

SUMMER 2008

WISCONSIN

magazine of history

“Adventures
of 4 River Rovers”

On the Trail
of Paul Bunyan

BOOK EXCERPT
Finding Josie



Find your place in history . . . then go there!

The Wisconsin Historical Society owns ten historic sites around the state of Wisconsin. Visit wisconsinhistory.org for information on hours, photos of the sites, and descriptions of each site. (866)944-7483 (SITE)





Division Administrator &
State Historic Preservation Officer
Michael E. Stevens

Editorial Director
Kathryn L. Borkowski

Editor
Jane M. de Broux

Managing Editor
Diane T. Drexler

Research and Editorial Assistants
**Brian Bengtson, Joel Heiman, John Nondorf,
Ellen Swenson, John Zimm**

Designer
Zucker Design

THE WISCONSIN MAGAZINE OF HISTORY (ISSN 0043-6534), published quarterly, is one of the many benefits of membership in the Wisconsin Historical Society. Annual memberships are:

- Individual, \$40.00
- Senior citizen individual, \$30.00
- Family, \$50.00
- Senior citizen family, \$40.00
- Institutional, \$65.

To join the Society or to give a gift membership, send a check to Membership, Wisconsin Historical Society, 816 State Street, Madison, WI, 53706, call the Membership Office at 888-748-7479, e-mail whsmember@wisconsinhistory.org, or go to our Web site

The *Wisconsin Magazine of History* has been published quarterly since 1917 by the Wisconsin Historical Society. Copyright © 2008 by the State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

For permission to reuse text from the *Wisconsin Magazine of History*, (ISSN 0043-6534), please access www.copyright.com or contact the Copyright Clearance Center, Inc. (CCC), 222 Rosewood Drive, Danvers, MA, 01923, 978-750-8400. CCC is a not-for-profit organization that provides licenses and registration for a variety of users.

For permission to reuse photographs from the *Wisconsin Magazine of History* identified with WHI or WHS contact: Visual Materials Archivist, 816 State Street, Madison, WI, 53706.

Wisconsin Magazine of History welcomes the submission of articles and image essays. Contributor guidelines can be found on the Wisconsin Historical Society website at www.wisconsinhistory.org/wmh/contribute.asp.

The Wisconsin Historical Society does not assume responsibility for statements made by contributors.

Periodicals postage paid at Madison, WI 53706-1417.

Back issues, if available, are \$8.95 plus postage (888-999-1699).

Microfilmed copies are available through UMI Periodicals in Microfilm, part of National Archive Publishing, 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106, www.napubco.com.

On the front cover:

Two men navigate their canoe through caves at the Wisconsin Dells.

WHI Image ID 1070



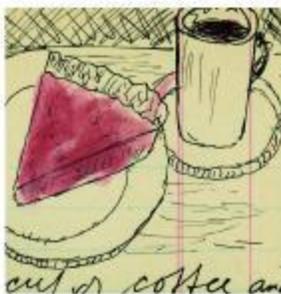
2



20



28



40

2 On the Trail of Paul Bunyon
by Michael Edmonds

BOOK EXCERPT

16 Finding Josie
by Wendy Bilen

20 The Photography of Dr. Edward A. Bass
by Jim Slattery

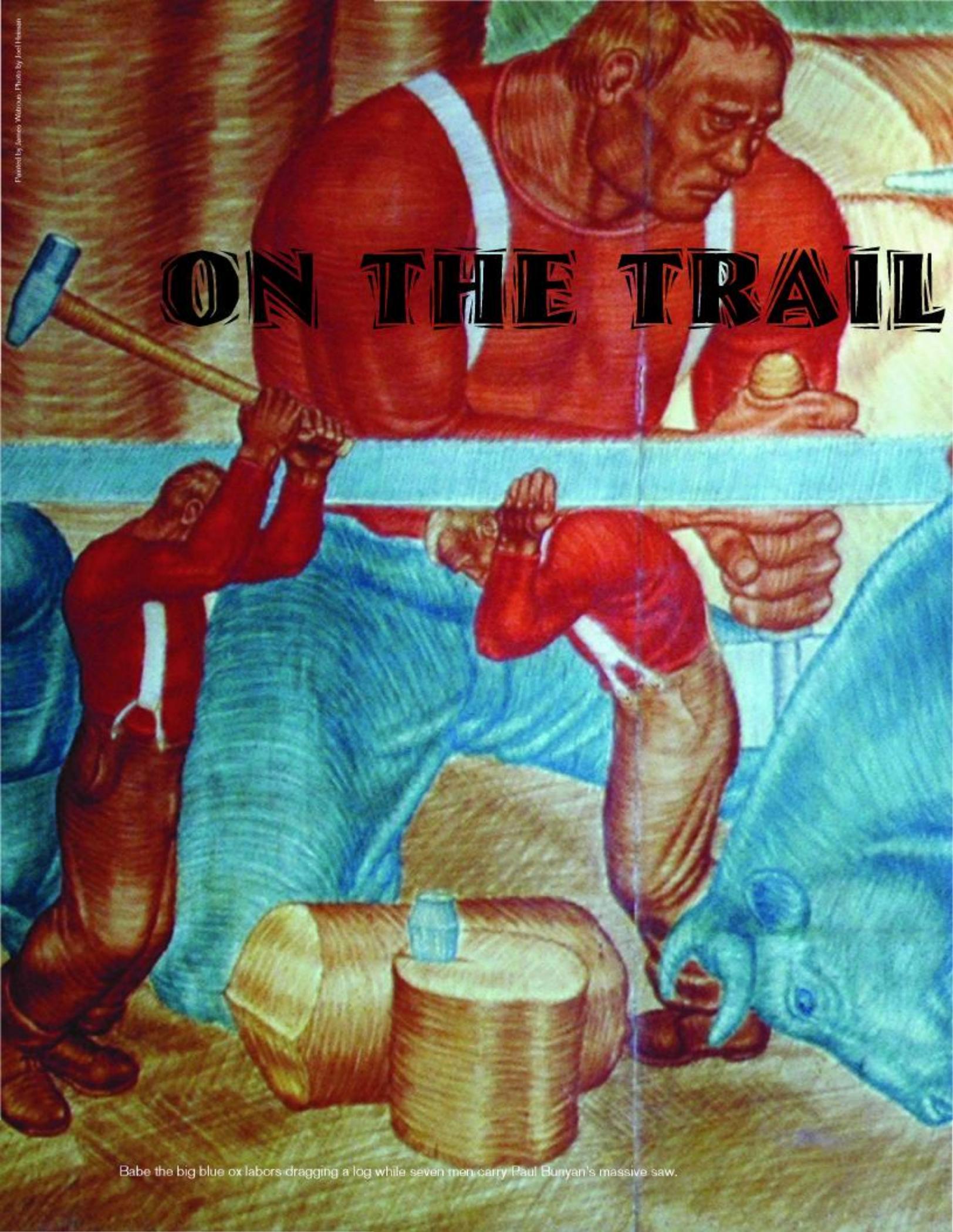
28 The Wisconsin Idea in Action
Reading, Resistance & the
Door-Kewaunee Regional Library,
1950-1952
by Christine Pawley

40 Observations on the Log Book of Preston Reynolds
One of the 4 River Rovers on
a Trip Down the Wisconsin,
Mississippi, and Up the Rock
and Yahara Rivers
by Marguerite Helmers

54 Letters

56 Curio

ON THE TRAIL



Babe the big blue ox labors dragging a log while seven men carry Paul Bunyan's massive saw.



OF PAUL BUNYAN

by Michael Edmonds

Painted by James Watrous; Photo by Joel Heiman



The big blue ox, named Babe by advertising executives, grew so fast he broke out of a barn every day.

I was paging through yellowed scrapbooks of early twentieth-century newspaper clippings, searching for first-person accounts by lumberjacks. A string of irrelevant headlines like “Mill, Long Since Abandoned, Was Town’s Beginning” had lulled me half-asleep. The murky photos that accompanied them—wooden loggers posed next to stone-faced oxen, formal portraits of equally stone-faced pioneers—only increased my boredom. Scanning page after page, my mind was growing soft and mushy, like the sawdust-covered floors of those long-abandoned lumber mills. My head tottered on my shoulders and I was about to nod off when a lovely young woman looked up from the page. She was staring directly into the camera, her face framing an enigmatic smile. The headline read, paradoxically, “Extracts from Paul Bunyan Yarns.”



A choreboy turns a grindstone so Paul Bunyan can sharpen his saw. By the time the choreboy went a full turn it was payday again.

The heroic logger Paul Bunyan is the best-known character in American folklore. He was said to be “a powerful giant seven feet tall and with a stride of seven feet” who cleared North Dakota of its forests, dug Lake Superior, and started the Mississippi River flowing.¹ More than a thousand books describe his exploits—never mind the audio recordings, videos, cartoons, comic books, and musical scores, or the half-million Web pages. Restaurants, stores, statues, amusement parks, festivals, and resorts from Maine to California bear his name. For more than a century, Bunyan’s immense size and strength epitomized raw, masculine power and personified our national ambitions.

So why was a young woman staring up at me from the faded newspaper? “As promised with the last lumbering article,” the text began, “we are giving today extracts from the Paul Bunyan Legends by Miss K. Bernice Stewart of the University of Wisconsin . . . Miss Stewart is no novice in matters pertaining to logging camp life. Her father was a timber cruiser in Northern Wisconsin and Michigan and as a young girl she herself spent several winters in camp. Becoming interested in the yarns which the typical old time woodsmen were accustomed to relate for the benefit of any tenderfoot who might be present, Miss Stewart has for some years past been making a careful study of the subject. As noted before, it was only a few months ago that she made a trip to Eau Claire and vicinity in search of material along the same line.”²

Those “typical old time woodsmen” were actually the Hell’s Angels of their day—with axes. Their drinking, brawling, and violence struck fear into the heart of many a small-town shopkeeper every spring when they emerged from the woods. How did a female undergraduate dare to travel through remote logging camps asking to hear their private jokes? What became of her research? And what part did she play in creating America’s most famous legendary character?

These questions led me from the dusty stacks of the Wisconsin Historical Society’s library in Madison to the sun-splashed hills of western Massachusetts. They took me elbow-deep into boxes of century-old manuscripts and sent me flashing through the latest digital research tools. The trail of Bernice Stewart and Paul Bunyan turned out to be more intriguing than I could have imagined, and proved that Wisconsin sits at the center of the Paul Bunyan legend.

The Collectors

Stewart was born on May 15, 1894, and spent her girlhood moving from town to town in northern Wisconsin. Her father, Harry Stewart, made his living estimating the market values of large tracts of forest for lumber companies. Timber cruisers like Stewart mapped their clients’ land, monitored it to make sure it wasn’t being cut by others, and handled local legal and financial obligations for the companies.³ Harry Stewart spent much of each year roaming through the northern wilderness, and he occasionally brought his family along. As a girl of nine, Bernice accompanied him on a trip through the forest, staying in logging camps and meeting lumberjacks. Eventually the family settled in Antigo where, in 1909, as a high school junior, Bernice placed second in a statewide writing contest. This probably helped her gain admission to the University of Wisconsin in the fall of 1912.⁴

Stewart became active in women’s athletics and joined the staff of the *Daily Cardinal*, the student newspaper. She worked as a reporter for its “Woman’s Page,” helping to publish stories about suffrage, women’s working conditions, pensions for

mothers, and the anti-war movement (the rest of the paper, written by men, was largely about sports and fraternities). She was also an outstanding student, served as guest editor of various magazines, and was elected to Phi Beta Kappa.⁵ In her freshman year, Stewart wrote a paper for English professor Homer A. Watt (1884–1948) about the Paul Bunyan tales she'd heard as a child.

Watt had graduated from Cornell in 1906 and won a graduate fellowship at Wisconsin the following year. After earning his doctorate, he joined the Madison English faculty in 1909. His research was traditional: his dissertation was on an obscure Elizabethan dramatist, and he later published a guide to Shakespeare's plays and compiled a *Dictionary of English Literature*.⁶ He was also an innovative teacher and a generous mentor. He encouraged students to write about their own observations and experiences, and urged faculty to give a more sympathetic reception to student writings, "which are too often only riddled by an ogre with a blue pencil."⁷ Watt was intrigued by Stewart's paper on the Paul Bunyan stories and by 1914 both student and teacher were enthusiastically tracking down the tales.

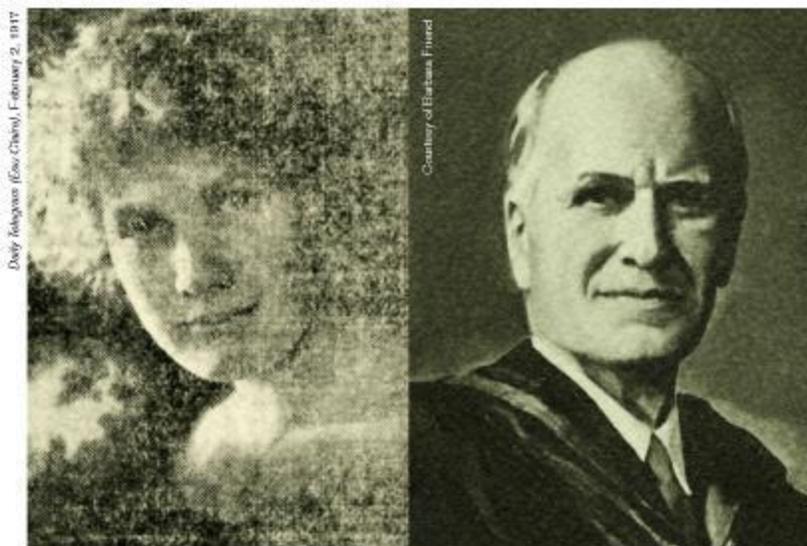
Paul Bunyan's Origins

At the time, oral versions of the Bunyan stories had been circulating in Great Lakes logging camps for about thirty years but were little known to the outside world. So far, the earliest reliably-dated account of a Bunyan tale came from Bert Taplin of Wautoma, Wisconsin, in 1938 who told local newspaper H. J. Kent in 1938, that he,

first heard these yarns in the winter of '85 or '86, in the Manson camp north of Tomahawk . . . A cruiser by the name of Bill Mulhollen, in the employ of a lumber company at Turtle Lake, near Saginaw, Michigan, visited the Manson Camp on a trip from the Wisconsin Chippewa country, and Mr. Taplin accompanied him on his search for good timber.

Mulhollen spent three nights in camp, and held Taplin's bunkmates spellbound with a steady flow of stories about the legendary lumberman . . . These yarns, says Mr. Taplin, were related with an air of authenticity, their "amperage" increasing with the cruiser's stay. Not until it was time to turn in on the last night did his bunkmates realize how engagingly they had been taken for a "sleigh-ride," at which time they hurled overshoes and everything else that was handy at the story-teller.⁸

Taplin's recollection is corroborated by another Wisconsin logger who was in the same area about the same time. "In the summer of 1886," H. J. Kent reported, "Jim McKeague of Wautoma worked on the road at Tomahawk, when there was barely a building there on the Fourth of July. When he returned in the winter, the town had built up with 17 saloons, 2 brothels,



Left: Miss K. Bernice Stewart collected Paul Bunyan stories as a student at the University of Wisconsin. She was first intrigued by the Paul Bunyan tales she heard as a child visiting the lumber camps where her father worked.

Right: Homer A. Watt provided scholarly analysis for the tales collected by Bernice K. Stewart and also arranged to get the stories published.

and several stores. He was a clerk in Jack Clark's double-front store, and heard Bunyan stories there." After talking with other retired Wisconsin loggers, Kent told Charles E. Brown that, "Bunyan stories were not current in camps south of Marshfield, but were congenial to the regions of heavier pine and probably travelled with choppers rather than mill workers."⁹

About the same time, Eugene Shepard (1854–1923), a timber cruiser who was well-known as a raconteur and prankster, was also telling the Bunyan tales in the same region. Shepard first entered the Wisconsin woods in 1871, and for the next three decades spent much of each year cruising the wilderness. He gained a wide reputation as a storyteller, especially of the Bunyan tales, even claiming more than once that he himself had invented Paul Bunyan.¹⁰

Shepard never let facts interfere with a good story (or self-promotion), and didn't hesitate to fabricate details, plagiarize other people's work, or fashion elaborate hoaxes. His claim of creating Bunyan is almost certainly false, but he did disseminate the stories widely on his travels. Shepard was, as his obituary put it, "one of the original Paul Bunyan boosters" and for decades he told the tales to audiences all across the lumbering region, from Michigan to the Pacific Northwest.¹¹

Although some writers have asserted that Bunyan was born in Wisconsin, there is no conclusive proof to support this claim.



Loggers skidding with oxen.

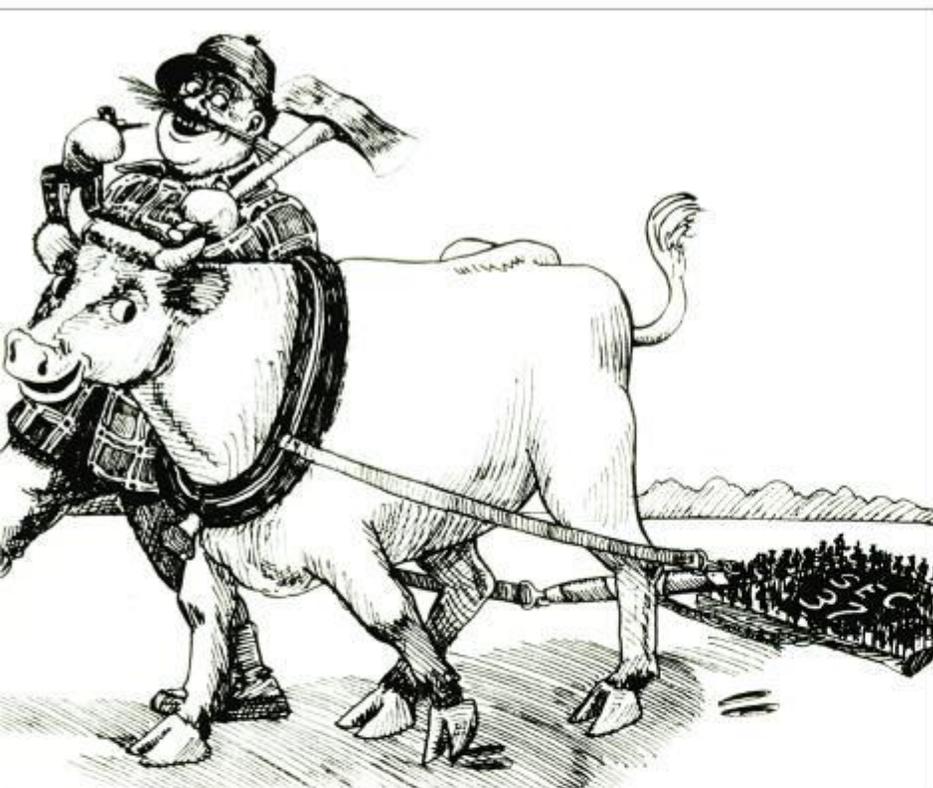
There is also no reliable evidence for the often repeated assertion that Bunyan came west into the Great Lakes with loggers from New England, New York, and the Canadian Maritimes. Motifs in many of the stories undoubtedly traveled from East to West, and some were used as early as the eighteenth century in other American folktales. But the character of Paul Bunyan was invented in the Great Lakes region after the Civil War. Between the mid-1880s and 1900, stories about him were certainly told in Pennsylvania, New York, Ontario, Minnesota, and the Pacific Northwest, probably spreading simultaneously east and west from the Great Lakes. Most lumberjacks moved to a new camp each fall, and large numbers traveled throughout the entire region many times during the years when the Bunyan tales first circulated.

