



SOUTH WOOD COUNTY HISTORICAL CORPORATION

ARTIFACTS

Volume

MAY 1993

READY FOR 20 MORE

The Museum will mark 20 years of operation this summer and we have slated a grand opening celebration on Sunday, June 6, 1993, from 1:00 - 4:00 p.m. Our honored guests, the Wisconsin Society of Land Surveyors (WSLS) will be cutting the ribbon on a newly renovated presentation of the history of surveying. "*Point of Beginning: Wisconsin*", is a cooperative venture between the Land Surveyors and the SWCHC. Funding was provided for this project along with technical assistance from the WSLS Education Committee.

South Wood County has maintained a collection of surveying artifacts since 1980. Now after 13 years in the basement, the featured exhibit has been moved to the main floor. We are fortunate to have such an enthusiastic group participate in the presentation of local history. This one-of-a-kind exhibit and will serve as a model for similar undertakings throughout the state.

The Museum is also unveiling other items from our collections. The Laundry Room in the basement has been painted and rearranged. Look for the curtain stretchers complete with a pair of curtains! The Dairy items that once shared this location have been moved to an adjacent display area.

Would you like to test your identifying skills? The "What is it?" challenge, gives all an opportunity to guess the name of the artifact. We've searched for some easy examples and some difficult. Be prepared to be stumped.

The second floor will host a display of military uniforms and supporting paraphernalia. The Civil War, WWI and WWII are represented. Childrens' clothing has also been displayed this season. We've added a grouping of tiny shoes and some appropriate photos from our collections.

If you would like a "hands-on" introduction to some of the documents in our possession, we have set up a reference room for scrapbook gazing. There are special procedures to follow, white gloves are a must when handling the books, but volunteers will be happy to assist you in paging through these wonderful samples.

Have we whetted your appetite? Hope so! Visit the Museum this summer and discover the treasures that await. We will be open on Sundays and Tuesdays from 1:00 - 4:00 p.m.

DUES DUE

You might think that we just put this little reminder of dues in each newsletter to fill up some unused space. But really we save a small space each issue to remind you that we do not send out statements for dues, but that sure does not mean that we do not want your payment. You can mail them to the museum at 530 Third Street, Wisconsin Rapids, or drop them off at the museum.

Single membership is \$5.00 and a couple's is only \$7.50. We appreciate your cooperation!

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HISTORIC FACTS

Grand Rapids had a local news paper as early as 1857. The first Wood County Fairs were held in Grand Rapids at a location now utilized by Witter Field.

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We are offering a new selection of items for sale as the Museum opens its doors for the 1992 season. In limited quantities we have the following gifts for sale:

- + Sheet Music by Charlotte Witter
- + The Cranboree Waltz (phono album)
- + The Nekoosa Story by J. Marshall Buehler
- + Notecards
- + Bridge Posters

THANKS

A special thankyou to those staff and volunteers who have been working so hard to get our museum ready for its grand opening on June 6th.

LIBRARY BOXES

Did you get yours? Our last newsletter made mention that we had 35 wooden boxes, hinged covers and carrying handles that were used for transporting books from the library in Wisconsin Rapids to remote locations throughout Central Wood County. These were part of the J. D. Witter traveling library.

After saving three of these boxes for the museum artifact collection, we offered the rest of them for five dollars each. We disposed of 28 of the boxes and have four left. The price is reduced on these remaining boxes to \$4.00 each or \$15.00 will take all four provided that they are still available by the time you read this article. Personally, I never thought they would be that popular. Any takers for the last four?

ARTIFACTS

A publication of
South Wood County Historical Corporation
540 Third Street South
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(715) 423-1580

Editor: Pam Walker

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Port Auditorium

It's now referred to as the old gym at the Port Edwards High School but when it was built , it was the Port Edwards Community Auditorium. When new in 1920, it boasted as having the second largest theatrical stage in the state of Wisconsin, second only to the Davidson Theater in Milwaukee.

Dedicated on August 18, 1920, the auditorium offered a gala dedication program for the more than seven hundred attendees. Even the balcony was filled in order to accomodate the crowd.

The asbestos fire curtain rose at 8:15 PM and then the red velvet curtains parted exposing a Italian lake setting scene. By means of the latest innovations in electrical theater lighting, the scene took on a twilight atmosphere with stars actually glittering in the sky portion of the scene.

Carl Rupp and his ten man symphony orchestra immediately presented an ovature and followed by other musical selections.

The program continued with singers, vaudeville acts, a magician, and a motion picture comedy as well as Pathe News of the Day.

A special feature of the evening was the filming of the guests as they arrived for the evening's performance and then showing the same movie at the end of the show. Quite a feat to film, develop and show the film all in the span of a few hours!

After two more stage settings, one a garden scene and the other depicting a villa home interior the audience departed to a

rousing exit march played by Rupp and Linden's Symphony Orchestra.

A newspaper account stated that the Community Auditorium is of brick, stone and steel construction. It is fireproof and electrically lit. It adjoins the Port Edwards school and is an integral part of the school's programs. A pair of carbon arc, 35mm movie projectors will project films from an overhead balcony at the rear ceiling of the hall.

And back stage on a second level mezzanine are three dressing rooms for the star performers. Over that, on a third level, is the tangle of ropes and catwalks for adjusting the scenery for the mamouth stage.

Although there is not an orchestra pit as such, the musicians have access form the basement to an area under the lip of the stage.

The Auditorium committee and the Port Edwards Recreation Club sponsored monthly movies, plays and shows, many of them brought from Chicago as part of the traveling Lycium Circuit.

Eventually, school activities, especially after 1932 when Port Edwards added a high school, took over use of the auditorium. And that is the function to which it serves today. However, the old hard wooden seats have been replaced by soft, upholstered chairs for today's performances.

The Wisconsin Rapids Daily Tribune praised the Port Edwards Auditorium by stating, "Port Edwards has set a pace that the Rapids will have to hump some to beat."

SUMMER PROGRAM

JUNE 1ST SURVEYOR'S DISPLAY. SURVEYORS PRESENT AS GUEST SPEAKERS.

JUNE 6TH GRAND OPENING. REFRESHMENTS. BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT.

JULY 1ST "WOMAN'S WORK/WOMAN'S WORTH", A DISPLAY OF HOUSEHOLD TOOLS OF DRUDGERY.

AUGUST 1ST TRAINS. WISCONSIN RAPIDS MODEL RAILROAD CLUB. MODEL TRAINS, RAILROAD MOVIES AND RESTORED TRAIN STATION.

AUGUST 5/6 RIVER CITY FUNFEST DAYS. OPEN WITH SPECIAL EVENT FOR CHILDREN. MARSHALL BUEHLER WILL HAVE A DISPLAY OF WORKING TOY STEAM ENGINES.

AUGUST 29 LAST DAY MUSEUM WILL BE OPEN FOR THE SEASON.

IF YOU HAVE IDEAS, CONTACT:

MARGE SIMOLKE	421-4906
CYNTHIA REISBECK	423-0274
BETTY ZIMMERMAN	421-5042



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540 Third Street South
Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54494

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