



1995 - 2025

Portage Historical Society

The Museum at the Portage

804 MacFarlane Road • Portage WI 53901

August 2025 Newsletter

ZONA GALE'S CALIFORNIA CONNECTION

By: Peggy Malone

Zona Gale and her mother Eliza Beers Gale, spent parts of their winters at Mission Inn in Riverside, California, from 1918 until 1923 until Eliza Gale death.

Zona continued her winter trips annually until 1928, when she married Wm Breese. Frank Miller, the proprietor of Mission Inn, was born in Tomah, Wisconsin, in 1857, and his family moved to Southern California when Frank was 17. His parents built a home in Riverside that had extra rooms for boarders. This eventually grew into the magnificent Mission Inn, which is world renowned. A friendship grew between Zona Gale and Frank Miller that continued until Frank's death in 1935.



During Zona Gale's visits to Riverside, she would give speeches, and often read passages from some of her books to many groups, including the Kiwanis, YWCA, Chamber of Commerce, various arts associations, schools, churches and other social clubs. In 1927, Low Park, located in Riverside, dedicated an area they named "Friendship Row", where distinguished visitors of Riverside were asked to plant a palm tree. Zona Gale had the honor of planting the first tree.

There is an annual Sunrise Easter service at Mount Rubidoux, a property that Frank Miller owned, in which Zona Gale often participated in, as an audience member, speaker, or as a writer of poems to be read at the service. She would also write articles about this service in the local newspaper. The Sunrise Easter Service continues to this day. Frank Miller's family gave the land to the City of Riverside in 1955.

In 1928, Mission Inn created a section of rooms located on the top floor named "Author's Row" dedicated to



the many authors that visited. Zona Gale had a suite - Room 409 named "Zona Gale Room". She would stay there when she visited with her husband, Wm Breese.

Zona wrote a biography of Frank Miller, entitled, "Frank Miller of Mission Inn" which was published in 1938, the year that she died.

Another California connection Zona had was with a gentleman named Francis Grierson (also known as Jesse Shepard). He was a very talented pianist, who traveled the US and Europe playing the piano. He resided in San Diego, and built a mansion named Villa Montezuma. Upon completion in 1888, Grierson lived in it for only two years, as he decided to give up music and pursue a literary career in Europe. He wrote of mysticism and spiritualism, which, at the time, appealed to Zona Gale. After the deaths of her mother in 1923 and her father in 1929, Zona became interested in these topics, and wrote a book named "Preface to a Life".

The following excerpt is from an article written by Charles Spratley in 2009 on the LaPrensa.org website:

Eventually settling in Los Angeles, Grierson struggled to make ends meet. Supported by his longtime secretary and friend, Lauritz Waldemar Tonner, Grierson struggled over and over

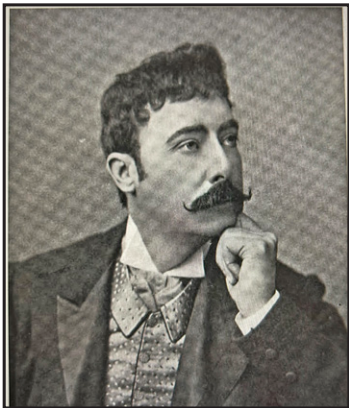


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for a comeback that never came. He found a guardian angel in the form of a female author and poet by the



name of Zona Gale. She took pity on his plight and sent him some money while arranging a benefit concert in which he would play and hopefully garnish enough funds to spend the summer at the Mission Inn in Riverside, which at the time was one of the most popular hotels on the West Coast.



I have read correspondences between Frank Miller, the owner of the Mission Inn, and Zona and they came to an agreement that room and board would be given to Grierson and he would be welcome to play the piano at the Inn. The invitation was declined,

however. Miller wrote that Grierson turned down the lavish offer because he lacked the train fare to make the trip to Riverside but even more tragic, he did not have shoes in which to travel in. We do know that in his last days, Grierson pawned all of his treasures that he acquired from his travels of Europe and the last thing he sold was a gold watch given to him by Royalty.