How Tales of Paul Bunyan Were Told

Bill Mulhollen's performance in Tomahawk during the winter of 1885–1886 was not typical of how the stories were usually told. References to Bunyan usually consisted of short, passing quips improvised on the spot, rather than full-fledged narratives recited to a passive audience. "Any crews that I ever came in contact with in the woods, or any place else," recalled

William Laughead, who worked in the forest around 1900, "wouldn't let any one man monopolize the conversation very long." Instead, lumberjacks "would be likely to pass fragmentary remarks about Paul between themselves, like a hand-ball, for their effect upon the uninitiated." They were typically used to test the gullibility of new recruits who were fresh from the family farm or big city. Speakers would deliberately leave openings for others to step in and expand the story with a slightly grander exaggeration, tongue planted firmly in cheek and with an eye on the reaction of the greenhorns.¹²

On some occasions, however, loggers would deliberately spin out long Bunyan tall tales in recreational lying contests. P. S. Lovejoy, who first heard them in Michigan about 1901, reported that, "None of the old-timers ever laughs, either in telling or listening, and they often wrangle solemnly over details. 'That weren't the way I heern it,' one would say, and then would follow another version, whether traditional or improvised on the spot it is sometimes difficult to tell." A retired Wisconsin logger recalled about 1927, "I can see old Gus Hendricks now. He'd be lying quiet an' still in his bunk listenin'. By and by he'd raise up, 'Did you every hear this one?' he'd say, and then he'd tell one to beat all the rest."¹³



Paul Bunyan and Babe hauling off an entire section of lumber

Here is a typical Bunyan story, in the words of the lumberjack who supplied it to Bernice Stewart and Homer Watt:

Paul B Driving a large Bunch of logs Down the Wisconsin River When the logs Suddenly Jamed. in the Dells. The logs were piled Two Hundred feet high at the head, And were backed up for One mile up river. Paul was at the rear of the Jam with the Blue Oxen And while he was coming to the front the Crew was trying to break the Jam but they couldnt Budge it. When Paul Arrived at the Head with the ox he told them to Stand Back. He put the Ox in the old Wisc. in front of the Jam. And then Standing on the Bank Shot the Ox with a .303 Savage Rifle. The Ox thought it was flies And began to Switch his Tail. The tail commenced to go around in a circle And up Stream And do you know That Ox Switching his tail forced that Stream to flow Backwards And Eventually the Jam floated back Also. He took the ox out of the Stream. And let the Stream And logs go on their way.¹⁴

Some of the Bunyan tales revolved around amazing feats of strength or skill, such as Bunyan blowing down trees when he shouted to his crew. Others described the immense size of his logging operation, which included a three-story cook shanty where railroad cars were needed to serve food and loaves of bread were as large as bunkhouses. Their humor often turned



WHS Museum 1903.104.5

Mid-twentieth century ceramic plate bearing an image of Paul Bunyan

on logical impossibilities such as a circular river with no outlet, or an athletic logger who could cross wide rivers in only three leaps. Others employed sophisticated humor worthy of Lewis Carroll: "At Round River in section 37 there was a forty of land shaped like a pyramid," Charles E. Brown was told, "with a heavy growth of timber on all of its sides. To see to its top 'took a week.' It was 'as far as twenty men' could see."¹⁵ Others featured blood-thirsty animals such as the hodag and the hide-behind, deliberately intended to terrify innocent recruits who were intimidated by the primeval forest.¹⁶

Although many Bunyan anecdotes contained motifs which had appeared long before in traditional American folktales, others were inside jokes with punch-lines that depended entirely on technical knowledge of logging and its jargon. Because the tales were told in an all-male environment about a masculine hero, a number of them revolved around Bunyan's private parts, sexual prowess, and ability to get drunk, all in proportion to his gargantuan physique.

Paul Bunyan represented loggers' idealized version of themselves—massive in size, amazingly strong, clever at problem-solving, courageous in the face of adversity, capable in any emergency, and good-natured with comrades. The tales enabled them to obliquely address the fears they harbored as they risked their lives daily at one of America's most brutal occupations. Frostbite and exposure were constant companions, since most of the work was performed in frigid conditions

where thermometers often dropped far below zero. The chance to instantly lose a limb or sever an artery was ever-present. As late as 1907 almost twenty percent of Wisconsin's industrial accidents happened in the woods or saw mills. A Washington state commission, after evaluating workplace injury statistics for 1910–1919, concluded that logging was a more deadly occupation than warfare. The Bunyan tales allowed men who endured extreme hardship and risked death every day to fantasize that things could be far worse and yet still come out right.¹⁷

Most loggers' stories, however, were not about Bunyan at all. Woodsmen had a very rich folklore, but most of their tales were about deceitful bosses, notorious brawls, famous tragedies, or personal feats of strength. Many retired lumberjacks reported in the 1930s and 1940s that they had never heard a single Bunyan anecdote in the woods. Some who couldn't recall Bunyan tales told the very same stories about other characters, such as the French-Canadian logger Joe Muffreau. By 1920, when railroads had long-since replaced oxen and steam engines had supplanted muscle power, woods workers had almost stopped talking about Bunyan altogether.¹⁸ By then, thanks in part to Bernice Stewart and Homer Watt, the tales had been collected and printed.

Collecting Tales of Paul Bunyan

In a letter dated June 10, 1916, Homer Watt described how he and Bernice Stewart were trying to gather the tales: "... with the active assistance of one of my students, Miss Stewart, who has lived all her life in the woods of Wisconsin and Michigan, I have been for two years collecting lumberjack tales and legends... Miss Stewart is especially well equipped to gather the materials; not only has she lived for years in the north woods, but her father is an old lumber cruiser and her circle of acquaintances is wide." Watt also intended to write to "members of English Departments in northern universities and to lumbermen in all parts of the north, with a form letter requesting additional information concerning the legends and songs of the lumber camps. In this way I hope to cover a very wide sweep of country and determine the distribution of the material and other matters of equal interest."¹⁹

In the same June 1916 letter, Watt noted that "Miss Stewart leaves for the Eau Claire and Chippewa River districts as soon as Commencement is over (she graduates this year) and will engage in a month's study of the early days of lumbering and of lumber-camp tales and songs. Although our plans are not yet completed for this trip we have been thinking of using a dictaphone on the visits to old lumber men so that an actual record in dialect may be made of some of the tales and songs." It was on this trip that she met William Bartlett, editor of the article that had first caught my eye. No recordings, or, indeed, any other field notes by Stewart and Watt, have been found.

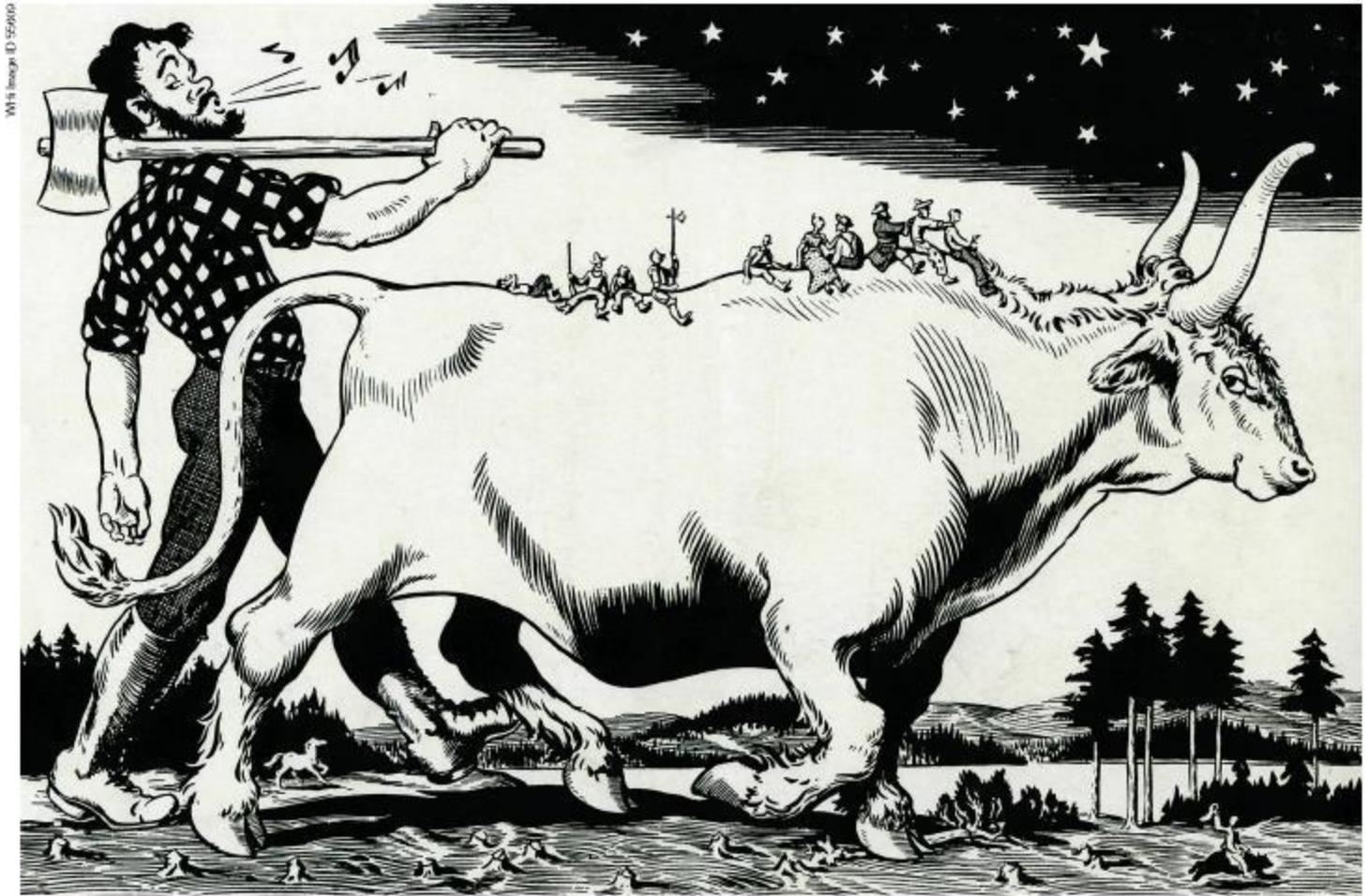
Watt may have joined Stewart on some of these collecting trips, since his obituary reported that she had "arranged for



Woodcut depicting Paul Bunyan with a calf that would grow to be the legendary blue ox

him to visit the logging camps. There he heard many tales about Bunyan." In surviving documents she is more often mentioned as the person with connections to informants, and was probably the chief collector. He, on the other hand, probably arranged for their scholarly publication and provided the critical and scholarly analysis that accompanied the stories when they were finally printed.²⁰ That process began in the summer of 1915, when Stewart and Watt were asked to give a presentation on their research at the annual meeting of the Wisconsin Academy of Arts, Sciences, and Letters. This was expanded into a thirteen-page article summarizing their findings for the 1916 volume of the Academy's *Transactions* (actually published in March, 1917).²¹ In its introduction they summarized their methods this way:

The following study of lumberjack legends has grown out of a little collection of these tales made in the lumber-camps by Miss Stewart, who for years has heard the stories told by the lumberjacks of Wisconsin and Michigan.



Paul Bunyan and Babe walk through cleared land, Babe toting several people on his back.

Recently by corresponding with and interviewing lumbermen and others who are or who have been intimately connected with the lumber-camps we have added to the original collection a considerable number of new legends, besides many different versions of stories already in our collection, and a great deal of miscellaneous information about the hero, Paul Bunyan, and his blue ox. Some of these stories, as must be expected of any such series, are too coarse for publication. It has seemed to us, however, that for the most part the tales are quite wholesome; perhaps the circumstances under which they were collected have automatically excluded those of the rougher type.

The sources whom they thanked were "Mr. B. R. Taylor, Mr. M. W. Sergeant, and Mr. Harold Stark, students in the University who have recently lived in the lumber districts of northern Wisconsin, and who have heard Paul Bunyan tales from boyhood, to Mr. Douglas Malloch of Chicago for a copy of his poem, *The Round River Drive*, a metrical version of



Eugene Shepard drawing of a primitive and frightening Paul Bunyan



Loggers occasionally had time for music and jig-dancing, when not working or spinning tales about Paul Bunyan.

some of the tales which was published in *The American Lumberman* for April 25, 1914, to the Red River Lumber Company of Minneapolis, Minnesota, and to lumbermen and others who have sent us material from the lumber districts." They also reported that they had collected tales from Langlade County, along the Flambeau and Wisconsin rivers, and from northern Minnesota. Through correspondence they had also gathered others from lumberjacks who migrated west to Oregon, Washington, and northern California.²²

Stewart and Watt printed about twenty-five Bunyan tales, almost half of which were previously unknown to readers. Their work was the first effort to systematically collect the oral tradition in which America's greatest folk hero was born. Almost every Bunyan editor since then has cited their stories as the most trustworthy and authentic versions of the folktales told in nineteenth-century logging camps.

Paul Bunyan Tales in Print

Stewart and Watt preserved the Bunyan tales just as the stories began to undergo a revolutionary transformation. For thirty years they had been improvised aloud in conversations among illiterate loggers in isolated forest bunkhouses. Unlike American Indian creation narratives or the legends of King Arthur, there was no stable collection of Bunyan myths that

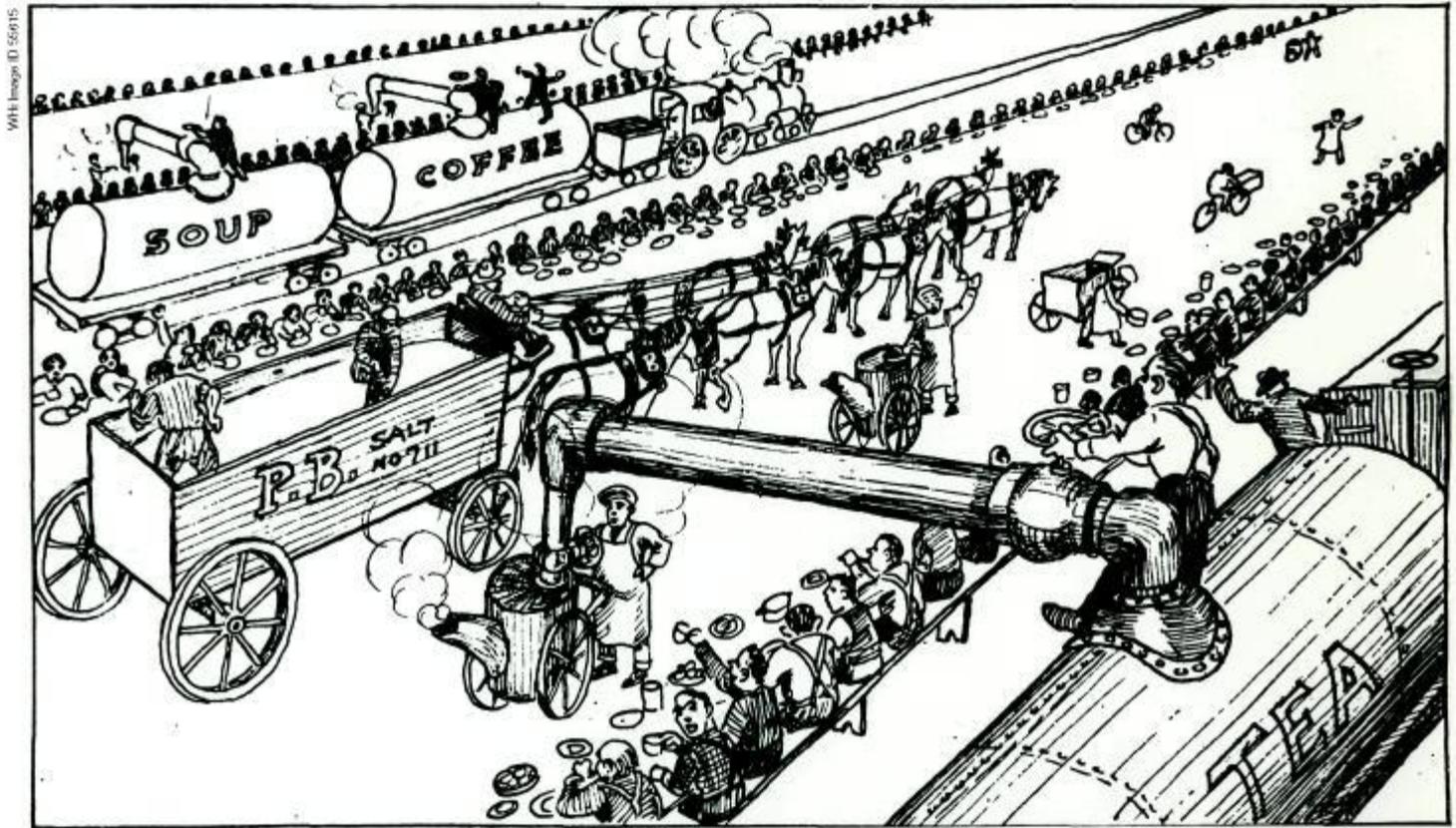
WPA Image ID 41778



Loggers in a cramped bunkhouse

passed from one memory-keeper to the next. Every story changed with every telling: the tales were modified with each new attempt to scare greenhorns or out-do fellow liars. But when Bunyan moved out of the woods onto the printed page, all this changed. The stories were reshaped for polite, educated readers and permanently fixed on paper in radically new forms.

The earliest publication of any Bunyan stories (unknown to scholars until now) appeared in the "Caught on the Run" column in the *Duluth News Tribune* on August 4, 1904. This very brief piece was followed six years later when J. E. Rockwell published a collection of more than twenty tales for the Milwaukee-based nature magazine *Outers Book* in February 1910. The *Outers Book* was a popular monthly like *Field and Stream* that specialized in stories about camping, fishing, and hunting. Although it had a nationwide circulation of 41,000 at the time, only one copy of the February 1910 issue appears to survive in American libraries. Rockwell's article almost certainly included tales from Wisconsin loggers, and also described Eugene Shepard's famous hodag hoax of 1896. Rockwell's tales were quickly reprinted in the *Washington Post* and the *Wisconsin State Journal*, which brought them to the attention of more than 70,000 readers. It was the first time Bunyan reached a national audience.²³



The mess hall at Paul Bunyan's camp welcomes trainloads of coffee, tea, and soup to feed a hungry crew and the gigantic lumberjack.

About the same time, a handful of different Bunyan tales were published in the *Oscoda (Michigan) Press* (1906) and in the *Detroit News* (1910). Called "Round River," these Michigan tales were thought until now to be the earliest printings of the stories and were widely anthologized and often cited by scholars. They were originally collected by former lumberman James MacGillivray from timber cruiser Jimmy Conn (1870–1940), who had worked in the Saginaw region at the turn of the century; one historian has argued that Conn's model for them was a French-Canadian logger named Joe Fournier (1845–1875).²⁴

No other Bunyan tales appeared in print until 1914, when a few were used as filler in the trade journal *American Lumberman*. That same year the Red River Lumber Co. created an advertising campaign around Bunyan's image and exploits. It fell flat on its face because most of their customers—sawmill managers and lumber wholesalers—had never heard of Paul Bunyan. During World War I, a more aggressive Red River ad campaign finally took off, and between 1922 and 1947 they distributed more than 100,000 booklets containing various versions of the Bunyan tales. Babe the Blue Ox, as well as several other familiar characters were invented by Red River ad executives rather than by lumberjacks. The Red River Co. tales were picked up by Eastern magazines in 1923 and 1924, the first commercial books about Bunyan appeared in 1924 and

1925, and the first children's collection in 1927.²⁵ By the mid-1920s Paul Bunyan had become famous.

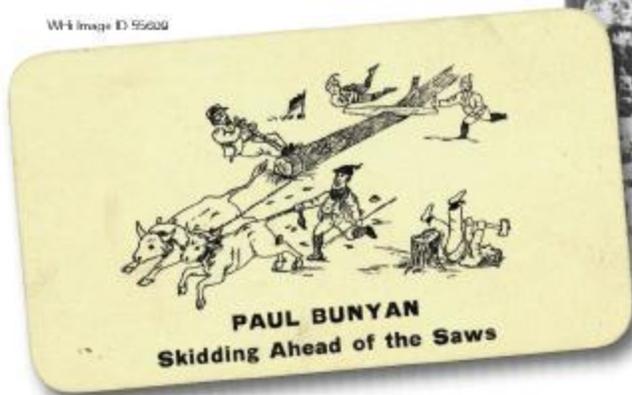
Forcing the oral Bunyan stories into printed form during the 1920s imposed certain conventions on them. Where working-class loggers had once argued with one another about Bunyan around bunkhouse stoves, educated middle-class magazine readers sat passively in comfortable living rooms. Instead of lumberjacks pulling greenhorns' legs with private jokes that changed shape like amoebas every time they were told, professional writers had to sell commercial fiction in predictable narrative formats. Simply by being printed in a newspaper, magazine, or book, the Bunyan tales were frozen in time, stabilized, in a way that the spontaneous collaborations told aloud in logging camps could never be.

Printing the tales also enabled editors to expand them into conventional short stories with a full cast of colorful characters. Well-rounded Bunyan narratives in polished prose (and sometimes embarrassing attempts at dialect or verse) flooded the market. This led Eau Claire historian William Bartlett to complain in 1927 that, "Most of the more lengthy recitals are extremely tiresome, containing, as they do, so little of the original, genuine material and so much of the musings and imaginations of their authors."²⁶

When the Bunyan stories appeared in print they were censored for the first time. In 1925 no publisher would have dared

A hyper-efficient Paul Bunyan skids a log as loggers try to cut it on the run.

W4 Image ID 55209



W4 Image ID 2413



Loggers cut down a tree with a two-man crosscut saw

to print the dirty jokes of lumberjacks. By the time that government bans and publishers' self-censorship had eased forty years later, all the loggers who had once told the sexual and scatological Bunyan tales had carried them to their graves.

The inevitable consequence of publishing the tales for urban readers after 1920 was that they were cleaned up and embellished, like a logger who washed, shaved, and bought new clothes when he left the forest for town in the spring. After Paul Bunyan arrived on the printed page, he was never the same again. Bernice Stewart and Homer Watt had collected and preserved the tales just before the giant lumberjack was civilized.

The Legacy of Stewart and Watt

Stewart and Watt intended to publish their research as a book that would also analyze a large number of the Bunyan tales they collected. Watt asked readers of their 1916 article to send him more stories, and as late as April 1917 Stewart was still collecting new ones. She was asked to speak again at the Academy's annual meeting that year and allowed William Bartlett to print their tales in the Eau Claire newspaper, but no book ever appeared.²⁷ In the spring of 1916 Watt was offered a faculty position at New York University and he left Wisconsin early in September. The folktales of lumberjacks probably seemed less important in Greenwich Village than they had in Wisconsin. Watt eventually became chair of the New York University English Department and a mentor to novelist Thomas Wolfe.²⁸

Bernice Stewart was graduated in June of 1916 and took a job with the university press service which kept her so busy that she had "almost been obliged to forget Paul Bunyan."²⁹ She fell in love with a returning World War I veteran named Alexander Campbell, married him, and settled in New York City. After her husband retired in 1953, they moved to San

Photo by Joel Hansen



Paul Bunyan's Cook Shanty, built in 1961, is located on highway 51 in Minocqua.

