

Historic Portage Informational Signs

Historic Preservation Commission



PORTAGE HISTORIC
PRESERVATION COMMISSION

DEATH BEYOND THE WILLOWS THE BRIDAL POND

A HISTORIC TRAGEDY

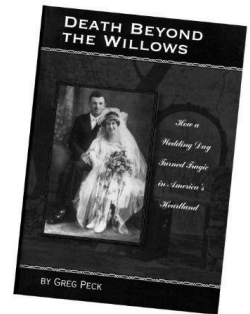


John & Hazel (Ferguson) Pinkl
as they appeared on their wedding day.

On the foggy evening of September 27, 1927, two newlyweds driving to their honeymoon retreat in Reedsburg, missed the curve at Highway 33 and plunged into the murky waters of the Armstrong's clay hole. They died instantly. Pinned to their chests were the rosebud flowers they wore at their wedding ceremony just hours before in Marshall; an old shoe and "just married" sign were still attached to the bumper.

It may seem like a morbid event to remember, but the tragedy at the clay hole inspired a famous novelist to write a story, which forever changed Portage. Zona Gale, a Pulitzer Prize-winning writer and Portage native, immortalized the watery grave pond by writing a short story titled "Bridal Pond," based on the wedding day tragedy.

The pond is a monument to the planning that gave us beautiful Pauquette Park. Two years after the accident, the city bought the clay hole and the surrounding area for a park. Local luminary Zona Gale was on the newly - appointed Parks Board that would oversee the design of the park. The board enlisted internationally - acclaimed urban and parks planner, John Nolan. The Bridal Pond is a municipal treasure that has been commemorated in many ways throughout the years. It has been featured on postage stamps in four different years. But within the verdant elegance that surrounds the Bridal Pond, live the spirits of a young couple. A wedding ceremony in the area is not complete without a visit to the Bridal Pond.



"Death Beyond The Willows" by
Gregory Peck of Janesville, Wisconsin
A new book about the Pinkl families life
and tragedies.

Sign Located at:

**Pauquette Park
Corner of West Cook Street & Pierce Street
Portage, Wisconsin**

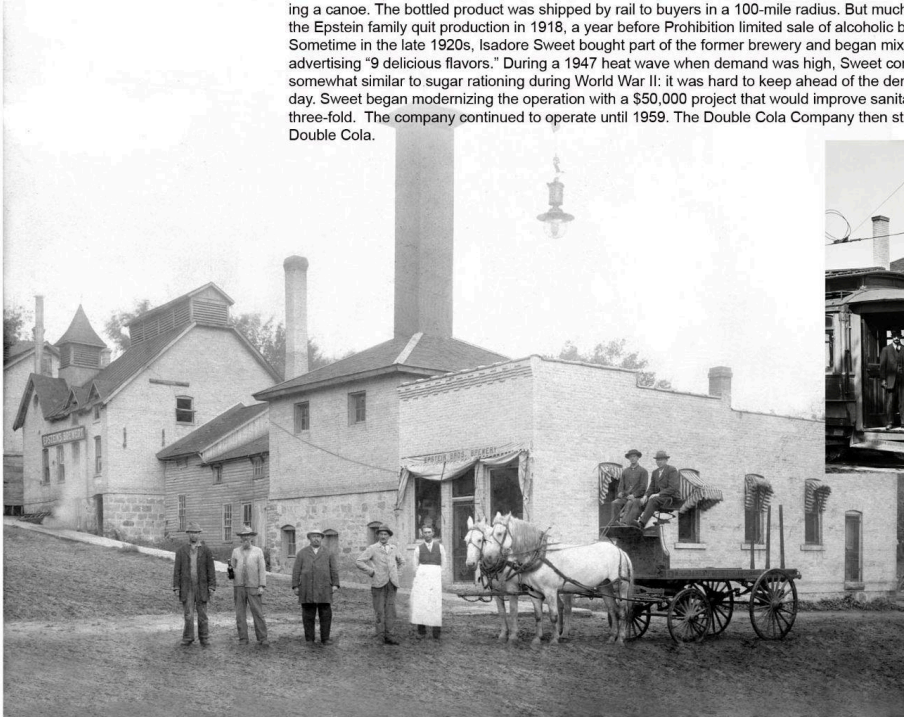


PORTAGE HISTORIC
PRESERVATION COMMISSION

EPSTEIN BREWERY SWEET BOTTLING CO.

