



Portage Historical Society

The Museum at the Portage

804 MacFarlane Road • Portage WI 53901

November 2024 Newsletter

Littlest Paper Deliverer

By: Peggy Malone

Portage had a German newspaper named *The Columbia County Wecker*, published by Portage resident, Gustavus Selbach. It was printed in German every Wednesday from 1874 - 1908. There was a large German population that settled in the Portage area, so the newspaper thrived for nearly 34 years. The business was located in various buildings in downtown Portage, the last being 226 West Cook Street (which has been torn down - is now a public parking lot next to Galley Studio). The Selbach family lived upstairs from the business and printing press. Twelve years after *Der Wecker* started, Gustavus died. His wife, Mary Selbach, ran the business until 1908. *Der Wecker* then merged with another German newspaper in the area, *The Rundschau*; the combined newspaper was named *Rundschau & Wecker*.



er - these items are now a part of the museum collection. The Museum has a picture of the building at 226 West Cook Street (Darlene is holding it) , and we also came across a picture of 5-year-old Dorothea Selbach who delivered *Der Wecker* newspaper. Darlene was able to take some pictures of the original pages of *Der Wecker* that we have in our newspaper collection.

In her spare time, Darlene makes clay statues of various people, including famous Wisconsinites, and plans on making a clay statue of the little newspaper girl with a clay page of the newspaper behind her. She has written a book "Memorable Milwaukee" featuring her clay statues.

Celebrating Friendship Village Highlights

Thanks to everyone who attended the "Celebrating Friendship Village" event at the Museum on August



17. Jeff Grothman's presentation about **John Baptiste DuBay** was intriguing and informative. He also offered a message to take a moment to recognize all of the talented, fascinating people who have called Portage home.

John Baptiste DuBay (July 10, 1810 - January 11, 1887) was a pioneer fur trader throughout the upper Midwest, primarily in Wisconsin. DuBay had a trading post on the Portage Canal just past the Indian Agency House. He was very successful in several of his endeavors. However, in 1857, he was accused of the murder of a mill owner in Portage. Despite two mistrials and an aborted third trial, he was not convicted. Nevertheless, the experience left him financially ruined. DuBay was illiterate and signed documents with an "X".

In August, Darlene Rzezotarski (a direct descendant of Gustavus & Mary Selbach) contacted the Museum

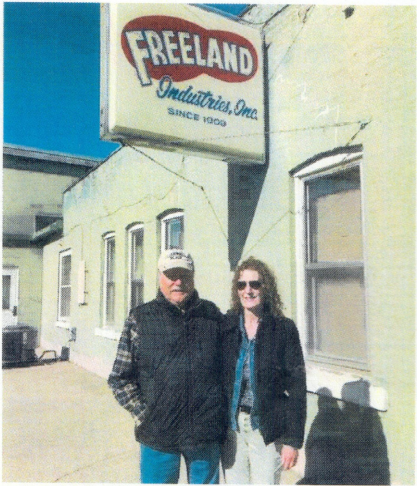


at the Portage to see if we had any original copies of *Der Wecker* at the museum. We were happy to inform her that we do have bound copies of *Der Wecker*. Darlene then came to the museum, and brought with her copies of pictures, history and other documents related to the Selbach family and *Der Weck-*

Curator Corner

By: Sara Oostdik, curator

Over its long history, Portage has seen many businesses come and go. Occasionally, a business continually adapts to the changing world and becomes a pillar of the community. After four generations and 113 years of operation, Freeland Industries and Freeland Trucking, Inc. closed its doors in 2022. Since his family business sold, Lynn Van Epps has been sorting through endless materials and documents. In May, he brought a selection of items to the museum for us to preserve in our collections. We are very grateful to Lynn for thinking of us.



Lynn & Nancy Van Epps



Freeland Industries, Inc., fabricated many different steel products including catamaran pontoons, steel row boats, and cattle tanks of many different shapes and sizes. Unfortunately, our building is much too small for these larger items! We were happy to accept a large selection of other business memorabilia and business history including the sign which hung out front of the business, now a centerpiece of our “Portage Business” exhibit on the second floor. Lynn and his wife, Nancy, also wrote a full history of the company, which will become part of our archives.

As museum staff, we feel passionate about saving these pieces of our community and we are grateful to everyone who has donated to the museum in the past and the present. We would not be here without your generosity!

Member Appreciation Night Highlights

On October 22, we had a “spirited” Member Appreciation Night. Shelley Mordini and Sharon Hart Addy shared tales about haunted experiences in the Portage area. Did you know we have ghosts at the Surgeons Quarters, Elks Club, local homes, etc.? You’ll have to check out their new book “**Haunted Portage**” coming out in August 2025 to learn more!

Shelley Mordini operates Baraboo Tours; she gives haunted tours, Rickshaw tours, etc. Check out her website at www.barabootours.com.

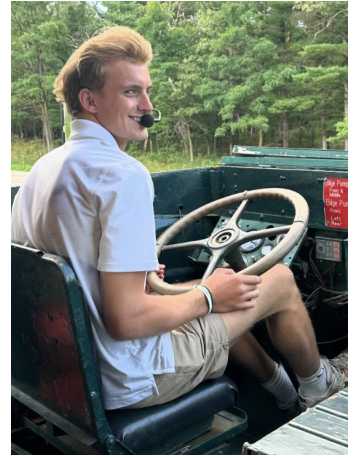
It was great to see so many familiar faces and some new friends! Do you have any stories of haunted experiences in Portage? We’d love to hear about them!



