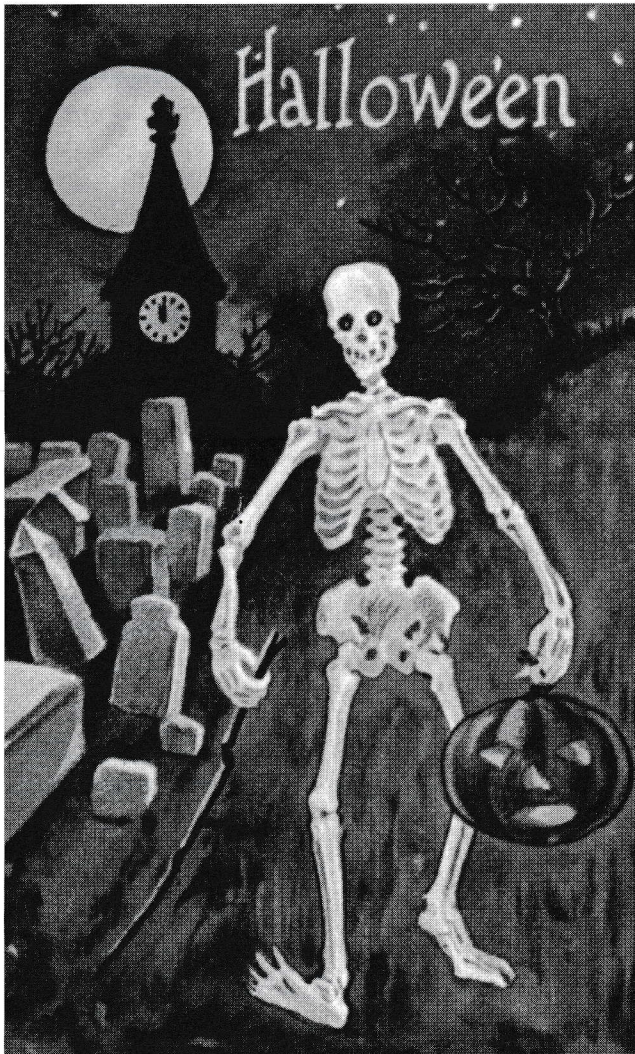



SOUTH WOOD COUNTY HISTORICAL CORPORATION

# ARTIFACTS

Volume



 **HALLOWEEN POST CARD**  
6065 "Dem Bones Shall Rise Again"  
A reproduction of an antique post card  
Printed in U.S.A.

## Pumpkins, Presidents and Politics

If the cold weather didn't shock your system into believing it's fall, the advertising for the upcoming Presidential campaign reminds us that it must soon be November. Frost more than settled in on the jack-o-lantern I carved for Halloween, it froze solid at 19 degrees last night!

The Museum will be closed for the season beginning on November 1, 1996, although we will maintain regular office hours throughout the winter months. Bernadine, Karen and I have our winter work outlined as we prepare to dismantle a few exhibits. The new perennials will be safely tucked away for the upcoming winter and we have already begun the process of planning our next round of landscaping for the Spring of 1997.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank everyone for sharing their talents, time and stories about local history. We have enjoyed another year of offering the public a glimpse of our locality's past. Our overall visitorship is up this year, and we have received school children from our own area as well as from a distance.

If we can be of assistance to you, or you have a special item to donate, please call us at the Museum Office, 423-1580.

# A Constructive Liberal

## George W. Mead's Unlikely Run For Senate

by Dave Engel  
Wisconsin Rapids City Historian

Perhaps the only sure thing for George Mead was that his home town, Wisconsin Rapids, would support him.

In 1928, anyone named La Follette was unbeatable in Wisconsin. The father, "Fighting Bob," had died in 1925 while a U.S. Senator—shortly after receiving 5 million independent and labor votes for President on the Progressive ticket. The one state he had carried was Wisconsin.

Elected to fill the Senatorial vacancy was his son, Robert M. La Follette, Jr. running as a "Progressive" Republican. Having lost only Rock County in the earlier election, La Follette was running again as a strong favorite. His platform attacked corruption and favored farm relief, collective bargaining by labor, modification of the 18th amendment outlawing liquor sales, flood control and the St. Lawrence Seaway.

Opposing the Progressives within the Republican Party, the "Stalwarts," weren't making much of an attempt to field a candidate for the Sept. 4 primary.