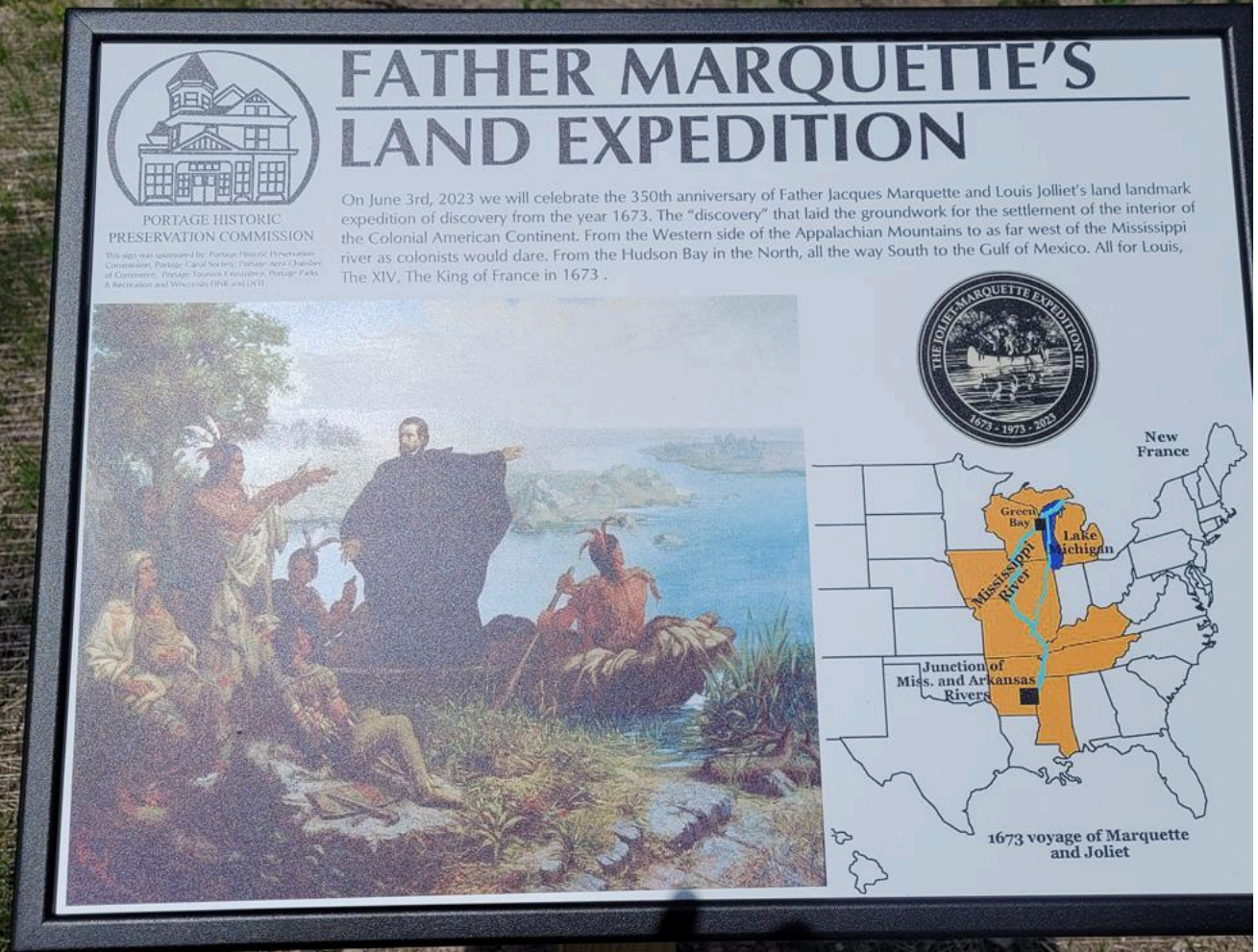
Harry Epstein saw growth potential when he purchased a brewery from Michael Hettinger in 1875. Born in Germany, Epstein was the brewmaster at a brewery in Baraboo when he brought his skills to Portage. He added three buildings to the property on East Edgewater Street (then called Canal Street) and upgraded many aspects of the operation and was soon filling 500 barrels annually. After his death in 1901, his widow Anna and sons Henry Jr., Charles, William, Philip and Alfred added more buildings to the property, included a saloon, a bottling facility and a brick barn. The company's trademark featured a Native American portaging a canoe. The bottled product was shipped by rail to buyers in a 100-mile radius. But much larger breweries were on the horizon competing for business, and the Epstein family quit production in 1918, a year before Prohibition limited sale of alcoholic beverages.

Sometime in the late 1920s, Isadore Sweet bought part of the former brewery and began mixing and bottling soft drinks. In 1938, Sweet Bottling Company was advertising "9 delicious flavors." During a 1947 heat wave when demand was high, Sweet commented that a shortage of returned bottles had an effect somewhat similar to sugar rationing during World War II: it was hard to keep ahead of the demand. A year later the plant was churning out about 400 cases each day. Sweet began modernizing the operation with a \$50,000 project that would improve sanitation and automate machinery, thereby increasing production three-fold. The company continued to operate until 1959. The Double Cola Company then started bottling their brand at the plant: Kist, Cheer Up, Ski and Double Cola.



Sign Located at:

**Ice Age Trail along Portage Canal
East of Adams Street
Portage, Wisconsin**



Sign Located at:

**Ice Age Trail along Portage Canal
East of Adams Street
Portage, Wisconsin**



HEINZ PICKLE PLANT

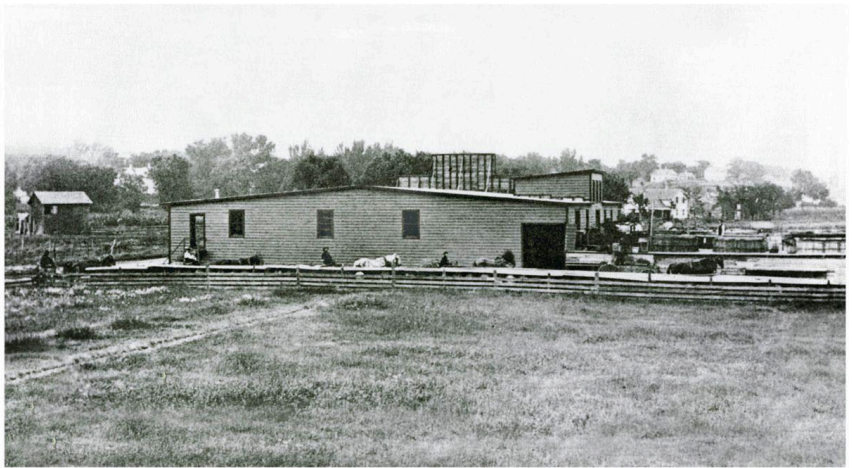
In the last quarter of the 19th century, Wisconsin was in a leader for growing fruits and vegetables. The light sandy soil north and east of Portage was especially well-suited for growing cucumbers. Initially the manufacturers operated their own farms, but soon small family farms also began to grow the vining crop to sell to the manufacturer, recognizing that it brought another source of income to the farm. By the turn of the century there were 49 vegetable processing facilities in Wisconsin, with Columbia County among the leaders.

