

SOUTH WOOD COUNTY HISTORICAL CORPORATION

ARTIFACTS

Volume 99. 2 1999

Summer



I would like to dedicate this issue of *Artifacts* to celebrate the birthday of our historical society President, J. Marshall Buehler. A card would have been easier, but an issue appropriate, we need the space to fully realize how devoted he is to maintaining the richness of our local heritage through story, active participation and documentation. For those unfamiliar with his contributions I shall list a few:

- always prepared to speak about the history of Port Edwards, Wisconsin Rapids or Nekoosa (complete with slides),
- demonstrations on steam engines, paper-making and "homebrew" with the still in the Museum basement,
- tireless volunteer introducing programs, serving lemonade or fending off centipedes while cleaning,
- contributing writer to the newsletter despite his inability to spell, and the "a" that is misaligned as his little finger slips through the keys of his manual typewriter.

I know he would rather be riding the trains in a distant mountain country, Switzerland and Russia are his favorite, but I am so thankful he remains loyal to the mission of South Wood County Historical Museum where he serves as mentor and history hero to all.

Happy June 21 Birthday Marshall!!



The Girls in the Attic...our new summer staff has begun to sift through the items in the attic labeled for additional preservation, assisting Karen Pecher in our next phase of collection management. **Jona Anderson, Andrea Anderson, Ursula Arnold, Jolene Arnold, Aubrey Aschenbrenner, Jamie Hahner, Stacy Lobner** and **Katie Milkey** have discovered the behind the scenes work museums encounter. They have been focusing on the clothing collection but found these report cards of interest and though they would be fun to share. Great job girls...and they thought trying on the vintage hats was fun!

Monthly Report.

Report of **Cora B. Gates**
for the month commencing
Sept. 18 and ending
Oct. 18, 1878.

Grammar,.....	70.
History,.....	61.
Physiology,.....	
Reading,.....	81.
Spelling,.....	80.
Writing, ..	
Arithmetic,.....	80
Geography,.....	78
No. of Times Tardy,.....	4.
No. of Whispers,.....	3.
No. of Days Present,.....	27
No. of Days Absent,.....	2
No. of Perfect Lessons,.....	
No. of Imperfect Lessons,.....	
Department, ..	<i>Very Good</i>
	W. E. SWAN, Teacher.

Monthly Report.

Report of **Cora B. Gates**
for the month commencing
Dec. 1 and ending
Dec. 31, 1878.

Grammar,.....	80
History,.....	65
Physiology,.....	
Reading,.....	86
Spelling,.....	93
Writing, ..	
Arithmetic,.....	99
Geography,.....	84
No. of Times Tardy,.....	5
No. of Whispers,.....	1
No. of Days Present,.....	18
No. of Days Absent,.....	1
No. of Perfect Lessons,.....	
No. of Imperfect Lessons,.....	
Department, ..	<i>Very Good</i>
	W. E. SWAN, Teacher.

ARTIFACTS

A publication of
South Wood County Historical Corporation
540 Third Street South
Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54494
(715) 423-1580

Editor: Pam Walker

ARTIFACTS is a publication that contains articles and information for the members of the South Wood County Historical Corporation. Its contents are not copyrighted.

CENTRALIA ENTERPRISE.

Wisconsin Valley R. R.

Trains arrive and depart at Centralia.

Going North.	Going South.
Pass. 9.50 A. M.	Pass. 5.47 P. M.
Freight 11.00 A. M.	Freight 11.00 P. M.

C. B. W & St. Paul Railroad Co.

Time of departure and arrival of passenger train at Green Bay.

Going west, leave at	6:30 a. m.
Arriving from the west at	9:00 p. m.
AT GRAND RAPIDS	
Going West leave	4:00 a. m. accommodation
" " " "	10:55 a. m. passenger
Going East leave	5:00 a. m. accommodation
" " " "	4:50 p. m. passenger
Arrive from the East	10:50 a. m.
" " " "	7:30 p. m.
Arrive from the West	4:50 p. m.
" " " "	8:50 a. m.

Official Directory-1883.