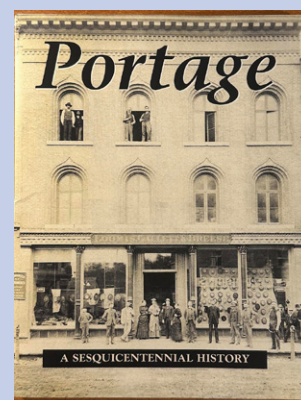
The benefit concert for him did go on as planned and on May 29, 1927, in Los Angeles at the home of a friend, "Jesse Shepard" came back from the dead. He arrived late as always and charmed the people in attendance and despite being 79 years old, he played the piano like he was a young man again. Grierson/Shepard played for what seemed forever and concluded the evening with one of his most famous pieces entitled "The Egyptian March". When he struck the final chord, Grierson/Shepard bowed his head. As the thunder of

applause settled down, he did not move. It was soon discovered by Tonner that Grierson was dead, at the piano, his fingers resting on the final chord of his most celebrated piece.

Following the trail of Francis Grierson is a truly fascinating one. I recently visited the Mission Inn and saw the beautiful 1876 Steinway piano which was intended for Grierson to play while he convalesced at the Inn. Across the street at the Metropolitan Museum, I was given access to all the letters between Frank Miller and Zona Gale. There I discovered a treasure that both moved me and shed light on the relationship between Miller, Gale and Grierson. It was a telegram sent to Gale on May 30, 1927. It read simply this: *Francis Grierson died last night. I had sent Dewitt down a few weeks ago with an earnest invitation for him to come to Mission Inn as my guest, with the same thoughts that you have written me. It is well for the dear man to go as he has.*

Zona Gale lived a full life that impacted many people in many places. Portage is lucky to have been able to nurture her in childhood and in her adult years. As a board member of the Portage Historical Society, it is an honor to research her life and share her stories.

GET YOUR COPY NOW!



"Portage: A Sesquicentennial History" book has been reprinted and is available for sale for \$30! Purchase your copy at the Museum at the Portage or at The Mercantile or purchase online at www.portagemuseum.org/shop.

“ZONA GALE: WISCONSIN’S UNSUNG TRAILBLAZER”

Three students from Green Bay Southwest High School (Jessica Trevarthen, Lucia Suarez and Caitlin Mellberg) competed at the National History Day Contest in June in College Park, Maryland. The theme for the contest was “Rights and Responsibilities”. Their project - “Zona Gale: Wisconsin’s Unsung Trailblazer” - explores an important chapter in our state’s and nation’s history. After months of research and advancing through both regional and state competitions, the group was honored to represent Wisconsin at the national competition. Additionally, they believe this is the first time that the topic of Zona Gale has been researched for National History Day!



Even though they didn’t make it to the finals, the experience was amazing! They were able to learn so much, connect with nearly 3,000 students from across the country, and received great feedback from the audience who viewed their performance, as well as great constructive feedback from the judges to build off of for next year. It meant so much to be able to share their hard work on a national level and represent the often unacknowledged story of Zona Gale.

CELEBRATING FRIENDSHIP VILLAGE AUGUST 16, 2025

portage, wi

SOCIETY HILL

walking tour

STARTING LOCATION:
Museum at the Portage

FREE TO ATTEND
Thanks to our sponsor!



SOCIETY HILL HISTORIC DISTRICT

This 120 building district is bounded, in part by Emmett, Oak, Main and MacFarlane streets. Most of the houses were constructed between 1870 and 1910 and are in the Italianate and Queen Anne architectural styles.

Society Hill reflects the wealth and prestige of Portage's early prominent families who lived here because of its proximity to the downtown and the railroad. Located railroad complex, the district housed many skilled railroad workers.

The district contains the homes of two Pulitzer Prize winners, Zona Gale and Frederick Jackson Turner. Society Hill was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1982.

DESIGNED 2002
BY THE PORTAGE LANDMARK CELEBRATION SOCIETY, INC.
CELEBRATING FRIENDSHIP VILLAGE

SPONSORED BY:



SATURDAY, AUGUST 16TH

12:00 PM Departure
Tour Begins at the Museum at the Portage
Guided by Judy Eulberg

Historic Buildings & Landmarks
Cultural Stories | Hidden Gems | Museum Visit

For more information, contact Vicki Vogts at (608) 697-4717

WOMEN’S CIVIC LEAGUE

CELEBRATE ZONA GALE DAYS WITH US!

