

1995 - 2025

Portage Historical Society

The Museum at the Portage

804 MacFarlane Road • Portage WI 53901

November 2025 Newsletter

PORTAGE HIGH SCHOOL HALL OF FAME - WINIFRED BAIN

By: Peggy Malone

In late September, Dr. Winifred E. Bain (PHS Class of 1909) was inducted into the Portage High School Hall of Fame Class of 2025. Dr. Bain was born in 1889, and raised in the Portage area. Her early education was spent at the Spicer School in Fort Winnebago, and her high school years were completed at the Central High School building in Portage. Dr. Bain decided early in life that she wanted to be a kindergarten teacher. Upon high school graduation, Dr. Bain attended "Normal School" in Whitewater and Milwaukee to become a teacher. She taught kindergarten in Wisconsin and Minnesota after graduating college. Dr. Bain continued her education at the University of Chicago, where she earned a PhD degree in 1924. In 1929, she received her PhD from Columbia University in New York City. Dr. Bain served on the faculty at Radford State College in Radford, Virginia, always concentrating on early education. In 1940, she became president of Wheelock College in Boston (now known as Boston University Wheelock College of Education & Human Development). While president, Dr. Bain transformed the school into a fully-accredited four-year college. After she retired in 1955, Dr. Bain continued to serve the college by being a member of its Board of Trustees. Dr. Bain died in 1965 at the age of 76. The Bain family has been featured in the "Portage Families" exhibit at the museum for the past two years.



*Dr. Bain
shaking hands
with graduates.*

MEMBERSHIP APPRECIATION NIGHT HIGHLIGHTS

September 18

Robert "Bob" Block gave a presentation on "Wisconsin POW Camps" during World War II. Bob is a resident of Oregon and is an active member of their Historical Society as well as having an interest in historic topics. Bob retired after working with the Wisconsin Crime Lab in Madison for 34 years before retiring as head of the drug identification unit having testified in courts of law over 500 times as an expert witness.

Wisconsin had 38 POW camps housing 20,000 prisoners between 1939-1945. There were POW camps in Cambria, Fox Lake, Markesan, Ripon, Beaver Dam, Green Lake, Reedsburg, Columbus, and Lodi. POWs were treated very well and some even stayed in Wisconsin after being released.

Thank you to Robin Kvalo for sponsoring our speaker in memory of her dad, Ted Rebholz. The Portage High School culinary students prepared the appetizers and desserts - thank you to Florence Schieber for sponsoring the delicious banquet.



CELEBRATING FRIENDSHIP VILLAGE HIGHLIGHTS

August 16

By Sarah Mautz



Celebrating Friendship Village Day at the museum took a turn this past August 16th. Due to unexpected circumstances, Jeff Grothman, the presenter of this annual program, was not available. When Wisconsin author, poet and friend James P. Roberts learned of this from another friend just a week before the event, he emailed an inquiry to the museum, volunteering to "... do a short program reading some of Zona's poetry from *The Secret Way*, August Derleth's poem *Elegy: On a Flake Of Snow* and speak briefly on Zona's poetry as it relates to other poets of her time: Edna St. Vincent Millay and Amy Lowell." Tentative plans became fact after James received Jeff's permission.

It was a fine program, and we were treated to quite a surprise ending. James read two poems of his own, paying tribute to Zona Gale and to Margery Latimer. We thank James P. Roberts for this introduction to transcendental poetry from yesterday's writers. As well, we thank him for stepping in at the last minute to keep the Celebrating Friendship Village Day program from skipping a beat.

A BIT OF HISTORY FROM AN ARTIFACT:

On the 7th day of August 1974, Wisconsin Governor Patrick J. Lucey proclaimed the 100th anniversary of Zona Gale's birth, Monday, August 26, 1974, to be ZONA GALE CENTENNIAL DAY. Our museum has a framed copy of this proclamation on display in Zona's study.

SOCIETY HILL HISTORIC DISTRICT WALKING TOUR

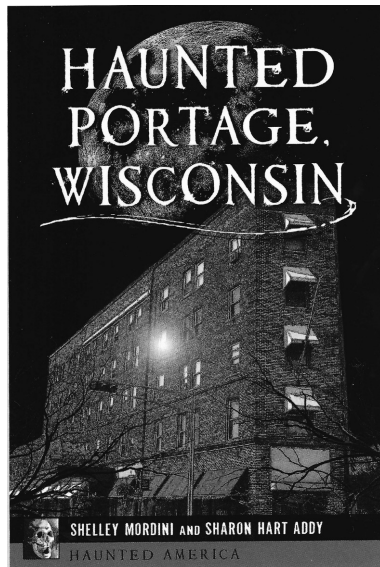
After the Celebrating Friendship Village presentation on August 16th, the Portage Historic Preservation Commission gave a walking tour of Society Hill Historic District led by our own Judy Eulberg. We had a good turnout considering it started to rain just as we were leaving the museum.