Sheriff.....	PETER McCANLEY
District Attorney.....	GEO. L. WILLIAMS
County Clerk.....	W. T. JONES
Treasurer.....	HENRY KUNTZ
Register of Deeds.....	PETER N. CHRISTENSEN
Clerk of Circuit Court.....	R. P. BRONSON
County Surveyor.....	WILLIAM SCOTT
Coroner.....	JOHN TIMM
County Judge.....	G. R. GARDNER
Circuit Judge.....	G. L. PARK
Co. Supt of Schools.....	EDWARD LYNCH

CENTRALIA WHOLESALE MARKET

CORRECTED WEEKLY BY GARRISON & WHITTLESEY.

Flour, per barrel.....	\$5 50
Wheat, per bushel.....	92
Oats, " ".....	46
Rye, " ".....	50
Potatoes, " ".....	50
Turnips, " ".....	15
Beans, " ".....	2 25
Peas, " ".....	75
Onions, " ".....	100
Corn, (in ear) per cwt.....	60
Corn Meal, " ".....	1 50
Butter, per pound.....	25
Cheese, " ".....	16
Lard, " ".....	16
Eggs, per dozen.....	25
Fresh Pork, in hog.....	6 50
Mess Pork, per barrel.....	21 00
Beef, on foot.....	3 60
Beef, dressed.....	6 00
Hay, (wild) per ton.....	5 00
Hay, (Timothy) per ton.....	10 00

—A large number of pretty school "marms" are daily walking up and down the sidewalks on their way to the institute at the school house. We have used our spy-glass from our office window, and have yet failed to discover a single one that is homely. And still, in that intoxicating atmosphere, Mr. Lynch, the superintendent, still remains a bachelor. What are you made out of, anyhow, Ed.?

—Garrison & Whittlesey's gray delivery horse "Lara" ran away last Saturday, spilling Mr. and Mrs. Duncan who were occupying the sleigh. The accident happened near Haertel's mill. The sleigh tipped over on the horse, the box covering him up entirely, excepting his legs. At that time, a man with a load of wood estimated at one and a half cords was coming along. His sleigh-runners passed over Lara's legs, but did not break them. After the team had passed the horse got up and came down town carrying the vehicle on his back, and was relieved by the clerks, who removed the box and running gear, just as one would an over coat from a man's back. Nobody hurt.

HERE AND THERE.

PERRY H. SMITH, a Chicago millionaire, is insane and an application for a conservator has been filed.

WHILE officiating at a marriage in Peru, Ill., on the night of the 6th inst., Rev. George F. Bronson, pastor of the Congregational Church of La Salle, fell dead at the feet of the couple just as he had pronounced them man and wife.

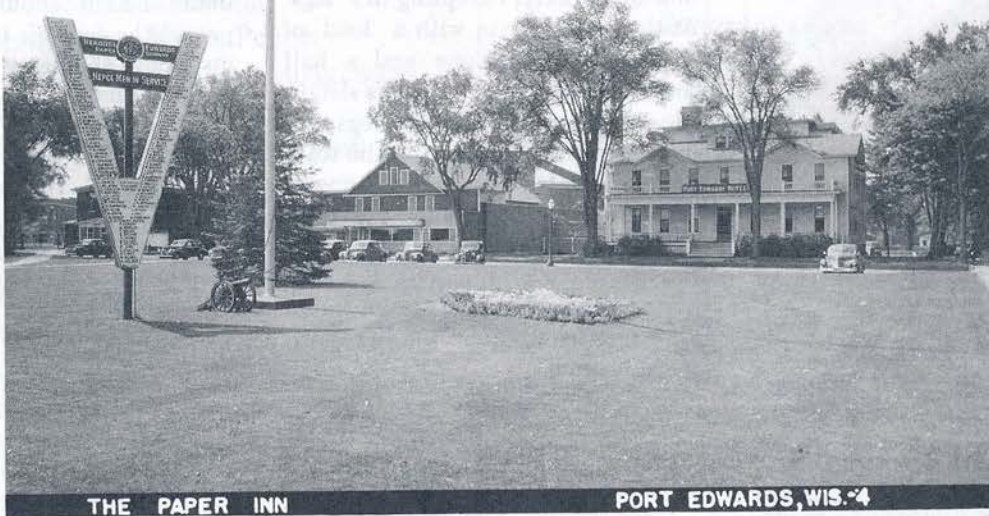
—A lively runaway occurred last Sunday. The team of a Polander going to mass, was frightened near the church, becoming unmanageable and throwing him and his sister out of the wagon. The horses came across the bridge at a 1.44 gait, and capsized at the corner of N. Johnson & Co's shed. No one was hurt except the wagon tongue and the solid board fence. No insurance.