Diego, where she died on May 8, 1975. She appears never to have written another word about Bunyan.

Watt, on the other hand, never forgot Paul Bunyan. While teaching undergraduates, running an academic department, advising Thomas Wolfe, and pursuing his own research, he wrote "a sort of bed-time story or series of stories in a frame" under the title "When Gran'pa Logged for Paul" for a high school literature textbook. The grandfather in the piece is called "Gran'pa Stewart" and the little boy to whom he tells the tales is Harry Stewart—the name of Bernice's father. At the time, both of them were living in the New York area and it's possible he knew that she had children of the right age to



Once the tree had fallen, loggers cut it into sections for transport to the mill.

encounter the textbook in their classes. Watt also contributed twenty Bunyan tales to Lewis Wann's 1933 textbook, *The Rise of Realism*, lamenting in his commentary that popularizers had "sometimes destroyed the mood and flavor of the Bunyan tales by sentimentalizing or otherwise distorting them."³⁰

Ten years later Watt correctly predicted that the audience for Bunyan tales would soon be the very young, "... and that only in children's stories will he remain, like Jack the Giant Killer. There is no reason why America should not ultimately develop its traditions of the nursery just as Old England has done." He even prepared a manuscript of the tales for his grandchildren, but World War II and unexpected family responsibilities kept him from publishing it. When he died at age sixty-four in 1948, it was not Watt's many academic honors and accomplishments that the *New York Times* highlighted in his obituary. Instead, it devoted two full paragraphs to the pioneering research that he had done with Bernice Stewart in Wisconsin thirty years before.³¹ By then, Paul Bunyan had become "the personification of American ingenuity, pluck, and progress, of the ability of the American to undertake and accomplish the impossible in life."³² By the time Stewart died in 1975, he had grown into a grotesque caricature of the authentic folk hero she had known as a Wisconsin girl. Born as a private joke among Great Lakes loggers, Bunyan evolved first into an advertising gimmick, then into a symbol of national pride, and ultimately a jovial buffoon in cartoons and children's books. The frontier demigod who had dug Lake Superior and cleared every tree from North Dakota was ultimately conquered by corporate mass media. Luckily for us, Stewart's and Watt's ground-breaking research before World War I had captured the real Paul Bunyan, as he was before he left the Wisconsin woods. ❧



"Paul Bunyan's Ax" has been awarded to the winner of the annual Wisconsin-Minnesota football game for many decades.

PAUL BUNYAN LEGENDS OUT OF THE FOREST AND INTO PRINT

The following stories are from: K. Bernice Stewart and Homer A. Watt. "Legends of Paul Bunyan, Lumberjack." *Transactions of the Wisconsin Academy of Arts, Sciences, and Letters* (1916): 639–651. The entire article is available online at www.wisconsinhistory.org/turningpoints/search.asp?id=1648

Near the Round River camp was a hot spring, into which the tote-teamster, returning one day from town with a load of peas, dumped the whole load by accident. Most men would have regarded the peas as a dead loss, but not so Paul. He promptly added the proper amount of pepper and salt to the mixture and had enough hot pea-soup to last the crew all winter. When his men were working too far away from camp to return to dinner, he got the soup to them by freezing it upon the ends of sticks and sending it in that shape.

According to another version of the pea-soup lake story, Paul deliberately made the pea-soup; he dumped the peas into a small lake and heated the mess by firing the slashings around the shore. In a Wisconsinized version of the Michigan tale the peas have become, for some reason, beans. A much exaggerated version of this story comes from northern Wisconsin. According to this account the tote-teamster was driving across a frozen lake when a sudden thaw overtook him. The teamster saved himself, but the ox was drowned. Bunyan dammed up the lake, fired the slashings around the shore, and then, opening the dam, sluiced down the river to his laboring crew an abundance of excellent hot pea-soup with ox-tail flavor.

Bunyan was a powerful giant, seven feet tall and with a stride of seven feet. He was famous throughout the lumbering districts for his physical strength and for the ingenuity with which he met difficult situations. He was so powerful that no man could successfully oppose him, and his ability to get drunk was proverbial. So great was his lung capacity that he called his men to dinner by blowing through a hollow tree a blast so strong that it blew down the timber on a tract of sixty acres, and when he spoke, the limbs sometimes fell from the trees. To keep his pipe filled required the entire time of a swamper with a scoop-shovel.

The cook-stove was so extensive that three forties had to be cleared bare each week to keep up a fire, and an entire cord of wood was needed to start a blaze . . . Such a stove as Bunyan's demanded, of course, a pancake griddle of monstrous size. As a matter of fact, Bunyan's cook, Joe Mufferon, used the entire top of the stove for a griddle and greased it every morning by strapping hams to the feet of his assistant cooks and obliging them to skate about on it for an hour or so. Of this famous tale there are several versions. According to one the cook mixed his batter in a sort of concrete-mixer on the roof of the cook-shanty and spread it upon the stove by means of a connecting hose. . . . By mistake one day the nearsighted cook put into the batter several fingers of blasting-powder instead of baking-powder, and when the mixture was spread upon the griddle, the cookces [assistant cooks] made a very rapid ascent through the cook-shanty roof and never returned to camp.



Map of Paul Bunyan country



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Michael Edmonds is deputy director of the Wisconsin Historical Society's Library-Archives. A member of the staff since 1982, he leads the teams that digitize original manuscripts, rare books, and pictures for publication on the Wisconsin Historical

Society website (wisconsinhistory.org). His book on Paul Bunyan's Wisconsin roots is scheduled to appear next year from the Wisconsin Historical Society Press. His articles on Increase Lapham's cartography and on birds in the Old Northwest appeared in the *Wisconsin Magazine of History* volumes 68 and 83, respectively. Like this issue's Bunyan piece, those essays investigated how various stories, cultural values, and types of knowledge were disseminated in early Wisconsin.

Notes

1. Charles E. Brown, *Paul Bunyan, American Hercules. Wisconsin Tall Tales of the Prince of American Lumberjacks and His Logging Crews for Story Telling at the Campfire and Fireside* (Madison: C. E. Brown, 1937), 1-2.
2. *Eau Claire Telegram*, April 20, 1917.
3. George Henry Warren, *The Pioneer Woodsman As He is Related to Lumbering in the Northwest* (Minneapolis, MN: Press of Hahn & Harmon Company, 1914).
4. Bernice Stewart to William Bartlett, March 29, 1917, in *William Bartlett Papers, 1821-1934, 1944-1962*, Eau Claire Mss BY, Eau Claire Area Research Center, McIntyre Library, University of Wisconsin, Eau Claire, Wis., Box 1, Folder 6; "Two Anigo Young Ladies Win Prizes," *Daily Journal* (Anigo, Wis.), Jan. 6, 1910, p. 5.
5. The *Wisconsin Badger* (student yearbook), vol. 30 (1916): 301, 306, 318, 352; vol. 31 (1917): 275, 277, 283, 296, 344, 357. *Daily Cardinal*, January 5, 1915-May 30, 1916; *Wisconsin State Journal*, April 9, 1916.
6. *La Crosse Tribune*, April 24, 1907; Obituary, *New York Times*, Oct. 5, 1948.
7. *Cornell Alumni News* vol. XX, no. 27 (March 28, 1919).
8. H. J. Kent to Charles E. Brown, Nov. 11, 1938, in *W. W. Charters Papers*, Kerlan Collection, Anderson Library, University of Minnesota.
9. *Ibid.*
10. Geneva Kebler, archivist of the Lovejoy papers, to Elwood Maunder, director of the Forest History Society, Dec. 16, 1964, in *James Stevens Papers*, University of Washington, Seattle.
11. "Life Closes for Eugene Shepard." *New North* (Rhinelander, Wis.), March 29, 1923.
12. William B. Laughhead and W. H. Hutchinson, "The Birth of Paul Bunyan," *Forest History* 16, no. 3 (1972): 48-49; H. J. Kent to Charles E. Brown, Nov. 11, 1938.
13. Constance Mayfield Rourke, "Paul Bunyan [sic]," *New Republic*, July 7, 1920, 177; Marian Jenne McDonald, *The Legend of Paul Bunyan* (BA Thesis, University of Wisconsin, 1928): 59-60.
14. K. Bernice Stewart and Homer A. Watt, "Legends of Paul Bunyan, Lumberjack," *Transactions of the Wisconsin Academy of Arts, Sciences, and Letters* (1916): 644.
15. Brown, *American Hercules*, 6.
16. The Hodag and the Hide-behind were, respectively, "a ferocious beast with "horns on its head, large bulging eyes, terrible horns and claws" which "fed on mud turtles, water snakes and muskrats but did not disdain human flesh," and "a very dangerous animal . . . always hiding behind something, generally a tree trunk . . . from this position it springs upon its human prey, dragged or carried the body to its lair, and there feasted upon it . . ." From Charles E. Brown, *Paul Bunyan Natural History* (Madison, WI: C. E. Brown, 1935), 3-4.
17. Robert F. Fries, *Empire in Furs: The Story of Lumbering in Wisconsin, 1830-1900* (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1951), 219-220; Robert Eric Walls, *The Making of the American Logger: Traditional Culture and Public Imagery in the Realm of the Bunyanesque* (PhD dissertation, Indiana University, 1997), 387.
18. Carleton C. Ames, "Paul Bunyan—Myth or Hoax," *Minnesota History* 21, no. 1 (1940): 55-58; Louise Blanchard, *The Lumberjack Frontier: The Life of a Logger in the Early Days on the Chippeway* (River Falls: University of Wisconsin—River Falls Press, 1976): 81; Richard Dorson, *Bloodstoppers and Bearwalkers* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1952): 196.
19. Homer Watt to Milo M. Quaife, June 10, 1916, copy in *William Bartlett Papers*, Box 1, Folder 6.
20. *New York Times*, Oct. 5, 1948, 36.
21. Milo M. Quaife to William Bartlett, March 13, 1917, *William Bartlett Papers*, Box 1, Folder 6.
22. K. Bernice Stewart and Homer A. Watt, "Legends of Paul Bunyan, Lumberjack," 639-640.
23. "Caught on the Run," *Duluth News Tribune*, Aug. 4, 1904; "Some Lumberjack Myths," *Outers Book* (Milwaukee), February 1910, 157-160; "Frozen Snakes Used as Skids: Nature Fakers Put to Shame by These Classy Stories from the Lumber Camp," *Washington Post*, Feb. 6, 1910; "North Woods Myths Passing: Tales of Bunyan and Other Lumberjacks Bring Back Old Days. Gene Shepherd's [sic] Hodag. Famous Fake of Rhinelander Man a Product of Backwoods Cleverness—Bunyan a Character," *Wisconsin State Journal*, May 23, 1910.
24. D. Laurence Rogers, *Paul Bunyan* (Bay City, Mich. Historical Press, 1993): 80-92.
25. W. H. Hutchinson, "The Caesarean Delivery of Paul Bunyan," *Western Folklore* 22, no. 1 (Jan., 1963): 1-15.
26. K. Bernice Stewart to William W. Bartlett, *William Bartlett Papers*, Box 10, Folder 9.
27. K. Bernice Stewart to William W. Bartlett, March 29 and April 8, 1917, *William Bartlett Papers*, Box 1, Folder 6.
28. University of Wisconsin Faculty Employment Cards, University of Wisconsin—Madison Archives; unpublished memoir by William W. Watt in the possession of his daughter, Barbara Friend.
29. K. Bernice Stewart to William W. Bartlett, March 29, 1917.
30. Homer A. Watt, "When Gran'pa Logged for Paul," *Literature and Life* (Chicago: Scott Foresman and Co., 1936) vol. 3: 422-427; Lewis Wann, *The Rise of Realism* (New York, Macmillan Co., 1933): 270-273, 779.
31. Homer A. Watt to W. W. Charters, Aug. 21, 1942. W. W. Charters Papers, interview with Barbara Friend, Northampton, Mass., Oct. 6, 2007; *New York Times*, Oct. 5, 1948.
32. Charles E. Brown, lecture notes on Paul Bunyan, 1936, Charles E. Brown Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, Mss. HB, Box 11.

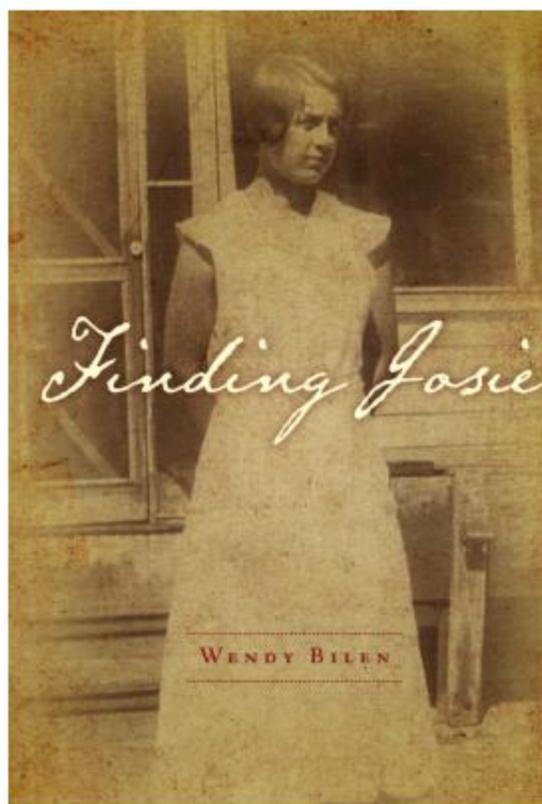
FINDING JOSIE

by Wendy Bilén

The following is an excerpt from the Wisconsin Historical Society Press's forthcoming book Finding Josie. Author Wendy Bilén's grandmother, Josie Broadhead, was born in 1911 on the North Dakota prairie, married a Wisconsin farmer, and moved to a dairy farm outside La Crosse. Years after Josie's death, Bilén embarks on a journey to unearth Josie's story—and quickly realizes that the search is about her, too. As she discovers her grandmother's complicated nature, she learns much about herself and her own choices. More than mere memoir or family history, Finding Josie illuminates the surprising ways our lives intersect with those of our ancestors.

**Bearings
La Crosse, Wisconsin
2004**

When I was a kid and living in suburban Chicago, driving to the farm where my mother grew up in La Crosse, Wisconsin, was not unlike unscrambling an anagram. The official designation was and still is “going over the hill,” which refers to leaving Interstate 90 in favor of a back route for the last leg of



the trip—the point at which we encounter roads known only by letters: YY, M, B, O. Those who live there would claim it's just a bunch of farms not all that different from the ones in Illinois, but for my brother and me, going over the hill was like entering a secret valley. Strapped into the backseat of our station wagon, once we took the exit toward West Salem we put down our books, our crayons, and our crude electronic

games to look out the windows with a sort of reverence. A departure from aluminum siding and half-acre lots, every curve held green fields billowing like blankets on a clothesline—corn and oats, soybeans, wheat, and alfalfa all waving hello. Men driving tractors bejeweled with reflective triangles and wheels big as our plastic swimming pool chugged along. Spotted pigs, horses, and the occasional chickens spilled out of red and white clapboard barns, and if we were fortunate, we spied babies: calves, foals, piglets. The very sight of Holsteins caused my mom to coo with a sadness that could make our eyes water even if we were mad at her. We knew when we'd reached the hill; the car told us with its panting and straining, and gravity pulled us back toward our seats. Guardrails also appeared: rounded posts painted black and white, resembling a row of

little jockeys. We went up, up to the tops of rustling birches and walnuts, which obscured the view to the striped fields below. Up we went, snaking around layers of sandstone sticking out its many tongues until it seemed the car would take flight and the road spit us out on the ridge, on top of the world.

Though I've probably gone that way a hundred times, if you asked me to drive you on pure instinct, we would surely end up at a hog farm in Neverland. My parents, who drove us that hundred times, would possibly get you no closer. "I know you exit I-90," my mom said when I asked her for directions last week, "and you take that to, uh . . ."

"It's a frontage road, and uh, it's difficult to say," added my dad. "I have to be there to tell you."

"There's three roads—"

"Yes, there's three roads—"

"And then it takes you to Highway 14," she said definitively. "One might be 33."

"Did someone say TT?" I asked, trying to get everything down.

"One is 33, by whatchamacallit," offered my dad.

"The next one is YY."

A pause, and then the final word from both: "Ask your aunt."

We all take the highway now, and I wish we didn't. The new way, "going through town," means that we exit at Route 16, which hugs the shopping mall and fast-food chains and office supply stores before it narrows into Losey Boulevard, where little houses with perfectly spaced lots line the drive like lace trim. On the left looms Grandad Bluff (though we've always said "Granddad's Bluff"), its American flag waving high on top. If we turn right on any of the cross streets, such as Cass, we'll end up at the Mississippi, and if we keep going, in Minnesota. A University of Wisconsin campus is down there, as is the site of the old Heileman's brewery, which once boasted the world's largest six pack: towering tanks painted to look like cans of Old Style beer.

If we're early, we turn on Market and drive until we meet Sixteenth, where Ranison Ice Cream and Candy peeks out from behind the bungalows and townie farmhouses, an upended rectangle with a striped awning and, in any given season, two or three people licking pastel cones out front. My mom's only sister, Beverly, lives with her husband in the pale yellow house next door. Bev and Bruce Ranis owned this store for many years but eventually sold it to one of their employees. Bruce intended for one of his two sons to take over just as he had taken over for his father—hence, the name Ranison—but the boys have settled into nonentrepreneurial arrangements.

Quiet streets surround the neighborhood store, and although the store isn't quaint, it is comforting. Neighbors can get quick dinners and forgotten items from the row of groceries against the right wall, and they can replenish their coolers with

the beer and pop waiting at the back, in refrigerators partially obscured by shiny posters from Coke, Miller, Mountain Dew. For purely hedonistic needs, customers need only lean to the left. Lining the front wall, at child's eye level, is the popcorn and penny candy counter, where my brother and I filled little brown bags with Bottle Caps, Bazooka, and candy cigarettes before our trips home in the station wagon. The chocolate counter comes next: shiny glass cases lined with dark and milk chocolate hiding almonds and peanut butter, mints and fudge, candied orange and lovefood, a crunchy concoction of hardened bubbled syrup. When we were young and unrestrained, my brother and I followed our cousins through the back of the store, where grown-ups dipped those sweet-smelling chocolates and winked as we nibbled on ten-pound bars. But most stop by for the ice cream in the back corner. My mom once said she could eat ice cream three meals a day, and I believed her. Our family considers it a staple. Ranison flavors, none of them low-fat, include Grape Nut and brownie, blue moon and pumpkin. I had forgotten about pumpkin until my most recent visit to La Crosse, but once someone reminded me, I made a special stop to get some.

At 8:00 on an October Wednesday I walk into the store, which I find empty of people, including help. I scan the board and see that pumpkin is available. A minute passes, and no employee appears, so I sing a long hello, like a piano key that's stuck. A petite blonde teenager emerges, scuffing her way from the back in an oversized green T-shirt and braided choker, her hair in an unfinished ponytail. I tell her I'd like a small pumpkin milkshake, please. She sleepily goes to work scooping pale orange into a cup, packing every scoop for several seconds.

"So," she says, staring into the freezer and pausing for emphasis, "how was your day?"

"It was fine." I reply, half smiling. "How was yours?"

"Oh, fine," she sighs.

Silence, another scoop.

"Whad'ya do?"

"I did some research for a book I'm working on, so I went to a county courthouse and collected some records."

"What's your book about?"

"It's about a woman who lived on a farm just outside of town."

She stops, ice cream scoop in hand, and looks at me, her eyes wide. "You're like one of those people on PBS, a detective—what do you call them?"

"A history detective?" I offer.

"Yeah, that's it!" She slowly pours milk into the cup, nodding her head. "So, you're a history detective."

"Something like that."

"I want to be either a history professor or a kindergarten teacher," she says.

"Good for you."

More silence as she inserts the cup into the mixer.

"So. What do you think of La Crosse?"

"I like it," I say.

"Yeah, you know people say that it's boring, that there's nothing to do here, but I think they're not looking hard enough. If I was gonna live anywhere, I'd probably live here, or in Jackson County, but I don't wanna move just to move. I wanna have a reason and not just be one of those people who contribute to urban sprawl."

She mixes my milkshake for a long time.

"Where ya staying?"

"I'm staying with my aunt, on her farm."

"The same farm?"

"That's the one."

"Ohhh." More nodding.

I don't tell her that I used to stand where she's standing, that my cousins once locked me in the freezer where they store the extra pumpkin, that I am related to the people next door whose name still decorates the candy boxes. I withhold the fact that the peanut brittle my uncle slathered onto the marble counter out back with a wooden paddle and broke like glass melted on my tongue even before she was born. She doesn't realize that two old ladies, my grandmother and her sister Tina, spent many hours on stools in the back room dipping chocolates, paid with good company and free samples for their men. She has no way of knowing that this place, in a way, belongs to me.

She hands me the cup and a straw, and I pay.