VETERANS OF PORTAGE EXHIBIT SOCIAL

Isaac Raines, a junior at Portage High School, was part of the student group who created our "Military Heroes" exhibit at the museum in the off season. On August 21, Isaac held a reception for veterans and members of the local EAA chapter to visit the museum to check out the new military exhibit.





“Haunted Portage” book is available for purchase at The Mercantile. Other books also available, are:

- “Portage: A Sesquicentennial History”
- “Stories of the Upper Fox River”
- “Early 1900s Photographs: A Collection of Portage Homes”
- “Early Days of the Fox-Wisconsin Portage”
- “A Military History of Portage”

CURATOR’S CORNER

By Sara Oostdik, curator



After roughly two years of “large scale” organizing in the museum basement, the end is in sight for these larger projects. Over the last two years, several loads of junk, moldy items, and trash have been removed from the basement - creating more usable space for items in the museum’s collection. Spaces have also been designated for storage of certain items making it easier to locate them in the future. Metal shelving has replaced old wood shelving in two rooms, and existing shelving has been thoroughly cleaned. A large-scale inventory has also been completed of all of the boxed clothing in the museum’s collection.

Recently, Sara and Vicki, with help from volunteers finished installing metal shelving in the Newspaper/Reference Room. This metal shelving replaced older existing shelving and provided space for over 250 bound newspaper volumes (the oldest dating back to Fort Winnebago’s “River Times” in the 1840s!!) to be

in one room, organized by publication and year. Two large map cabinets were also added to this room for storage of blueprints, posters, and other large documents.

Smaller scale organizing will be ongoing in the collections spaces, with continued efforts focussed on item specific record and location updating. This detailed process will further help enhance the accessibility and overall inventory of the collection.

When we’re not in the basement organizing or working on other projects, museum staff have been building relationships with other historical societies locally and state wide. In October, museum staff attended the Wisconsin Historical Society’s Local History and Historic Preservation Conference held at Ho-Chunk Gaming in Baraboo. At the conference, staff learned new skills, shared ideas, and networked with local history representatives from across the state. This conference was the largest in the 19 years of the conference, with over 400 people attending.

Upcoming, several museum staff will be visiting the Driftless Historium & Mount Horeb Area Historical Society in Mount Horeb. This is a chance for us to reconnect with their Executive Director, Destinee Udelhoven, who used to work in Portage and Baraboo museums. Through this meeting we will share tips and tricks and continue to foster that connection.

Even though the museum is now closed for the season, work will be continuing throughout the winter! Stay warm and we hope to see you all when the museum reopens in the spring.

LOCAL HISTORY & HISTORIC PRESERVATION CONFERENCE

October 15-17

The annual Local History & Historic Preservation Conference was held at the Ho-Chunk Casino & Conference Center. With it being so close to home, board members and docents were highly encouraged to attend this year.



Some of the topics included:

- Designating local landmarks
- Preservation strategies
- Creating connections with members and community
- Local government records and repositories
- Creating an effective exhibit

There was a social at the VanOrden Mansion in Baraboo sponsored by the Sauk County Historical Society and a preview of “America@250: The American Revolution” by PBS at the AL. Ringling Theatre in downtown Baraboo.

So much was learned and connections made with other historic preservation and museum colleagues around the state.

MEMBERSHIP & DONATIONS

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 newest members: Rich & Joan Bailey • Shelley Mordini • Doug & Julia Pearce

We have several unmet capital needs this upcoming year. We need to have significant repairs done on the museum sunroom. We appreciate any amount you can give above your membership to support us. Your generous gifts help the Portage Historical Society connect people to the past by collecting, preserving, and sharing stories. Additionally, your gift is critical to our daily operations at the Museum at the Portage. Thank you for your generous support and believing in the power of local history to inspire, educate, and connect us all.

Amount:

- ☐ \$25
☐ \$50
☐ \$100
☐ \$300
☐ \$500
☐ Other \$ _____

In Honor of:

In Memory of:

HAVE YOU THOUGHT ABOUT A PLANNED 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 one's estate, perhaps a gift to the Portage Historical Society might be an appropriate memorial consideration for you. We are a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization so any donations are tax-deductible



BRICK MEMORIAL PATIO



Outside of 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

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Portage, WI

(608) 742-6682 (voice message)

Website: www.portagemuseum.org

Email: museumattheportage@gmail.com

Hours of Operation:

Closed for the Season

Reopen on May 14, 2026

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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.