—Pat McHugh was shot by some unknown party while sweeping in front of his saloon yesterday (Thursday) morning. The ball entered under the left shoulder blade and passed through his body coming out just above the heart. He is at the hospital doing well.—*Wisconsin Pinery*, April 20th.

The Enterprise is enterprising—it still continues to advertise the Roche House as being an excellent place to stop at when the building was totally destroyed by fire the 19th of January last. According to the "ad." Jos. Gervais is at the Rablin old stand. Such advertising must pay big.—*Reporter*.

This is the first time the Reporter speaks about us with common civility. We will cheerfully explain, and answer in the same spirit. Our advertisements are printed in Milwaukee. They look better, you know. They almost all run to the 1st of January or the 21st day of May. Both the "ads" referred to have paid regular rates in advance, and Mr. Gervais' will be changed next week. We can't say that they *paid big*, but they paid reasonably. When we make a contract with a party for one year, we keep advertising for him or her, unless otherwise ordered, whether they burn up, move away or are pulverized by an earthquake. This issue will contain many new ones that will run one year. Look at them, boys, and pass your opinion on them. By the bye, why don't you secure a little more home business, instead of filling up with "Kidney-Wort, Lydia Pinkham, Manhood how lost, Indiscretions of youth, Parker's Hair balsam, Ginger tonic, Floreston Cologne and all such confounded humbugs?

—*excerpts from Centralia Enterprise 1883*



Model Village

Marshall Buehler's
Port Edwards

Memories of an ideal boyhood—

Excerpts from an interview with Dave Engel

At Alexander House, June 11, 1999

Barbaree

Did you ever hear of 'Barbaree?' It was a team type game. 'Can I be on your team tonight?' 'Yeah, sure.' So there were probably ten or twelve kids on a team. It was a hide-and-seek thing that ran all over town.

One team would go and hide. You'd sound them out by hollering, 'Lost trail!' Then the other team had to holler in unison, 'Barbaree!'

It was good for passing a hot evening.

Lemon Aid

Tom Coldwell, John Watson and myself built a lemonade stand and mounted it on a wagon. A lot of kids had lemonade stands out in front of their house, a penny a glass for lemonade. But ours was mobile.

At four o'clock we'd go down to the mill with a fresh supply. As the fellows came out of the mill, we'd be there.

During the day, we'd park in front of my dad's store and catch the ladies going in. We maybe made fifty cents a month that we had to split three ways.

Bear Hugs

We would ride our bikes up to Edgewater nursing home: the Poor Farm.

That's what it was called then. Go up there and take a bag lunch along. They had a couple picnic tables out in back.

Where those wings are now, was a zoo. They had a bear; they had deer; they had monkeys.

There was a caretaker named Jim Case. I think he lived at Edgewater and I think he was kind of a janitor. He would come out and feed the animals for us. He'd go in the bear den and the bear would stand up on his hind legs and he'd put his arm like this and they would fake wrestling.

The Bus

For Saturday afternoon cowboy shows, we'd take the bus up to the Rapids theater by the Wood County Bank.

We had a bus every hour. I think it was a dime. I think the bus fare for a kid was a nickel to Nekoosa and seven cents to the Rapids.

I took the bus to Nekoosa, to parochial school, every day, and I took it home from school for lunch.

When I got in high school, a lot of Boy Scout activities were at Wisconsin Rapids. We'd also go to dances the Catholic Youth Organization, CYO, used to have at St. Peter and Paul's school gym. Take the bus up.

In my case, it was fun to miss the bus home; then we'd take the night train. I think that cost three cents more, a dime. It left the Rapids around quarter to ten.

The bus ran all the way through World War II. The train was abandoned later.

The Train

I love trains and my dad did too.