John & Lila Waldman - Portage History Scholarship

Haakon Johnson, son of Avery & Sarah Johnson, received the John & Lila Waldman Portage History Scholarship for \$1,000.

Haakon graduated from Portage High School in June and is attending Edgewood College in Madison with plans to work in his family's company, Zimmerman Plumbing. He drove for the Wisconsin Ducks this past summer. While in high school, Haakon was a four-year starter in baseball and also played football for all four years. He was involved in FBLA (Future Business Leaders of America) and qualified for state two years in a row. In his essay, Haakon stated how he enjoys talking to Judy Eulberg to learn all about the history of Portage.



Haakon volunteered at the museum this summer helping out with moving all of the bound newspapers in our collection from Storage Room 2 to the new metal shelving in Storage Room 3 - he was a huge help!! Afterwards, Judy gave him a tour of the museum which he thoroughly enjoyed. Congratulations to Haakon for winning the Waldman Scholarship and best wishes to him at college.

THANK YOU

To our **Members** - we simply could not do it without you. You are supporting us in preserving, protecting and promoting our historic Portage heritage.

To our **Corporate Sponsors** and **In-kind Supporters** - your generosity in supporting our mission is invaluable.

To our **Board Members** who are always there to help with events, exhibits, questions, etc. - you are appreciated!

To **Sara Oostdik**, our curator, and **Sandy Nachreiner** and **Deb Rohrbeck**, our Friday morning volunteers, consistently working on going through our entire collection and ensuring that each item is aligned with our mission and is properly preserved.

To **Dave Eulberg** for being our Treasurer for many years! Thanks to Veronica Kamrath stepping up to take over in January.

To **Peggy Amend** for her years of being our Secretary! Thanks to Deb Rohrbeck for taking over the job in January.

To our **Docents**: Sarah Mautz, Judy Eulberg, and Linda Wendt. Your knowledge of Portage history is profound - we couldn't do it without you.

To **Peggy Malone** for her love of history, her knowledge, and researching skills in answering questions and for creating new exhibits.

To **Steve LaFave** for being our handyman. We appreciate his skills in fixing, building, etc., around the museum.

To all of those people who donate anonymously to the museum to keep Historic Portage alive for the next generation.

Become a Member

The Museum at the Portage is maintained by the Portage Historical Society, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. It was founded in 1995 and is dedicated to preserving the history of Portage and surrounding areas. Your support of the Portage Historical Society will ensure that future generations will continue to learn about Portage's historic past. Join today!

Membership Levels

<i>Level</i>	<i>Donation</i>	<i>Store Discount</i>	<i>Genealogy Research</i>
Pierre Pauquette	\$25-\$49	15% off	
Ansel Clark	\$50-\$99	20% off	
Zona Gale	\$100-\$249	25% off	1 hr free
Julia Rusch	\$250-\$499	30% off	2 hrs free
Frederick J. Turner	\$500+	35% off	3 hrs free

The museum is funded by our members. Your membership pays for heat and electric, phone, website, repairs, exhibit materials, archival supplies, speaker at events, gardening maintenance, newsletter, etc. Thank you for your support!

BRICK MEMORIAL PATIO



Outside the front entrance of the Museum at the Portage is a **Brick Memorial Patio**. Engraved pavers will serve as a lasting tribute to those - past and present - who established Portage as a cultural center in 1854 and those who continue to serve the City of Portage.

Pavers are available in two sizes:

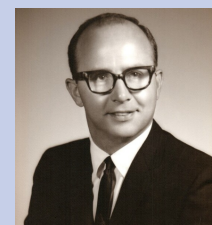
- 4" x 8" for \$125
- 8" x 8" for \$150

Your support of the museum will ensure our history will live on for generations to come. When ordering online, you can pay with PayPal, a debit or credit card. Want to pay with a check? We do have paper forms available at the museum or you can email us at museumattheportage@gmail.com so we can mail you a form. We appreciate your support!

In Memoriam



Edith McElroy
(October 23, 1932 - April 26, 2024)



Robert "Bob" Goodman
(September 17, 1930 - October 8, 2024)

HAVE YOU THOUGHT ABOUT A MEMORIAL GIFT TO THE MUSEUM? We have received memorial gifts of both money and artifacts in the past, which have been greatly appreciated. When drafting your Will or settling a loved ones estate, perhaps a gift to the Museum might be an appropriate memorial

THANK YOU MEMBERS

Frederick Jackson Turner Level (\$500+)

Dennis & Maribeth Dorn

Julia Rusch Level (\$250-\$499)

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Zona Gale Level (\$100-\$249)

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Veronica Kamrath

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Pflanz Mendrala Funeral Home

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In-Kind Sponsor:

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*New member in 2024

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Linda Wendt

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Website: www.portagemuseum.org
Email: museumattheportage@gmail.com

Hours of Operation: Opening May 15, 2025

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Be sure to "LIKE" us on Facebook & Instagram and enjoy the changing posts about Portage's history. You can add comments about your own experiences or information about each post.