In 1903, the H. J. Heinz Company based in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania was offered a site at Brady and Colt Streets in Portage and contracts were secured from area growers to supplement crop grown by the company. The going rate was 50 cents per bushel with an average of 100 bushels per acre expected, providing a tidy source of income for a family farm, especially if the family was large enough to supply all the labor. A large quantity of dill was also needed, adding another potential income source for the farm family. After World War II, Heinz provided camps for laborers working for local growers, with one camp on County Highway EE northeast of Portage. Growers were expected to harvest cucumbers at least every other day and deliver fresh product to the salting station where employees sorted the cucumbers and brined them, then packed them for shipment by rail to a pickle factory in Muscatine, Iowa or Holland Michigan. H. J. Heinze continued to operate the plant in Portage until 1971, providing seasonal employment for city residents and extra income for area growers.

Written and edited by Jane Considee



**PICKLES
BY THE
BARREL**



Five teams of horses are lined up before the pickle tanks.

This sign was sponsored by: Portage Historic Preservation Commission, Portage Canal Society, Portage Area Chamber of Commerce, Portage Tourism Committee, Portage Parks & Recreation and Wisconsin DNR

Sign Located at:

**Ice Age Trail along Portage Canal
East of Adams Street
Portage, Wisconsin**



**PORTAGE HISTORIC
PRESERVATION COMMISSION**

This sign was also sponsored by: Portage Canal Society, Portage Area Chamber of Commerce, Portage Tourism Committee, Portage Historical Society, Portage Parks & Recreation and the Wisconsin DNR, DOT and SHPO.

INDUSTRIAL WATERFRONT

Long before the City of Portage was chartered in 1854, the crossroads settlement was active and growing with many businesses already serving the surrounding area and Wisconsin River traffic from the northern pineries. The Fox River and the Portage Canal allowed travel northeast to Montello, Princeton, Ripon and beyond. The city was elevated above the surrounding marshy areas, providing a comfortable place for business to build and thrive. The arrival of the railroad in 1857 meant that products made in Portage were able to move quickly to much larger cities such as Milwaukee and Chicago. Much of the manufacturing in the 19th and first half of the 20th century occurred close to the Fox River, the canal and the railroad tracks. Some of the early ventures included feed mills, blacksmith and machine shops, and warehouses for storing ice, lumber, coal and seed. A tannery supplied leather for shoes, boots and harnesses, and lumber yards filled the needs of the newcomers building homes, agricultural buildings, offices and retail stores. Several monument companies found a source of granite in nearby Montello and at least one of those companies did business nationwide with a showroom in Chicago. The first brewery opened in the 1850s and was followed by a succession of family-owned breweries, with the last one closing in 1958. During prohibition, some of the breweries began bottling and distributing soda pop, an enterprise that continued into the 1960s. Wooden boats were designed and built from a shop on the canal, with the company supplying boats for Wisconsin Dells boat lines. Portage was also home to a "salting station" where growers brought cucumbers that were sorted and brined before shipment to other facilities for further processing. In the latter years of the 19th century, local investors opened a knitting mill where socks, mittens and hosiery were produced with 220 employees on the payroll in 1932. A woolen mill purchased wool and spun yarn operating at the former hosiery site until 1989. Investors also opened an underwear company in the 1890s. Like many Wisconsin cities and towns, Portage had a creamery for making butter, later bottling fluid milk. The building was later purchased by Ray-O-Vac for battery manufacture. A local ice cream manufacturer operated from 1935 to 1977. Many of these businesses are gone now, replaced by manufacturing facilities that use modern technology, an array of healthcare providers, a retail sector with both large and small vendors, and individuals working in education, finance, government services and hospitality.

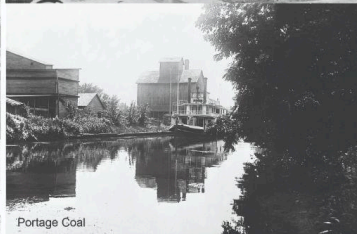
Written and Edited by Jane Connelley



Portage Creamery



Portage Hosiery



Portage Coal



Unloading Paper - Portage Daily Register



Sign Located at:

**Portage Canal
Between West Wisconsin Street & Adams Street
Portage, Wisconsin**



PORTAGE HISTORIC
PRESERVATION COMMISSION

KETCHUM'S POINT

RED BIRD'S SURRENDER

Two hundred years ago the parcel of land that we now call Ketchum's Point was the high ground between the Fox and Wisconsin Rivers, but highway construction and other development has reduced the elevation over the years. Asa Ketchum was an ambitious man and saw potential for the small settlement between the rivers. He was a real estate agent, selling parcels of land on the northeast side of the growing town, and the area came to be known as Ketchum's Point. He served in the state legislature in the mid-1800s, and along with Hugh Macfarlane was responsible for marshalling support to grant a city charter to Portage, and for promoting the city as the winning candidate to be the county seat.

Ketchum's Point is also the site for the surrender of Red Bird, long a respected Ho-Chunk leader, who is credited with sacrificing his own freedom and thereby reducing the chance of continued armed conflict between the U.S. military and the Ho-Chunk nation. The root of the conflict began early in the second decade of the 19th century when white settlers arrived to mine for lead in southwest Wisconsin, the ancestral homeland of the Ho-Chunk nation. Hostile encounters increased, fed by rumor and suspicion. The cycle of violence and revenge between the Ho-Chunk and the settlers and military came to a head when Red Bird was implicated in raid near Prairie du Chien that resulted in the death of two men and grave injury to a child. Local militia and soldiers caught up with the Ho-Chunk who had sought refuge near Portage. It is uncertain precisely who among the Ho-Chunk men was culpable for the deaths, but as a tribal leader Red Bird took responsibility. Near Ketchum's Point, and a solemn and dignified Red Bird, clad in white elk skin with colorful ornamentation, approached the soldiers slowly, ready to surrender and accept punishment to prevent further violence. Tradition holds that he stated he was ready to die, adding that "I do not wish to be put in irons." He and the other two men were imprisoned at Fort Crawford in Prairie du Chien, awaiting execution. A Ho-Chunk leader, Nawkaw, traveled to Washington D.C. to successfully petition President John Q. Adams to release the prisoners. Red Bird, however, perished in prison, possibly a victim of disease. The other two men were released. Red Bird is venerated among the Ho-Chunk for his selfless act that prevented more violence and retribution.