"Good luck with your book," she says.

I raise my pumpkin milkshake and wish her well.

I remember Grandma Josie at the La Crosse farm as she was in the later years, when her hair was white, her glasses wire-rimmed, and her skin the texture of bread dough. By then she had perfected the hawkish screech that came out when she was yelling for or at Grandpa Lee; it was meant to sound intimidating but resulted only in making anyone who might be standing around—including her husband—laugh under his breath. She hunched over from back pain, which she believed resulted from that rafter fall and too much hoeing. A fashionista she was not, in her polyester pants and blouses, and though I don't remember ever seeing her in makeup, she painted on the cheapest, reddest nail polish she could find, the only thing that would cover up the dirt wedged underneath. She had plenty to paint; she always kept her thumbnails long enough. Her friend Lorraine Leske says, "Those two thumbs were like a spade and a shovel."

She didn't look all that unlike other grandmothers, though if you expected a plump woman in an apron to meet you at the door with a plate of cookies, I'd have advised you to move on. All the elements existed, just in a different order. She baked, but if it couldn't be fried or dropped in a pressure cooker, it generally didn't get any attention. My dad still says that woman

Josie Broadhead in Florida
in the late 1950s



Photo courtesy of the author

knew how to ruin a good steak. But just try to keep a plate of her sizzling "nothings" or cake doughnuts sitting around. She might boil up some water for cocoa after sledding, or you could get yourself something to drink by venturing down into her basement for a glass bottle of Crush—orange, grape, strawberry. She sent cards on birthdays, too, often with a short typed message. She typed everything, in capital letters.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY. LOVE GRANDMA B.

She wasn't the kind of woman who lived for her grandchildren, whose life midway through started circling her children's children, even though four of them lived up the road and another two in town. She wasn't a cheerleader, nor one to greet you with her arms open for a hug, even if you had good news. A distance surrounded her; something about her always remained apart. In the past I might have thought that she was holding back. Now I know that she just treated everyone the same.

Reasoning with the woman, however, proved near impossible, though enough people tried. (I once discussed the idea of the occult with her, and she couldn't see how anyone would want to worship the devil. I kept telling her I knew that but people did it anyway, and she kept saying that couldn't possi-

bly be because it made no sense.) The smarter ones recognized the futility earlier than the rest and learned to work around it. If she saw on the rare occasion that you'd outsmarted her, she'd pull her chin down and laugh a bit, and all was forgiven.

This was the woman I wanted to be, even before I could articulate why. I've always felt a little guilty about that, as if I cherish a stolen desire or an undeserved taste, because in some ways Josie wasn't my grandmother at all. My cousins, who saw her every day, had a grandma, someone they could tell about their test grades and invite to their choral concerts and ask what she would do about those mean kids at school. I had a woman I saw a few times a year, someone I patched together from cards and visits. Geography and personality forged this relationship, and I blame no one; my parents built a life the best they could in another state, and Josie could not have been any other way. I might have earned the right, like the others, to capture and preserve her in my mind, but how could I presume the arrogance of loving and wanting to be like someone I don't even know?

Photo courtesy of the author



Wendy Bilen and her brother, Matt, outside their grandmother Josie Broadhead's house in Breidel Coulee, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1976

I was keenly aware that the farm wasn't my home, as much as I wanted it to be or thought it so. I was out of my element, out of place, regularly reminded by ignorance, by hesitancy and the fact that I had to ask questions that startled everyone with their simplicity: How does that machine work? What's that smell? Why do I have to wear long sleeves when it's so hot? What are you feeding those animals? What's a clutch? My clothes differed, as did my posture, making it painfully obvious that I lacked the informality they shared. Caught between what I knew and what I wanted, I couldn't let either side go.

Because the farm always presented a thousand things to do, jobs with which I could help, processes I could watch, and questions I could ask, I had a language with which I could speak to her and begin to understand not only how this place operated but also who she was. It was a language of dirt and seeds and breath, one of simplicity and completion. So I peeled eggs and picked berries and did what I was told so I could be near.

Not that she didn't care about people. In fact, people entwined with her biggest and most important tasks, and often they became tasks themselves—in ones, twos, eights, or larger groupings. There was always something to be done with someone, a change or a generosity with which she either could or couldn't help. And once her effort had spent itself, the moment had passed, or the transformation had come, there just wasn't much else to talk about. It may sound cold to those who don't work this way, but it's merely a way of thinking, of preventing the chaos of the mind from taking over. I think most people fail to understand that for women like Josie, compassion and love take the form of action, not affection.

Conspiring, my heart and mind transformed Josie into a mythic figure when I wasn't looking. It happens to some extent with all family stories, I suppose; with time, fact blurs into legend. Characters exaggerate, events rearrange, and morals amplify, but the result is no less true. The myth that is Josie has served me well, but I don't remember wishing for someone larger than life. I wanted what my cousins had all along: a grandmother.

The heart has its reasons. ❧

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Wendy Bilen has studied creative nonfiction writing at Northwestern and at George Mason University, where she earned an MFA. She has written for various publications and venues, including the *Washington Post*, the *Country Today*, and

North Dakota Public Radio. She teaches English at Trinity University in Washington, D.C.





PHOTOGRAPHY OF

Dr. Edward A. Bass

by Jim Slattery

S

ome historic photographic images have it all—a famous subject captured with perfect technique by a well-known professional photographer at an important time and place. Such photos are more likely to have been well-preserved against the ravages of time. Others rest in dusty boxes in dark places, or are exposed to the elements at auctions or flea markets, unidentified and forgotten. If they hold any interest at all, it is often the anonymous attraction of occasion, apparel, or occupation.

The photographic images produced from 1892 through 1911 by Montello physician Edward A. Bass exist somewhere between those extremes. Dr. Bass was a talented amateur photographer whose work is preserved on 134 glass negatives donated to the Wisconsin Historical Society by his son, Edward Cary Bass, in 1957. They provide a rare look at family, social, and political events of their time through the eyes of one of the participants.

To be sure, Dr. Bass recorded family occasions, but he did not produce the starched, somber portraits typical of his time. The human subjects of Bass's photographs sit or stand naturally, and although wide smiles are rare, the faint expression of bemusement, a sideways glance, or a look of concern are all recorded and bear witness to their emotions.

The photographs are not journalistic representations of what might commonly be considered important historic events, yet many provide a clear view, truly a snapshot, of times and places that passing years have proven to be interesting and important. This did not happen by chance. There is ample evidence that Dr. Bass was acutely aware of his place in history and the world, and that he set out to leave a photographic legacy. He published the Bass family genealogy in pamphlet form and submitted it to the Library of Congress, the Wisconsin Historical Society, and the New York Public Library, and carefully documented the subjects of his photographs.

Edward Alpheus Bass was born in Iowa in 1860. His family had been in America since 1633. Raised for a time in Vermont, Bass returned with his family to the Midwest in 1872, to a farm near Prairie du Sac. He attended local schools and graduated from Lodi High School. After graduating from Chicago's Bennett Medical College in 1884, Dr. Bass practiced first in Burnett Junction, Wisconsin. He married Ada Burlingame of the Town of West Point in 1885 and began practice in Montello in 1887.

A photograph of Pine Hollow in the town of Sumpter, Wisconsin, shows the expanse of the Sauk Prairie looking south with Ferry Bluff visible in the distance. The Bass family farm was located here until 1942, when Dr. Bass's nephew, Floyd, sold it to the federal government to make way for the Badger Army Ammunition Plant.



Dr. Bass's self-portrait in his office includes the prominently displayed certificate of membership in the Wisconsin Eclectic Medical School.

Bass's photograph, "Group Along Country Road," was selected for the 1964 Museum of Modern Art exhibit "The Photographer's Eye" and remains in the permanent collection there.

Dr. Bass participated in politics and was a delegate to the Republican state convention in 1896; he also served on the party's state central committee. In 1897, he was awarded the job of Montello Postmaster. He was director of the school, village health officer, and railway surgeon for a segment of the Wisconsin Central Railroad. Ada Bass was quite active in social circles and the arts. She helped establish the first library in Montello and performed in plays presented at the Opera House. She was a member of the Methodist church and hosted church socials, poetry readings, and musical evenings at the Bass home. Later, she was active in the Women's Christian Temperance Union and Daughters of the American Revolution. They regularly attended the Monona Lake Assembly, Madison's yearly Chautauqua.

WPA Image ID 47209



"A Japanese Wedding Entertainment will be given at Opera Hall Wednesday evening, August 30, 1893 by the young people of Montello."—*Montello Express*, August 26, 1893. Ada Bass, kneeling in center, was featured in a duet in the performance.

The local newspaper of the time, the *Montello Express*, provides extensive documentation of the professional and social life of Dr. Bass. He was apparently on good terms with the editor and was not shy about providing details of his many activities. It appears to have been the rare medical condition that was considered unfit for publication in the weekly paper.

Whatever invasions of privacy occurred, we are fortunate to have a record of the breadth of the good doctor's medical practice and challenges he faced. Trained in Eclectic Medicine, he was a champion of vaccination and public sanitation, and a surgeon of broad experience. The Eclectics were considered a separate group from the "scientifically" trained physicians (Allopaths) of the time. They were, however, earlier to abandon the dangerous practices of bleeding, purging, and

WPA Image ID 47179



Cary Bass holding a hoop outside 131 E. Montello Street

WHL Image ID 42889



Ada Bass (right, back), daughter Everetta (center front), and son Cary (left of Everetta) join a celebration on Court House hill.

WHL Image ID 40950



A dredge is visible in a photo of men fishing below the dam at Montello.

WHL Image ID 47507



Milwaukee City Hall under construction. The cornerstone for the building was laid February 24, 1894. Dedication ceremonies were held December 23, 1895.

blistering; their philosophy was to select the best practices from various branches of medicine.

Articles and notices in the *Montello Express* provide context for other photographs in the collection, which record the growth of Montello and document progress in other areas such as education and transportation. On May 4, 1895, the newspaper reported, "Quite a number of bicycles are owned in Montello and the young people who ride the wheel seem to have a whole lot of fun." By the following year, the national bicycling craze was at its height. The intersection of the craze and Dr. Bass's medical practice was apparent by February 15, 1896: "Miss Jessie Underwood had the misfortune to fall from her wheel on Monday and was quite severely injured, but under the care of Dr. Bass is mending again and will be all right in a short time."

Although commercial river transport on the upper Fox River was declining by the 1890s, pleasure boating and some commercial shipping persisted and are recorded in Bass photographs. A dredge is visible in a photo of men fishing below the dam at Montello. Despite the continued maintenance of the river channel, the railroads had already surpassed shipping for inland transport. Trains are also represented in Dr. Bass's photographs, including several images from a trip north through Stevens Point to Ashland and Bayfield.

Dr. Bass became disabled by 1912, and died in 1916 at the age of 55. He is buried in Garden Bluff Cemetery in the Town of West Point near Lodi. The graves of Edward and Ada Bass are marked by simple headstones of Montello granite. ❧



WHI Image ID 47155



On May 4, 1895, the newspaper reported, "Quite a number of bicycles are owned in Montello and the young people who ride the wheel seem to have a whole lot of fun." By the following year, the national bicycling craze was at its height.

WHI Image ID 48547



Edward and Ada Bass regularly attended the Monona Lake Assembly, Madison's yearly Chautauqua, pictured here on Monona Bay.

WHA Image ID 47605



WHA Image ID 47606



Although commercial river transport on the upper Fox River was declining by the 1890s, pleasure boating and some commercial shipping persisted and are recorded in Bass photographs like this one of the steamer Fortuna.

If You Go

The Montello Historic Preservation Society will present Looking Back: The Photography of Dr. E. A. Bass from August 9 to October 26, 2008, at Vaughn Hall, 55 West Montello St., Montello. The exhibit features prints made from glass negatives in the collections of the Wisconsin Historical Society and the Marquette County Historical Society. The exhibit will be open to the public Fridays through Sundays and will also include a lecture series. The exhibit is supported by a grant from the Wisconsin Humanities Council and the National Endowment for the Humanities. Information is available at (608) 297-2727.

WHA Image ID 47607



Edward Bass near the boathouses on Montello Lake



WHI Image ID 47014



Trains are also represented in Dr. Bass's photographs. This one was photographed on the White River bridge.

"The school opened Monday with full attendance in all departments. . . . Monday noon Dr. Bass took a picture of the schoolhouse and pupils."—*Montello Express*, Friday November 21, 1896.

WHI Image ID 40542



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jim Slattery is a native of Iowa and retired physician who lives in rural Dane County. He is active in the Montello Historic Preservation Society and has been a volunteer at the Wisconsin Historical Society Library-Archives division since 2001. In that capacity, he has helped digitize various collections including the photographs of Angus McVicar, F. S. Eberhart, and Arthur Vinje in addition to those of Dr. Bass.

Ada Bass and two friends view a waterfall.

THE WISCONSIN IDEA

READING, RESISTANCE & THE DOOR-KEWAUNEE REGIONAL LIBRARY

Door County Library



IN ACTION

IONAL LIBRARY, 1950–1952



Door County children line up to see the bookmobile.

by *Christine Pawley*

One evening in early November 1952, Jane Livingston, director of the Door-Kewaunee Regional Library, and assistant Andy Kroeger drove the county bookmobile south from Sturgeon Bay to a meeting at a tavern with some angry inhabitants of the township of Montpelier in Wisconsin's Kewaunee County.¹ "There were people down there having a royal fit," Livingston later recalled, "because a library book had some pretty frank language—an adult book."² In Montpelier, anxieties about reading "bad books" was a symptom of a more general community opposition to an experiment that brought public library services to Door and Kewaunee Counties. The two library staff members knew that they were about to encounter some tough questioning. They little knew, however, that some person—or people—in Montpelier were planning to challenge the library in more a direct and unambiguous manner.

Why was the regional library such a contentious issue, and what led this group of mid-twentieth century citizens to harbor such antagonism against it? In the late 1940s, a quarter of Wisconsin's population lacked free library access, and rural literacy rates were also low. Since the late nineteenth century, the Wisconsin Free Library Commission (WFLC; the state agency charged with promoting public libraries) had helped Wisconsin cities and villages establish local libraries. The WFLC had also circulated "traveling libraries"—boxes of books—to rural areas.³ But in the 1940s, many of Wisconsin's libraries, like those in other parts of the United States, were under-funded and provided only mediocre service. A 1948 American Library Association report complained that while some public libraries had excellent resources and provided services to match, many more were small and ineffective. Book collections tended to be outdated, and most library staff lacked a college education. Although combining small libraries into larger county or regional systems was an effective means of improvement, in 1946, fewer than one-third of the counties in the United States had taken this step.⁴ None of these was in Wisconsin.⁵



Inside the bookmobile, space was at a premium.

“At a time when most of us grow more ignorant hour by hour unless we keep pace with the best experience and expanding information of a rapidly changing society,” wrote John R. Barton, Professor of Rural Sociology at the University of Wisconsin–Madison in 1948, “the per capita book circulation of Wisconsin libraries is decreasing.”⁶ Barton had recently joined the WFLC board, and he was eager to introduce new techniques for “taking library services to the people or for keeping library values before the public.”⁷ In 1948, the WFLC published a booklet that set out its vision for the future of public libraries and echoed many of Barton’s concerns.⁸ Building onto the concept of the Wisconsin Idea that the university’s influence should be felt throughout the state, in *The Wisconsin-Wide Library Idea* the WFLC called for involving all of Wisconsin’s citizens as partners in democracy, including those living in remote rural areas. The vehicle was to be the rural public library—but not the old “small recreational depot” that was “unfortunately the total picture of a library carried in the minds of most people and public officials today.” Instead of being a “kind of cloister for the cultured, retiring and bookish people,” libraries needed to attract a wider clientele that would include children and teenagers, homemakers, farmers and townspeople, and those working in industry, business and the professions. By cooperating in ordering books and cataloging, and sharing a common pool of materials that would circulate not only in local libraries, but also on a bookmobile, communities could iron out the differences between wealthy and poor districts, and could reach even the most remote rural readers.⁹

Adopting the term “demonstration,” the WFLC aimed to create a model by which the State could help bridge the literacy gap in active cooperation with rural people themselves.¹⁰ The proposed demonstration would involve setting up a regional library that would provide a much wider range of services and recent materials than any single library could provide on its own. Funding would be shared between the state and the region itself.

The first step in making the demonstration a reality was to secure state support—not an easy task at a time fraught with Cold War anxieties.¹¹ Across the nation, libraries and librarians were also under attack as “Cold warriors” pointed to “subversive” ideas in books and magazines that libraries routinely circulated.¹² Some politicians were even on record as opposing mobile library service to rural people. Argued Republican Congressman Harold Velde of Illinois (formerly of the FBI and subsequently chair of the House Un-American Activities Committee) in March 1950, “Educating Americans through the means of the library service could bring about a change of their political attitude quicker than any other method. The basis of Communism and socialistic influence is education of the people.”¹³ It would be several months before Joseph R. McCarthy, Republican senator from Appleton, Wisconsin, (only a few miles from Kewaunee County) attacked the Truman Administration for harboring communists, but in doing so he was joining a movement that was already under way.¹⁴ Although the groups that supported McCarthy sometimes adopted the strategy of challenging library books that they considered politically subversive, no evidence suggests that



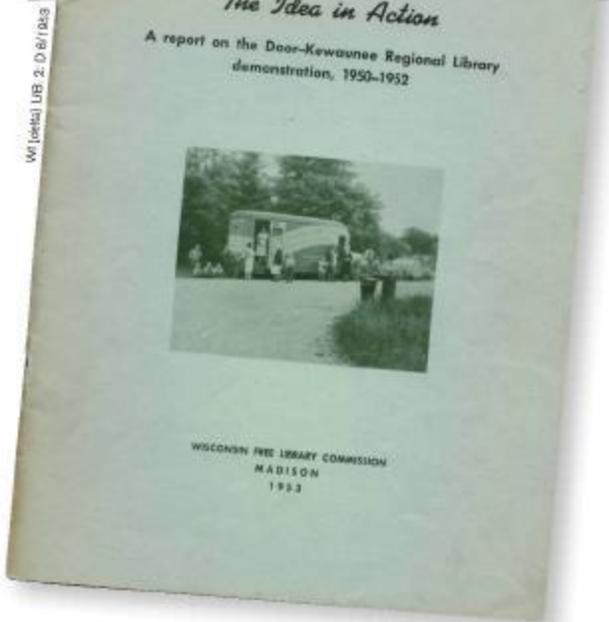
Jane Livingston, director of the Door-Kewaunee Regional Library

any such group was actively involved in opposing the Door Kewaunee Regional Library Demonstration.

WFLC officials recognized that the project could be a hard sell, but despite the unfavorable political climate, in September 1949 their lobbying campaign was rewarded. Over Republican Governor Oscar Rennebohm's veto, the Wisconsin Legislature passed a law that allowed the WFLC to "establish a single demonstration . . . in a limited, predominantly rural area . . . now lacking an efficient coverage by existing library systems."¹⁵ For the first time, the State of Wisconsin agreed to provide funds in direct support of community library service, as long as the communities involved matched the state funds. Apart from this, the law only set out the general guidelines for the project. The details were left to the WFLC to work out in conjunction with the areas to be selected.

The next step was to agree upon the region. The WFLC publicized the projected Regional Library Demonstration widely across the state, and were gratified when a number of districts stepped forward as candidates. In selecting the area for the demonstration, the WFLC used several criteria. Most importantly, local librarians and citizens must be enthusiastic, and most municipalities in the region must agree to take part. The area should be lacking in good existing library service, but it should not be so poor that it would be difficult to avoid failure.¹⁶ After all, the whole point of the exercise was to encourage other districts to fund their own cooperative library systems, as well as to show legislators that their commitment of

Children stand outside the bookmobile while two women walk away, immersed in the books they just checked out. The bookmobile served adults as well as children.

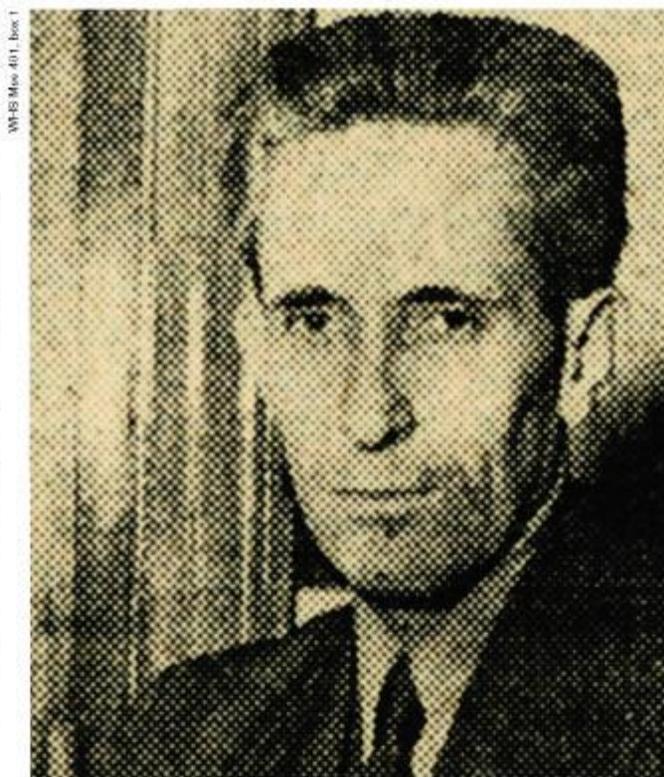


Evoking the tradition of the Wisconsin Idea, the Wisconsin Federated Library Commission (WFLC) called the bookmobile demonstration "The Idea in Action."

state funds was justified, so the Commission needed to be able to point to success.