### MAYOR MEAD MAKES A MOVE

George W. Mead. Born Feb. 22, 1871, in Chicago, the son of a lumber merchant attended school in Oak Park. After his father's death, the family moved to Galena. Mead graduated from Rockford High School, taught at Rockford public schools for a semester, attended Beloit College for a year, and graduated from the University of Wisconsin in 1894.

Mead hoped to teach Latin in the Rockford school system, but the position was given to another, so he joined his brother D. Raymond Mead in a Rockford furniture store.

In 1900, Mead married Ruth Witter, daughter of Jere D. Witter of Wisconsin Rapids. When Jere Witter died suddenly in 1902, George and Ruth were called to assist in business affairs left unfinished. This amounted to building and operating the Consolidated Water Power & Paper Co., mill in Wisconsin Rapids.

A prominent contributor to the campaign of Republican Gov. Zimmerman, Mead was a regent of the University of Wisconsin. When he ran for mayor of Wisconsin Rapids, he received the endorsement of several factions, including labor.

He was in his second term when, on July 24, 1928, Mead, through his friend and business associate, George M. Hill, declared himself a candidate for the Senatorial nomination in a Milwaukee morning paper. His move was confirmed later in a "sizzling hot campaign announcement" handed the Wisconsin Rapids Daily Tribune.

Mead was known to be a successful, intelligent and prudent visionary—familiar with daunting difficulties, but unaccustomed to failure; yet, pundits knew he would be lucky to win anywhere outside his home town. Surely, his strong support there would be some consolation.

### A CONSTRUCTIVE LIBERAL

In somewhat muddled terms, Mead related his position as a "Constructive Liberal."

"The kind of criticism, which condemns on sight and refuses to entertain or accept anything that is proposed is not sound or aggressive, is reactionary and destructive so also is action which will not lend a lifting hand

but stands apart or holds back as others are bearing the load."

He said progressive policies are largely pure "opposition" and unworthy of the state of Wisconsin. He also deplored the "political outlawry and servitude" of the La Follette group. If nominated and elected, Mead said, he would not submerge his political independence for the sake of political preferment for any group.

### FRIEND OF LABOR

Mead's political platform:

√Endorsement of Hoover for President; and of the Republican platform, including support for the 18th Amendment, known as Prohibition.

√Independence from the Republican Party's and all other campaigns for state offices.

√Building the St. Lawrence Waterway and the Mississippi-to-the-Gulf Waterway to achieve cheaper transportation to Wisconsin.

√A Congressional program for farm relief.

√Government ownership of large water powers such as Muscle Shoals and Boulder Dam. Municipal ownership of city electric plants, using the city of Wisconsin Rapids as an example. "Power monopoly must be curbed. The interests of the people must be guarded. The efforts of those, who desire power monopoly, to secretly buy or influence public officials, educators and others in order to control public opinion should be condemned."

√Friendship with Labor: "The one great safety of Labor is found in collective bargaining. I believe in the right of Labor to organize and to negotiate with employers through agents of their own choosing."

When businessmen called Mead a radical because of his sponsorship of organized labor in his mills, he said he considered this a compliment. "We adopted the eight hour day in our mills

without coercion from Labor and have always stood and now stand heartily in favor of it. We were among the first to adopt the three shift system. When the Workmen's Compensation Law was proposed we strongly favored it and worked for its enactment."

√Campaign limits. Though he was a man of means, Mead said, there would not be any lavish and indecent use of money in his campaign; he opposed "war chests" that amounted to "excessive use of money in political campaigns."

"My political record is limited but is one of which I am unashamed. My business record dates back 35 years, practically all in Wisconsin," Mead said.

"Wisconsin Republicans should choose next September between a so-called political progressivism, tintured with the most reactionary methods of political dictation, or the independent candidacy of one who would employ a liberal but constructive policy...fearless and independent."

### FAINT PRAISE & THREE VOTES

Not surprisingly, Mead received the hearty endorsement of his own journal, *Consolidated News*. Surely, he could count on the support of his home town newspaper, the Wisconsin Rapids *Daily Tribune*. The publisher, William F. Huffman, was a personal friend of his from Rockford.

Indeed, the Tribune was excited by the first attempts of a local man to seek an elective office on such a large scale. It agreed, on July 25, that Mead had performed well as mayor and as manager of a large industry. He certainly had plenty of fight and nerve and many would support him, said the Tribune, which flirted with but failed to arrive at an actual endorsement.

