

PORTAGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY



Winter 2013

Museum at the Portage
804 MacFarlane Rd. PO Box 727
Portage, WI 53901
608-742-6682
www.portagemuseum.org
open April—October

Erika Janik will be the guest speaker at the January 13 annual dinner meeting of the Portage Historical Society. Ms. Janik is the author of two books about Wisconsin—Odd Wisconsin: Amusing, Perplexing and Unlikely Stories from Wisconsin's Past and A Short History of Wisconsin and the executive editor/producer of Wisconsin Public Radio's "Wisconsin Life."

She describes herself as a person who intended to be a history professor but along the way discovered that she was excited to find that "people were actually reading and responding to" articles that she wrote while employed part-time at the Wisconsin Historical Society. Rather than continue down the academic path focused on studying colonial women's history, she chose to pursue and write

about a wide variety of topics.

The annual dinner will be held at Trail's Lounge, with social hour starting at 5:30, dinner at 6:30 and a *very* short business meeting prior to Ms. Janik's program at 7:30. The dinner menu options are Swiss steak, tilapia or baked chicken. Each dinner includes non-alcoholic beverage and dessert.



The cost per meal is \$16 including tax and tip. Call Kathy Rowley at 697-9631 or Peg Amend at 429-9214 by noon on Jan. 10 with your reservation.

For information about Ms. Janik's recent article about curling, see p. 4 of this newsletter.

Once again, standing watch



After the devastating flood of 1938 left much of Portage under water, plans were made to build two watch houses on opposite banks of the Wisconsin River. When high water threatened, volunteers would man the stone buildings, ready to sound the alarm if it seemed that a breach of the levee was imminent.

When the levee underwent major improvements in 1997, the watch house on the city side of the river was dis-

mantled, with plans to eventually rebuilt it. For 17 years the stones were stacked along the top of the levee near the west end of the paved walkway. Finally, in November, the watch house was rebuilt, with old photographs as a guide for the process. It's a few feet smaller but the look is the same as it was when dedicated volunteers spent the night there during high water season. It again serves as a reminder of the influence of the river on the life of Portage.

We value your continued financial support

It's that time of year when many organizations appeal to your generosity to help support their goals and programs, and Portage Historical Society is no different. Now, more than ever, we need your continued support in order to preserve and share the stories of Portage.

Our board of directors is not only dedicated to the organization, but individually they have all contributed many hours, whether by taking inventory of the items in the collection, designing and arranging exhibits, making phone call reminders about an upcoming program, changing lightbulbs, weeding and pruning in the rose garden, or processing financial records. You can do your share by making your financial contribution so we can continue to keep the doors

open from April to October, have special events for members, and curate our collection of items that tell the stories of Portage.

We have some new exhibits in process for 2014, and one of the highlights of the year will be the visit to Portage by antique and fine art appraiser Mark Moran on June 21. Those with membership in PHS will be the first to learn about reserving a time with Moran. And work will continue throughout the year to catalog items in the Museum collection, answer inquiries and provide tours at the museum.

The membership card enclosed with this newsletter suggests various levels of support. Please consider adding a bit extra when you write your check, and know that it will be used wisely as we plan for 2014 and beyond.

Canal, railroads capture interest of student rep Hannah Malone

Portage High School senior Hannah Malone is the student representative to the Portage Historical Society, and she is intrigued with the role the canal and railroads played in the history of her hometown, but she finds the eventual demise of those two giants astounding.

A summer reading assignment for an English class at UW-Whitewater introduced her to John Muir, and she cited him as the one historical figure associated with Portage that she would most like to converse with. She is impressed with the national significance of his efforts, and motivated by his love of learning and inspired by his transcendentalist thinking. Hannah plans to enroll at UW-Madison next year with the goal of studying law.

