

SOUTH WOOD COUNTY HISTORICAL CORPORATION

ARTIFACTS

Volume



WOOD COUNTY TELEPHONE COMPANY

(FROM: HISTORY OF WOOD COUNTY)

"The Wood County Telephone Company which provides telephone service for Wisconsin Rapids and surrounding territory having switch boards at Wisconsin Raids, Port Edwards and Nekoosa, is an independent cooperative company, organized on a charter dated May 13, 1895. The company was founded by John Gaynor with the idea of furnishing service at the least possible cost, and its stock is owned by its subscribers. Previous to its organization service was provided by the Bell Telephone Company, which made a desperate effort to retain

control, even offering to give subscribers three years free service contracts in order to put the new company out of business. But Mr. Gaynor, without hope of pecuniary award, personally fought out with each telephone patron the question of the ultimate effect of entering into such contracts, and the result was that the old Company (Bell) was eliminated from the local exchange business in this city. A modern brick building to serve as office and station, was built in 1917, on Second Street. The company now has 675 miles of lines in this county, with 40 miles of pole line and 14 miles of cable. It has 1695 telephones in Wisconsin Rapids, 100 in Port Edwards and 226 in Nekoosa, and 300 rural. There are 31 employees and 15,000 calls a day are handled."

The above was written in 1923.

Telephone numbers were easy to remember and as simple as a single digit. My home number was 5W and dad's business phone was 33!



THEDE BRAZEAU'S MEMORIES

"We had a rag carpet on the floor, more or less woven in spots. Nobody had any boughten rugs to speak of. There were a few people that had them but not many. And the rag carpet; a new one was brought out each year. We saved up rags in balls, wound them up, stored these and then took them to a weaver. There was always some woman in town who would weave a rug carpet and that's where we got our rugs."

"There were few books or papers in the house. There was the family bible that everybody had on the center table great big bible, seldom opened but it was there and lent a religious air to the home anyway, whether you read it or not.."

"And there was the albums with all the pictures of the uncles and aunts and grandmothers and grandfathers neighbors and friends. And there were the auto albums where people wrote their names and little verses in them and you kept these around on the tables."

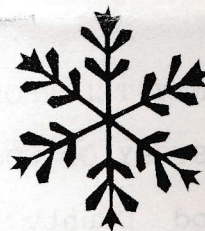
"And for the Boys? You wonder where they got their fun. They couldn't go to the movie. They couldn't take their dad's car and run around the country. They couldn't watch TV. They couldn't do much of anything you'd think, But they did and they had a wonderful time. We went barefoot all summer long. We wandered the woods and along the streams and loved every inch of nature. We went swimming. We went fishing and hunting. We had guns at a very early age and hunting was wonderful around here. So we had our own sports and we made

many of our own sports. We had no football or basketball. In fact we had no organized sports of any kind. We ran races. We wrestled with one and another in the yard. We had a few fights. And our athletics was confined to that."

Question: Do you remember Billy Bell?

Answer: "Oh do I remember Billy Bell! I remember getting hit on the head many a time by Billy Bell. Billy Bell was janitor of the Howe building."

(To be continued next issue.)



ARTIFACTS

A publication of
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Theodore Brazeau



Artifact Donations from 1997

Adeline Hladilek	Children's games
Alfred Race	Stereograph holders , stereographs
Phyllis Hunger	Love Seat
Marshall Buehler	Navy dress uniforms, business letters [ca. 1900], ration coupons
Pam Schmidt	Newspapers [ca. 1940]
Arlette Peterson and Magla Moore	Photo: Edith Sakolosky
Kathy Hoelzlhammer	dress, hats, doll and clothes, dress patterns, <i>Lincoln Lights</i> school newspaper [1949], books
Kathy Daly	Tin types, photos, business letters [1940], Witter geneology
Pam Walker	Magazines, plat books, children's books
Mike Anderson	Radio
Lilas Smith	Ladies purses, photos
Kathleen Gumm Westlund	School textbooks
William C. Rohde	Camera equipment
Joan Haasl	Postcards, calendar [1939], game
Mr. and Mrs. James Custer	"Resolutions Adopted by the Citizens of Grand Rapids and Centralia" [1879]
Margaret Boles	Banner from class of 1927
Pat Goodnough	Photos, confirmation certificate
Carole Milkey	Magazine
Josephine Lassen	Nose enema
Elkhart County Historical Society	Postcard
Paper Cities Baseball Association	WR Twins baseball uniforms
Marjorie Hinrichsen	Magazines