"It takes nerve to do battle with the name of La Follette in political matters," said the Tribune, calling Mead "a candidate who possesses both conservative and progressive characteristics."

Surely, Mead could count on the support of the local union, for whom he had risked his reputation with his peers.

But, in an action similar to that of the Tribune, three of the largest Rapids-area unions—the Papermakers, the Pulp and Sulphite and the Electrical Workers—met in the Central Labor union hall and drew up a “statement of confidence.” In the face of criticism, Mead felt he had to assure the public that the statement was *not* an official endorsement, which would have been against the union’s policy.

Surely, Mead could count on the community of nearby Stevens Point of which he was a benefactor, providing a paper mill and plenty of philanthropy.

Not surprisingly, the *Stevens Point Journal* called Mead “A rich man who is offering his services because he hopes to make them valuable to the people, who is prepared to help solve in the public interests and unselfishly the great water power problem, who is willing to pay his full share of taxes—that’s the kind of rich man who deserves encouragement, just as the elder La Follette would have given him encouragement and welcome.”

But encouragement is not endorsement. The only absolute 1000% support came from the Anti-Saloon league.

Perhaps the strongest personal testimonial came in a letter to the *Point Journal* from “Mrs. Walter Parmeter and Seven Happy Children.” She said her husband had drowned while fishing in a canoe above Biron, leaving a young mother and seven children destitute.

“A man came and took charge of everything. He paid all the bills and told the mother not to worry...the family would remain together, the children would be sent to school and all would be taken care of as long as necessary. He kept his word and made us so happy and self-supporting.

“The same man who did this for us is president of the Crippled Children’s Society of Wisconsin, is a generous giver to the Children’s Home Finding Society of Wisconsin, has made his home city one of the most beautiful in Wisconsin

and is the best friend we poor folks ever had. That’s why he will get our three votes for United States Senator. We hope that all who read this will do the same. We are glad to speak for our best friend, George W. Mead.”

Surely, the voters of central Wisconsin would join Mrs. Parmeter—even if no one else did.

## THE CAMPAIGN

With the election one month away, Mead started his campaign with a speech at Lincoln Athletic field after a band concert. Forced to the local Armory by rain, Mead delivered the speech without notes, hoping to avoid, he said, the “rapping and razzing” usually accompanying typical “dyed-in-the-wool politicians.”

Burt Williams of Milwaukee, former mayor of Ashland, prominent state Democratic and father-in-law of Mead’s son Stanton, was appointed campaign manager. C.E. Jackson of Rapids would be publicity director, operating from campaign offices opened in the Mead-Witter block in downtown Rapids.

Mead, aligned with no wing of the Republican party, “played a lone hand.” In Fond du Lac, he spoke in meandering fashion. “My position is not based on hostility to business interests, vindictiveness toward any group in America nor buncombe for political consumption, but it is the attitude of plain good common sense as a business man who is looking at this vital thing to find what is necessary to give the best results to the general public.”

The flavor of the short-lived campaign is suggested by a report from L.P. Daniels, J.R. Ragan and Dr. Frank Pomainville, all of Wisconsin Rapids, who pursued a two-day barnstorming drive to promote Mead. They said they were received well every place but Prentice, where the printing office refused to allow them to post a Mead bill on the premises. The next day the Mead men hired local boys to make sure every person in Prentice had the literature. They

also tried to hire a band but the La Follette faction already had all available musicians "under contract."

Accompanied by his son, Walter; by Reinhold Henke, president of the Pulp & Sulphite Workers; and by union men from Stevens Point, Mead addressed crowds in Milwaukee, Racine, Kenosha, Janesville, Beloit and Sheboygan. He wound up his brief campaign with a Labor Day address. After voting, he went home to receive the election returns on his own radio.

### AN ASTONISHMENT

Soon after the returns came in, Mead conceded an abrupt defeat, with a non-statement to the Tribune, "There is nothing I care to say."

He had lost, others said, but was it so bad? Any fool expected him to do worse. La Follette got about 300,000 votes, Mead 150,000. It was a moral victory.

The *Tribune* noted that political experts called it an "exceptional" race but that there was never much doubt about the outcome. "The people are sold on the La Follette family and they have earned through years of service a position that others can hardly challenge successfully."