Written and edited by Jane Cosandine



Red Bird & Wekau



Looking toward Ketchum's Point, October 1950. New Hwy. 33 bridge in background. Canal passes under bridge in foreground.

Sign Located at:

**Ice Age Trail along Portage Canal
East of Adams Street
Portage, Wisconsin**

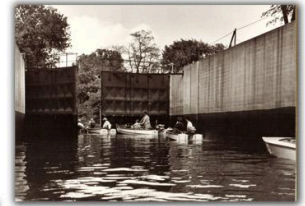
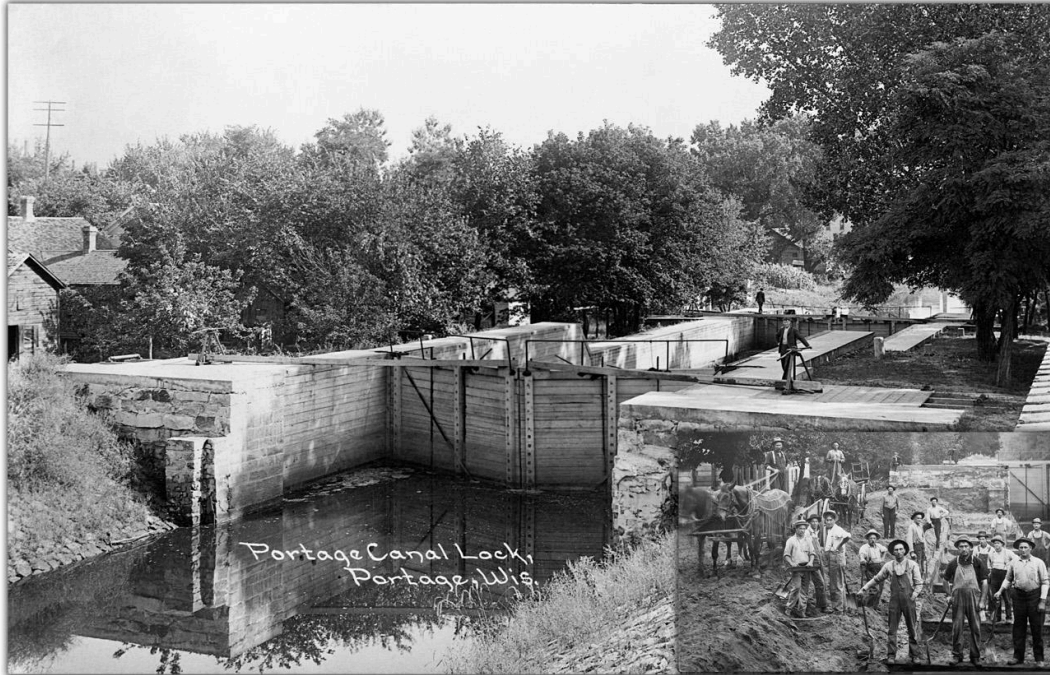


PORTAGE HISTORIC
PRESERVATION
COMMISSION

WISCONSIN RIVER LOCK

The Wisconsin River Lock (or Portage Lock) was first erected in 1851 at the west end of the canal. It was made of wood and functioned as a guard lock preventing the washing of sand from the Wisconsin River into the lock and canal. The lock had several revisions between 1859-1892. The Army Corp of Engineers rebuilt the lock as a "lift lock" between 1892-1893 and again after a flood in 1900. The 1900 renovation raised the walls of the Portage lock 3.5 ft, and between 1927-1928 the federal government reconstructed the lock using concrete walls and set new steel gates, which is the lock you see before you now. The lock measures 35 feet wide and 146 feet long. The "government crew" removed the sand from the Portage Lock and cleaned and painted the structure in 1937. The Army Corp of Engineers decommissioned the canal in 1951. The lock gates were welded closed, some of the hardware was removed and the banks surrounding the lock and canal were re-landscaped.

Excerpt from 1993 Historical Survey by Dr. Joyce McKay & Dr. Kathleen Taylor



The last lockage. Portage Boat Club 1951.



The walls were raised in 1900, but not high enough for the 1911 flood. Downtown Oshkosh floods.



A new lock is built in 1927.

Immigrants from around the world came to Portage attracted by the hope of work on the new Portage Canal. Many settled in the area after work was completed giving Portage it's rich and diverse cultural heritage.