We hope you'll join us again this summer for our annual ice cream social on August 16, 2025 from 2-4pm at the Women's Civic League club house at 506 West Edgewater in Portage, Wisconsin. We'll be serving up delicious pies and ice cream and will be providing free tours of the house for those visitors interested in a look inside this historical site. Live music by Susan Franklin will be a special treat and as always, the inspiring view of the Wisconsin River from the beautiful backyard will be yours to enjoy! Your donation will be gratefully accepted. We hope to see you then!

EULBERG LEADS DOWNTOWN WALKING TOURS

Local historian Judy Eulberg will once again lead Downtown Walking Tours this summer. The hour-long tour will be held during Taste of Portage on Saturday, August 23. The tour leaves from the Portage Chamber office, 104 W. Cook Street, at 10am. Come learn about downtown Portage and enjoy a morning meeting someone new.



MEMBERSHIP APPRECIATION NIGHT

SEPTEMBER 18, 2025

5:00 - Social Hour • 6:00 - Presentation

Museum at the Portage



“Wisconsin POW Camps”

Presented by Bob Block
Oregon Historical Society member

Most people are unaware that Wisconsin had Prisoner of War camps during WWII and are surprised to learn that there were 38 of them having a total of 20,000 POWs.

JOHN & LILA WALDMAN - PORTAGE HISTORY SCHOLARSHIP WINNER



Henry Shortreed, a 2025 graduate of Portage High School, is this year's recipient of the John & Lila Waldman - Portage History \$1,000 scholarship. Henry shared his story that shaped his future career path:

I never knew the trades were a good option for me until my dad got a project truck during COVID-19. I looked forward to restoring the heart of that old truck - hearing the roar of a 350 small block gave me a sense of peace in my life; the kind of peace that comes if you can block everything out of your surroundings to focus on one thing. As time went on, I realized that the trades are so much more than just 9 to 5 living. There is a whole world of trades out there.

As I started to research and take advantage of the opportunities given at school, I realized that I was fortunate to have such a great system of different programs I could choose from: auto, fabrication, welding, cabinetry, plumbing, electricity, and more! My interest in the trades kept getting bigger and bigger from there. I have been accepted into the Construction Program at Madison College starting this August and I am looking forward to expanding my knowledge.

Henry lives a couple doors down from the museum and has been mowing the Rose Garden as a volunteer since he was in 8th grade. We wish you the best in your future endeavors, Henry!

HAVE YOU THOUGHT ABOUT A MEMORIAL GIFT OR DONATION 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 consideration for you. We are a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization so any donations are tax-deductible.

SUNROOM RESTORATION PROJECT



Did you know that our building is 113 years old?! With age, comes repairs. In 2021, the city had the asphalt shingles replaced and in 2022, the rubber membrane on the flat room areas was replaced. Unfortunately, the roofer tore off the overhang without our approval which included the original copper gutter on the sunroom. Without the overhang and gutter, rain water is now running directly over the windows and columns on the sun room which has caused significant damage.

We are searching for grants to help in the repair costs but donations would help in getting the restoration project started now. Please consider donating to the Portage Historical Society, a non-profit 501(c)(3) corporation. Your donation would be tax-deductible.

Priority #1

New Framed 12" Overhang with 10" Copper Gutter System.....	\$40,000
Reproduce Crown Molding & Soffit.....	\$25,000
Repair Rubber Roofing for Iron Railing.....	\$10,000
Repair & Powdercoat Original Iron Railing.....	\$ 8,000
TOTAL	\$83,000

Priority #2

Repair/Replace Leaded Glass Full Metal (16 Windows).....	\$15,000
Restore/Replace Wood Columns/Bases & Wood Panels.....	\$20,000
All Sunroom Exterior & Window Casement Painting.....	\$20,000
TOTAL	\$55,000

Priority #3

Replace Spalled Exterior Bricks on Southwest Tower.....	\$ TBD
Replace Plaster in Southwest Tower.....	\$ TBD
Replace Plaster on West Interior Walls.....	\$ TBD
Replace Plaster in Miscellaneous Interior Walls/Ceilings.....	\$ TBD

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!