The two counties of Door and Kewaunee seemed ideal. Their total population was just over 38,000, two-thirds of whom lived in country areas. The median income for the two counties was similar.¹⁷ Local industry included shipbuilding in the cities of Sturgeon Bay and Kewaunee, where World War II had brought boomtown conditions, but much of the region was still heavily rural, and even remote.¹⁸ There were also differences between the counties, however. Although the southern peninsula (settled by Belgians, Czechs, Poles, and Germans) was heavily agricultural, fishing villages composed of people of Scandinavian descent dotted the northern coast as well as Washington Island, separated from the rest of Door County by the treacherous strait called *Porte des Morts* (Death's Door).

Northern Door County was distinctive for another reason, as picturesque villages like Ephraim, Sister Bay, and Fish Creek attracted wealthy summer visitors from Chicago and Milwaukee. Some families used to sail up Lake Michigan to their cottages, spending the entire summer there and bringing with them cultural practices that the permanent community also enjoyed, including concerts, classes on the local environment, and an art association.¹⁹ Perhaps most importantly, few existing public libraries served the two counties. The cities of Sturgeon Bay in Door County and Algoma and Kewaunee in Kewaunee County each had its own library. Six northern Door County communities—Bailey's Harbor, Egg Harbor, Ephraim, Sister Bay, and Washington Island—also had small libraries that were, for the most part, run by volunteers, open for restricted hours only and stocked with donations. Southern Door and Kewaunee Counties had no rural libraries at all, and though country residents could use the city libraries for a small fee, few could afford to do so. The new regional library would combine the library resources of the three cities, as well as the six villages. A bookmobile would circulate throughout each county, stopping at country crossroads and visiting rural schools. The Sturgeon Bay public library would be the headquarters for the whole operation, providing space for administration offices and for the bookmobiles to replenish their stocks.



John R. Barton, professor at the University of Wisconsin—Madison and board member of the Wisconsin Free Library Commission, helped develop new techniques for “taking library services to the people.”

Jane Livingston had moved to Door County in 1945 to head the Sturgeon Bay Public Library.²⁰ Born and raised on a farm in central Wisconsin in the 1920s, like many other young women of her day Livingston's first career aspiration was to become a teacher. This in itself was no easy proposition. During the Depression, “getting an education was a real achievement,” she recalled. The state teacher's college at Stevens Point was just twenty miles from her parents' farm, and she traveled home every weekend, she said, for her mother to hand her the money that would see her through the next week and to stock up on food.²¹ After finishing her degree, instead of teaching school, she worked for a year in the children's department of the Green Bay Public Library, and then attended the University of Wisconsin Library School in Madison. After graduation, she worked for several years in a Michigan county library system.

However, on a visit home, she found herself recruited for the directorship of the Sturgeon Bay Public Library, largely on the basis of her Michigan experience. Although she was a Wisconsin native, Jane Livingston realized that to the inhabitants of the Door Peninsula, she was an outsider. “They used to say that you had to be born here to belong here,” she admitted. In contrast with most Door Peninsula inhabitants, librarians were educationally privileged, and Livingston and her staff recognized that not all rural folk valued reading to the extent that they did. Nonetheless, several were themselves from rural backgrounds, and felt they retained an authentic rural identity that gave them an insider's understanding and sympathy. This knowledge, they believed, would help them meet the reading needs of rural people, and win over support for the regional library.²²

Most of the area's farm children attended their local one-room school for all eight grades. Teachers were often young women who had themselves attended a rural school before high school and the county normal school. Aged twenty, or even younger, they might be in charge of as many as forty children in all eight grades. In the classroom, children sat in columns according to their grade (the youngest nearest the window so that they did not block the light), and studied on their own for long stretches. Lessons targeted specifically at



Wisconsin Senator Joseph McCarthy,
zealous anticommunist

Cold War anxieties helped fuel opposition to libraries as some worried about the potential subversive nature of library materials.

an individual grade level typically lasted no longer than ten minutes. Reading material at school consisted largely of prescribed texts that formed part of the literary canon—"classics"

by authors such as Henry Longfellow, Christina Rossetti, and Walt Whitman.²³ A shelf of well-worn books at the back of the room might provide the only reading materials apart from the district-designated textbooks. Books for pleasure reading, especially books written for children, were rare.²⁴

Teachers struggled to maintain the high degree of organization required to serve such a wide range of student needs. In spite of their hard work, rural children's school performance persistently failed to match that of their urban counterparts, according to rural sociologists.²⁵ Local newspapers, too, expressed concern about low educational attainment. "We blush as we write this," confessed *Algoma Record-Herald* editors. "Kewaunee county residents over 25 years of age have the lowest education median in the state with half having completed 8.4 years."²⁶ Door Peninsula residents did not necessarily share this pessimistic view. Many felt that their children were doing fine with a one-room school education, and resisted what they saw as outsider interference. "One old German farmer used to sit right in the front row of the county board meeting," recalled Livingston. "He had learned in school all right, and if it was good enough for him, it was good enough for his kids."²⁷

Because the two counties were neither very affluent nor very poor, and because existing library service was not extensive, state officials felt confident that they had identified an ideal area for the demonstration.²⁸ But in the region itself, library supporters feared that local politicians and residents might not be easily per-

sued. Both county boards of supervisors were due to vote on the proposal on November 9, 1949, the Kewaunee County board in the morning and the Door County board in the afternoon. Kewaunee County in particular had a history of funding only a restricted formal education, and project supporters were far from sanguine about their willingness to match the state funds for the library. However, to many people's astonishment, at their morning meeting the Kewaunee supervisors voted to fund the library. Still shaking her head in wonderment fifty years later, Livingston commented, "It was a miracle . . . They were so tight-fisted." In her opinion, one woman's activism contributed to the positive vote. Mrs. Olga Dana—widow of a beloved local doctor who had visited and donated art prints to Kewaunee

rural schools—appeared before the county board, and told them they "should be ashamed not to allow that money for the library, because the children needed it," said Livingston. George Miller, former district attorney for Kewaunee County, believed that the prospect of state funding held some allure. "The thing that sold it to the Kewaunee County taxpayers was that the State . . . probably paid one-third of the amount of the cost of it," he said. The idea of getting something for nothing had appeal.²⁹ Whether inspired by Mrs. Dana's example as cultural civilizer, or attracted by the prospect of state aid, the Kewaunee board's favorable vote presented the Door County supervisors with a dilemma in the afternoon, since, said Livingston, "they prided themselves on being more progressive than the Kewaunee board."³⁰

Livingston had already laid some of the groundwork in Door County. She was interested in introducing a county bookmobile service even in advance of the WFLC plan, and school superintendent Curtis Tronson supported this idea. Supervisors and library board members were harder to convince. Fortunately, Stanley Greene, mayor of Sturgeon Bay and an influential library board member, had become a county system advocate after attending a Wisconsin Library Association meeting in Madison. Others were impressed by a demonstration using a borrowed bookmobile at the 1949 Door County fair. "We snared every [supervisor]," Livingston commented. "All we did was tell them we wanted to show them what it was. We didn't

Interior of the Sturgeon Bay Public Library, 1913

Governor Oscar Rennebohm's veto of the Door-Kewaunee bookmobile demonstration was overridden by the Wisconsin legislature.

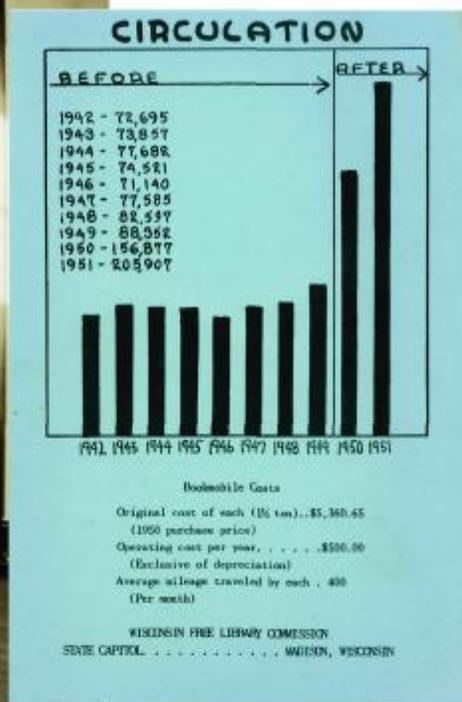
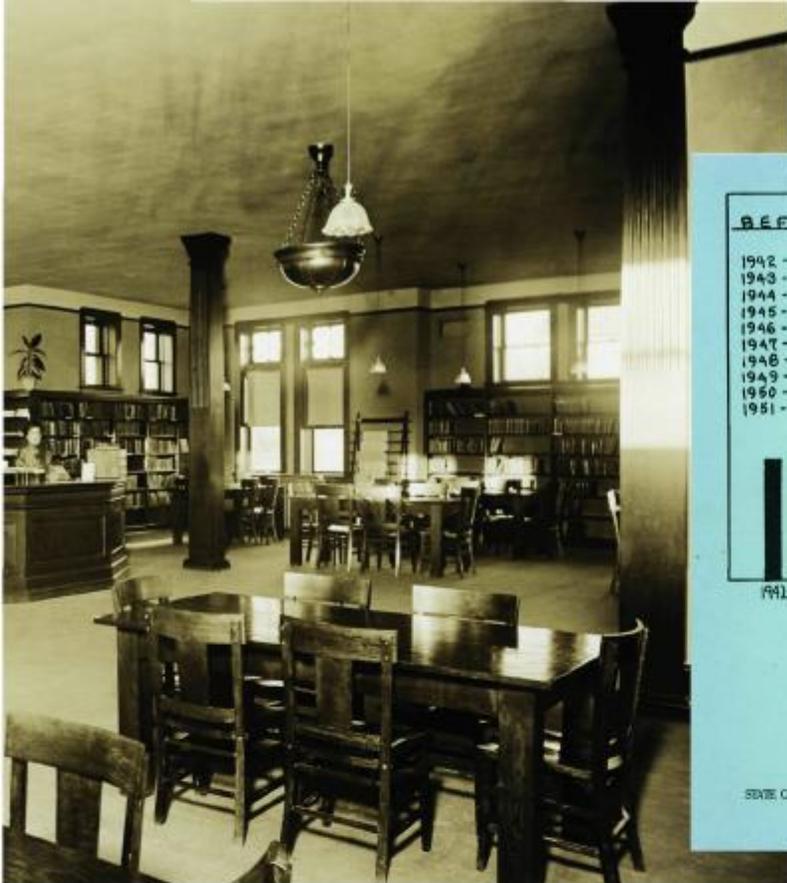


put any pressure on them." One supervisor from the north of the peninsula missed the show, however. "On Monday morning the bookmobile was still here," she remembered. "So we took off and went up there and stopped at his house." Fortunately for Livingston and Tronson, the man's wife was a library supporter. "He's off out in the woods up there, but you can get through," she told them. Following her directions, Livingston and Tronson drove the bookmobile off the highway into the woods. Perhaps it was their persistence that he found impressive, but from then on they could always count on this supervisor's support. "I think it impressed him that we chased him down," Livingston recalled.³¹ After all this the Door County supervisors, too, voted to fund the project. "The county board of supervisors voted Wednesday afternoon to include \$15,000 in the county budget for the creation of a Door-Kewaunee county library. The vote was 15-4 with one member absent," reported the *Sturgeon Bay Advocate* in November 1949.³² The state-sponsored Demonstration seemed all set to go.

Still, not everyone accepted the result. Some opponents felt that their forebears had fled oppressive regimes in their native lands, and valued their freedom from government "interference" in America.³³ One supervisor from Montpelier was particularly opposed, at least in part because the project involved "giving up some of their powers," opined George Miller. The price for state funding was possibly some loss of local control over his community, this supervisor might have thought. The opposition was quick to organize itself, and Montpelier residents called for a referendum on the library question. In June 1950, three Kewaunee County supervisors proposed a county-wide referendum on the regional library. At their June meeting, the county supervisors

considered the request. Three residents (two from Montpelier) spoke against the library, reported the *Kewaunee Star*, while Jane Livingston and the library's administrative assistant also attended the meeting, arguing in its favor. Perhaps they spoke more persuasively, or perhaps the supervisors felt the library should be given more of a chance to prove its worth, but in the end, the request was turned down on a vote of seventeen to three. "Only Supervisors Wodsdalek of Casco town, Ledvina of Franklin and Nejedlo of Montpelier favored the referendum," recorded the newspaper under the headline "REFERENDUM REQUEST IS DENIED BY COUNTY BOARD."³⁴

Reinforcing the project's link with the Wisconsin Idea, the WFLC promoted the Demonstration as "The Idea in Action."³⁵ Starting early in 1950, and over the course of the next three years, library use in Door and Kewaunee Counties soared by over 160 percent. Over ninety percent of grade-school children in the rural schools made use of the bookmobile service, and their reading scores improved beyond expectation.³⁶ For teachers and students alike, regular bookmobile visits transformed rural classroom reading opportunities. Staffed by a librarian and a driver, the two vans carried hundreds of books, pamphlets, and periodicals arranged by age and subject level. Whether at school or a crossroads near their homes, children eagerly anticipated the bookmobile's arrival. On bookmobile days, "It was like a party," recalled a former teacher.³⁷ Expert observers also remarked on the children's enthusiastic responses. "To an outsider it seems miraculous that more than nine out of ten farm children of school age within range of the big bookmobiles rolling across Door and Kewaunee counties are regular borrowers," wrote one visitor. "But to some of us who have gone over the route and



WFLC Series 1111

Bar graph created by the WFLC to illustrate increased circulation brought on by the bookmobile

have seen the youngsters swarm down on the bus when it stops, fill it to bulging, capture the attendants with shrill questions and chatter, and then squeeze through the check-out station and drift home thumbing pages and looking at pictures as they go, it is more believable.”³⁸

Determined to make the project a partnership between the state and its citizens, the plan provided for voter feedback in the form of a referendum in the fall of 1952. State funding was set to expire at the end of the Demonstration, and now the two counties had to decide whether or not to support the library without state assistance. Voters were asked to consider the question, “Shall Kewaunee [or Door] County continue to participate in the Door-Kewaunee Regional library or some similar library?”³⁹ Although the results were non-binding, county supervisors were likely to base their decision about the library’s future on the referendum results. To win over reluctant voters, the WFLC used surveys, pamphlets, spots on local radio stations and articles in newspapers and journals to mount a sustained publicity campaign. Responses seemed positive. A trustee wrote from Washington Island, “I am 100 percent in favor of the regional plan. Prior to it, the library service was extremely limited. We were only able to have our library open one day a week, and during January–February found it necessary to close completely. Under the Regional system, our library is open three afternoons and evenings the year around.”⁴⁰ *Algoma Record-Herald* editors appealed to their readers’ civic duty, as well as to their sense of good financial management. “Each of us as intelligent, progressive citizens should look at the proposal from the standpoint of costs . . . and also on the other side of the ledger—just what is the

Regional library giving us in return for our hard-earned tax dollars—it’s as simple a business proposition as that.”⁴¹ Local teachers paid for a signed advertisement calling for the library to continue.⁴² The Algoma Woman’s Club voiced its approval in the newspapers, claiming that under the regional plan the Algoma library had “gained everything and lost nothing.”⁴³

Library opponents used many of the same publicity strategies, however. “One of the main reasons our Grand Parents came to a ‘Land of the Free’ is to get away from Gravey [sic] Taxes,” wrote Clarence Antholt and Gordon Mallien of the Belgian-dominated community of Brussels in a paid newspaper advertisement. “A ‘yes’ vote on the Bookmobile issue means favoring the hardships they left.” Spelling out the calculations could just as well work against the library. “We’re already paying heavy school taxes for the information these books are suppose to contain,” argued Antholt and Mallien.⁴⁴ Official campaign literature from the local Republican Party reinforced calls for fiscal stringency. “GREATEST DISAPPEARING ACT ON EARTH” screamed an advertisement in which a cartoon donkey waved a banner of WASTE over a sack of YOUR HARD-EARNED TAX MONEY. “NOW YOU SEE IT AND NOW YOU DON’T!”⁴⁵

In Montpelier, too, it was easier to drum up opposition, now that state funding was about to be withdrawn. “It was a year when . . . they were having a hard time balancing the budget,” former district attorney George Miller remembered, “so . . . a lot of people lined up to turn them down.”⁴⁶ By November 1952, feelings against the library were running so high that some community members were ready to take more direct action than writing to the newspapers. When Livingston and

Kroeger drove the bookmobile there that fall evening, they knew they were nearing the source of general hostility to the library. As the specific issue was a book challenge, Livingston and Kroeger convened the town meeting in the hope of carrying out a discussion about that book, but the Montpelier residents were already primed with other kinds of ammunition. "They tried nailing me to the wall with complaints and criticisms and everything else," Livingston said. To their surprise, help came from an unexpected quarter. "The Lutheran pastor was there, and he stood up for me," she recalled, still astonished in retrospect, since some local clergy had been firmly against the library experiment. But even he failed to persuade the crowd, and when Livingston and Kroeger finally came to

leave, they discovered a new problem: the bookmobile failed to start. "It was a matter of spark plugs or something, not permanent damage," said Livingston. Fortunately, Kroeger's mechanical skill saved the day. "Andy, dear Andy just figured out what might have happened to the bookmobile."⁴⁷

Although some Kewaunee residents seemed prepared to sabotage the library, others stood up for it. "Where else can one obtain so much for so little?" wrote a rural Kewaunee County reader to the *Wisconsin Library Bulletin*. "Children's books—so many, so interesting—adult books—romance, adventure, mystery—fiction of all kinds; cook books, books of manual arts, science, biography—name it and you can have it. . . . Perhaps one reason I am so enthusiastic over the Bookmobile service is

Shawano Evening Leader article, April 10, 1952, reporting on the inadequacy of Wisconsin's libraries.

John R. Barton wrote to Jane Livingston on October 28, 1952, to express support for the Door-Kewaunee Regional library.

CLIPPING BUREAU
231 Washington Building
MADISON, WISCONSIN
Stevens Point Journal
APR 18 1952

Wisconsin Needs Better Libraries

UW Sociologists Find Lack Of Facilities

Madison—(AP)—Two University of Wisconsin sociologists believe there is need for improved library facilities in Wisconsin—particularly in rural areas.

John Barton and Franklin Rector recently completed a survey of libraries in the state and found that minimum standards for library support, set up by the American Library association, are not being met.

The sociologists found that Wisconsin residents spend about \$1 a year for library service. The association recommends a minimum of \$1.50.

They urged that regional systems be utilized because one-fifth of the state's population has no ready access to library facilities. Such systems call for counties to join together to make reading matter available.

Libraries Aren't Growing

"Most of our libraries are not growing and growing enough to

keep abreast of events from internationalization. Theings. for lil paper. A ment near ment resea

Miss Jane Livingston
Kewaunee Regional Library
Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin

October 28, 1952

Dear Jane,

I have heard through the grapevine that you wish me to write you a few short paragraphs which conceivably could help you in the forthcoming decisions on the library's future. I am not sure that I will write what you can use, but I will give you a couple of paragraphs, and you are free to cut them or shape them for your purposes. At any rate here goes:

"Door and Kewaunee Counties are becoming the Mecca for all sorts of people who are looking for real achievements in democratic learning and democratic living. I have personally sent a number of small groups and leaders to study Wisconsin's only regional library. Their enthusiasm was so high on their return that I had to travel up myself for a part of a summer to try and experience what was going on."

"The demonstration in my view has been a remarkable success. It will in time have influence in raising the social, cultural, and economic level of the whole state. Door and Kewaunee Counties can ill afford to let their support falter when the three year period is up. Actually, the cost will be more than met in the long run by making your communities more attractive to live in and by increasing both the quality and the quantity of the wants of your citizens. Beyond all of this, the general level of intelligence of all of us must be raised if we are to surmount the dangers that beset us both within and from without."

I certainly hope that you will get the necessary support for full continuance. If there is anything more that I can do, please let me know.

Eloise and Larry were most enthusiastic about their week in Door County. In fact they liked Sturgeon Bay so much that they came back talking about the possibility of settling down there and living some of these days. So you had quite an influence.