As Mead campaign manager Williams closed the campaign headquarters, he called Mead one of the most popular candidates who ever ran for office in Wisconsin, and said his vote was "an astonishment everywhere."

Most surprising, said Williams, in view of the many votes actually tendered his way, was that Mead had conducted his campaign with no organization or committees and had spent only four weeks on it. Williams called Mead a new type of candidate, a successful and influential business man who is progressive in thought and action.

"Wisconsin Rapids can well watch the future public career of George W. Mead. His record, principles and life, his lack of affiliation with any political ring, make him one man Wisconsin will force into official life and a citizen this state will highly honor in the future."

### HOME, SWEET HOME

Surely, Mead could take consolation in the returns from his homeland. In the previous election for mayor of Wisconsin Rapids, Mead had been supported by all groups except the Socialists and had received 2060 of 2832 votes cast. The resounding victory was credited to the Labor group that nominated him and conducted a strong campaign for him.

Similar results were expected in the 1928 Senate primary, as Williams urged "Mr. Mead's community" to do the right thing: to use all their power to send him to Washington and "bring honor to this progressive community."

But, as Mead sat in his Island home listening to the radio, the returns came in—and they must have smarted. In Wood County, Mead won only the communities of Arpin, Cary, Cranmoor, Pittsville and Biron.

Returns from the remaining cities, villages and townships accumulated in a total county vote of 5486 for La Follette and 3149 for Mead. Not totally unexpected, was the loss of Wisconsin Rapids' rival, the city of Marshfield, 1229 to 594.

But what of Wisconsin Rapids?

If Mead waited to be recompensed for his efforts on behalf of a grateful River City, he was to be sorely disappointed. Of eight wards, Mead won only the second, third and eighth. With stunning infidelity, the total city vote was Mead 1467, La Follette, 1574.

Writing a 1927 article about Calvin Coolidge, Mead may have stated his own ethic: "Without regard to votes, paying no attention whatever to the criticisms or prophecies of those who would advise him to count the political cost, he has taken the course that he believed to be right and for the country's interest."

Mead took his best shot and let the wood chips fall where they might. Had he been a lesser mortal, his compassion for his home town would have gone into the chipper with the jack pine.

### BUY RAPIDS PRODUCTS

Support local industry and the economy of the area by purchasing locally manufactured products. Today the locally produced products are all together different than the ones that were offered for sale seventy-five, a hundred or even a hundred and twenty-five years ago.

For instance, in 1869, if one needed a steam engine or water turbine wheel for your lumber or grist mill, Battrick & Mahoney Mfg. Co, had the casting facilities and machine shop to make such items.

No better wagon wheels, tounges , and wheel hubs and spokes could be found than those that were produced by Mackinnon and Griffith who started their hardwood business in 1879.

The F. Haertel Chair Company was turning out chairs prior to 1870. The standard kitchen chair and other un stuffed chairs were their claim to fame.

An advertisement for Coleman and Jackson Milling Company stated that a better and cleaner flour was not available than that milled at their mill in Centralia.

Lessig Brick Company and the Vesper Brick & Tile Company were competitors for your brick business. The Vesper plant also turned out other clay building products such as tile. And speaking of cerramic products, one should be sure to look for the name Pittsville on creamers, suger bowls, pitchers and even dishes. They were produced

by the Pittsville Pottry Company.

Vesper was the place to go to purchase a wooden silo or water trough for watering cattle. The Vesper Wood Manufacturing Company was turning out these items at their plant in that village.

And for "watering" your own thirst Grand Rapids Brewery and Lutz Beer were the thirst quenchers for local patrons. With the comming of years of prohibition, Grand Rapids Brewing Co., turned to soft drink production while Lutz started to make cigars.

Sampson Canning Company finally took over the Grand Rapids Brewing building and opened a canning plant specializing in beans, beets and sauer kraut.

And many of us remember Preway, organized in 1915 as Prentis Wabers Products Co. Gasoline camp stoves, lanterns and blow torchs were their first products but later they expanded into a line of gas fueled appliances, space heating furnaces and fire places.

Oberbeck bed room furniture was the brand to look for when one wanted to furnish their home. Built in 1891. the plant was located near St. Lawrence Church and the building became part of Consolidated's box plant.

