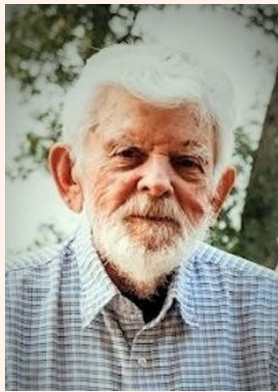


## John Waldman: teacher, leader, collector, tireless volunteer

John Waldman, past president of the Portage Historical Society, passed on July 26 after a brief illness. John served as president of the organization from 2014-2019 and both he and his wife Lila were active in PHS activities. During his tenure as president John was part of the team that spearheaded plans for hiring the museum's first manager, and even after Melody Brooks-Taylor was hired John continued to be deeply involved in issues related to maintenance of the 100 year old building and grounds, mowing the grass by the rose garden, mulching the plantings, etc, and always ready to lend a hand for projects and events. He was the president in spring 2014 when a fire broke out in the building, forcing closure of the building for a full year while issues of smoke and water damage were resolved.



John was a business education teacher and after retirement from Madison Metropolitan School District he continued to teach at Fox Valley Technical College. He and his Lila traveled extensively in the US and abroad, journeying to Germany, Poland, South Africa,

South East Asia, and Korea. According to Lila, John was a collector of model cars, matchbooks, pins, coins, tokens, typewriters (42!), and Parker Pens that were manufactured in Waldman's home town, Janesville. He also had a large collection of LP records and CDs. John also was an avid reader, favoring mysteries, books about the American West and history.

In addition to his contributions to Portage Historical Society John was also involved with Habitat for Humanity while living in Kentucky and Pennsylvania, and in recent years with the Portage Food Pantry. He was a U.S. Army veteran and taught prisoners at Fort Campbell KY during the Korean conflict.

John is survived by his wife Lila, six children, 12 grandchildren and two great-grandchildren, and many nieces and nephews.

A celebration of John's life will be at the Wintergreen Resort and Conference Center in Wisconsin Dells on Sunday, Sept 11 from 1-4 pm. People will be asked to share a memory of John. There will be a silent auction of a few of his collected items with proceeds going to charity, including the Portage Historical Society.

## From the docents' desk:

We are so pleased to have received a book documenting the early years of the "Milwaukee Road" train. History of the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railway Co., and Representative Employees was donated by the families of Frank A. Krause and Frank G. Krause, father and son, who were both Portage "rails" in days gone by. The 653-page book was published in 1901 by the Railroad Historical Company, Chicago, Illinois. It has returned from the bindery now after receiving repairs and is at the museum, waiting to be leafed through and appreciated by railroad buffs. *ALL ABOARD!*

## Pottery preceded plastics in Portage

*Long before the advent of plastic manufacturing in Portage, there were potteries on DeWitt and Conant Streets in Portage, providing crocks, jars, butter churns and other functional items for homes in the 1860s. Recent research on those pre-Civil War potteries will be the topic for a presentation by Peter Maas, a researcher, collector, urban archeologist and author at the Member Appreciation event on September 21 at the Museum at the Portage. A social hour at 5 pm with refreshments and light snacks will precede the 6 pm presentation. If a current member has a friend or family member they would like to bring to the event, the guest may join the Portage Historical Society on Sept 21 and activate a 2023 membership immediately.*



## New exhibit recalls days of the Opera House

Next time you visit the Museum at the Portage, close your eyes and imagine that you hear troupes of traveling entertainers singing, reciting lines from a popular drama, or a brass band playing stirring march music. All of that—and more—was occurring at 115-117 E. Cook Street when the Dullaghan Opera House was operating. An impressive marble cornice from Stotzer Marble and Granite Works was at the top of the building, which housed a bar in the basement, retail space on the 2nd floor, and performance area with seating for 350 patrons on the third floor. PHS board members Peggy Malone and Kathy Rowley have been putting finishing touches on the exhibit on the first floor of the Museum. Included are period clothing, copies of showbills, photos and sketches, and original programs.

The Dullaghan Opera House was built in 1879, and entertainers found the location to be a convenient stopover between engagements in Minneapolis, Milwaukee and Chicago. Local groups also used the opera house for graduation ceremonies until the high school was constructed in 1917. The Eulberg Brewing Company assumed management of the opera house in 1915. The increasing popularity of motion pictures signaled the end of opera houses in small towns. The building was nearly completely demolished in 1929 when Montgomery Wards hired Gunderson Construction to build a new structure. Rhyme Drugs moved in the building in 1978.



