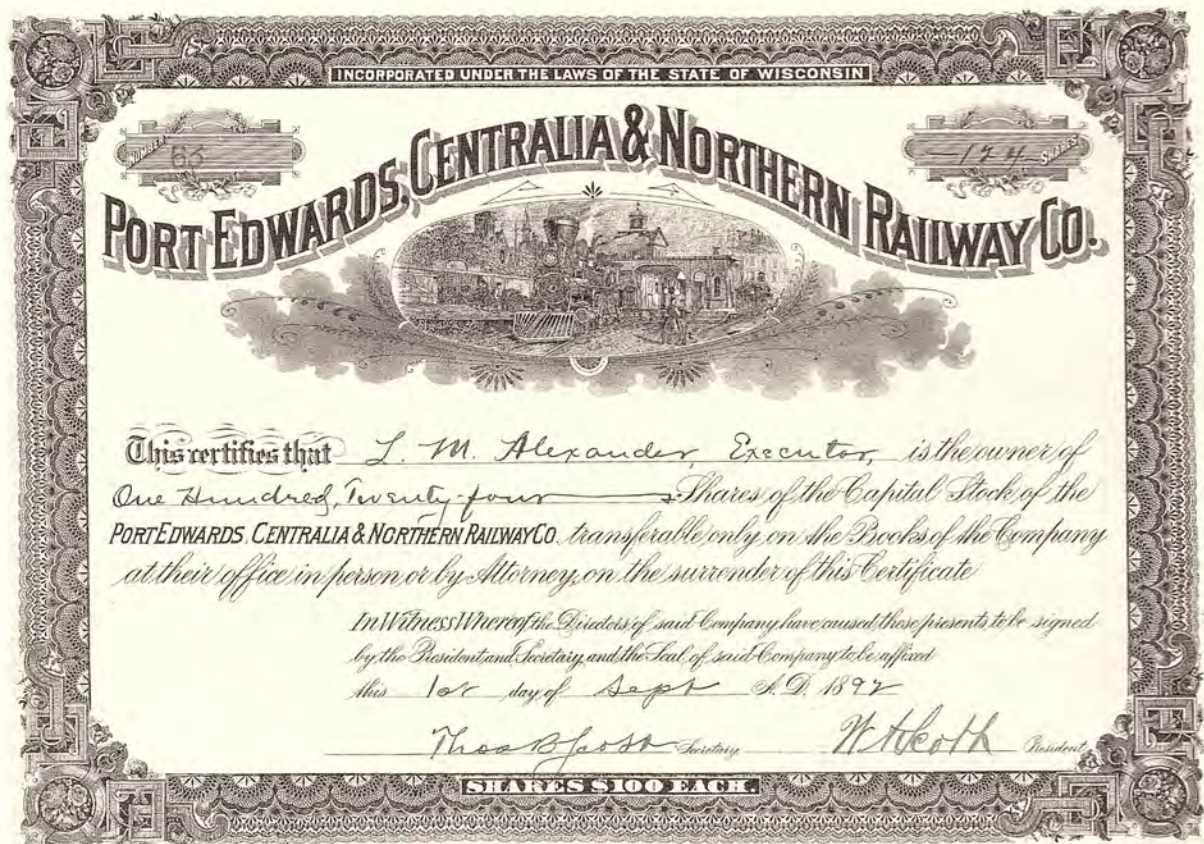
John Alexander, to his dying day, worked to get a state highway bridge across the river at Port Edwards, either at Letendre Avenue or Seneca Road.

Ice cutting was an annual winter activity carried out by John Gavre and his sons. The ice was harvested from the mill pond and stored during the summer packed in sawdust in a black tarpaper-covered building located at the corner of LaVigne and Second Streets.

As late as 1946, the village had to deal with pigs running loose in the streets. This was most likely a carryover from the war years when people raised chickens, pigs, and even a cow to supplement their meat ration.

NEPCO is an abbreviation of Nekoosa Edwards Paper Company. The letters that appear on the mill smokestack are actually white bricks inserted into the stack masonry, and that is why they have survived several corporate name changes.

Port Edwards' only saloon was located near the dam and supposedly offered "Goodhue's Damndest." It was short lived and the village became a dry town for many years.



Stock certificate from Port Edwards' namesake railroad, the PECAN line.



Mr and Mrs. John Edwards enjoy a pleasant day in front of their 1866 home, now the site of the YMCA parking lot.