This sign was sponsored by: Portage Historic Preservation Commission, Portage Canal Society, Portage Area Chamber of Commerce, Portage Tourism Committee and Portage Parks & Recreation

Sign Located at:

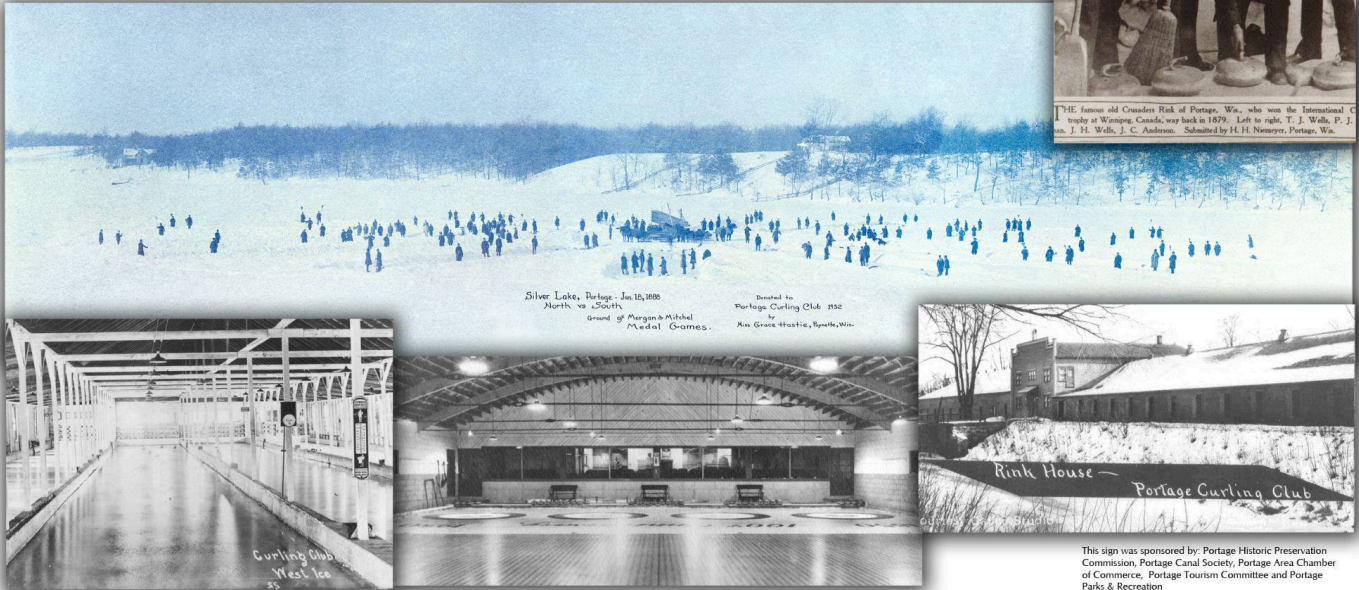
**Levee on Portage Canal
West of W. Wisconsin Street
Portage, Wisconsin**



Though the sport of curling has been part of Portage life for more than 150 years, it was a little-known sport until 1998 when it gained a spot on the world stage as an official sport at the winter Olympic games. Columbia County lays claim to five curling rinks, with the first one established in Portage in the 1840's. The sport was developed in Scotland, and likely introduced in Portage by Scottish immigrants who settled west of Portage in the Caledonia hills. In those early days the teams of four competed on the frozen Wisconsin River, Silver Lake or the Portage Canal. A player skidded a heavy stone across the ice aiming for a bull's eye at the opposite end of the rink and three teammates ran ahead, sweeping the ice to smooth the surface and affect the direction of the stone. The first curling stones were made from hickory, and it has been said that men sometimes used their wives' heavy pressing irons. Later rounded blocks of iron were used. Today the standard curling stone is a smooth 42 lb. granite disk with a forged handle attached. A three-sided shed was built over the canal to shelter two sheets of ice, and in 1910 the curling association constructed a fully enclosed building housing five rinks between the canal and the Wisconsin River. Fire destroyed the building in 1945 and the association constructed a new building about two miles north on W. Albert St. To this day, curling is a popular winter activity for both men and women in Portage and many friendships are forged on the ice.

Revised copy provided by Priscilla Taylor
1993 Historical Society by Priscilla Taylor, John J. Taylor & Dr. Kathleen Taylor

Revised copy provided by PHPC taken from
1993 Historical Survey by Dr. Joyce McKay & Dr. Kathleen Taylor.



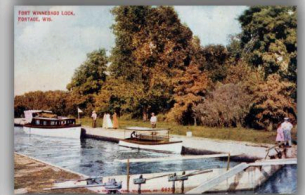
This sign was sponsored by: Portage Historic Preservation Commission, Portage Canal Society, Portage Area Chamber of Commerce, Portage Tourism Committee and Portage Parks & Recreation

Portage Canal Portage, Wisconsin



J.K. Koeppe and Herman Zadow founded the Portage Boat & Engine Company (PB&EC) in 1906 to build gasoline powered boats. Originally located on East Cook Street the business was moved in 1910 to West Mullett, on the Canal. Over the years the PB&EC built thousands of small pleasure craft and garnered the reputation throughout the Fox River Valley for producing "speedy" (7mph) and reliable boats. The company boasted that their boats were 100% made in Portage. Engines were made in a foundry once located on the Portage canal, and all other parts were made and sewn on site. The PB&EC maintained and repaired a growing fleet of pleasure boats that were often anchored in the canal. Sadly, by the late 1930's the company switched focus to automobile repair and left the boat building business.