MEMBERSHIP

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

Welcome to our new members in 2025:

- Joyce Bisbee
- Chad Schwenke

Newest Honorary Life Members:

- Nan Rebholz
- Bill Welch
- Lucille Wheeler

WHY IS MARKETING IMPORTANT?

To effectively market your business on social media, you should start by developing a strategy, choosing the right platforms, and optimizing your profiles. Then, introduce your business, engage your audience, and leverage tools, trends, and influencer marketing to expand your reach. Finally, analyze your results to refine your approach.

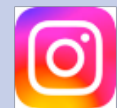
Recently, the board of directors approved a Social Media Policy for the Portage Historical Society and the Museum at the Portage. Why? A social media policy is a set of guidelines that an organization or company establishes to regulate how its board and staff use social media platforms, both during work hours and in their personal lives, when it could potentially affect the organization. It aims to protect the organization's reputation, maintain brand consistency, minimize legal risks, and ensure responsible online conduct.

Leave us a Google Review too! It does more than support our museum. It helps others find us, plan their visits, and appreciate the value of preserving Portage's rich history.



Find us on
Facebook

and



Instagram
#portagemuseum

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.

CURATOR CORNER

By: Sara Oostdik, curator

While each museum has its own “specialty”, at its core the museum field is meant to be a collaborative space, working with the public and other institutions to share knowledge and expertise. Part of this collaboration is helping each other “fill in the blanks” when records are incomplete or there are gaps in information.

We heard that following Zona’s death in 1938, her husband, William Breese, donated many of her items to the Wisconsin Historical Society. Conversations with WHS Curator Tamara Funk, showed us that these items were in fact in their collection. In February and July of this year, some board members and staff had the opportunity to visit the WHS Preservation Facility in Madison, to see these items in person.



The Zona Gale collection at WHS includes hats, dresses, fans, and personal items such as pottery from Japan and a painting she did of an oriole. The collection also includes her graduation gown from when she received an honorary doctorate degree in 1929 from the University of Wisconsin. Zona’s dress collection includes several beautifully made evening dresses, a finely embroidered black coat, and a couple simpler garments. Our group all fascinated over how petite Zona was, evident in the small waistlines and shorter lengths of her dresses (compared to known lengths of similar styles). Three of the four hats we viewed, Zona even bought from hat makers in Portage! The largest item in the WHS collection is Zona’s wood baby carriage from 1875.



These items are beautifully preserved and cared for at the WHS facility. We are grateful to Tamara Funk for sharing her time with us and bringing these items out for us to view. Museum at the Portage staff are working on compiling the information we’ve obtained from these visits into one place, so the public can research if interested.



UPCOMING EVENTS

Co-Hosted by the Portage Historical Society

HEARTH & HOME

2025 SPEAKER SERIES

Historic Indian Agency House
1490 Agency House Road, Portage

Tuesdays @ 6:30 pm | Free Admission



JUNE 10

Dr. James Marten
Professor Emeritus
Marquette University

Inventing Childhood: Coming of Age in the New Republic



JULY 8

Vicki Twinde-Javner
Sr. Research Archaeologist
Mississippi Valley Arch. Center

Daily Life at Frontier Forts: Archaeology Yields Evidence



AUGUST 12

Tamara Funk
Curator, WI Historical Society

Haste to the Wedding: Philosophies & Customs of Euro-American Courtship & Weddings in the 18th - 20th Century United States

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Sara Oostdik

Docents:
Judy Eulberg
Sarah Mautz
Linda Wendt

Thank you to Ann Marie Fuerst and Heather Mundt-Smith for their years of service to the Board of Directors.

Welcome to Robin Kvalo, our newest member to the Board of Directors. She hopes to keep her father, Ted Rebholz's, legacy of keeping history alive in Portage for future generations.

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.

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Portage Historical Society, Inc.
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Museum at the Portage
804 MacFarlane Road
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(608) 742-6682 (call only during open hours)
Website: www.portagemuseum.org
Email: museumattheportage@gmail.com
Hours of Operation
Memorial Day to Labor Day
Tuesday - Saturday, 1-4:00 pm