HISTORIC DATES OF PORTAGE

OF INTEREST TO CITIZENS AND HOME-COMERS.

DATES OF GENERAL INTEREST.

1843. Solomon Leach builds first sawmill near Wisconsin river bridge.

May 12, 1849. First buildings of old red brick and stone completed on Jefferson street.

1849. June 12. First soil broken for canal. Steamboat John Mitchell was first to pass up the canal.


1851. Sept. 28. Wisconsin river broke into canal, washing out banks.

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1852. Chas. Haeltl starts brewery.

1855. Smith & Blair build first iron foundry on Dodge street, 20 men being employed there in 1856.

1863. M. R. Keegan founded similar institution.

1865. Jas. Fyfe & Co. took business and opened foundry on site where H. A. Cull's mill on Wisconsin street is now located. In 1872 firm succeeded by Portage Mfg. Co., with A. E. Eggleston as superintendent; in 1883 Portage Iron works took charge, with Jas. Fyfe as manager; in 1878 he became sole proprietor; after John Anderson became partner and firm name reverted to Fyfe & Co. Later the plant was destroyed by fire and loss was so heavy it passed out of existence. John C. Anderson is now connected with the Webster Mfg. Co. of Chicago and is at head of Chicago home comers to Portage in 1908.


1860. First elevator built near Milwaukee road depot by S. S. Case.

1862. Wentworth elevator in first ward built.

1870. Fred Sieverkrop & Brother establish flour mill, corner Brady and Wisconsin streets. Later enlarged by new owners and destroyed by fire.

1871. Madison & Portage railroad extends sidetrack to Wentworth's elevator.


1871. N. H. Wood building on West Cook street built.

1876. Carnegie & Prescott enter partnership to conduct planing mill on East Canal street.

1877. April 15. The Turnverein (Vorwaerts) organized.

1879. R. B. Wentworth starts planing mill near First ward elevator.

1880. Building occupied by Ruddy & Coughlin built by H. Epstein.


1881. Oct. 4. Neenah Creek overflows and stops traffic on Wisconsin Central.

1881. Sept. 15. Excursion steamer Dell Queen wrecked on Kilbourn dam.

1886. Gas plant completed.


drowned in Silver Lake.


1877. First military company, known as Guppee Guards, organized and later succeeded by Co. F, which saw active service in Porto Rico campaign in 1893. The present Co. F was mustered in May 4, 1899, with 61 names enrolled. Present officers are: Capt., Guy F. Goodell; First Lieut., L. O. Mueller; Second Lieut., S. B. Ernsperger.

1879. Groth & Stotzer start Columbia County marble works in a building south of Ender House, on site now occupied by D. Buglass & Co.'s bakery. Sam'l Stotzer later bought plant and moved where Portage Steam laundry is now located. Later he built handsome structure on Wisconsin street, where his sons, Rudolph and Oscar, have succeeded him.

October, 1902. New eighty-foot chimney of Portage Hosiery Co.'s plant completed.


SCHOOLS.

The first high school was organized in August, 1859, with Prof. Jas. H. Maguffin as principal and Miss Abbey O. Briggs as assistant. First high school was situated on corner Adams and Cook streets, opposite present Baptist church. Ninety-five pupils were enrolled, among them being E. J. S. Wright, D. A. Hillyer, Agness Carnegie and Elizabeth Waters. Fifteen lots were bought of L. W. Barden for $460 on Franklin street, between DeWitt and Mac streets, and the contract for the old brick high school building let to Andrew Carnegie for $4,325 and corner stone was laid June 6, 1863. Four additional lots, extending to Emmett street, were purchased at $25 each from L. W. Barden. The building was first occupied April 4, 1864, with Prof. Maguffin and Miss Briggs as principal and assistant. Entire cost of building, site and furnishings was $6,052.13. In 1886 when Judge W. S. Stroud was superintendent of schools he called the attention of the inadequacy of the building. Feb. 6, 1895, plans for present high school were accepted, being drawn by W. A. Holbrook of Milwaukee. Dike, Schroeder & Co. of Milwaukee were the contractors and the corner stone was laid, Thursday, June 6, 1895. The contract price for the building was $28,289, the approximate price being $33,200. The handsome new building was dedicated Wednesday, Jan. 1, 1896.

April 4, 1864. Old High school building first occupied. Cornerstone of old building laid on June 6, 1863.

1874. Second and Fourth ward school houses built.

June 6, 1895. Cornerstone of new High school building laid.


CHURCHES.

December, 1850. First Presbyterian church opposite the jail was completed.

1855. The First St. John’s Episcopal church on East Pleasant street was completed. Burned to the ground Oct. 17, 1897. New brick church dedicated the following year.

February, 1856. Presbyterian church, corner Cook and Adams streets, now occupied by Baptists, completed.

Oct. 30, 1858. Baptists dedicate church on West Cook street, later transferred and now occupied by St. Mary’s congregation.

1871. Trinitatis church built.

1871. German Evangelical church, corner Lock and Howard streets, completed.

1874. German Lutheran church completed and Free Methodists purchased old frame structure which now stands near the corner of Jefferson and Pleasant streets.

1878. St. Francis’ Xavier church completed, corner Mac and Pleasant streets.

May 20, 1886. Cornerstone of new St. Mary’s church laid by Rev. G. W. Brady.

Sept. 22, 1895. Remodeled Evangelical Lutheran church dedicated.

Nov. 12 14, 1895. Madison district conference of M. E. church meets in Portage.