There was a train that went through here about 2:15 in the afternoon. It went to New Lisbon where it met a train that was going to Chicago. It would stay there an hour and a half to two hours. Then it would come back, get here about 5:30.

Dad would put me on that train, when I was in seventh or eighth grade, and send me to New Lisbon, telling the conductor 'Don't let him get off the train.' I'd go there and sit on the train an hour and a half and then come back.

Dad went to the World's Fair in Chicago two years in a row. In 1934, I went with him. Took the sleeper, no less, the Pullman, from Port Edwards. Got on the train around ten o'clock at night. He and I shared a lower berth and arrived in Chicago the next morning.

Radio Club

In high school, I was in the choir, the camera club and the archery club. All these things met after school, usually at 4 o'clock. In the evenings there were basketball games, there was play practice.

The radio club met in the evenings because our adviser was the administrator. He'd go back to school at seven o'clock where you sat and learned the Morse code, listening to tapes and records.

Tom Coldwell and I were doing a lot of work in the camera club for the school annual. The principal just said, 'Here's a

key. You two fellows just go over and work whenever you want.'

We'd go over on a Sunday afternoon, walk into school. There was no security system. Unlock the door, lock ourselves in, go and work in the darkroom for two or three hours.

We'd go in the lab and start conducting our own experiments. We got samples of all the different brands of car lubricating oils and we ran flash points and fire points and some other tests, kind of a Consumers Union type evaluation.

Skating Pond

In winter, the ice pond would be jammed every evening. At least 100 kids on a Friday or Saturday night. It was lighted. They played music, toward the end.

That's where you met your girlfriend and laced her ice skates up for her. Or else you walked over to Ole Boger's ice cream and confectionery store.

Ole Boger used to put a piece of old canvas on his floor so people that came in with their ice skates on wouldn't cut the linoleum up. Don't walk on the floor!

He had the best selection of candy, better than my dad had. Except for the Boger kids. They thought my dad had a better selection.

Licorice was my favorite. You could buy a stick of licorice for a penny. Or a licorice cigar which had a little red sugar coating on the end to make it look like it was burning.

The ice pond didn't open until about four o'clock. It would stay open until around nine o'clock. They didn't actually kick you off the ice but the warming shed closed and the lights went off.

Boy Scout

My dad, being in the grocery store business, had hours from 6:30 in the morning until 6:30 or 7:00 in the evening and never had time to take us camping or anything like that.

The Boy Scouts gave me that outing that he wasn't able to. I really lived it up. When they didn't offer enough troop-sponsored events, the three of us, Coldwell, Watson and myself, would get together. We'd take a tent and a sleeping bag and our food and water and ride our bike to some remote place and camp.

Did my parents worry? I don't honestly know. We'd tell them we were going out to Moccasin Creek to camp overnight.

The very first time I ever went on an overnight camping trip was with the Boy Scouts out to Nepco Lake. It was the first time I had ever slept outdoors. It rained like the dickens that night.

I found out later that my mother woke my dad up when it started to rain and said, 'You better go out and get Marshall.' He refused to do it. Thank God he did! They would have laughed me out of the Boy Scouts.

Depression

My wife, Pat, tells about her dad, who was a pipefitter. There was no work in the mill. They weren't wearing anything out because they weren't running. She said they'd give them a day's work or maybe two peeling bark off logs. The company was being good to them.

On a Sunday afternoon, Mother and Dad and I and my sister, who was just a baby, would get in the car and we'd go out collecting bills. I can remember my dad saying, 'If we can collect a dollar, we can go up town and have a root beer.'

He'd go up and knock on the door and people would say, 'Here's a quarter.

That's all I can afford this week.' Fifty cents. If he got a dollar all together, we'd go up to the A&W root beer stand in Rapids and spend a dime for two regular root beers and a small, free one for me.

Hobos

They came in the store regularly, every summer during the Depression. My dad would recognize them. 'Oh, I remember you. Where you been this past winter?' They'd take anything you gave them. Usually Dad would go along the bread and feel them for one that's a little hard. Or a package of donuts, whatever was old. In the meat department the common item was the end of a stick of bologna. A chunk of that and a loaf of old bread. That was the common bill of fare that we gave them.