Please give my sta

because books are so expensive."⁴⁸ Supporters gained small victories that not only made them feel good at the time but still held vivid memories fifty years later. One resident recalled with pride accompanying her mother, a rural schoolteacher, to a community meeting to discuss the library. "One man said that his father never had a bookmobile, so he didn't need one either," she recounted. To this her mother had a quick reply. "Your father didn't have a car either," she retorted, "but that didn't stop you getting one."⁴⁹

Although library staff worked hard to win votes, they had a premonition that the election would not go well, especially in Kewaunee County. "We just didn't have enough friends in

Kewaunee County," recalled a former librarian. "We spent a lot of evenings running around Door and Kewaunee Counties giving talks that fall of '52."⁵⁰ On November 4, 1952, the nation went to the polls. The big question confronting voters was the presidential race. Who would be the new president: Republican Dwight D. Eisenhower or Democrat Adlai Stevenson? On the Door Peninsula, the result surprised no one when over seventy-five percent of voters supported Eisenhower.⁵¹ "A whopping all-time record-breaking vote was recorded Tuesday as Kewaunee county joined the Republican parade," proclaimed the *Algoma Record-Herald*.⁵² But the regional library issue was far from predictable. On that evening, as the ballots were being tallied, library staff and supporters anxiously

REGIONAL BOARD

E. F. WATERSTREET-PRESIDENT MRS. FRED TRAVEN-VICE-PRESIDENT STANLEY GREENE-SECRETARY	OSCAR BERG WALTER MASSART JOHN SCHWAB CURTIS TRONSON	Kewaunee BAILEYS HARBOR STURGEON BAY ALGOMA BRUSSELS LUXEMBURG STURGEON BAY
--	---	---

DOOR
KEWAUNEE
REGIONAL LIBRARY

HEADQUARTERS STURGEON BAY WISCONSIN

Jane Livingston wrote to John Barton on the eve of the referendum, admitting: "we are not making bets on the outcome of this one." While Door County was expected to vote favorably, library proponents were unsure of Kewaunee County.

November 3, 1952

OFFICE OF THE
DIRECTOR
JANE LIVINGSTON

Mr. John R. Barton
College of Agriculture
Dept. of Rural Sociology
Madison 6, Wisconsin

Dear Mr. Barton:

Thank you for the statement you sent along last week to help in our campaign. I suspect Dr. Stevens was the grapevine you mentioned - I do appreciate his interest and yours, as well as your taking the time to help us out when you have such a full schedule.

This being the day before election we are beginning to relax, at least insofar as being able to do much more for the cause. Actually there won't be much relaxing until after the votes are counted tomorrow night. Referendums being what they are, we are not making bets on the outcome of this one, although, off the record, it seems to be the general opinion that Door county will vote favorably with Kewaunee county the big question mark.

We are all so disappointed not to have Anne able to be up here tomorrow. However, she will have the verdict as soon as possible after the count is in, so perhaps you can find out what has happened through her or Walter quite early in the evening, since I am sure you are concerned, too.

I enjoyed meeting Eloise and Larry this fall and it was good to see Mrs. Barton for a few minutes when she came to Fish Creek last month. Now when do you have a trip to Door county?

Sincerely yours,

Jane
Jane Livingston
Director

Quinn

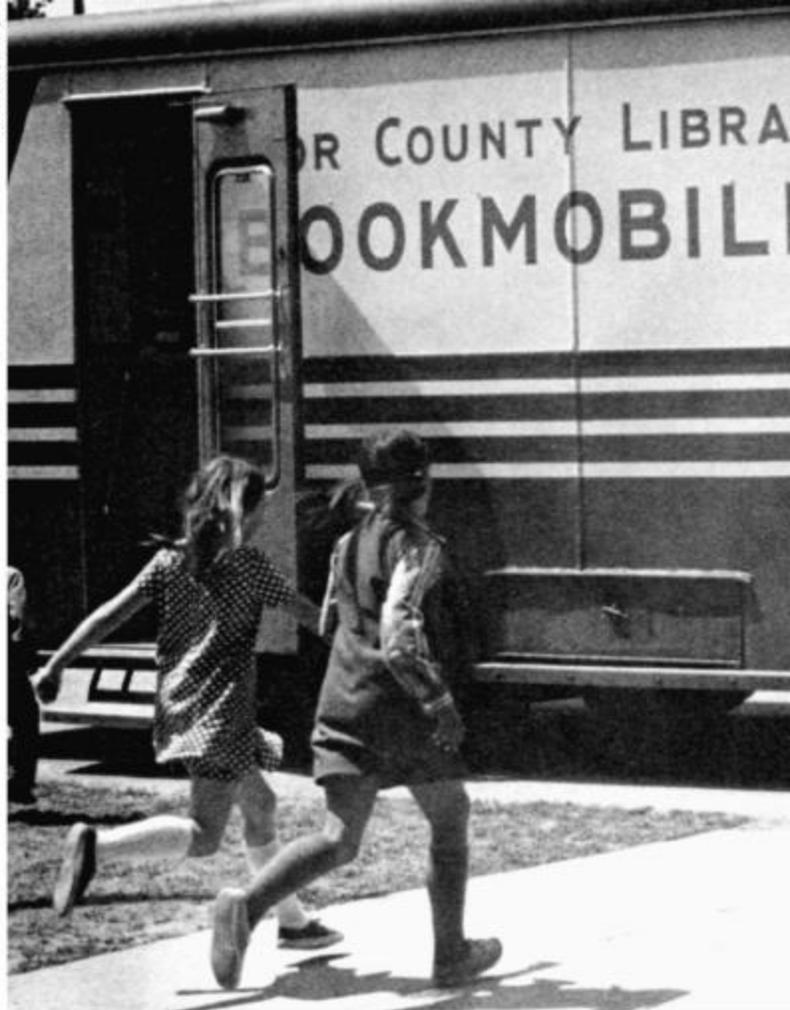


The bookmobile drove onto a ferry to get to Washington Island.

awaited the referendum's outcome. Despite the Republican clean sweep, it was still possible that the referendum result might bring good news to library supporters.

However, as the evening wore on and votes were tallied, it became obvious that the library staff's pessimism was justified. Door County results were positive, but for the Regional Library to continue, the referendum needed a majority in both counties. "I was sitting on the telephone," remembered Livingston. "Andy the bookmobile driver, he was from Kewaunee, he was down there in the courthouse, and every once in a while you'd get a call from Andy, and it wasn't good. It meant that Andy was going to lose his job."⁵³ The following day the newspapers reported the results. "Only three Kewaunee county units favored the library—Algoma, Casco village and Luxemburg village," the *Algoma Record-Herald* told its readers. "Each of the ten towns gave it a resounding slap in the face and Kewaunee City rejected it 652 to 653—just one vote difference."⁵⁴ In Montpelier and other southern Kewaunee townships—the same rural areas that librarians had hoped to win over—library supporters found themselves especially heavily outvoted. The board of supervisors quickly voted to kill the regional library, and service stopped abruptly at the end of 1952. Library opponents were jubilant. Wrote one, "I heartily agree with the stand you have taken in voting negatively on the Door-Kewaunee Regional Library. Why? Because the cost of it was born by so many people and the benefits realized by so few. . . . If we are called upon to reimburse a military commensurate with an all out war effort, the tax burden will be great enough without also having to pay for a bookmobile service."⁵⁵

By contrast, most Door County townships voted in favor. Over the decades to come, Door County libraries continued their mutual cooperation under Livingston's leadership, and the Door County bookmobile continued to roll into the 1990s. Statewide, the era of library cooperation was by no means finished, either. Strongly influenced by the *Wisconsin-Wide*



Children run to the bookmobile. One teacher recalled that when the bookmobile visited, "It was like a party."

Library Idea and experience with the "Idea in Action," Wisconsin librarians and WFLC officials continued to plan for regional libraries. In 1971, the passage of a Senate Bill allowed for the creation of extensive library collaboration, and by the beginning of 1973, four systems had been set up. In 1976, both Door and Kewaunee Counties joined the Nicolet Federated System, along with five other neighboring counties, and by 1987 all of Wisconsin's libraries participated in systems, making free public library services finally available to everyone in the state.⁵⁶ ❧

Notes

1. Some material in this article has been adapted from: Christine Pawley, "Reading versus the Red Bull: Cultural Constructions of Democracy and the Public Library in Cold War Wisconsin," *American Studies* 42, no. 3 (2001): 87-103. Used with permission.
2. Interviews with Jane Livingston Greene and other residents of Door and Kewaunee Counties carried out between 2000 and 2005.
3. Stuart Stotts, "A Thousand Little Libraries: Lume Stearns, the Johnny Appleseed of Books," *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 90, no. 2 (Winter 2006-07): 38.
4. Carleton B. Joeckel and Amy Winslow, *A National Plan for Public Library Service* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1948), 19-30.
5. A handful of small "county" libraries existed in Wisconsin prior to 1950 mainly to provide service to schools. *The Idea in Action: A Report on the Door-Kewaunee Regional Library Demonstration, 1950-1952* (Madison: Wisconsin Free Library Commission, 1953), 6.
6. John Barton, "Information Preview," *Wisconsin Library Bulletin* 44, no. 9 (November 1948): 170. Although the Wisconsin Free Library Commission had a salaried staff headed by the Commission Secretary, overall authority rested with a volunteer board.



In 1949, this included three *ex officio* members and four citizens appointed by the Governor. The *ex officio* members were: John Callahan (State Superintendent), Edwin B. Fred (President, University of Wisconsin), and Clifford L. Lord (Director, State Historical Society). Citizen members were: librarian Ella Veslak of Shawano, Wisconsin; William J. Deegan Jr., City Manager of Superior, Wisconsin; John P. Barton, University of Wisconsin-Madison Professor of Rural Sociology; and John Chancellor, Chancellor had been a public librarian in New York and New Haven before moving to Wisconsin and taking up farming. Walter S. Botsford, formerly head of the department of political science at the University of Wisconsin's Extension Department, was WFLC Secretary. In addition, the Commission employed full-time "field-workers" (usually drawn from the ranks of the library profession), and consultants on an ad hoc basis.

7. Barton, "Information Preview," 174.

8. *The Wisconsin-Wide Library Idea for Voluntary Education through Reading: A Detailed but Tentative Statement from the Wisconsin Free Library Commission* (Madison: Wisconsin Free Library Commission, 1948).

9. *Wisconsin-Wide Library Idea*, 3, 9.

10. The word "demonstration" was frequently used by the agricultural extension service to introduce new methods to farmers by demonstrating how well they worked.

11. More details of the political background to the demonstration can be found in Christine Pawley, "Reading versus the Red Bull: Cultural Constructions of Democracy and the Public Library in Cold War Wisconsin," *American Studies* 42, no. 3 (2001): 87-103. This article also appears in *Libraries as Agencies of Culture*, ed. Thomas Augst and Wayne Wiegand (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003).

12. Early in 1950, for example, Ruth Brown, librarian of Bartlesville, Oklahoma, was dismissed, ostensibly for subscribing to the *Nation*, *New Republic*, and *Soviet Russia Today*. Louise S. Robbins, *The Dismissal of Miss Ruth Brown: Civil Rights, Censorship and the American Library* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2000).

13. Congressional Record—House (81st Congress, 2nd session), 6 (S) March 9, 1950, p. 8129.

14. McCarthy made his "Enemies from Within" speech in Wheeling, West Virginia, on February 9, 1950. David Halberstam, *The Fifties* (New York: Villard Books, 1993), 49.

15. *Wisconsin Library Bulletin* 47, no. 2 (March 1951): 89. *The Idea in Action: A Report on the Door-Kewaunee Regional Library Demonstration, 1950-1952* (Madison: Wisconsin Free Library Commission, 1953), 16.

16. Anne Farrington, "Wisconsin's First Regional Library," *Minnesota Libraries* 16, no. 7 (1950): 201.

17. *Census of Population: 1950*, Volume II, "Characteristics of the Population, Part 49: Wisconsin" (Washington, DC: U.S. G.P.O., 1952), 49-13, 49-112. [are these page numbers right? 49-13 doesn't make sense]

18. William F. Thompson, *The History of Wisconsin, Volume IV: Continuity and Change, 1940-1965* (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1988), 96.

19. Writers' Program, *Wisconsin: A Guide to the Badger State* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1941), 317.

20. For more information about the librarians who worked on the Demonstration, see Christine Pawley, "A 'Bouncing Babe,' a 'Little Bastard': Women, Print and the Door-Kewaunee Regional Library, 1950-1952," in *Women in Print: Essays on the Print Culture of American Women from the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, ed. by James P. Danky and Wayne A. Wiegand (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), 208-225.

21. Interview with Jane Livingston Greene, Sturgeon Bay, March 13, 2001.

22. Interview with Jane Livingston Greene, Sturgeon Bay, October 23, 2000.

23. Jacksonport Historical Society, *Jacksonport Through the Generations*, vol. III (Maryland, DE: Gateway Press, 2000), 77.

24. Former teachers in Door and Kewaunee rural schools provided this description in interviews with the author, carried out in 2000 and 2001.

25. Frankin Eugene Rector, "Social Correlates of Eighth Grade Attainment in Two Wisconsin Counties" (PhD Diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1954), 21-22, 107.

26. *Algoma Record-Herald*, December 4, 1952.

27. Interview with Jane Livingston Greene, October 23, 2000.

28. Walter Botsford to William J. Deegan, February 29, 1949, SHSW Series 1967/205 Box 1.

29. Interview with George Miller, Algoma, January 9, 2002.

30. Interview with Jane Livingston Greene, October 23, 2000.

31. Interview with Jane Livingston Greene, October 23, 2000.

32. *Sturgeon Bay Advocate*, November 10, 1949.

33. Robert C. Nesbit, *The History of Wisconsin*, Volume III: *Urbanization and Industrialization, 1873-1893* (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1985), 45, 52.

34. *Kewaunee Star* June 22, 1950.

35. The title of the final report was *The Idea in Action: A Report on the Door-Kewaunee Regional Library Demonstration, 1950-1952* (Madison: Wisconsin Free Library Commission, 1953).

36. *The Idea in Action*, 33, 5.

37. Interview with former teacher, Sister Bay, May 24, 2001.

38. Baker Brownell, "Foreword," in *The Idea in Action*, 5.

39. *Algoma Record-Herald*, October 30, 1952.

40. *The Idea in Action*, 19-20.

41. *Algoma Record-Herald*, October 9, 1952.

42. *Luxemburg News*, September 18, 1952.

43. *Algoma Record-Herald*, October 9, 1952.

44. *Sturgeon Bay Advocate*, October 30, 1952.

45. *Luxemburg News*, October 16, 1952.

46. Interview with George Miller, Algoma, January 9, 2002.

47. Interview with Jane Livingston Greene, October 23, 2000.

48. Mrs. John Marnard, "From a Bookmobile Patron," *Wisconsin Library Bulletin* 47, no. 2 (1951): 45.

49. Interview with resident, Algoma, March 21, 2002.

50. Interview with former librarian, Sturgeon Bay, March 14, 2001.

51. In Door County, McCarthy received 7,513 votes as opposed to 1,902 votes received by his opponent, Democrat Thomas R. Fairchild. In Kewaunee, the vote was 6,412 to 1,941. See James R. Donoghue, *How Wisconsin Voted, 1848-1960* (Madison: Bureau of Government, University Extension Division, University of Wisconsin, 1962), 97, 57.

52. *Algoma Record-Herald*, November 6, 1952.

53. Interview with Jane Livingston Greene, October 23, 2000.

54. *Algoma Record-Herald*, November 6, 1952.

55. Open letter dated March 19, 1953, to Mr. Ray P. Fulwiler, Supervisor, Fourth Ward, Algoma, Wis. from Frank Wesely, *Algoma Record-Herald*, March 26, 1953.

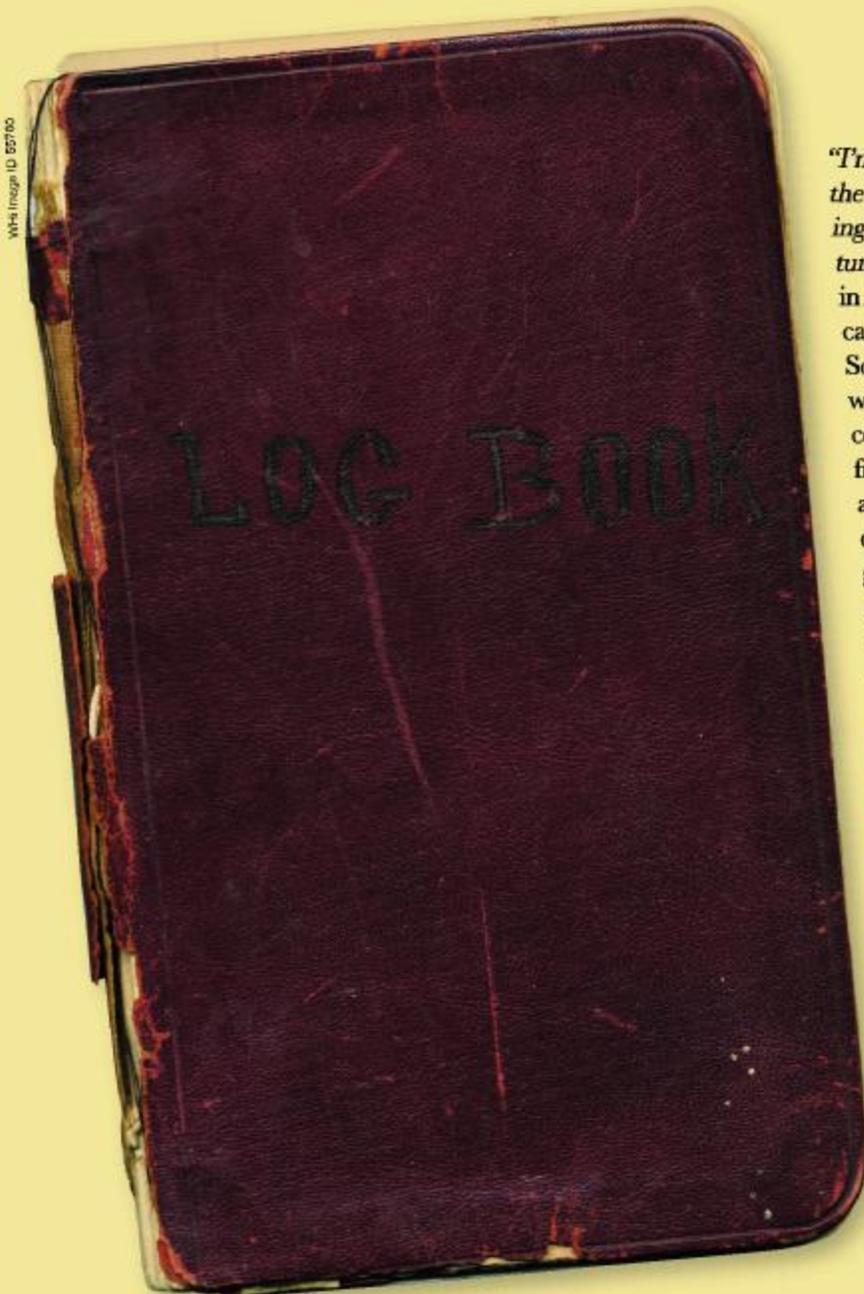
56. Charles Seavey, "Public Library Systems in Wisconsin, 1970-1980: an Evaluation" (PhD Diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1987).



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Christine Pawley is a professor in Library and Information Studies and director of the Center for the History of Print Culture at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Her book, *Reading on the Middle Border: the Culture of Print Late Nineteenth Century Osage, Iowa*, was published by the University of Massachusetts Press in 2001. Other of her publications have appeared in such journals as *Library Quarterly*, *Libraries and the Cultural Record*, *Book History*, and *American Studies*. Her two current book projects are tentatively titled *Contested Literacies: Reading, Citizenship, and the Public Library*, and *Reading in the Heartland: Domesticity, Community, and Networks of Print*.