Aug. 27, 1899. First Methodist Episcopal church, corner DeWitt and Pleasant streets, dedicated.

Oct. 15, 1893. First Presbyterian
church, corner Clark and Pleasant streets, dedicated.

BREDS.

Oct. 10, 1857. First teams cross Wisconsin river bridge. Old bridge removed for $1,000, a Howe truss placed on some piers and bridge reopened in August, 1868. Cost of building and maintaining it from March, 1857, to March, 1871, was $119,624.02, the receipts for tolls during that time being $19,392. In October, 1869, bridge was boarded up and covered, and in July, 1870, 70 feet of roof was carried away by storm. A similar happening occurred in March, 1871. Up to 1879 the following toll rates were charged: Wagon drawn by horses, 10 cents; hogs and sheep, one cent each; horse and rider, 10 cents; foot person, 10 cents, with privilege to re cross once the same day. No toll was charged persons going to or from church, friends or city officers on official business. It cost $5 for privilege of crossing with a team for one year. Bridge totally destroyed by storm on Aug. 8, 1905. Temporary float bridge completed Sept. 5, Sept. 21, 1905, bridge bond issue of $60,000 carried at special election and Oct. 3 council accept Schillinger Bros. bid for the bridge abutment at $15,431.50. Pan American Bridge Co. receive $29,292 for superstructure of bridge. New bridge completed Aug. 1, 1906.

July, 1860. Temporary bridge finished across canal at junction of Wisconsin and DeWitt streets. In 1879 present iron bridge was built.

THEATRICAL AND AMUSEMENTS.

June 27, 1879. Cooper & Bailey's circus.

Sept. 15, 1879. Dullaghan's opera house opened by grand ball under auspices of Gappey Guards. Marie Stuart, with Mme. Jauauschek in leading role, was first traveling attraction on night of Sept. 19, of the same year.

Sept. 15-17, 1879. "The Battle of Alatoona" by local talent.

June 27, 1879. Adam Forepaugh's circus.

July 1, 1880. P. T. Barnum's circus.

May 11, 1886. Belva Lockwood lectures here.


May 10, 1886. Carl Gardner in "Karl, the Peddler" at opera house.

Aug. 18, 1886. Wallace & Co.'s circus.


FIRES.


March 31, 1856. Fire destroys old landmarks at Ft. Winnebago.

Dec. 21, 1859. Lee House destroyed by fire. Two years previous the saloon conducted in connection with the hotel burned and two lions, belonging to Col. Orton's circus, which were housed in the building, were liberated. The snow which had fallen during the day made the recapture easy and they were recaged.

April 5, 1860. Fire damages the Veeder House.


Jan. 19, 1863. $30,000 fire destroys W. D. Fox's storehouse, depot and buildings, and business places of Carl Schneider and T. V. Derksen, together with elevator of S. S. Case and 10,000 bushels of wheat and barley belonging to different parties.

Dec. 24, 1864. Fire damages Columbia county jail.

July 7, 1866. Section of business portion of city destroyed by fire. The losses included: Robt. Norris, grocery; Morris Collins, grocery; Jas. Malcomson, second-hand store; Louis Elterman, jewelry store; household goods of Geo. Helmann Sr.; Wm. Niemeyer, grocery, confectionery store and residence; John Versen, harness shop and residence; Andrew Kiefer, barber shop and residence; Donald Ferguson, residence. The women formed in line and aided Co. No. 1 by forming a bucket brigade. An old resident who recollects the fire said that the women at least saved the millinery store of Mrs. Wrightman.

June 9, 1869. Fire destroyed the tannery of Chas. Sternberg, on site just east of the Suessenguth residence on West Canal street.
Business Section of Portage Showing East Cook Street from Wisconsin to DeWitt Streets, the Scene of the Fire Run on Wednesday Night.

DUPLICATE EXPOSURE
April 11, 1870. Old four-story stone mill of Wells & Craig, situated at site of Pt. Winnebago lock, burned.


Nov. 15, 1875. Four horses and three cows burned in the Ellsworth House barn on site where H. G. Hylan’s livery is now located. [The Ellsworth House was later known as the Corning House.]

April 1, 1876. Geo. Port’s warehouse burns on the site where T. H. James’ saloon is now located.

Sept. 30, 1876. Emder House barn completely destroyed by fire.

Sept. 22, 1877. Dangerous fire starts in Pettibone block, but was extinguished.

May 1, 1879. Fire destroys P. H. Hays’ residence on site where Portage creamery is now located.


March 25, 1895. Fire causes $25,000 damage to stock of Breese, Loomis & Co.

Oct. 6, 1895. Old City Hotel destroyed by fire.

March 31, 1901. Part of Corning House block destroyed by fire.

May 2, 1888. Hildebrand’s livery barn in Holland beck block destroyed by fire. Thirteen horses, together with seventeen buggies, carriages and a hearse, were consumed in the fire.

FIRE DEPARTMENT.

June 6, 1863. First fire department of Portage organized with Jas. Collins as chief, L. T. Mead assistant, John Graham treasurer, S. S. Brannan secretary. Mr. Graham is the only one of the officers surviving. The old Oregon Company No. 1 was organized in the spring of 1864, with John Curry as foreman and John Schliessman assistant. A hand engine was the chief apparatus. Oregon company flourished two years and then disbanded. The only surviving members of that company are: Peter E. Mahon, Thos. Maloney and Michael Huber, and they are participating in the home-coming.

November, 1871. Hook and Ladder Co. No. 1 organized with Wm. Hensel as foreman, Chas. Prehn and Frank Tessman as assistants, A.