And yes, lumber, shingles, and paper were available from almost the very beginning of our cities. They both survive, but lumber has given way to paper.

Speaking of paper, Nekoosa Foundry & Machine Co. built a paper machine once although they were better known for casting and making parts for the paper mills of the area.

You may never need one but the American Carbonic Corporation was well known for supplying refrigeration units for meat plants, theater airconditioning and freezer plants.

We cannot support these business companies of the past but there are locally produced products that deserve our patronage. Support today's locally made or grown products.

# Alger Manufacturing Company

INCORPORATED

WHEN USED IN ACCORDANCE WITH DIRECTIONS FURNISHED

Port Edwards, Wisconsin

We found a brochure that was passed out by a Port Edwards business concern some years ago. It promoted a simple product that was made in the village and called a manifold heater for Ford autos.

"Easy starting, smooth and efficient running in all kinds of weather."

An attachment to the motor of the car had a built in reservoir on the side of it. The motorist took an ordinary oil can and squirted a small amount of gasoline into the heater. Then, with a match, the heater was ignited. The resulting flame warmed the engine block of the car.

Since this paper was found in some old documents in the files of John Alexander (deceased president of

Nekoosa Papers Inc.) I asked him one day what success the Alger Company had. John's story was something like this.

"The heater was the brain storm of a fellow named Rogers who worked in the Port Edwards mill machine shop. Rogers needed financial backing to make and market his heater. Being an avid auto buff all my life, I arranged the financial backing he needed. We formed a partnership and patented the heater. As I recall, we made about a dozen of the things and burned up almost as many cars."

Although the heater sold for only \$1.50 and took only five minutes to install, the company was not a success and soon retired from the business world. So much for one local business.

## Easy Starting, Smooth and Efficient Running in All Kinds of Weather

**A** LGER gets you started in the coldest weather—with every cylinder firing and the engine delivering smooth, full-powered efficiency. Then, after the slight charge of fuel in the heating cup is exhausted, the ALGER jacket starts functioning:

**VAPORIZES LOW GRADE FUEL THOROUGHLY.** Takes exhaust-manifold heat (formerly wasted) and puts it to work so the engine will not get a raw, liquid-like charge. Shields intake from cold air from the fan.

**REDUCES CARBON.** Resulting mixture explodes instantly and completely, leaving only the barest amount of residue.

**INCREASES MILEAGE.** Each gallon of gasoline goes farther because there is better vaporization which means that the needle valve on your carburetor can be turned down from a quarter to a half-turn.

**PREVENTS FLOODING OF CYLINDERS** and rapid fouling of plugs.

**ELIMINATES ALL JERKING AND "BUCKING"** and thus reduces strain on the mechanism. With an ALGER you get summer-time motor efficiency in zero weather.

### For Summer Use

# ALGER

**MANIFOLD  
HEATER for FORDS**

PATENTS PENDING

**Price Complete \$1.50**

MANIFOLD HEATERS ARE FEATURED ON HIGH PRICED CARS

The ALGER Manifold Heater is not only a necessity and help in winter driving, but also an all year accessory. ALGER covers the exhaust pipe, takes the hot air that formerly was wasted and concentrates it where it is needed—namely on the intake pipe—thus causing better vaporization of the gasoline, a smoother running motor and an increase in mileage.

Many of the country's foremost engineers—men who have designed some of the most high-priced cars—regard heating of the manifold as a vital factor in successful operation of their motors. Why should you be satisfied with just fair efficiency and average mileage from your Ford when you can buy—for only \$1.50—a manifold heater that will end your winter driving troubles forever? You can install an ALGER

### JUDGE HENRY HAYDEN MURDERED!

Judge Henry Hayden, head of the law firm of Hayden, Rossier & Baker, was shot dead as he walked out of his office on Oct. 9, 1879. Several people witnessed the shooting by W.H.Cochran, cashier of the First National Bank.

Judge Hayden was a prominent member of the Greenbackers. (A political movement organized in 1874)

Cochran was tried for murder, the trial being held in Clark County. He was adjudged "Not Guilty" by the jury. A martial love tryst was the cause of the shooting.

(From History of Northern Wisconsin)



### **SOUTH WOOD COUNTY HISTORICAL CORPORATION**

540 Third Street South  
Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54494-4352



To:

*Daved Engel*

*5597 3rd Ave*

*Rudolph, WI*

*54475*