James E. Studley

Mark Scarborough

Estate of Kenneth Ironside

Loretta Wilhelm

Leila Blajeski

Charles Giesler

Karen Pecher

History of WR Lodge #128

Photo, Wood County Official
Directories

WW II Army uniform, military
items

WW II Army overcoat, other coats

Book

Photos

Ash tray: Preway

We are grateful for the generosity of these people and appreciate the support of our collections.

11

A picnic of the old settlers of Portage and adjoining counties is announced for the 25th inst., at hog
Hole, on Conant's Rapids. There will be music, speeches by Hon. G. Park & Geo. W. Cate, picnic dinner
and other festivities. None of the old settlers here, should miss this opportunity to meet once more with the
first pioneers of the pinery.
Centralia Enterprise August 11, 1881



Rapids Reformers Appear in Municipality

by Dave Engel

Wisconsin Rapids Municipal Historian

"Wealth is power," says the social critic, speaking in the age of reform—"and the accumulation of great power in the hands of a few is generally dangerous to the welfare of the many. What shall we do to control the great monopolies that are every year becoming more numerous and powerful and which are more than ever concentrating wealth?"

The reformer: Grand Rapids judge, John A. Gaynor.

The subject: public ownership of water, gas and electric utilities. This is the "question of the hour" in 1900 as described in the inaugural issue of *The Municipality*, the newsletter of the League of Wisconsin Municipalities.

Because of a cooperative system of ownership of utilities spearheaded by Gaynor and known as the "Grand Rapids Plan," Gaynor's home town is chosen for the 1902 League convention.

Fightin' Bob

At Grand Rapids, Wisconsin Governor and renowned "progressive" Robert M. La Follette joins Gaynor in a call for morality in public affairs.

"One of the most encouraging results of the work of municipal leagues and civic federations is that men of high character are no longer shirking municipal responsibility, but are assuming it and meeting every requirement with patriotism and

courage," intones La Follette, with a seeming contradiction following.

"Our great cities are the worst examples of corruption and municipal rottenness known to civilization ... It is because of the crookedness and jugglery of machine manipulation in politics, and especially in the selection of candidates through caucuses and conventions, that it has been so difficult to move the masses...to take an active interest in righting the long-recognized evils of city government."

In his remarks to his central Wisconsin audience, La Follette also accurately predicts the future suburbs, which, according to him, will be made possible through improvements in mail, traveling libraries, macadamized highways, township schools, telephone exchanges, electric lights and electric car service.

"The time is not far distant when the old barriers that have divided the city and country will be broken down, for the distinctions which have existed between country and city life, between the urban and the rustic are rapidly disappearing."

Mayor Mead

Another reformer speaks on a similar topic at a later League of Wisconsin Municipalities convention, this time in 1931 at Marshfield, where League president and Wisconsin Rapids mayor George W. Mead insists that members not only continue to fight for the

principle of public ownership of local utilities in Wisconsin, but attempt "to create new and growing support for this principle in the minds of people everywhere by giving honest official control and conscientious, efficient administration."

"He is a poor municipal official," maintains Mead, "unworthy the vote of any citizen, who goes into office thinking how he can benefit himself or his friends, or advance political partisanship. He is the best official, in the smallest community as well as the largest, who dedicates his official efforts as well as his private business life and work to honest, unselfish devotion to the public whose servant he is."