Observations on the Log Book of Preston Reynolds One of Down the Wisconsin, Mississippi,



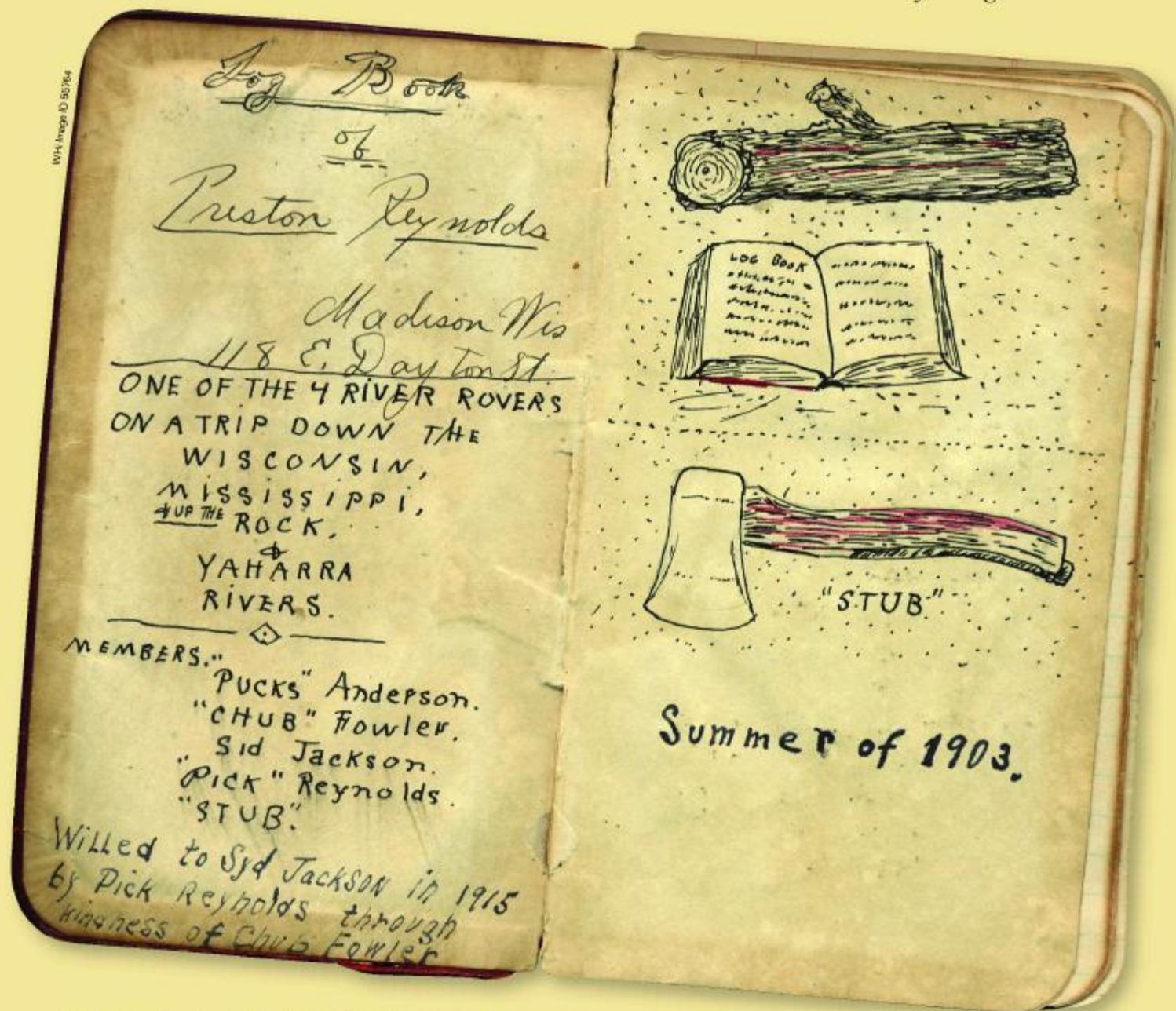
"I'm going to write a thrilling? story of adventure entitled the 'Hair bredths Escapes of the 4 River Rovers or Canoeing on Historic Waterways.' I think I would make my fortune on that book."¹ So Preston "Pick" Reynolds concluded in August 1903, as he returned to Madison from a two-week canoe journey. Now housed at the Wisconsin Historical Society, the logbook is a small, leather-bound volume for which Reynolds paid \$1.59 in 1903, filled with reminiscences of the adventures Reynolds undertook with his friends Rolfe "Pucks" Anderson, Herbert "Chub" Fowler, and Sydney "Sid" Jackson as they traveled in two canoes down the Wisconsin River to the Mississippi. Distinguished by numerous detailed drawings of life along the rivers and the droll wit of its author, the diary provides a vivid glimpse of a changing way of life in America at the turn of the twentieth century. The complete logbook numbers approximately 6700 words and ninety-seven pages; we have abridged it here for readers.

The trip warranted reports in the *Wisconsin State Journal*, perhaps due to some of the families' standing in the Madison community. Preston was born in Madison on August 20, 1884, to George and Ada Reynolds. The oldest of the "River Rovers" was Rolfe "Pucks" Anderson, born in Madison in 1883, son to Rasmus B. Anderson, Professor of Scandinavian Studies at UW-Madison. The youngest "River Rover," only fourteen at the time of the trip, was Sydney Jackson, son of Dr. Joseph Jackson, founder of the Jackson Medical Center. Herbert "Chub" Fowler was the son of a traveling salesman from New Jersey.

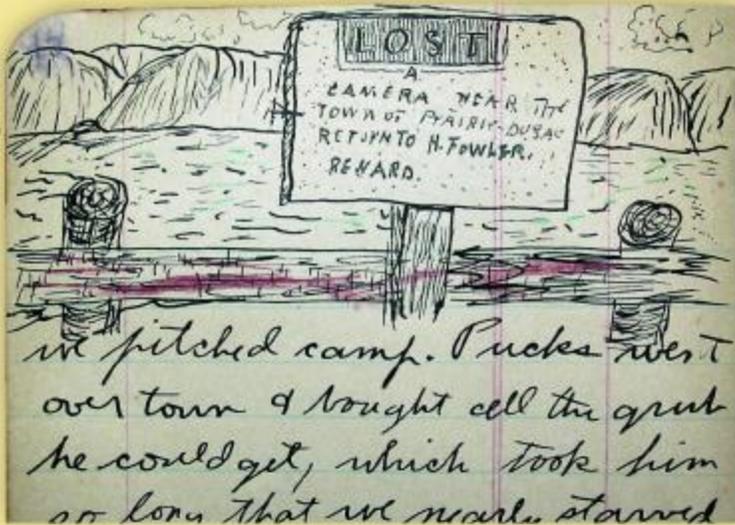
Cover of Preston Reynolds' logbook

the 4 River Rovers on a Trip and Up the + Rock and Yaharra Rivers.

by Marguerite Helmers



The first interior pages of logbook contain the names of the "4 River Rovers" and a drawing of "Stub" the ax.



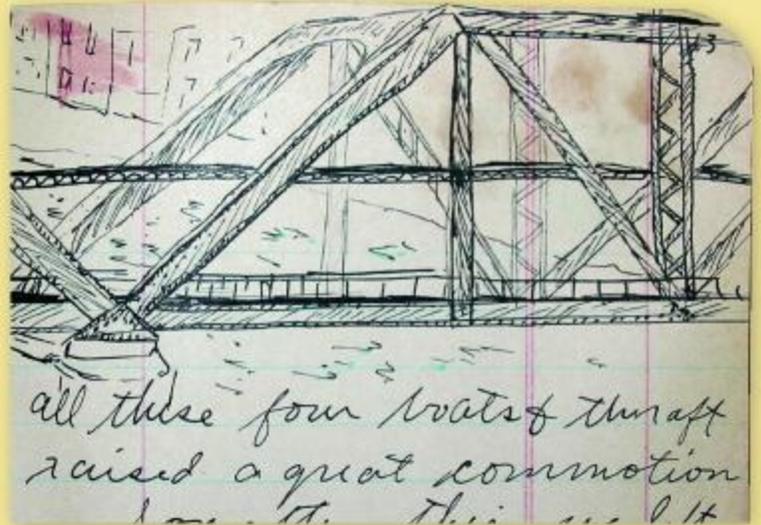
The Rovers lost their camera early in the trip.

Unfortunately, 1903 saw a cold and wet summer. Reynolds's logbook notes that on August 1, it rained "like greased lightning."² The morning of August 3, rain kept the travelers inside their tent after first digging trenches to divert water. On the night of August 4, rain and wind "blew to beat the cars."³ On August 6, camped on a hillside, they nearly froze. They were not far from Clinton, Iowa, where the day's high temperature of 88 fell to a low of 64 degrees. Climate and Weather Bureau reports confirm an excess of moisture and deficiency of temperature and sunshine during this period.⁴ Despite the rainy weather and an onslaught of mosquitoes, Reynolds maintains an unflinchingly positive tone throughout the logbook.

The story begins on Monday, July 27, as the boys ship their equipment from Madison to Kilbourn, now the Wisconsin Dells, by the Chicago, Milwaukee, & St. Paul Railroad.

After much deliberation and consultation the 4 River Rovers got all their outfit together & packed, & down to the depot . . . After hustling to beat the band & wearing out \$3 worth of shoe leather, we got our outfit aboard the train. (We even tried to bribe the baggage man). On boarding the train we settled down, secured a board & started to play cards. In the midst of our very interesting game the conductor came along & kindly told us our little fun would cost us 5 cts. per corner. This nearly broke our hearts, consequently we desisted from this pastime to rubber at the high buildings in the numerous Cities through which we sped on our jaunt to Kilbourn.

On arriving there we tore down to the boat landing to catch the boat before it left for the dells, and then had to wait about two hours there. We finally started up the dells! & saw all the great sights including Witches gulch & the Devils Jug. As we found that the boat would not



Drawing of a bridge the Rovers saw along the way

get back to Kilbourn till very late, we started from the Devil's Jug and walked to Kilbourn. We asked every one we met how far it was to K. & each gave a different answer. The 1st man said it was one mile and a half, the 2nd man, after we had walked three miles, said it was two miles, and the next said it was one mile, we decided that it was certainly far enough & it was. . . .

Next morning we had a roaring old time getting all our duds & traps in the canoes. At last we succeeded & embarked on our long journey.

We sped down through the lower dells, which were great, and paddled through a cave which we thought was "boat" cave.

When our unfortunate canoe would stick on a sand bar the other crew would sing, "O! Captain, Captain, stop the ship, I want to get out & walk," & give lots of good advise which was never followed.⁵

The River Rovers' method for seeing the Dells by canoe was common in the late 1800s, and rowboat tours were featured until the early 1900s.⁶ Early tours included Boat Cave, Sky-light Cave, Rood's Glen, and other small inlets. In 1890, the last lumber raft floated down the Wisconsin River as souvenir shops began to open, and H. H. Bennett (the photographer responsible for naming many of the Dells' rock formations) began selling postcards from his studio.⁷ The River Rovers saw the Dells before it underwent the major changes brought about by the construction of a dam at Kilbourn in 1908.

A short time after we left Portage two fellows that attend the U.W. overtook us in a duck boat. They had come from Green Bay & were going to the Mississippi. We rowed along together for company. They got stuck on sand

bars more than we did. We all stopped at Merrimac & went up to the Great town to get some ice cream sodas, but they were scarce. One of the U.W. fellows bought some swell bittersweets? We then embarked, and wonder of wonders, Sid & "Chub" made us hump to keep up with them! We reached a fine island just above Prairie Du Sac where we pitched camp. Pucks went over town & bought all the grub he could get, which took him so long that we nearly starved waiting for him. This was a camp "Paradise" in one way & "Paradise lost" in another way, because when we left, we forgot to take the camera & a spoon hook of Chubs. As other things are also missing we probably left them there.

Next morning we continued on down the river, stopping at Sauk City, where "Chub" and I had an ice cream soda & bought some bread. The next stop was at Spring green Bridge where we got some water and corn.

In many parts of the river, so far there has been some great scenery. In places perpendicular cliffs rise for over one hundred feet in the air, with pine trees growing right out of the side.⁸

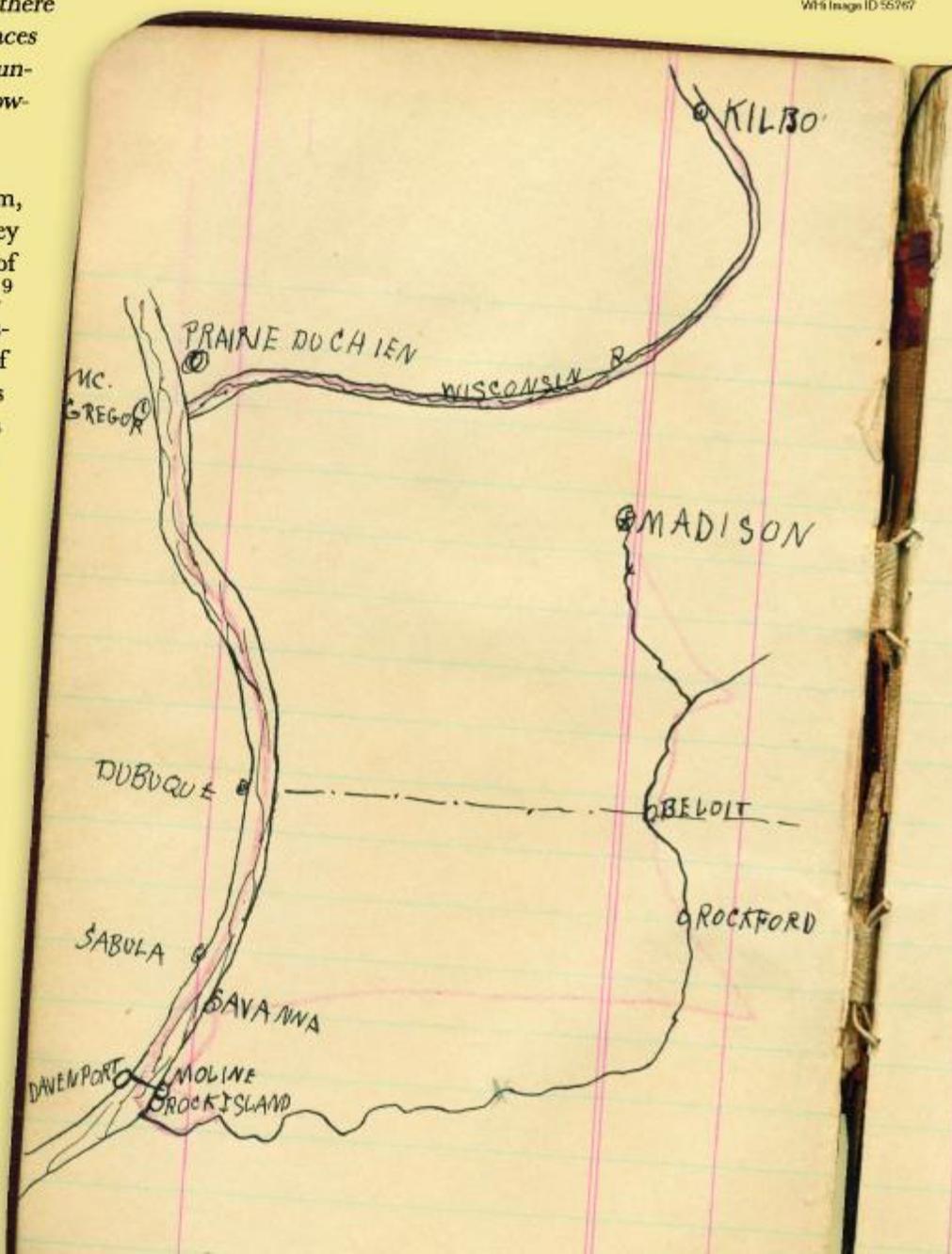
As the Rovers continue downstream, Reynolds comments on the towns that they pass. Tower Hill was at one time the site of the lucrative Wisconsin Shot Company.⁹ By 1903 the shot-making outfit was dismantled, but Tower Hill renewed itself with a lively Chautauqua. Reynolds shows his wit when referring to Richland City as "mighty," but it was at one time the "most important landing between Portage and Prairie du Chien."¹⁰ Located at the confluence of the Pine and Wisconsin Rivers, Richland City reaped the benefits of being located along the major trade route of the Wisconsin River. However, as a result of increasing competition from the railroads, steamboat traffic on the Wisconsin River dwindled, as did the fortunes of those townships which depended on it as a source of revenue.¹¹ The economic hardships faced by Richland City were compounded by environmental tragedy. Because of an inexplicable shift in the river's current, the very terrace upon which the city stood began to erode.

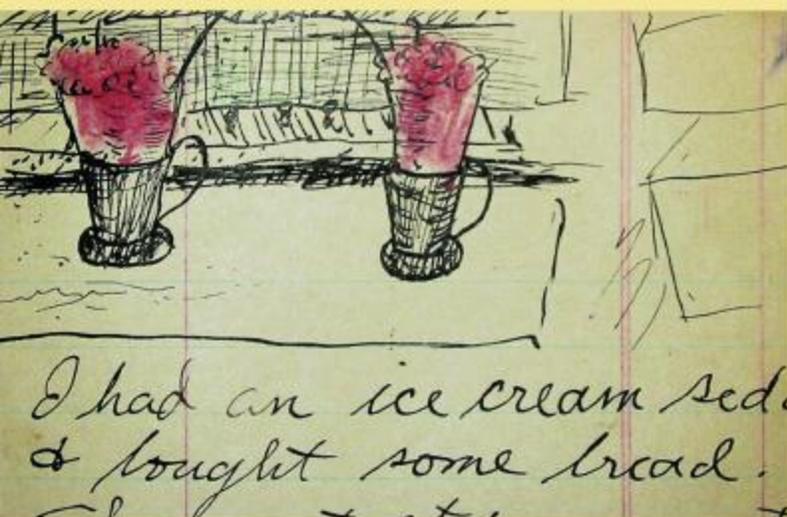
Reynolds also notes that the Rovers stopped on Saturday, August 1, to sleep in the "tobacco shed" of

"an angorra goat farm" between Boscobel and Bridgeport.¹² Reynolds almost certainly mentions this feature of their accommodations because of its rarity. Angora goats were also something of a rarity in Wisconsin; Wisconsin is not even mentioned as possessing any Angora goats on a 1900 government agricultural census. Nationwide, the raising and ranching of Angora goats was on the decline by the time Reynolds and his friends embarked on their excursion.¹³ Prized for their longer wool, the Turkish breed was imported on the mistaken assumption that it would clear land of scrub brush and that it could withstand extreme weather, neither of which proved to be entirely true.¹⁴

Map of the route taken by the Rovers, drawn by Reynolds

WIS Image ID 55267





WH Image D358110

Ice cream sodas were all the rage in the summer of 1903.



WH Image D358102

Sid breaks the gunwale "in his obstreperous efforts to kill time."

Tower hill, the next place we struck was very pretty. It is a summer resort. Lone Rock like the rest of the towns along the river, was so far back from it that we couldn't see it. We landed at a farmhouse a little way down the river & replenished our diminishing supplies.

On rounding a big bend about two hours later we struck a mighty place called Richland City, and one of the swiftest currents in landing we had so far encountered. When we did land, we simply struck a bonanza. An old man there simply swamped us with provisions. He gave us a peck of potatoes, 20 ears of corn, over a quart of onions, and a big loaf of bread, all for thirty cents. We could hardly tear ourselves away from him, but finally succeeded.

We camped that night at camp "Escape" where we just escaped being eaten alive by mosquitoes. . . .

Our next camp at camp "Hillside" was a peach. "Pucks" hiked back up the river a mile and got grub. Our jar of beans is getting hippicanoreous.¹⁵ "Pucks" & Sid put out their set line again, but did not get a thing, as the fish were not dieting on raw bacon.

We got off early and soon reached Boscobel, which was two miles back from the river. "Pucks" and Sid went up town. "Chub" and I went & examined the Castle Garden Wrecking Company. It was certainly the greatest place I ever struck. There were about three hundred old wagons, buggies, mowers, standing around. Then there were tons & tons of old trucks of every kind imaginable. It is run by a man about seventy years old.

Boydton and Wauzeka were MILES back from the river. It had been cloudy all day and when we got just above Wauzeka it began to rain like greased lightning. All got under raincoats except "Chub" and I, and we put oil clothes around us but the rain went through them like water through a sieve. We finally reached a smooth level bank and on landing we nearly had a hippicanoreous fit, for wonder of wonders a house was seen back but a short distance from the shore. We ran up to the porch then the man let us occupy the tobacco shed & it was simply swell beside the pouring rain outside. On opening our duds we found that they were sopping wet. We appropriated a few blankets we found in the shed & after having a deuce of a time getting some supper we went to bed. "Pucks" & I slept in the wagon box & it was swell. "Chub" & Sid slept in their sleeping bags and some young lambs kindly came and walked over them and some chickens roosted above. . . .

In the morning we spread our clothes out in the sun, what there was of it, to dry. There was a hill about four fifty feet high right at this place and we all climbed up it, & it wasn't no picnic either. We got a swell view from the top. "Chub" & I came down to write our logs before "Pucks" & Sid, who stayed up to roll rocks down like a couple of two year olds. When they got back they washed out the canoes and oiled the canvas one. The place where we were was an angorra goat farm. . . .

We stopped at Bridgeport & bought some graham crackers & a can of cocoa. They charged 35 cts. for an ordinary can, which is worse than Madison. After leaving this mighty place we hit the high places in the river to beat the cars until we struck the Father of Waters, and took off our hats & gave three rousing cheers? After deliberation we camped right at the junction of the two rivers. We struck a place where some clammers had camped. There was a very refreshing odor from the old clam shells piled on the bank.



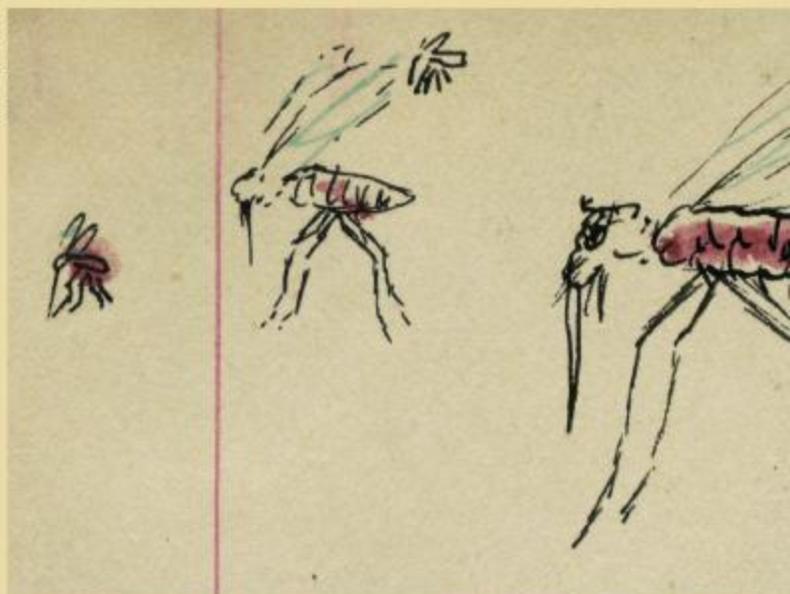
At first there were no mosquitoes, but when they heard we had arrived they paid frequent enjoyable (to them) calls. In fact they called so often that we were moved to vacate the tent and let them have it, as we did not want to be selfish about it.