After many renovations made by L.M. Alexander, the Elm Court residence of John Edwards looked like this. It was later converted into apartments prior to demolition.



Lover's Lane was really Highway 73 between Port Edwards and Nekoosa. The road has since been relocated.



The state of Wisconsin established a fish hatchery at Nepco Lake just to stock the lake with fish. It was located near the present Nepco Lake pumping station.

The bus line that connected Wisconsin Rapids, Port Edwards and Nekoosa was partially subsidized by the village and NEPCO. Forty-five dollars a month was jointly paid to the bus line by the two supporters.

Avenues in the village were named in honor of village pioneers:

Edwards - Builder of the original lumber mill
 Alexander - Builder of the paper mill
 Morrill - Wife of Edwards and first teacher
 Letendre & LaVigne - French lumber raft pilots
 Bruener and VerBunker - Early landowners

There was a butcher shop at the corner of Second and Island Streets. It was later converted into a duplex home.

Only two women have ever served on the village board, Dorothy Lichty and Rita Schneider. The police department and the fire department have each had one woman on their roll.

What would John Edwards think if he could see Port Edwards today, and what would Francis Morrill have to write about her village if she could see it now?



Originally a horse-and-wagon barn, there were a dozen of these structures in the village in the pre-auto era. Note the small overhead door for throwing hay into the loft. Some still stand, converted into garages such as this one.



Nekoosa Edwards Paper Company main office just before being replaced by the modern administration building.



The Carrivou House was a boarding house located at the end of Edwards Avenue. It was later converted into two apartments.

A 1927 village ordinance banned all slot machines from the village and, in 1925, a \$5 license fee was invoked on any provider of soft drinks. I wonder if this applied to the lemonade stands where young children sold Jiffy Julip for a penny a glass.

A late 1920s building program sponsored by NEPCO proved a lot, \$35 toward a sidewalk, free fill and top soil, grading, fertilization and seeding. Engineering and contracting service was available from the NEPCO engineering department. Materials could be purchased from the mill store department which reflected the advantage of bulk purchase prices.

In 1929, over 3,000 people experienced their first airplane ride when NEPCO gave free rides to employees and their families, utilizing their new 12-passenger Ford Tri-Motor plane.

Moonshine was available during the prohibition years in the attic of the building located at the corner of ____ and ____ Streets. (Names deliberately left blank!)

Twenty dollars provided a supply of candy Easter eggs for a village Easter egg hunt in 1951. The village paid for the eggs.

Port Edwards had a railroad that bore its name for about five years. The Port Edwards, Centralia and Northern Railroad connected Port Edwards with Marshfield.

The John Edwards statue across from the YMCA was originally a memorial monument on the Edwards family lot at Forest Hill Cemetery. Brass plates cover the usual engravings in the base of the statue.

A White City Store and a White City Band identified the tradition of buildings being painted white. Even the three railroads abandoned their tradition of painting their stations with the railroad's identifying colors and instead painted the buildings white. White paint was sold by NEPCO at a reduced price to encourage people to keep their buildings neat-looking.

John Jones lies in the grave located at the Port Edwards dam. He was a teamster for John Edwards and appears to have died a pauper. He was buried on riparian land and marked with a standard war department marker.



John Jones was a teamster for Edwards. His grave is located on riparian land along the river near the Port Edwards dam.



Some day this would become Nepco Lake. Land has been cleared, but the dikes and dam are not yet finished in this 1923 view.

A mill whistle directed the lives of village residents. The schedule of whistle blasts was as follows:

6:55 a.m.	Get ready to begin work.
7:00 a.m.	Beginning of the day shift.
12:00 noon	Lunch hour starts.
12:55 p.m.	A warning that afternoon work was about to start.
1:00 p.m.	End of lunch hour.
4:00 p.m.	End of the day shift.
8:45 p.m.	Curfew. Children under 18 years of age to be off the streets.

Firemen were summoned to fires by blowing the mill whistle. A series of short blasts and wailing shrieks made up a code that told the firemen where the fire was.

Alexander Field was the scene of an Air Force training base prior to World War II. During the war, it was converted into a German prisoner-of-war encampment.

Garbage was still being collected and streets graded by horse-drawn equipment as late as 1940. The first village dump truck was purchased that year and the horses were retired.



High water at Nepco Lake in 1938 resulted in closing the road since the bridge was partially washed out.



Carriage house for John Edwards' Elm Court estate. Later, renovations incorporated an office for L.M. Alexander, a library and a ball room.



It's dedication day for the shopping center. A parade preceded the formalities of the day.