At the 1932 Menasha convention, Mead ridicules those who claim government is too big: "Wisconsin is spending twice as much for its automobiles as it is for all municipal government and public schools."

Silent Spring

In 1948, "mosquito abatement, a community service" is featured in the *Municipality*. According to a report from Port Edwards, the most common toxic agents used on breeding places are fuel oil, Paris Green, Pyrethrum, and, most recently, DDT. "The effectiveness even extended to occasional rain pools in which the DDT seemed to remain when the pool dried up and again became effective when again flooded."

Public Access Pioneer

A "cutting edge" event from Wisconsin Rapids is described in a January 3, 1950, article by Carl

Knudsen, mayor. According to Knudsen, his city introduced "a new chapter" in municipal history "by bringing a complete word-for-word broadcast of its council meetings directly from the council chamber to every home in the city."

The public service broadcast by local radio station WFHR and WFHR-FM is believed to be the first of its kind in the United States.

The inspiration, says Knudsen, came from an article in the *Saturday Evening Post* in late 1949 about a council broadcast in eastern Canada. It was implemented because Knudsen and other council members felt the proceedings were not always adequately presented in the city's one newspaper, the *Daily Tribune*, like the radio station, owned by William F. Huffman.

Knudsen reports a poll finding 18 of 20 homes called had tuned in. "Few people, if any, were accustomed to attending council meetings, and those who did attend for the most part were city employes or individuals who were interested in a certain petition for improvement or gain of some sort for themselves."

"While the council broadcasts have a tendency to amuse certain people," concludes Knudsen, "a more serious and worth-while purpose is served. They give the taxpayer a good look at his government at work."

The League of Wisconsin Municipalities' 1998 centennial book, published by New Past Press, Friendship, will include a timeline by Dave Engel.

RIVER EXPOSES ITS BOTTOM!

By JMB

It was a great opportunity to look for any missing relatives, a lost car, or a stolen bike. But if you were like many inquisitive people in Port Edwards, you just went river bottom exploring this past month. That's when Georgia Pacific Company lowered the ponds above the Port Edwards and Centralia dams for some work on those facilities.

I couldn't help but join others in walking the sandbars and rock outcroppings in the Port Edwards vicinity. I put on my oldest shoes, (that river muck has an odor all its own), and with my camera, ventured out to places in the river that have not been trodden for the past twenty years which was the last time that the river was drawn down this low.

I encountered others out there. Some were fishing in the narrow stream that was still running. Some were looking for flotsam and jetsam---old bottles, fishing lures, steel rings and spikes from the logging days, clams, etc.

But I wanted some pictures of the multitude of old piers, booms, dams, rock cribs etc.

I was not disappointed. The river above the Port Edwards dam is full of these old artifacts that were so essential to the lumbering industry. In fact there were so many of these structures that John Edwards Lumber Company had a person just in charge of the booms. He was identified as Superintendent of Booms.

Obviously there were others working on the booms, cribs and dams or he would not have been a supervisor.

As far as I, and an associate, Brendon Doughty from the G.P Engineering Dept., can ascertain, the booms at Port Edwards, opposite the Alexander House were important for several reasons.. They were like a switch in a railroad yard; that is the booms could be opened and closed . In this way, logs could be deflected to Edwards' mill at Port Edwards or by closing the boom, lumber rafts could be sent on down the river by-passing the Edwards mill.

Other booms in the mill pond north of the present paper mill, would hold back the floating logs until they were needed at the mill

At one location on the west side of the river, the shore is lined with one foot square timbers. It appears that these were placed there as a buffer for logs coming down the river. The logs were deflected off the wall, thus preventing erosion of the bank and possible log jams at this narrow channel.

There are many old structures that we can not identify, or be sure of what purpose they served. Some are so old that the timbers are held together with wooden pegs while the newer ones are fastened with twenty-four inch steel spikes. Steel rings , about six inches in diameter are imbedded in several large boulders. Remnants of what might have been a bridge at Port Edwards appeared at the end of Island Avenue. One old map of the area indicates a bridge at

this site.

