

By-law change proposed

A proposed change to the by-laws of the Portage Historical Society would move the annual meeting from January to April. This change was proposed at a recent board of directors meeting because in recent years weather conditions in January have often discouraged members from attending the evening meeting.

According to the bylaws of the organization, a two-thirds vote by members attending any regular meeting called for this purpose may amend the bylaws, provided the amendment is submitted in writing to the membership 30 days prior to the meeting. This notice, therefore, fulfills the obligation to inform the membership of the proposed change.



Children's furniture and other child-size items from Ruth Schultz are featured in a new exhibit at the museum.

Portage Historical Society

Museum at the Portage

804 MacFarlane Rd

April—May, Sept—Oct, open 1-4, Thurs, Fri & Sat

June—Aug, open 1—4, Tues—Saturday



Museum re-opens, open house May 24

The long-awaited re-opening of the Museum at the Portage will be celebrated Saturday, May 24 from 10 am to 4 pm. A fire at the museum in April 2014 prevented the museum from opening its door to visitors throughout 2014. Restoration to recover from the fire, smoke and water damage was a lengthy process, but the Museum opened to the public last month. With artifacts back in their rightful place, and after much cleaning and polishing, the board of directors deemed that it was time to mark the occasion with the grand re-opening event.

Mary was curator of Portage history

When Mary Langbecker passed away on March 3, we lost not only a faithful board member and museum docent, but also a person who was truly a curator of the Zona Gale story and legacy. Mary contributed many hours to the museum, and championed the preservation of all Gale artifacts. She had thorough knowledge of the museum collection, welcoming visitors and always taking pride in telling the stories of Portage. Mary was one of the board members who participated in the clean-up of the building after the fire, and she was working on getting an exhibit of Portage High School memorabilia ready for the new season. Mary is survived by two sisters, Peg Amend and Sally Kipfer.

Refreshments will be provided, and board members and docents will be on hand to give guided tours, or visitors will be free to roam throughout the museum. Of particular interest will be the areas that underwent the most exacting and time-consuming restoration.

The grand reopening is open to the public at no cost. Normal museum hours through the end of May are 1-4 pm Thursday-Saturday, and during June, July and August the museum will be open 1-4 pm Tuesday through Saturday.

Portage Historical Society 2015 Board of Directors

John Waldman, President
Kathy Rowley, Vice-President
Peg Malone, secretary
Dave Eulberg, treasurer
Peggy Amend
Betty Christenson
Jane Considine
Kathryn Curtis
Fred Galle
Elayne Hanson
Ted Rebholz
Florence Schieber
Heather Smith

PO Box 727, Portage, WI 53901
804 MacFarlane Rd., Portage 608-742-6682
www.portagemuseum.org
info@portagemuseum.org

Save the date!
Saturday, May 24
Grand Re-opening
at Museum
10 am - 4 pm

Portage Historical Society
804 MacFarlane Rd.
PO Box 727
Portage, WI 53901

2015 Portage Historical Society Members

Patron

Bill/Peggy Amend
 Kathryn Curtis
 Dave/Judy Eulberg
 Ann Marie Fuerst
 Betty/Gerry Gast
 Bob/Bobbie Goodman
 Pat Halasz
 Nathalie Hamele
 Joe/Kathy Houzner
 Robin/Mike Kvalo
 Sean/Peggy Malone
 Pflanz Mantey Mendrala Funeral Homes
 Ted/Nan Rebholz
 Richard Rehm
 John/Florence Schieber
 Dorothy Schultz
 John/Lila Waldman

Family

Anna Mae Axness
 Ann/Gary Bisping
 Jane Considine
 William Stroud Eulberg
 Fred Galley Family
 Pat/Dave Geltemeyer
 Jim/Mary Gorman
 Vicki Vogts-Griepentrog