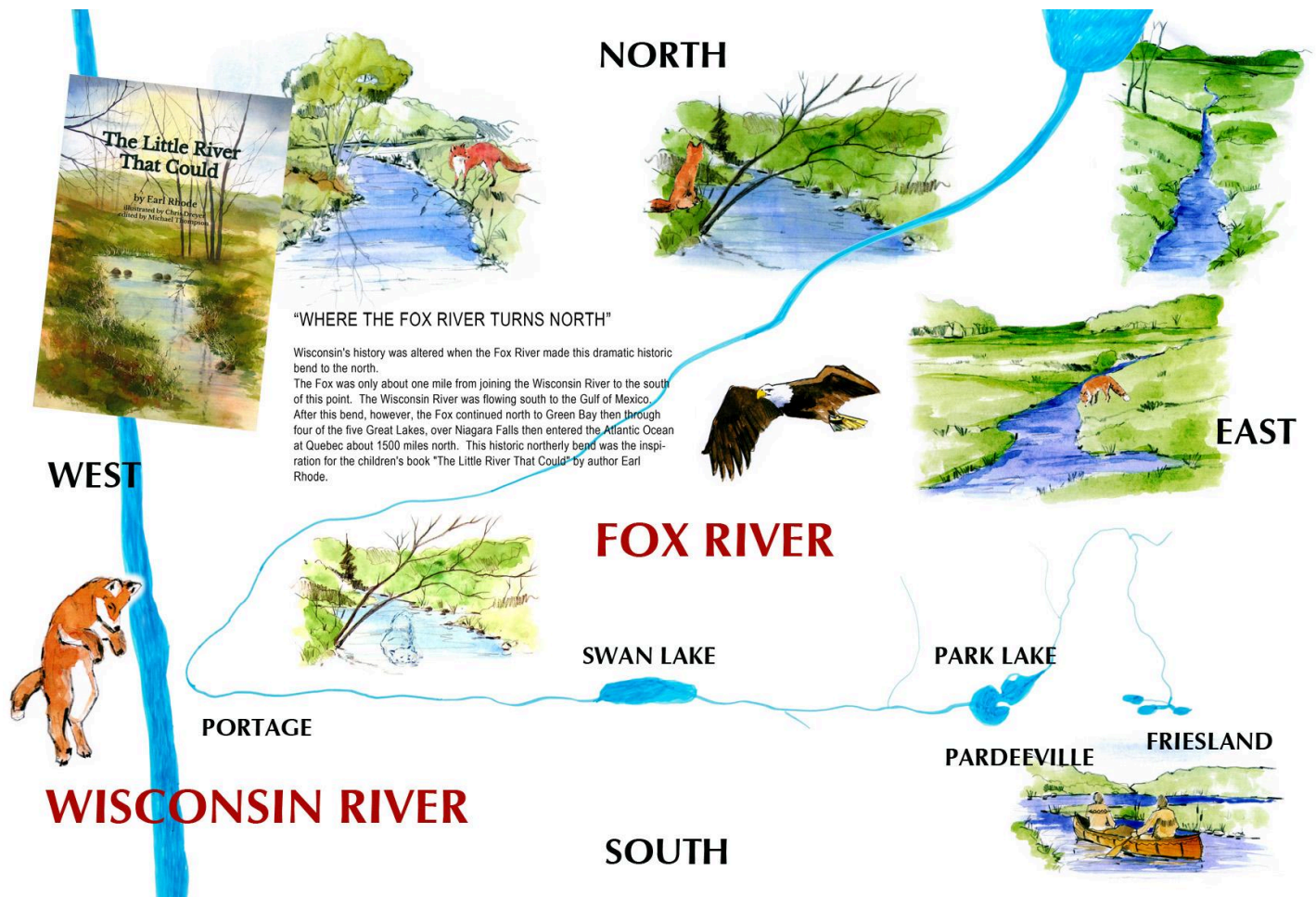
Excerpt from 1993 Historical Survey by Dr. Joyce McKay & Dr. Kathleen Taylor



This sign was sponsored by: Portage Historic Preservation Commission, Portage Canal Society, Portage Area Chamber of Commerce, Portage Tourism Committee and Portage Parks & Recreation

Sign Located at: Portage Canal
West of West Wisconsin Street
Portage, Wisconsin

WHERE THE FOX RIVER TURNS NORTH



Sign Located at:

Fox River north of City of Portage Fire Department Training Center
Corner of STH 33 and Wauona Trail
Portage, Wisconsin



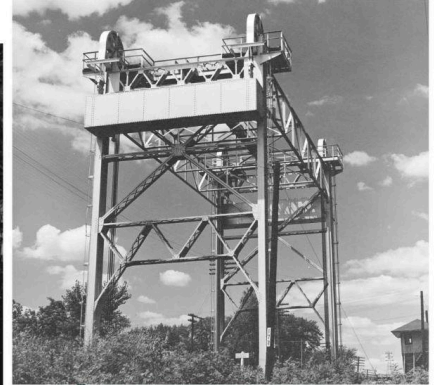
PORTAGE HISTORIC
PRESERVATION COMMISSION

RAILROAD LIFT BRIDGE

In 1937 construction started for a lift bridge to replace the swing bridge over the canal at "Portage Junction" where the tracks from various Milwaukee Road lines met. Although commercial traffic on the canal had dwindled substantially at that time, the Army Corp of Engineers still considered the canal a "navigable waterway" and as such was required to have a moveable bridge. When the lift bridge was completed it was inspected while about 50 observers watched it being raised and lowered. The record indicates that it was lifted only one other time, in 1940 when government and railroad officials were on hand to note that it performed as expected. Since there was no electric motor to perform the raise/lower function it took 13 men 14 minutes to raise, and 20 minutes to lower. By 1952 the Army Corps of Engineers had determined that it no longer required the bridge to raise and lower. The 85 ton counterweights were removed in 1958, and in 1968 the superstructure was removed.



The entire bridge and tracks were lifted vertically 30 feet into the air, so boats could go under.



The Morning Hiawatha rumbles over the Portage Canal bridge. In this June 1961 scene, the two 85-ton counterweights have been removed from the bridge superstructure, which itself will be dismantled seven years later.

Sign Located at:

**Ice Age Trail along Portage Canal
East of Adams Street
Portage, Wisconsin**

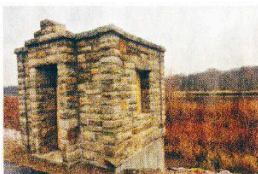
PORTAGE CANAL - WATCH HOUSE

Capital Newspapers

CURRENT A SLICE OF LIFE

Saturday, November 23, 2013 B1

All along the WATCH TOWER



The watch house along the Wisconsin River in Portage awaits door and window iron.