And rocks! it's easy to see why raftsmen had a difficult time getting their rafts from Centralia to Point Basses, (Low point). The rocks are just below the surface and many show signs of having been blasted to remove them. Drill holes are still visible where the dynamite charge was inserted.. Unlike smooth boulders, these are sharp, jagged outcroppings that could easily destroy a lumber raft and drown a member of its crew. Who knows how many loggers are buried in unmarked graves along the river bank; buried wherever they happened to float ashore

Lastly, did you notice the deadheads, water soaked logs , that were sticking up from the river bottom in the area just above the Port Edwards mill , across from the YMCA? They are small diameter logs that became water soaked while floating in the water, waiting to be floated to the mill. These

are pulpwood and date back to the 1920's when the Nekoosa Edwards Paper Company still stored their pulpwood on the river. The small diameter logs were prone to becoming water soaked faster than a larger diameter log. But why they sunk in a vertical position rather than a horizontal position is a mystery

Opposite Lyon's Park, one island has the up river end of it rip-raped with vertical timbers, perhaps to divert the logs and rafts to the west channel of the river.

The river is full of old bottles, tires, steel drums etc. But ~~what~~ it really contains is a lot of history, mystery and intrigue. If Old Man River could only talk, what a story it would have to tell!



Rock filled cribs were anchoring spots for the log booms that stretched up river from Port Edwards.

CENTRALIA ENTERPRISE.

VOLUME I.—NUMBER 28.

"Now to the Line, Let the Chorus Fall Where They May."
CENTRALIA, WISCONSIN, WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 26, 1879.

\$1.00 PER YEAR, IN ADVANCE.

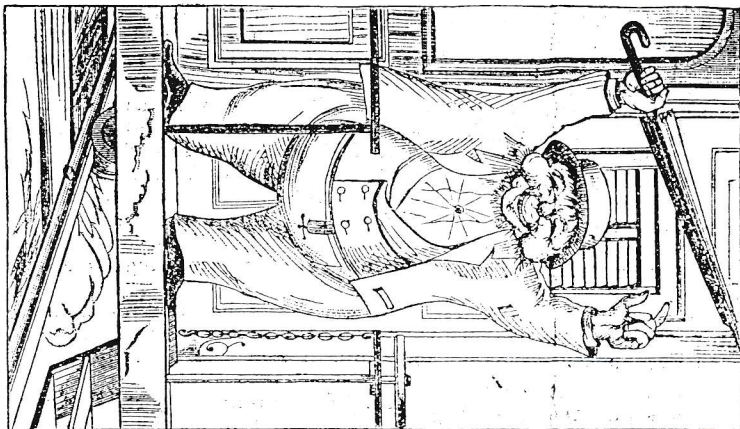
P. NELSON,

DEALER IN

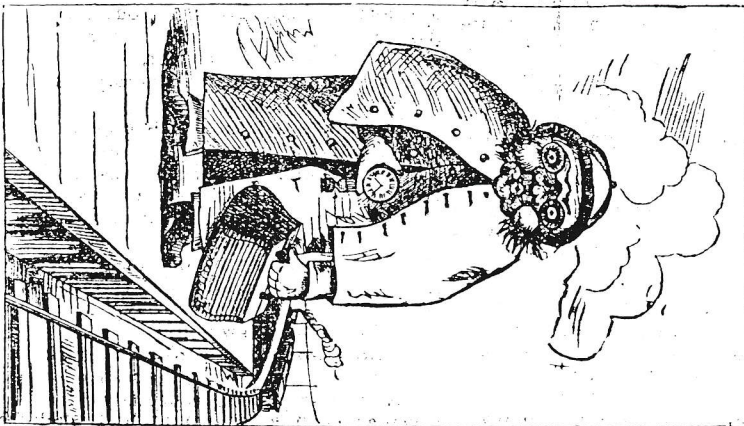
WATCHES, CLOCKS AND JEWELRY,

SOLID SILVER AND PLATED-WARE, MUSICAL MERCHANDISE.

The man who did buy a Rockford watch.
(On board.)



The man who did not buy a Rockford watch.
(He got left.)



Look upon this picture, And then upon this.

The Rockford Railroad Watch a Specialty.

GRAND RAPIDS,

WISCONSIN.

WISCONSIN STATE NEWS.

CHARLES RASTER, of Eau Claire, was drowned while riding a log in the river Wednesday to the mill in which he was employed.

SOME one set fire last Saturday to the club house situated on Willow creek and owned by Omro sportsmen. It was totally destroyed.

A PHILADELPHIA correspondent of the *Inter Ocean* says: "Milwaukee has one of the finest rolling mills in the country and three of the best blast furnaces."

THE railway station at Hanover, near Janesville, on the C., M. & St. P. road, was robbed of a small amount of money and other things, Thursday afternoon.

JAMES THORSTON, a young lad of Westfield, was buried beneath a falling floor of his father's barn, Friday, while husking corn. He was instantly killed.

THOMAS BAKER, formerly of Janesville, but for six years yard master at Albany, N. Y., was killed Monday night by the cars while attending to his duties.

THE total amount of annual salaries paid to the officers and employes in every department of public service in Milwaukee county, (excepting city officers) is \$72,616.

HENRY CHRISTIAANSEN, who murdered Fogarty at Milton, Rock county, pleaded guilty Monday and was sentenced to Waupun for life. Mrs. Fogarty pleaded not guilty and will be tried.

WILLIE CHESLEY, of Waupaca, fell 15 feet from the M. E. Church steeple to the scaffolding, Tuesday, breaking his shoulder, bruising his skull and otherwise injuring himself. Yet he managed to recover his senses and walk home and will probably recover.

LAST Friday the work of making the grade for the branch of the M. L. S. & W. R. R., between Hortonville and Oshkosh, was completed, and the large force of men thus employed were discharged. The work of placing the ties and laying the rails is now in progress and probably by the middle of December the trains will be running regularly to Oshkosh.

CHAS. BRIEDRICH, farmer, who recently furnished liquor to Indians at Shawano, contrary to the government statute made and provided, was brought in by Deputy Marshal Nowell Wednesday afternoon, to answer for the wrong-doing before the government authorities in Milwaukee. He will enter a plea of guilty through ignorance of the law, and receive sentence—*Milwaukee Wisconsin*.

PORTAGE Democrat: Instantly and without a note of warning, death chilled the life current of Mr. Edward Shipley as he sat last Wednesday afternoon on his bench in Peter Williams tailor shop at Cambria. He was seventy-three years of age and up to the very minute when he was observed to fall lifeless on the table he was apparently in excellent health. Heart disease was the cause.