Gypsies

The word would go out, 'The Gypsies are coming.' They traveled in caravans of old cars with stuff tied to the roof and on the fenders.

There were only two stores in Port at this time. One would notify the other and they would lock up for a couple hours until the Gypsies moved on.

They used to come in and one would engage Dad in a conversation, trying on a pair of shoes and someone else would be lifting the merchandise.

They used to camp at Lyons park at the campground. And down at Nekoosa there was a campground right behind the bank building. Port didn't have anything like that so usually they would move on through Port Edwards.

Baskets for Sale

The Native Americans lived out on the marshes at Cranmoor. I guess they'd make baskets during the off-cranberry season maybe and come into town

selling baskets, everything from a big clothing basket to a little blueberry picking basket. I remember them knocking on the door.

WWII

The Boy Scouts had some lucrative things during the war. About four times a year, the village would loan us a dump truck and the boys would go out on a Saturday and collect papers. Nekoosa Papers used to give us their old tabulating cards. We used to sell those separately because they commanded a premium price.

Once in a while, we'd have a scrap iron drive. The village would loan us a truck. Nekoosa Papers usually had a truck also. They would donate some old scrap iron to start it off. So we had an income for our troop. If you worked every single drive, you got your week at camp almost for nothing.

Victory Gardens

The paper mill made land available for Victory Gardens, and I think they even plowed it. You took the vegetables to the school, and canned them in jars or tin cans. It was mostly women, though my mother didn't get involved. That was competition for the store.

Boys Club

We had a boys club, which has been replaced by the YMCA. It was initially started by John Alexander and the paper company.

We had a garden. All we raised was green beans. Our entire crop was sold to Sampson cannery.

In the morning, you'd work at odd jobs around the village: cutting grass, raking leaves, cleaning basements, washing windows. All the money went to the club. It paid for your camping.

In the afternoon you played games, baseball, swimming.

There was a very close relationship between the mill and community activities. 'Here's a piece of land, go plant your beans. You want to go swimming this afternoon, okay, we'll send a truck over and haul them out. Bring them back at four o'clock.'

They plowed the streets in the winter time with a great big Caterpillar tractor that had an enclosed cab and a V-shaped plow on the front.

The Alexanders

John and Dorothy Alexander were good citizens. They attended the school events. They would be there at the men's club dances with the rest of the village people. I think John knew all the workers in the mill by their first name.

As a kid, I used to play with one of the Alexander daughters my age, Joanne. When I went to work for Nekoosa Papers as a full-time employee, which was 1952, I'd see him and I'd say, 'Hello, Mr. Alexander.' I was in my early twenties at that time.

He finally told me one day, 'I've known you since you were a little kid. If you don't quit calling me Mr. Alexander and start calling me John, I'm not going to respond to you.'

It was John Alexander that was president during the Depression. It was John, who was trying his damnedness, in the face of the bankruptcy the mill faced, until they got a loan from the Bank of Milwaukee. It was John, who was looking after the welfare of his employees.

Domestics

The L.M. Alexanders had Mrs. Britten. She was a colored woman who lived in Port but went home to Nekoosa on weekends. Her sons were basketball

players at Nekoosa high school. I think one was Sam and one was Paul.

John Alexander had quite a staff. There were two ladies, both from Nekoosa. In the summertime, they would hire a third one because they would move out to Nepco Lake, where they had a summer home, so the kids would have transportation into the village to play with friends or someone to watch them when they were swimming.

We had a maid too. The first one was Nina Kruger. Her dad ran the Switch tavern. Then we had another one. We had three different maids. They didn't live with us because we didn't have room. These women would come in time to make breakfast for us in the morning. They'd stay all day long and go home after supper. This is during the Depression and you could get a girl out of high school for a dollar a day maybe.

Model Village

Was Port Edwards a company town? Yes! But it didn't hurt us. It was an advantage.

Port Edwards was always looked on as somewhat of a model village. People used to say that we were better off than Nekoosa because the mill management lived in Port Edwards: John Alexander, the sales manager, the vice presidents. That the mill looked out more for Port Edwards than Nekoosa. I'm not sure that's true; maybe it is.