After 16 years, a piece of Wisconsin River history is standing once again

Craig Spychalla
Capital Newspapers

High above the banks of the Wisconsin River sat the watchman, looking over the murky waters in the dark of night.

With a wood stove to keep him warm, the watchman stayed at the ready to warn those living close to the river.

His job was to sound a siren on top the stone watch house, so those living near the river could evacuate. His job was to save lives.

In the 1930s, river flooding was an issue across Wisconsin, especially in towns like Portage which had a levee system that could be breached. When the river would rise, someone had to head to the watch house for the night to keep an eye on the rising water.

But as technology made the watchman's job obsolete over the years, the watch house became empty - relegated to a marker for those heading along the mighty Wisconsin.

In 1997, the Canal Society in Portage helped save the last watch house which was taken down as a stretch of levee was rebuilt.

But for those who grew up remembering the watch house, this would not be the last time the stone fortress would overlook the river. Their plan was to rebuild some day.

Neal Hurd was one of the men who helped take down the house, and a few weeks ago, he was one of many who helped put the watch house back together - stone by stone - recapturing a piece of river history.

"The (above) door stone is 740 pounds," he said of how hard the work was.

With help from Randy Vesely, Mike Bortz and several city of Portage workers, the watch house is back up, sitting high

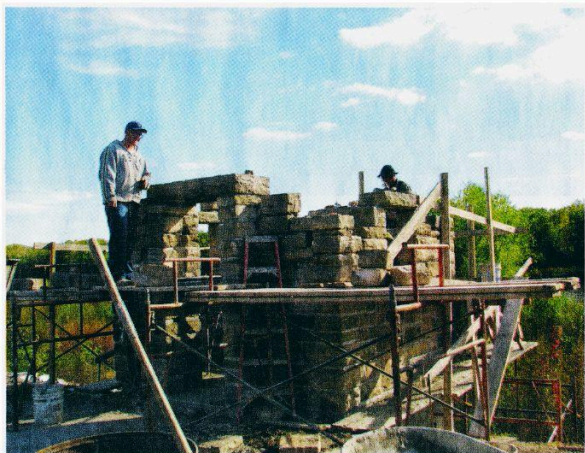


PHOTO BY FRED GALLEY

Randy Vesely and Neal Hurd work on rebuilding the watch house that was taken down in the late 1990s when the levee was redone. The structure dates back to the 1930s and was used to watch Wisconsin River levels.

atop the river again like a light-house.

Rebuilding such a structure about 75 years after the first one was crafted is not an easy job. But for those who remember the watch house as a landmark, they have been waiting 16 years for the return.

"We used to go down there (along the river) when they had flat bottom boat races," said John Anglim who grew up in Portage and still lives here. "My dad used to take us as kids. This was in the '50s. We sat (by the watch house) there and watched the boats go by."

Anglim said he believes the Civilian Conservation Corps - when President Franklin D. Roosevelt was in office - built

the watch houses.

"Down 100 feet from the Highway 33 bridge was another one, smaller," he said.

Anglim remembers stories from at least one person who stood watch in the building those nights with the cold wind racing up the river.

River towns have a long history of flooding in this state, but perhaps nothing quite like in September of 1938, when the Wisconsin River broke a record, cresting at more than 20 feet.

Reports came in from the Dells and communities up river, with large newspaper headlines warning residents to seek shelter, and a call for a few hundred men to be ready to stop the river from coming over the banks.

There were 17 miles of water to be watched.

When the river broke through part of the levee in Portage, trees, barbed wire, telephone poles, even two trucks, were used to fill the gap along Highway 51. And a city was saved from much damage.

About this same time watch houses were built out of large stones as a way to track the Wisconsin River that often washed over the banks. The small cabin-like structures were for those dedicated few who spent the night.

When the last watch house was taken down, Anglim said the stones were stored near the canal

Please see **TOWER**, Page B2

TOWER

From Page B1

locks in Portage, with the idea to build again.

But years went past, and the stones were nothing but rocks along the ground.

This past year, Bob Redelings, Public Works Director in Portage, contacted the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers who control the levee, to see if the watch house could be assembled once again.

Through old photographs, the watch house was reassembled - a few feet smaller, but the look is the same.

For three and a half weeks, the construction of the watch house took place this fall, with some of the stones weighing as much as 250 pounds.

"Walls are solid stone, about a foot thick. Building weighs 60,000 pounds," Hurd said.

The original craftsmanship of the stone-cutting was perfect, he said, adding that this was some of the heaviest masonry work he's ever done.

"Of all the people that came by, only two of them said we were doing that wrong," he said with a laugh.

Many of those who came past wanted to see a piece of river history again.

"I am elated," said Fred Galley, who has been one of the people working for years to bring back the watch house.

To complete the structure, iron rod windows and a door are being crafted. While the public will not be able to get inside the watch house, the structure will once again be a staple along the river.

"I'm happy it's back, part of our history," Anglim said.

After 1938, there were no more serious breaches of the levee, but the watchman was there for years in case something happened.

"I hope we can say (the watch house) will be there for another 100 years," Hurd said.

Keeping watch over the mighty Wisconsin.



WISCONSIN RIVER PAUQUETTE PARK

THE PARK

Pauquette Park commemorates Pierre Pauquette's role in early Portage. The site was an early source of brick for the Portage area. In 1828, it produced the brick for Fort Winnebago. William Armstrong's brick yard was established here in 1847. The yard produced 600,000 bricks per year at its peak, but closed between 1886 and 1890. The land was sold to the city and a park developed. Noted landscape architect John Nolan visited the site in 1914 and produced a set of plans for the park. In September 1927, a newly wed couple died when their automobile drove into the former clay pit. The tragedy stimulated the city to dredge the pit and create a rustic lagoon in 1928. The incident provided material for Zona Gale's story "The Bridal Pond" published in 1930. To this day, brides and grooms visit the pond on their wedding day.