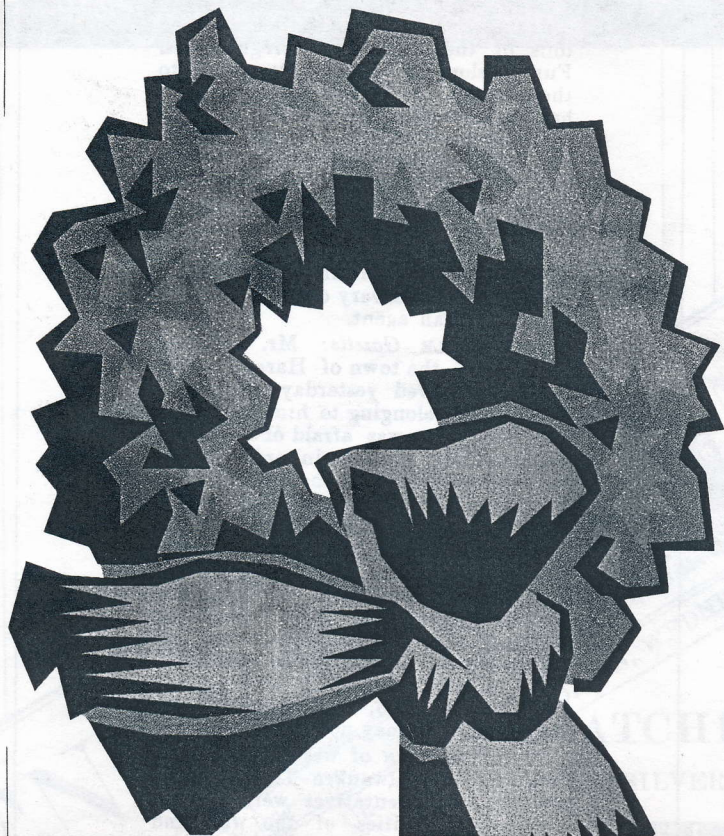
JOS. C. BRIDGMAN has fallen into the toils of the hunter of irregularities. Funds belonging to the government, to the amount of \$3,000, are alleged to have been "salted" by him while he was agent of the Green Bay Indian agency, and District Attorney Hazelton Tuesday afternoon filed an indictment against Bridgman, to which he pleaded not guilty, and gave bonds for his appearance for trial in the sum of \$4,000. There is also a civil suit against Bridgman, for the recovery of \$9,000 on his bond as Indian agent.

JANESVILLE Gazette: Mr. William Menzies, of the town of Harmony, was seriously injured yesterday by a young Clydesdale, belonging to him. It seems that the horse was afraid of a buffalo robe, and Mr. Menzies, in order to accustom him to it, took one upon his arm and entered the stable, with the intention of placing it in the manger. As he entered the stall the horse became frightened at the robe and kicked, striking Mr. Menzies in the head and knocking him down. In his fright he jumped on the prostrate man, who lay there unconscious for half an hour or so, when others of the family, missing him, went to the barn, and discovered his condition. He may not recover.

A CONVENTION of western druggists was held in Milwaukee Thursday and Friday. Representatives were present from leading cities of the west and northwest. The business of the convention was of no general interest to the public. The annual banquet was held at the Plankinton house Thursday evening.

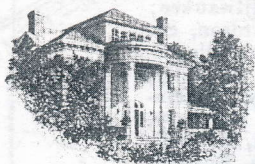
The officers of the organization for the ensuing year were elected as follows: President, H. H. Button, Milwaukee; vice presidents, J. C. Richardson, St. Louis; W. A. Robinson, Louisville; S. A. Tallman, Chicago; Geo. A. Kelly, Pittsburg; Robert McCreedy, Cincinnati; treasurer, S. M. Strong; secretary, D. R. Noyes; board of control, Mr. Williams, Detroit; C. P. Squires, Burlington; Fred. Dohmen, Milwaukee; Mr. West, Toledo.

MADISON Journal, 14: It will be remembered that some weeks ago the depot building in Sun Prairie village was entered by burglars, and the money drawer, containing a considerable amount of money and railroad tickets, taken away. All hope of recovering any portion of the stolen property was abandoned, the *Countryman* says, until last Sunday, when a young man walked into the depot with the money drawer under his arm. It contained a quantity of tickets and \$30 in cash. The young man, Wallace Austin, was out hunting, and while prowling through the brush on Pratt's hill, in search of game, discovered the lost money drawer, laying on the ground, bottom side up, and underneath was the property above mentioned. The cash was in a sealed envelope, and it is probable that in their hurry and fright the robbers overlooked it. Young Austin immediately delivered his prize to Mr. Morton, the Sun Prairie station agent, and received a liberal recompense for his discovery and its prompt delivery.



The Museum will be decorated
on December 3, 1997,
by the Reisbecks and Zimmermans.

Thanks for making us look
so festive for the holidays!



SOUTH WOOD COUNTY HISTORICAL CORPORATION

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