Port Edwards has always been a clean village. John Edwards used to sell white paint at a reduced price just so you could keep your property well-painted. That included your house, your outhouse, your sheds, your barn. They had the mill down there sponsoring a lot of these programs like the tree planting on the boulevard and the plowing of the streets.

It was written into your deeds that it shall not be used for the sale of alcoholic beverages. We didn't have any taverns, so there were no brawls or fights. You never saw a drunk on the street.

The street lights were turned off about eleven or twelve at night. In the wintertime they were turned back on at 5:30 or 6 o'clock in the morning. Why waste electricity?

I only recall seeing one fight between two men in Port Edwards. It was over a bill that was outstanding at the other store. That made quite an impression.

The Bandstand

On the southwest corner of Market and First, maybe half a block from my home was the village bandstand, right next to the old village hall, which today is Johnny's Rapids Inn. The high school band put on routine concerts there during the summer months.

When they abandoned that program, they would hang a big bed sheet on the north side of the town hall and they would project movies there. People just sat on the grass or brought a folding chair.

The sponsor was Bill Randrup's root beer stand that was built on exactly the same site the bandstand was. At intermission, you were supposed to be buying root beer and popcorn.

Shopping Center

The shopping center was John Alexander's dream.

Prior to that, Dad had a big wooden store. There was the Port Edwards mercantile right across the street, another big wooden store. The dentist office was located in the back of the drug store. The barber shop was a little wooden building tagged on to one of the grocery stores.

His idea was, after World War II, to build a very modern shopping center and put all these businesses in one. He got the business people together and took them on a trip down to Milwaukee, overnight, where they visited some shopping mall down there. Came home and offered to build it.

My dad, who had wanted a new store for years said 'Sure.' All the business people except one, Port Edwards Mercantile, went in.

The mill built the shopping center. At the time it was a state of the art retail merchandising center. We've been very fortunate having the mill and its management.

Halloween

Halloween. It wasn't trick or treat. You just went out and did pranks.

As young kids, the biggest prank we could do was soap windows of businesses or houses. A bar of soap—everybody got their windows soaped. It was easy, you just took a wet sponge and it washed off.

If you really wanted to get even with them, you used paraffin wax or an old candle. That almost took a razor blade or a solvent. That's about the only thing I engaged in.

That row of outhouses over on First Street? Those outhouses were all tipped over on Halloween morning.

It was very common to see somebody's underwear flying from every flagpole. They used to have a little cannon over by the flagpole in the park down there. It would end up in the river.

My dad's store had two entrances and it had about four steps, wooden steps going up. Invariably, those steps might end up somewhere a half a block away, as far as they could drag them before they got tired.

Not anything that really cost anybody any money but it would take a little effort. You had to right that outhouse. You had to drag those steps back and nail them on. You had to fish that cannon out of the river. You had to wash those windows.

That was Halloween.

Paul Gary

As a kid I remember Paul Gary, a single fellow who lived in the hotel where the administration building is down here. He originally worked in the mill; he was sort of retired because he lost his arm right above the elbow. I'm tempted to think it was in a mill accident.

When Paul Gary would take his walk, kids would follow him. 'Hi Mr. Gary. Got any candy, got any gum?' And he always had a piece of candy or a stick of gum for each kid. Or if he didn't, he'd give them a penny for a piece.

Curfew

The town lived by the mill whistle. You lived by it. It got you up at six in the morning. It blew again at 6:45, then at twelve noon for lunch, at five to one, at one o'clock. It blew at four in the afternoon to let you know it was time for supper and at 8:45 in the evening.

At 8:45, it was called the curfew. I don't know why they picked 8:45 unless it was to follow the same philosophy my parents had.

Fifteen minutes to get home. And if you weren't home by nine, you got your bicycle locked up for a week. Dad would be waiting to slip a padlock on the chain on the bicycle.

When the whistle blew, you knew you better abandon whatever you were doing and head for home.

Johnson, James and the Johnsons, I own Paris



Madison Brass and the Museum Lawn Party



Sunday, July 18, 1999

Performances at 1:00pm and 3:00pm

Ice Cream Social



**SOUTH WOOD COUNTY
HISTORICAL CORPORATION**

540 Third Street South
Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54494-4352

To: