

1995 - 2025

Portage Historical Society

The Museum at the Portage

804 MacFarlane Road • Portage WI 53901

Spring 2026 Newsletter

BOYS OF SUMMER - SILVER LAKE BASEBALL CLUB

By Peggy Malone



Standing (left to right)—Ira Moorehouse, scorer; H. Stahl, cf; F. Gutknecht, 2b; E. Bublitz, manager; E. White, rf; C. Achterberg, lf.
Sitting (left to right)—J. Beckerjeck, c; F. Denzien, 3b; F. Beckerjeck, mascot; E. Janda, ss; A. Gutknecht, pitcher; J. Schneider, 1b.

With spring training in full swing, let's talk baseball!

Portage had a sports team named the **Silver Lake Baseball Club**. The first mention of this team in Portage papers (*Wisconsin State Register* and *Portage Daily Democrat*) was in 1895. The next time they were noted was in 1904.

The Silver Lake baseball team played other Portage teams - the Fort Winnebago Farmers, the Southside Eagles, the Westsiders, the Fifth Warders, the Railroaders, and the Ramblers as well as clubs from Columbus, Rio, Kilbourn, Endeavor, Corning, Westfield and Montello, and other towns in the area.

The home games were played at Schulze Park, located north of the Milwaukee Road rail line. The citizens of Portage and the visiting teams seemed to be enthusiastic supporters of their ball players. In 1904, the "Silver Lakers" took on the Portage High School baseball team - PHS won the game. There was no mention of a rematch in the following years. In 1905, there was a Silver Lake junior baseball team, who played a game

against the Silver Lakers - the junior team beat the senior team. Again, there was no mention of a rematch in the following years; the Silver Lake junior team was never mentioned again in the Portage papers.

Portage Daily Democrat - Mon, May 22, 1905

...Five hundred people at Schulze's pasture, north of the city, saw the Silver Lake baseball team shut out the Corning Indians yesterday afternoon, 23-0. The way the Portagites smashed out the ball was something extraordinary. They scored three home runs and are credited with a three-bagger and four sweisackers. Six double plays were features of their sharp fielding. Gutknecht had the Indians complete at this mercy, striking out thirteen of them, while Dekorra, the red-skin pitcher, was able to fan but three. All of the visiting team were aborigines except the first baseman. "Dooley" Schwanz held the initial sack for them...

In 1906, there was a dance held at Eagle Hall (located in the Eulberg Block on West Cook Street), to raise money to buy uniforms for the Silver Lakers.

Portage Daily Democrat - Sat, May 19, 1906

FIFTY COUPLES AT DANCE

Silver Lake Baseball Team and Friends Pass Enjoyable Evening

Fifty couples attended the dance at Eagles' Hall last evening given for the benefit of the Silver Lake baseball team uniform fund.

Blue and white, the colors of the team were prominent in the tasty decorations. A large Silver Lake pennant hung from the chandelier in the center of the hall and the capitals "S" and "L" were suspended on either side of the orchestra alcove. The young ladies wore blue and white rosettes and streamers.

Luek Bros. furnished good music and the affair was one not to be soon forgotten by the team and their friends who patronized them so liberally.

The new suits, just arrived, are navy blue with the words "Silver Lake" in white letters across the shirt front. Blue caps with white stripes and white stockings complete the uniform. The opening game of the season will be played at Schulze's park tomorrow afternoon against the Corning Indians.

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After playing the 1906 season in their new uniforms, the Silver Lake baseball team wasn't referenced in the Portage papers again until 1914.

In 1914, the Silver Lakers then played baseball home games at the fairgrounds in Portage. Some of their opponents were: Marcellon, Cedarville, Corning, Caledonia and Kilbourn, as well as other Portage clubs - the Hosierey, the Cubs, the Tanks, the Rails, the Smokes, the KC's, and the Elk, among others. Emil Bubnitz, who played second base on the original team, was the team's manager.

The last mention of the Silver Lake baseball team was in 1924. They renamed themselves the Silver Lake Red Sox.

Portage has had a rich history of baseball teams that have organized and played here for generations. Baseball in this city was a sport that inspired comradery, competitiveness, and a proud sense of community for the players and the fans. PLAY BALL!!!

ANNUAL MEETING

Event Schedule:

April 15, 2026 (Wed)

Knights of Columbus Hall

4:30 pm - Social Hour (cash bar)

5:30 pm - Buffet Dinner (catered by Hitching Post)

6:30 pm - Short Meeting & Speaker Presentation

Buffet Dinner:

Roast Pork Loin & Baked Chicken

Parsley-Buttered Baby Reds

Green Beans with Almonds

Fresh Fruit Bowl

Veggie Tray

Rolls & Butter

Cherry Cheesecake

Cost is **\$20** per person (*includes coffee & gratuity*)

RSVP your attendance (yes with # attending

- or not attending) by **April 5** to Peggy Brown by calling or texting (608) 215-1375.

PAYMENT COLLECTED AT THE EVENT.

Speaker Presentation:

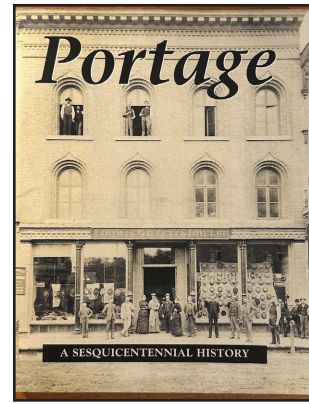
Sarah Pulliam, a Portage High School Social Studies teacher, will share her experience of traveling to Linz, Austria, Oświęcim extras (commonly referred to as Auschwitz), Poland, and Rome, Italy, in June 2025 with 25 educators and facilitators from 12 states and Vancouver, BC. The group was made up of career educators and first-year teachers, museum staff and classroom leaders, urban and rural, middle school to high school, general ed and special ed. For many, like Sarah, it was their first time overseas. The trip created an immersive and emotionally resonant experience for dedicated educators, brought them together to deepen their understanding of the Holocaust — not just what happened, but how, and why, and what it demands of us now.



GIFT STORE

Books available for purchase at **THE MERCANTILE**:

- “Portage: A Sesquicentennial History” - \$30
- “Stories of the Upper Fox River” - \$10
- “Early 1900s Photographs: A Collection of Portage Homes” - \$20
- “Early Days of the Fox-Wisconsin Portage” - \$10
- “A Military History of Portage” - \$15



MEMBERSHIP DRIVE

Why be a Member of the Portage Historical Society?

- **Support Local History Preservation**
- **Contribute to Educational and Cultural Programming**
- **Community Connection and Networking**
- **Exclusive Benefits**
- **Satisfaction of Civic and Cultural Stewardship**

Did you know that only 35% of our income is from memberships and 28% of our income comes from the Portage Tourism Promotions Commission? 20% of our budget pays for just heating the museum building (old and not insulated well)? Our furnace and air conditioning had significant repairs and archival supplies were a large expense this year.

There may also be financial advantages to nonprofit membership. By being a member of the Portage Historical Society, you join a community of supporters who value history, education, and local heritage. Your membership is an investment in Portage, Wisconsin—preserving

its past, enriching its present, and inspiring its future.

We appreciate your continued and generous support of the Portage Historical Society and the Museum at the Portage! We could not do it without you.



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

ROSE GARDEN VOLUNTEERS

Thank you to **Doug Pearce**, who has volunteered to mow the lawn and trim the Rose Garden this summer.

Thank you to **Don Roeker**, who has volunteered to weed and trim around the perennial flower beds and roses in the Rose Garden.

It takes a village to keep our beloved museum running smoothly.



THANK YOU FOR YOUR DONATION

Monetary Donations

Peggy Amend

(in Memory of Mary Langbecker)

Dave & Judy Eulberg

Robin Kvalo

(LED lighting in basement)

(In Memory of Ted Rebholz)

Gary O'Hearn & Judy Larkin

(in Memory of Gary Larkin)

Linda Wendt

(in Memory of Donald Holmes)

Thank You!

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: _____

CURATOR'S CORNER



By: Sara Oostdik, curator

Hello everyone! This winter was pretty quiet for collections work, there were a few Fridays that Sara didn't go to the Museum because of cold or snow. She was able to work from home on a few things.

N.H. Wood Project:

Starting in 1850, N.H. Wood was a prominent merchant and landowner in the Portage area. During a basement cleaning project a couple of years ago, Museum at the Portage staff came across a nondescript metal box containing numerous documents. The collection of over 500 documents ranges from the 1840s to the 1900s and tells the story of N.H. Wood's business dealings in Portage were primarily through land purchases and sales.

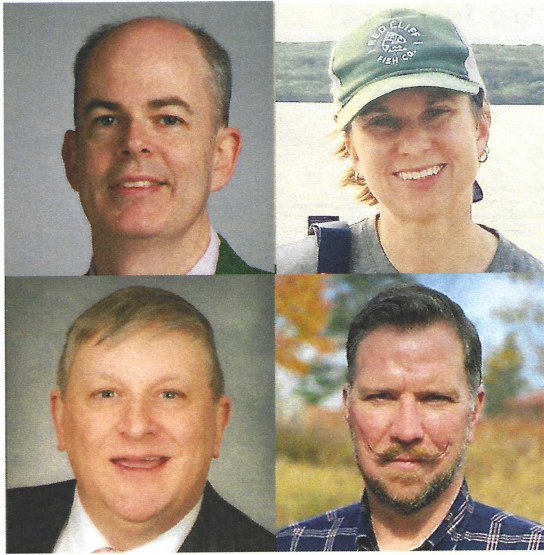
In order to best record the contents of these documents, the Portage Historical Society hired intern Natalie Hamm to sort, rehouse, and record location and other important information into a spreadsheet. Natalie has worked over 60 hours on the project so far and is doing a wonderful job! As Natalie goes through documents, she is recording the section, township, and range of the different records, as well as dates and any associated names. Our hope is that having a spreadsheet with this information will help with future research. Thank you Natalie for all your hard work!



OPEN HOUSE

Canal Days Parade Saturday, June 6 - see our "float" in the parade at 10:00 am down Cook Street!

Open House at the Museum at the Portage from 12:00 - 4:00 pm following the parade. New exhibits include the AA Porter family and the "Clark Sisters" (Juliette Breese Bennett and her two biological sisters, who were adopted as small children).



Intriguing Speaker Series on the Docket

On select Tuesdays throughout the season at 6:30 p.m., a series of outstanding speakers is slated to investigate a wide range of topics based on the theme of "The Big Picture." Admission is free.

Dr. Gabriel Loiacono, US-Oshkosh Professor of History, presents "Now What: US Politics After the Founding, 1790s-1820s" on June 9.

On July 21, UW-La Crosse Professor of Anthropology Dr. Heather Walder addresses "Large Scale Indigenous Trade Networks in the Great Lakes Region."

August 11 brings Dr. Patrick Jung, Professor of History at MSOE, to speak on "Métis Families of the Portage."

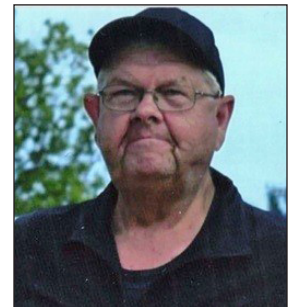
UW-Madison Professor of Military History, Dr. John W. Hall, expounds "The Big Picture of Jacksonian Indian Policy" on September 8.

MEMORIAM

Steven Lee Rohrbeck

October 1, 1955 - February 9, 2026

As a lifelong Portage resident, Steve truly loved the city and was well known for his many active roles throughout the community. As a member of St. John's Lutheran Church in Portage, he coached the boys' basketball team and sang in the choir. Steve served as an elected official on the Columbia County Board of Supervisors and the Portage Common Council.



For 35 years, Steve was a certified WIAA master official in baseball, softball, and volleyball. In 1981, he was one of the founding members of the Portage Little League Baseball program and umpired the first game in Portage history. Steve was inducted into the North American Fastpitch Association Hall of Honor.

Steve is survived by his wife of nearly 50 years, Debbie, and his three sons: Andrew (Melissa), Benjamin (Kimberly), and Matthew (Darcie), and his brother, James. Steve treasured being a grandpa to his grandchildren: Abigail, Noah, Madison, Elise, and Harvey.



Lester "Les" Heitke

February 5, 1949 - May 24, 2025

Les was born and spent his early years in Portage and graduated in 1967 from Holy Name Seminary High School in Madison. He earned his bachelor's degree and master's degree in theology at St. John's University in Collegeville, Minnesota.

He was deeply committed to public service. Les served on the Willmar City Council and later was elected mayor. He served on numerous community boards, as well as leadership positions statewide and nationally. A man of strong faith, he was a member of the Church of St. Mary. His passions included Civil War history and stained glass.

Les is survived by his wife, Cherie; sons, Adam (Sarah) and Mark (Sam); grandchildren, Alexa (fiance, Michael), Claire, Noah, Maximos, Walt, and Graham; and siblings, Beverly Heitke and Louis (Tia) Heitke.

With spring also comes golfing and flooding



OUR CORPORATE MEMBERS - PLEASE SUPPORT THEM



If your business or organization is interested in becoming a Portage Historical Society business member, please contact us at museumattheportage@gmail.com.

THANK YOU BUSINESS IN-KIND PARTNERS



PORTAGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.
Museum at the Portage



BALLOT
ELECTION OF BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Per our Bylaws, board members are elected by the membership at the Annual Meeting (an exception is made to fill vacancies, in which case the board of directors can appoint someone to fill the term of the vacant director position). The Nomination Committee is directed by the Bylaws to prepare tickets of candidates for vacancies to the Board. The presentation of the ticket at the Annual Meeting constitutes the report of the Nomination Committee. A request for nominations from the floor may follow.

There are seven director positions up for election on the Board of Directors. All positions are for a 3-year term.

Our nonprofit organization is seeking enthusiastic and committed individuals to join our Board of Directors. We meet on the 3rd Monday of the month (March - November). Come help us preserve Portage's history. If you or know someone who may be interested in being a board member, please write his or her name below so we can contact them.

- ☐ Peggy Amend (*incumbent*)
- ☐ Melody Brooks-Taylor (*incumbent*)
- ☐ Nancy Kreier (*incumbent*)
- ☐ Peggy Malone (*incumbent*)
- ☐ Kathy Rowley (*incumbent*)
- ☐ Florence Schieber (*incumbent*)
- ☐ Write in for vacant director position: _____ (3 years)

PLEASE RETURN YOUR BALLOT BY APRIL 5, 2026

Email: museumattheportage@gmail.com

Mail: Portage Historical Society, Inc.
P.O. Box 727
Portage, WI 53901

BOARD OF DIRECTORS & STAFF

Vicki Vogts, president
Suzi Hemler, vice president
Deb Rohrbeck, secretary
Veronica Kamrath, treasurer

Sean Malone
Sandy Nachreiner
Kathy Rowley
Florence Schieber

Peggy Amend
Melody Brooks-Taylor
Peggy Brown
Dave Eulberg
Fred Galley
Nancy Kreier
Robin Kvalo
Peggy Malone

Curator:
Sara Oostdik

Docents:
Judy Eulberg
Sarah Mautz
Linda Wendt

Portage Historical Society, Inc.
P.O. Box 727
Portage, WI 53901

Museum at the Portage
804 MacFarlane Road
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

**Find us on
Facebook &
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.