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From

The Portage (Wis.) Register

September 3, 1908.

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# 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 brewery on Jefferson street completed by John M. Hettinger. Later sold to Nauer & Gloeckler and in 1876 to Henry Epstein.

June 1, 1849. First soil broken for canal. Steamboat John Mitchell succeeds in passing up the canal as far as Veeder's. Improvements completed by government in June, 1876.

July 28, 1850. Schulze's band arrives from Germany.

April, 1851. Election locating the county seat in Portage.

Sept. 28, 1851. Wisconsin river broke into canal, washing out banks. Government afterwards placed docking and other improvements.

1851. Jos. Ludwig builds tannery at Wisconsin river locks in small log house; in 1852 built large frame structure, which burned later; in 1858 established manufactory, corner Canal and DeWitt streets, for boots, shoes etc. On the site is now located the two-story brick building occupied by C. F. Mohr's lumber office.

1852. Chas. Haertel starts brewery. 1855 erected three story brick building, corner Cook and Clark streets. Addition built in 1857. Capacity, 250,000 gallons annually. At death of Mr. Haertel in 1876 the management went to Jacob Best, a son in law, now a prominent business man of Milwaukee, and one of main promoters in bringing Milwaukeeans to Portage home coming in 1908.

1853. Smith & Blair built first iron foundry on Dodge street, 20 men being employed there in 1856. In 1863 M. R. Keegan founded similar institution. In 1865 Jas. Fyfe &

Co. took business and opened foundry on site where H. A. Cuff's mill on Wisconsin street is now located; in 1872 firm succeeded by Portage Mfg. Co., with A. E. Eggleston as superintendent; in 1873 Portage Iron works took charge, with Jas. Fyfe as manager and in 1878 he became sole proprietor; soon after John Anderson became partner and firm name reverted to Jas. 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.

Dec. 31, 1856. Portage Liederkranz society organized.

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 sidetracks to Wentworth's elevator.

July 30, 1871. Steeple blown off Presbyterian church.

1876. N. H. Wood building on West Cook street built.

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

April 15, 1877. 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.

Oct. 22, 1881. Foundation for Henry Epstein's malt kiln, Jefferson street, completed.

Oct. 14, 1881. Neenah Creek overflows and stops traffic on Wisconsin Central.

Oct. 4, 1881. Excursion steamer Dell Queen wrecked on Kilbourn dam.

Sept. 15, 1881. Ground broken for new building now occupied by Buckley & Leisch.

1886. Gas plant completed.

June 15, 1886. H. Johnnie Muir

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Wisconsin Historical Library

Library.

drowned in Silver Lake.

1866. Barney and Hugh Doherty establish marble works. In 1878 Hugh Doherty succeeded brother and still conducts business, corner Canal and Wisconsin streets.

1877. First military company, known as Guppy Guards, organized and later succeeded by Co. F, which saw active service in Porto Rico campaign in 1898. 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 Emden 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.

Oct. 19, 1905. Marquette-Joliet monument dedicated.

#### 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, Agnes 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.

Jan. 1, 1896. New High school building dedicated.

#### 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.

#### BRIDGES.

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 Guppy Guards. Marie Stuart, with Mme. Jauschek 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.

Nov. 25-27, 1879. "Blue and Gray" by local talent.

June 27, 1879. Adam Forepaugh's circus.

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

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May 11, 1886. Belva Lockwood lectures here.

May 22, 1886. Gilmore's band here.

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

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

June 29, 1906. Chief Hale's Fire Fighters here.

#### FIRES.

Feb. 2, 1851. United States hotel burned. Re opened Jan. 8, 1852.

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 re-caged.

April 5, 1860. Fire damages the Veeder House.

Aug. 21, 1861. Dean & Smith's foundry and machine shop burned. Thirty men thrown out of employment.

Jan. 19, 1863. \$30,000 fire destroys W. D. Fox's storehouse, depot and buildings, and business places of Carl Schneider and T. V. Derkson, 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 Ft. Winnebago lock, burned.

Oct. 7, 1875. Carnegie's planing mill scorched by fire.

Nov. 15, 1875. Four horses and three cows burned in the Ellsworth House barn on site where H. G. Hyland'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. Emdor 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.

Oct. 20, 1880. Pettibone block destroyed by fire.

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 Hollenbeck 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.

Kiefer secretary and Jos. Huebl Sr., treasurer. Mr. Prehn is the only one of the first officers surviving. Only three members on the roll in 1886 still remain members of the fire department: Chief C. L. Niemeyer, H. Wiperman and Ernest Rost.

October, 1877. Silsby Steamer Co. No. 3 organized with V. E. Brewer, foreman; D. W. Neill, first assistant; Wm. Edwards, second assistant; John Lewis, secretary. Of the roll of that company in 1886 the following remain residents of Portage at present: V. E. Brewer, H. W. Hildebrand, C. P. Jaeger, E. M. Parsons, Ansel Clark, M. J. Welch, E. C. Moran, Louis Blakewell, Jacob Hoff, Tim. McGrath, Jos. Kurtz and Dennis Leary.

April 6, 1886. Fire department summoned to La Crosse.

April 21, 1886. Break in levee calls out fire department.

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