## Portage Historical Society Museum at the Portage September 2022

### The Museum at the Portage 804 MacFarlane Rd, Portage, Wisconsin

May: Thursday-Saturday 1-4

June, July, August: Tuesday-Saturday 1-4

September, October: Thursday-Saturday 1-4

FREE ADMISSION

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# Postcards social media starting in early 1900s

By Jane Considine

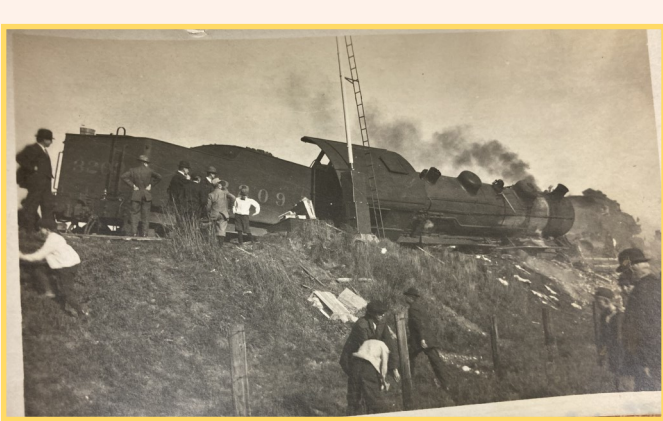
Many of the items in the Museum at the Portage not only tell about the history of Portage but also give us a glimpse of trends and events in the larger world. That is certainly the case with postcard collections, examples of which illustrate this page. Author Dan Friedman in The Birth and Development of American Postcards suggests that the very first postcard may have been a “piece of cardboard with a stamp and address on one side and a hand-written message on the other side, mailed during the first few years of the postal system.” It wasn’t until the late 1800s that postal regulations and rates ushered in the era of private, illustrated postcards.

The postcard craze peaked in 1909 and 1910. The Portage Daily Register reported on 10/21/1907 that the task of counting mail originating in Portage was a six-day event. Of the 16,219 pieces mailed from Portage, 6,881 were letters and 3,522 were cards. Druggist Oscar Klenert’s newspaper advertisement boasted “postcard albums” “as a gift in these busy days of the popular fad.” A 1912 article helpfully suggested that “a Valentine party can with little effort be more both attractive and enjoyable” with invitations on postcards “which may be bought at this season with great variety.”

Two large collections of postcards in the museum from the early 1900s and beyond were the efforts of Bessie Armstrong and Margaret Blount. As happens today, people collected postcards on their travels (or perhaps bought one of the popular holiday themed postcards at the local 5 & 10 cent store), and saved them in an album. Holiday postcards—Christmas, New Year’s, Valentines Day, St. Patrick’s Day, Easter, Independence Day and Halloween—were popular, with colorful artwork and sometimes embossed and trimmed with fiber or fabric (as seen on the girl’s earmuffs on the Christmas card below). Some postcards had a light coating of a glass or mica-

like substance to resemble snow, prompting the postmaster to bar such postcards unless they were enclosed in an envelope, thereby preventing injury to postal employees who handled the mail. Historian Daniel Gifford writes that a detailed survey of holiday postcards posted for sale on Ebay indicates that the holiday postcard craze was most popular in towns under 10,000, with their popularity especially high in New England states and west to Wisconsin and Minnesota. Also common were postcards promoting one’s hometown.

One of the outgrowths of the postcard mania was the introduction of Eastman Kodak’s Pocket postcard camera with a negative the right size for a postcard. The camera owner could then take a picture of children climbing on a chair in the backyard, or other everyday activity, or dash to the scene of the 1910 silk train wreck when rail cars transporting raw silk from Tacoma, WA to New York derailed near Portage. According to Dave Rambow, site director at the H.H. Bennett Studio and Museum in Wisconsin Dells, it wasn’t unusual for a small town like Portage to have photographer hobbyists who had basement darkrooms and could develop the film from a pocket camera. (C.H. Williams advertised his services in the Portage Daily Register in 1909 for “postcard groups and views; Taken from any location in the city” from postcard size to 8x24 inches.) The camera also had a small sliding window and with a special pen, the photographer could write the date or identify the people in the photo. Unfortunately, many of the photos from pocket cameras have no identifying information. If you someday page through the collections and recognize a person or building, please share the information with the docent at the Museum.



Sources:  
American Holiday Postcards, 1905-1915, Daniel Gifford, McFarland and Company Inc., Jefferson, N.C. 2013  
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David Rambow, Site Director, H.H. Bennett Studio and Museum, Wisconsin Dells