THE PIERRE PAUQUETTE STORY

Perhaps no other man who cast his lot at the famous Fox-Wisconsin portage has left a richer or more colorful heritage than Pierre Pauquette, agent for John Jacob Astor's American Fur Company empire.

Pauquette arrived in the early 1800s to oversee the safe transfer of precious pelts across the scant mile of portage between the rivers, where they continued to European markets via the Fox, Great Lakes and St. Lawrence water routes.

He was born in St. Louis in 1793 of a French father and a Winnebago mother. In 1818 he married Theresa Crele, daughter of Joseph Crele, famous mail carrier between Green Bay and Ft. Winnebago. They lived in a small house at the east end of the portage where their two children, Theresa and Moses, were born.

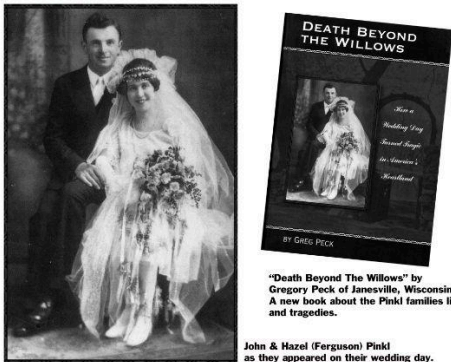
Hospitable, generous and kind, he was held in high esteem by all, particularly for his honesty and integrity. Having fluency in both Winnebago and French, he was engaged by the government as interpreter at council meetings held to arrange for the purchase of Indian lands between the Wisconsin and the Mississippi, and hopefully, the eventual peaceful removal of the tribes to new homes across the "Big River."

Though he could neither read nor write, he kept accounts for many Indians in his head by relying entirely upon his own memory and their honesty. He was held in virtual idolatry by the Indians who trusted him implicitly. He was said to have done more to cement the friendly relations between the red and white man than any other person.

He was a giant in both stature and strength, towering well above six feet and weighing 240 pounds. He was said to possess superhuman strength. Picking up heavy barrels with ease and harnessing himself with his team of oxen and helping to haul a heavily laden bateau across the swampy portage. In 1833 he built his new house close to his farm lands lying across the river, where he supervised the rafting of lumber carried on by the Winnebagoes, according to government treaty. He maintained his own ferry here in order to reach his other business interests several miles east at Ft. Winnebago.



A TRAGIC BEGINNING



"Death Beyond The Willows" by Gregory Peck of Janesville, Wisconsin
A new book about the Pink families life and tragedies.

John & Hazel (Ferguson) Pink as they appeared on their wedding day.

On a foggy evening, September 27, 1927, over 80 years ago, two newlyweds driving off to their honeymoon in a brand-new Chevy missed the curve at Highway 33 and plunged into the murky waters of the Armstrong's Clay pond. They died instantly. Pinned to their chests were the rosebud flowers they wore at their wedding ceremony just hours before in Marshall; an old shoe and "just married" sign were still attached to the bumper. It may seem like a morbid event to remember, but the tragedy at the Clay Pond inspired a famous novelist to write a story, which forever changed Portage.

Zona Gale, a Pulitzer prize-winning writer and Portage native, immortalized the watery grave pond by writing a short story titled "Bridal Pond," based on the wedding day tragedy. The pond is a monument to the planning that gave us beautiful Pauquette Park. Two years after the accident, the city bought the clay hole and the surrounding area for a park. Local luminary Zona Gale was on the newly appointed Parks Board that would oversee the design of the park. The board enlisted internationally acclaimed urban and parks planner John Nolan. Bridal Pond is a municipal treasure that has been commemorated in many ways throughout the years. It has been featured on postage stamps on four different years. But within the verdant elegance that surrounds Bridal Pond live the spirits of a young couple. A wedding ceremony in the area is not complete without a visit to the Bridal Pond.

THE WISCONSIN RIVER BRIDGE STORY

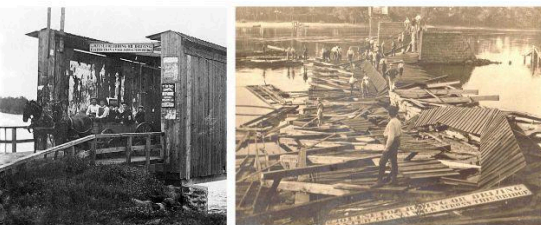


A ferry much like this one was used by Pauquette.

Pauquette Homestead and Ferry. Pierre Pauquette operated a ferry and trading post at this site between the mid-1820s and 1834. On what became the Barden property, he established a trading house, dwelling, and two or three farm buildings. Running the ferry from the south side of the river, Pauquette served travellers heading west across the Wisconsin. He ran the ferry from the south side of the river. After his death in 1836, Silas Walsworth and then William Armstrong operated the ferry until the construction of the first bridge at the site in 1857.



In 1856 the city of Portage and town of Caledonia took over the ferry charter and contracted with Hall & Lest of Philadelphia to build a 650 ft. long bridge which was completed in 1857. This original wood bridge after several replacements from flood and wind damage was replaced with a Howe Truss bridge in 1868. (Pictured above.) In 1869 the truss bridge was enclosed, and was destroyed by wind in 1905. (Pictured below.)



The Pan American Bridge Co. constructed a steel bridge in 1906. The current structure replaced the fourth bridge in 1964.

PORTAGE AREA TRAILS HERITAGE SYSTEM is a non profit organization dedicated to creating and maintaining trails in and around the City of Portage. PATHS is in need of volunteers in all areas of expertise. Please contact Fred Galley galleystudio@yahoo.com 608-742-6151 for volunteer opportunities. Donations are needed and tax deductible. Please send to PATHS, P.O. Box 181, Portage, Wisconsin 53901.