Andrew/Krista/Claudia/Alec Hamilton
 Elayne Clipper Hanson
 Jerry/Joan Indermark
 Kay Jenkins
 LuAnne/Robert Kau
 Kreier Family
 Betty/Bill Kutzke
 Mr/Mrs Fred Langbecker
 Ann Lee
 John Leeg
 Richard/Sally Lillie
 Pat Malone
 Gary/Barbara O'Hearn
 Warren/Dorothy Rebholz
 Scott/Leslie Rector
 Hazel/Ray Rogers
 Kathleen/Richard Rowley
 Frank/Barbara Sandberg
 Gilbert Schwantes
 Bill/Eleanor Voigt
 Delores Wade
 Linda/Ronald Wendt
 Pete/Diane Wenzel
Single
 Seymour Abrahamson
 Mike Bolgrihn
 Mary Cele Boockmeier
 Elizabeth Carrington

Jeri Collins
 Violet Daugherty
 Colleen Davison
 Ray Dorn
 Ruth Evans
 Irene Baxter Gloyd
 Donald Hebl
 Ruthann Helmann
 Elizabeth Hinkley
 Beth Hoskins
 Joan Johnson
 Sally Kipfer
 Doug Klapper
 Sheril Lannoye
 Howard Latton
 Mona Larsen
 Mary Loomans
 Pat Madani
 Ken Manthey
 Sarah Mautz
 Edith McElroy
 Helena McMahon
 Marie Moe
 Sally Moe
 Karen Nelson
 Mary Baxter Poole
 Elizabeth Robinson
 William Smiley
 Michael Wenzel

It's not too late to renew your membership in Portage Historical Society or join for the first time. We look forward to hearing from you soon.

NAME _____

STREET ADDRESS—PO BOX _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

PHONE _____ EMAIL _____

Single \$15 _____ Family \$30 _____ Patron \$100 _____ Benefactor \$250 _____

Return to Portage Historical Society, PO 727, Portage, WI 53901

Remember when spring rains threatened levee?

It's been many years since Portage residents have had to worry about the failure of the levee system that provides a barrier from high waters of the Wisconsin River. But there are still residents who recall the record high water of 1938 that threatened to lap over the top of the levee and cause considerable damage to more than "the flats" of Portage. Improvements to the levee over time came as the result of leadership from H.V. Tennant who was once described as "the backbone of the development of the levee system as we know it today." He had worked with the Portage Levee Committee and the Wisconsin Water Regulatory Board. He founded General Engineering Company, served on the school board, the Park and Recreation board, and helped restore the Surgeon's Quarters.

H.V.'s wife, Nellie Tennant, was chair of the committee to restore the Surgeon's Quarters, was a charter member of the Civic League, and both she and her husband were involved with the development of Sunset Park. Nellie was also a published poet, and a

member of the South Dakota Society of Poets, the Wisconsin Fellowship of Poets, and the Wisconsin Regional Writers Association. Several of her poems were included in the Bicentennial Edition of Wisconsin History in Poetry edited by Henry C. Spear. Reading "Levee Song," reproduced below, one can almost imagine the Tennants walking the levee on a spring night, looking for signs that could signal danger for the city.

Levee Song

*We are on patrol—our lanterns swing -
 The flood is high tonight;
 In the wind and rain we tramp and sing.
 We search in the grass for a seep or a spring
 as a squirrel's burrow, a rabbit's den
 might cause a break. Through the wind and rain
 We tramp and sing and our flickering lanterns swing.*

*The river, so placid in summer
 So friendly—so quietly flowing
 Now rages and claws at the levee,
 Enraged that man's power should defy him,
 He has gathered his strength from the
 mountains,
 From the valleys, the hills and the marshes
 And his strength is the strength of a giant,
 But while the giant was sleeping
 the levee grew higher and stronger;
 Then the giant has wakened but
 Man's work is strong to oppose him.*

*So we sing as we tramp the levee
 In the wind and the dark and the rain:
 "The levee is safe, the levee is firm,
 the levee is holding again!"*

Photo courtesy of General Engineering Co.



It's time to order paver for memorial walkway

There's still time to place your order for an engraved paver for the memorial walkway that will lead from the front of the museum to the rose garden on the north side of the building. A 4" x 8" paver is \$125,

and a 8" x 8" paver is \$150. Individuals, families or businesses can be memorialized as detailed on the order form, available at the museum, or by calling 742-6682 or email to info@portagemuseum.org