It's moving day in the village, as several homes located along Second Street are moved to new locations. House moving was more common years ago than it is today.

In 1893, an act was passed by the Wisconsin Legislature granting a permit to L.M. Alexander to construct a toll bridge across the river at Port Edwards. Alexander did not exercise his option.

A post office was established at Port Edwards in 1859, with John Edwards being appointed as postmaster. The office was located in the office of the John Edwards Company.

A "canker worm" epidemic broke out in 1940. The nasty insects fell off trees without respect to where they landed. Trees in the village were all banded with a sticky concoction called Tangle Foot. The glue-like substance entangled the larvae as they migrated up the tree from their soil hatchery.

John Edwards had the first indoor running water in the village. His home had an enclosed windmill alongside the house with an elevated tank at the top. This tank provided gravity feed to his home. Attractive fixtures were hard to find, however.



The Army Air Force sent a squadron of planes to Alexander Field for the dedication of that airport in 1928. The safety of our county was vested in aircraft such as these.



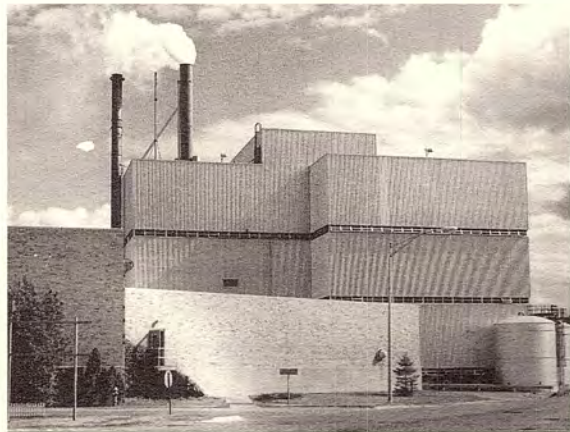
Lots of open space west of the mill would eventually be filled with buildings. This view shows a steam log loading crane on the track, the original laboratory building under the water tower, and the intermill railroad caboose.



Edwards Avenue, looking east toward the river. The entire area on the right of the road is now the Domtar paper distribution center.

A swamp area at Third and Jefferson Streets was deep enough for local youths to float a small beach boat and paddle around. Lack of a boat prompted the ingenious use of a wash tub and an old broom for a paddle. Considered a wetland by today's standards, the area was a nuisance and mosquito breeding area then. Hence, it was filled in and homes built thereon.

An artesian spring flowed out of the hill on the west side of Wisconsin River Drive, about 100 yards south of Seneca Road. Piped across the road, it provided cool, refreshing spring water for village residents. It still flows today, but it is piped directly to the river. A tall clump of overgrown grass indicates where the tile basin was located.



The village owned this waste treatment plant when it was built. A municipal bond issue by the village financed the cost. The bonds were then paid off by Nekoosa Edwards Paper Company over a period of years.



Tri-City Flying School operated for several years at Alexander Field, right after the airport was built. Here is the student classroom.

Chapter 22: Closing

What's Next?



Well, this concludes the history of Port Edwards during its first 100 years as an incorporated village and the years that preceded incorporation. Many things have not been told. But, alas, the number of allotted pages has been used up. One of the hardest tasks of a writer is to try and decide what information is of major interest to the readers. There is always much more that could be included, and that is certainly the case here. For the interested reader, you are referred to the Alexander house archives, where there is enough information to prepare a set of history books. The minutes of the village board are a valuable source of information and are public information.

Now we have to look forward to the next 100 years. Come the year 2102, I hope that someone will come forth and offer to bring this history of our village up to date. It should be an easier task for two reasons. First of all, the history for the first 100 years is contained herein and will form the groundwork to build upon. And secondly, equipment exists today that will enable pictures to be made of the village as it progresses through the

second 100 years. It would have been nice if John Edwards might have had the benefit of a camera to record the views of buildings and sites in Frenchtown!

I strongly recommend that the village government, the schools, churches, and individuals start recording village life, using their video, digital and film cameras. Start taking notes in your diaries, journals, and scrapbooks.

Let's hope there will not be any catastrophes to record, but rather lots of civic improvements and expansions. After all, Port Edwards will not die and become a ghost town!

We are fortunate to have the Alexander House located in our village. It has become a depository for village history. Visual and graphic articles on local history can be left there where they will be preserved.

So let's all lend a hand to that unknown author of 2102 who is going to be responsible for writing the second 100 years of history for Port Edwards.