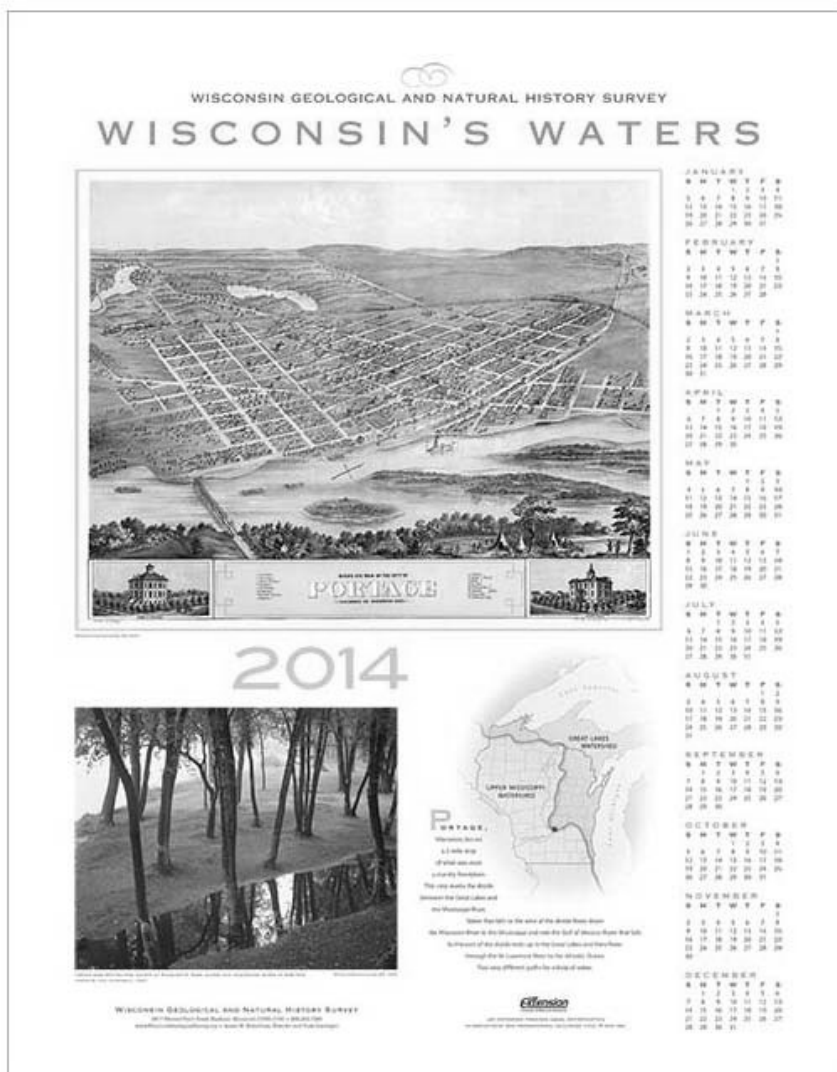
Upcoming events in the area

Feb 14, 15: Mid-Continent Railway Museum Snow Train™, 55-minute ride at foot of Baraboo hills. Reserve at www.midcontinent.org or call 608-5422-4261 after Jan. 5.

Now through Jan. 11: State Historical Society museum, 30 N. Carroll St. Madison, "Tis the Season" exhibit of aluminum Christmas trees made in Manitowoc, more than one million sold nationwide.

Jan. 14—Mar. 29, "Wisconsin Women of Style," exhibit at State Historical Society museum, 30 N. Carroll St., Madison. Featuring gowns and garments worn by women who had the means and the interest in wearing fashionable and expensive clothing.

Portage featured on 2014 calendar



The Wisconsin Geological and Natural History Survey is focusing its attention on the watershed divide running through Portage, determining whether a drop of water will make its way to the Great Lakes or to the Mississippi River. The 22 x 28 inch calendar features an 1868 bird's eye view (imagine a passenger pigeon's view) of the city of Portage, and a smaller current photo of the Wisconsin River waters near Pauquette Park on a misty morning. The calendar is \$7.50 plus shipping and handling and can be ordered from the agency's website, wisconsingeologicalsurvey.org, or by visiting the map sales office at 3817 Mineral Point Rd., Madison. Office hours are 8-4:30 pm., M-Fri.

Plans afoot for memorial walkway

Portage Historical Society board of directors has approved a plan to install a memorial walkway at the Museum at the Portage. The walkway would lead from the front of the building around the north side to the gate that opens to the rose garden.

The walkway will provide a means for individuals or groups to honor a person or institution that has been instrumental in

the life of Portage. The paving bricks will be \$100 for a 4"x8" engraved brick, and \$150 for an 8" x 8" engraved brick. Four Seasons landscaping of Portage will be laying the walkway, and board member Ted Rebholz is spearheading the plans. More details will be available in the spring issue of the newsletter.



The cover of the winter issue of The Wisconsin Magazine of History (left) features four members of the Milwaukee Curling Club, and the accompanying article (by Erika Janik who will be the guest speaker at the Portage Historical Society annual meeting) tells the story of curling in Wisconsin, and mentions an 1860 "bon spiel" on Silver Lake. The author referenced Dorothy McCarthy's "Tales of Old Portage" in her article.

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