Large steamboats began to go by our camp and continued all night & morning. Some of them made an awful swell behind them. Some of the boats are simply whales in size. One last night had a search light, which it played on the banks & the boat a ways ahead of it.¹⁶

A canoeist stops to view the Sugar Bowl rock formation in Wisconsin Dells.



Shell pile at Empire Button Works, Guttenberg, Iowa



Reynolds drawing of well-fed mosquitoes

Once they arrive at the Mississippi, “the Father of Waters,”¹⁷ they share the river with several rafting steamboats, transporting lumber from the northern forests: the Quincy (the first boat on the Mississippi to have an electric searchlight),¹⁸ the West Rambo, the Musser, the Clyde, and the mighty Weyerhaeuser hailing from the Mississippi River Logging Company in Minnesota. Later in their journey down the Mississippi, the Rovers discovered that they could make better time by hitching a ride on the rafts. Whereas they averaged about twenty-two miles a day in their canoes, the rafts allowed them to travel close to forty miles each day.

In addition, the Rovers would have viewed “tent cities” of clambers along the river.¹⁹ At times, the Mississippi was said to be so thick with clamming boats that “a person could cross the river by stepping from one boat to another.”²⁰ In Guttenberg, Iowa, Reynolds records the “largest piles of old clam shells [he] ever saw”²¹ and he visits the Harvey Chalmers button factory, maker of fine shell buttons. Opened in 1899, it was “the largest single employer of labor in the community.”²²

It is no wonder, then, that the smell of clams pervades Reynolds’ journey, “like the last rose of summer.”²³ In one of the many illustrations that color the logbook, Reynolds has drawn a bottle of “Attar of Clam” with the accompanying advertisement: “The most exquisite perfume made. Triple Distillation. Absolutely PURE. Price Reasonable.” A few pages later, he returns to the theme, hawking “Attar of Clam. Two cents per smell. One smell is enough.”²⁴

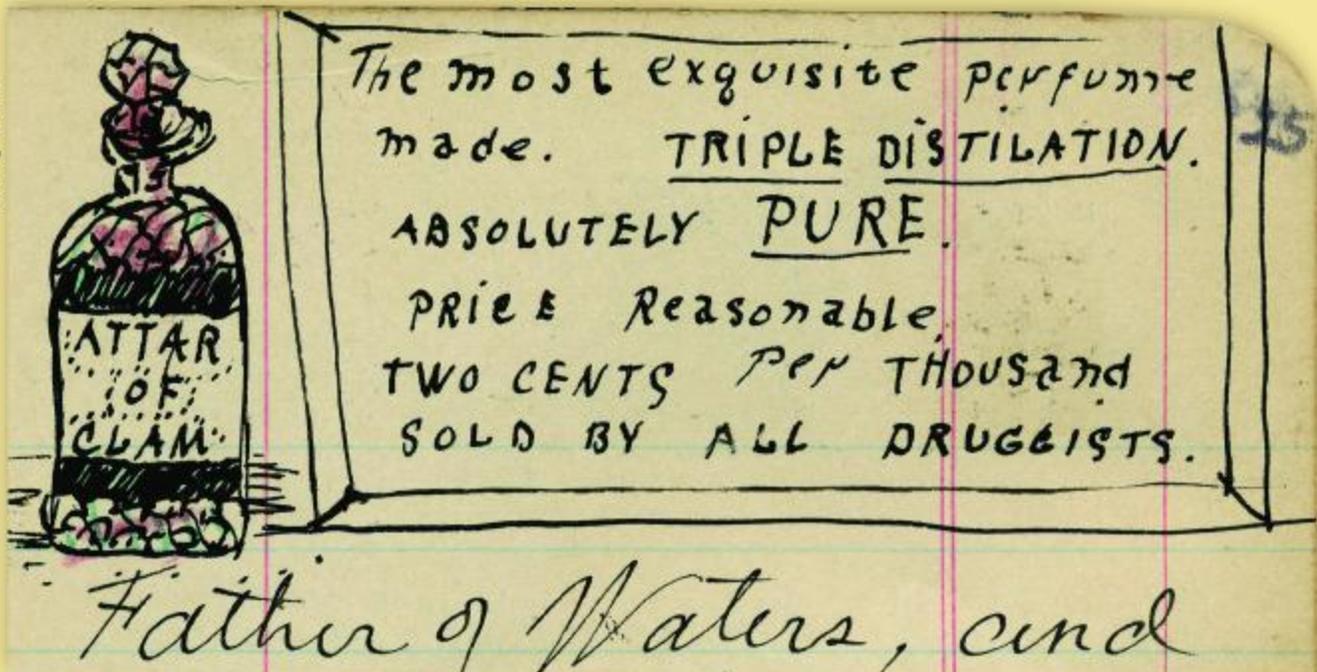
... We broke camp early Tuesday, Aug. 4, 03 and started across to town to leave a jail. “Chub” and Sid landed first & the first thing to happen, “Chub” got arrested. It seems he had been to Lancaster Wis. & shot up the town. We all fooled around waiting for something to happen. “Pucks” nearly tore his shirt when he found we would have to wait about 24 hrs. “Chub” bore up bravely under the sad blow; with tears in our eyes we bade him farewell and started to see the sights. We were the whole show. If we had put up our tent and charged admission exhibiting the ferocious Wisconsin man killer captured in the Wilds of Iowa, we would soon have paid the expenses of the trip. Instead of doing that we had two ice cream sodas and a pop (all except “Chub”). A steamboat, the Clyde of St. Paul came down with two large rafts that it landed at this town. . . .

The marshall or sheriff or whatever he was is the biggest bull headed sun of a gun I ever saw.

I laid in the shade & drew pictures and wrote log in the afternoon while the investigations in the dreadful shooting at Lancaster proceeded. . . .

Finally when a crowd of about two thousand had collected to view the remains the sheriff from Wisconsin arrived, took one long look at the supposed murderer, but now known as the Bank robber and exclaimed in a loud voice This is not my man.

The description called for a man about 25 yrs. of age,



The smell of clam was a faithful companion to the Rovers, prompting Reynolds' facetious invention, attar of clam, "The most exquisite perfume made."

The Rovers' rain-soaked campsite

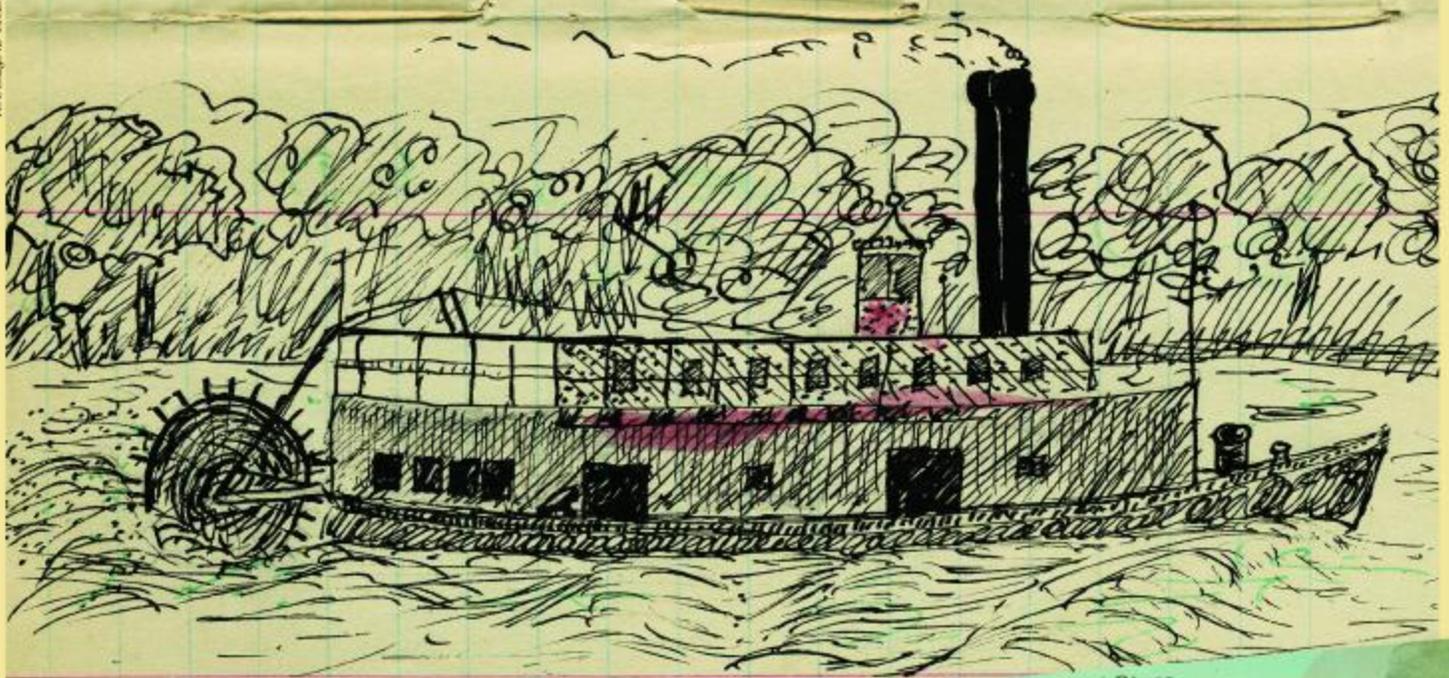
five ft. eight inches in height, dark hair, dark complexion, blue coat, black shirt, striped grey pants, low shoes or slippers, brown hat, weight 150. Chub had a white hat, a black coat, striped grey pants, a black shirt, height 5 ft. 10 in., dark hair, moccasins on, & weighed 123.

Every one in town was laughing at the fool marshall. When the performance was over we all adjourned to the soda fountain & celebrated. This made the third soda & 1st pop I had had during the excitement. This had been the brightest day we had had for a long time.²⁵

Reynolds seemed to believe the worst thing that happened to Chub as a result of his arrest was a missed ice cream soda. With an estimated 60,000 soda fountains in the United States by 1895,

soda fountains were "a social center for young people, serving in a genteel fashion the function that singles bars would serve much later."²⁶ On the other hand, some religious groups considered ice cream sodas amoral. Several Midwestern towns outlawed the sale of soda on Sundays because proponents of moral temperance believed the combination of a carbonated beverage and ice cream was entirely too decadent and sinfully rich to be bought, sold, and consumed on the Lord's Day.²⁷ Reynolds consumes his sodas midweek, on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays.

... It was about five o'clock when we finally got off. "Pucks" & Sid gave the Wisconsin yell. We paddled about eleven miles then camped in a swell grassy, soddy place below Cassville. In the night it rained & blew to



Weyerhauser,

Drawing of the steamer Weyerhauser

Steamer Quincy on Mississippi River.



beat the cars. We got up about half past eight & saw a boat with a raft coming down the river. We hustled the camp into the boats to beat the cars. It was nearly by us but we hustled & caught it & got aboard.

We ate our breakfast on the raft. The rest of the morning we lay around & examined the works & drank ice water while the other guys drank beer. The raftsmen all examined our little ax & our knives. We began to get leary of them. . . .

The boat Rambo is an awful old boat. It has seen about eighty four years service, so you can imagine how it looks. As I write an odor of bilge water comes to me. . . .

The two boats connected with the raft the Rovers were on have quite histories. The Rambo the oldest has sunk several times and smashed rafts as well as done other stunts of note. One of its smokestacks is gone, its windows have no glass in places, & it looks like the last rose of summer. Still there is lots of work to be got from it. A man has been murdered on the other and it has been in all sorts of scrapes.

At eleven o'clock my watch ended and I awoke Sid, & turned in. In the morning we reached Savannah where the raft had to be divided again to go through a bridge. "Chub" & I took the skiff and went ashore to get milk. The part of the raft with our other boat on went through the draw all right but the other half with the two steam boats to guide it struck one of the stone piers of the bridge. A snapping and cracking was heard as the ropes

& chains holding the raft together broke. The logs began to pile up in great shape. The "Musser" certainly had made a muss of it that time. She began to back & finally got most of the raft clear of the pier, & through the draw. Meanwhile the other half was drifting downstream towards an island. . . .

We changed our clothes on the bow boat of the raft. By that time we had reached the Moline chains and the swiftest part of the rapids. These chains, as they are called are really a long line of rocks, parallel to the main channel to turn part of the current in past the power house at the Arsenal. . . .

The channel through the rapids is marked by oblong pyramid piles of rock with lights on top. . . .²⁸

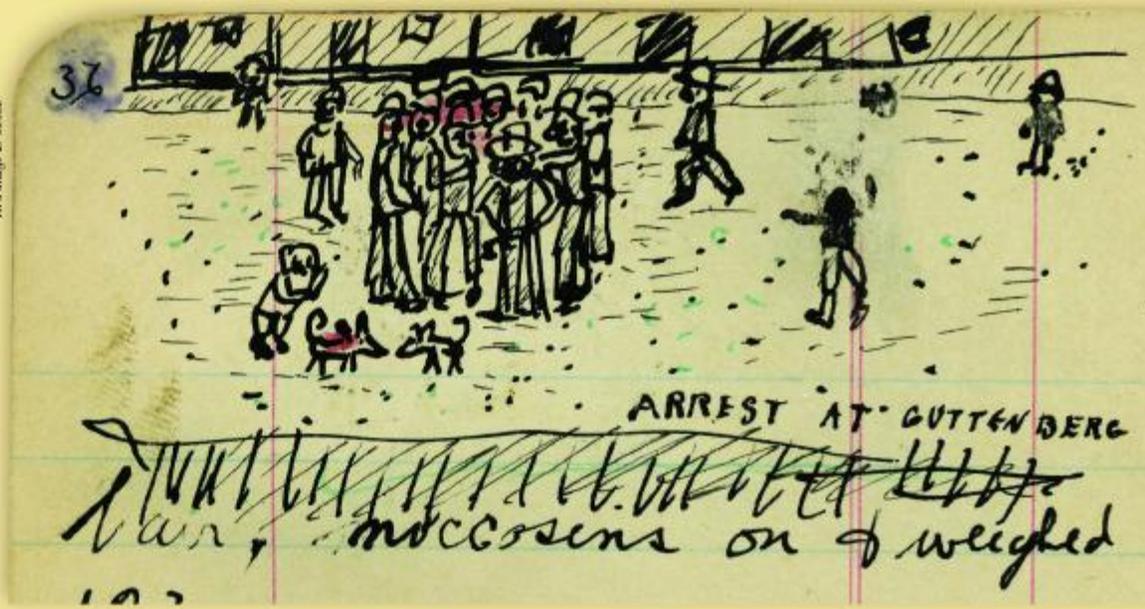
WHS Image ID 50007



Drawing of Chub's arrest



WHS Image ID 50002



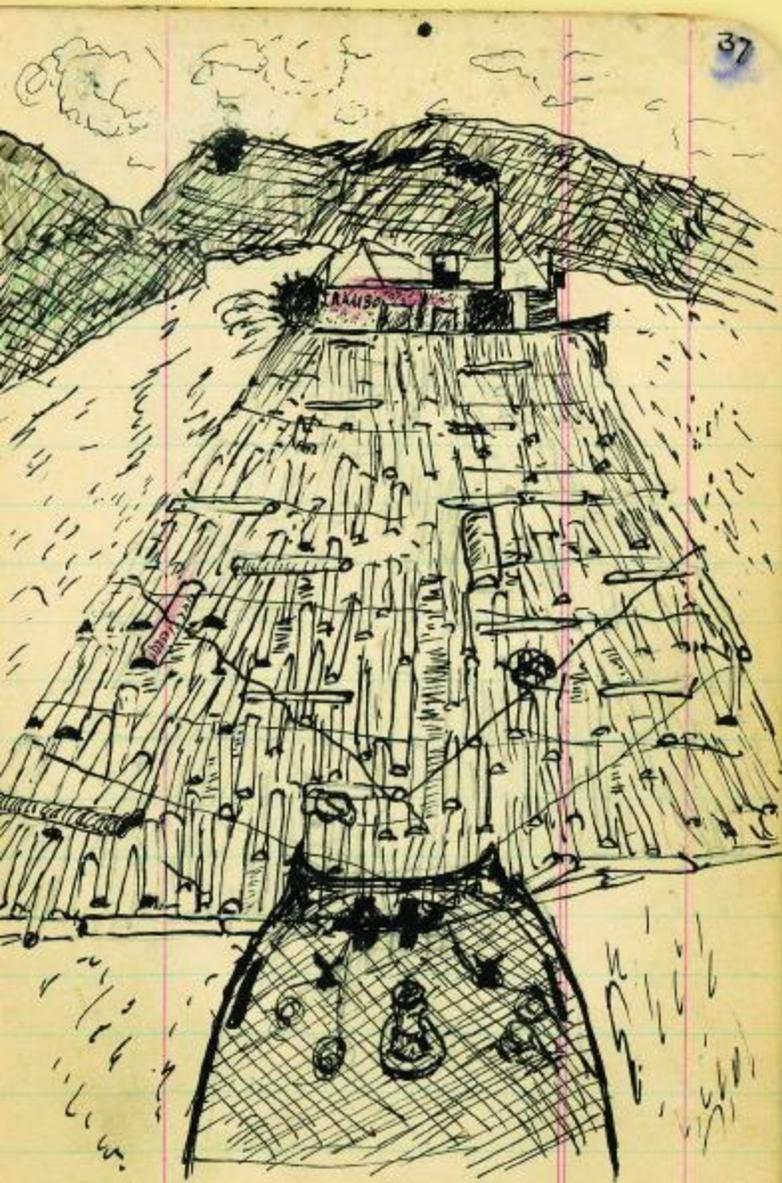
Chub's arrest at Guttenberg created quite a scene.

After leaving the steamships Rambo and Musser, the boys continued on their way in the canoe. They stopped to patch the canvas boat "with tire tape and shellac" and then drifted downriver past "summer resorts," where they "gave all the yells we could think of and sung all the songs we knew or made up."²⁹ Two days later, they hitched onto another raft, with which they sailed until Rock Island.

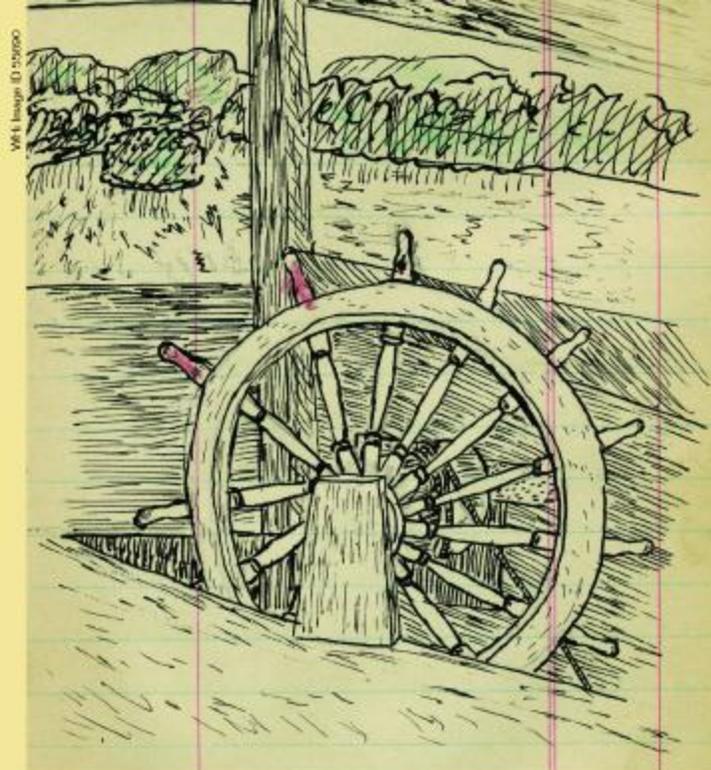
Throughout his journey, Reynolds displays a fascination with bridges, monuments, and new construction. The Eagle Point bridge ("simply great," according to Reynolds)³⁰ was only recently opened at the end of April 1902 and was thus still a novelty when the River Rovers passed through. "With warm weather, the project became a source of local entertainment, 'huge crowds' coming to Eagle Point on Sunday afternoons to look at the bridge."³¹

The Musser and the Rambo floating logs down the river

WPA Image ID 52090



THE MUSSER & RAMBO
from Stillwater to Davenport



Ship's wheel, one of Reynolds' more intricate drawings



Playing cards to pass the time on a train

Reynolds is also eager to see the new Rock Island Bridge, claiming it is "the finest bridge I ever saw."³² The first bridge across the upper Mississippi, the Government Bridge was ultimately rebuilt two times prior to 1903. The version Reynolds saw was "wider, higher, and heavier and capable of sustaining a far greater weight than the old one."³³ After being closed for a year during construction, the *Davenport Daily Republican* declared this newest incarnation of the Government Bridge the "Best in the United States," exclaiming, "Davenport has the finest bridge of the kind of any in the world, and her citizens ought to take cognizance of the fact. . . . The bold outline and majestic solidity of the new bridge have excited more than a passing attention in the minds of the people."³⁴

Soon after this we left the raft & landed just below the finest bridge I ever saw. There is a double track for railway trains and under that is a wide roadway for two street railways and two wagon tracks, and two foot ways. It is massive yet simple in construction.

... The Arsenal is a very pretty place with drives, walks, & bicycle paths. The buildings are nearly all built on the same plan. They are the finest machine shop buildings in the country.

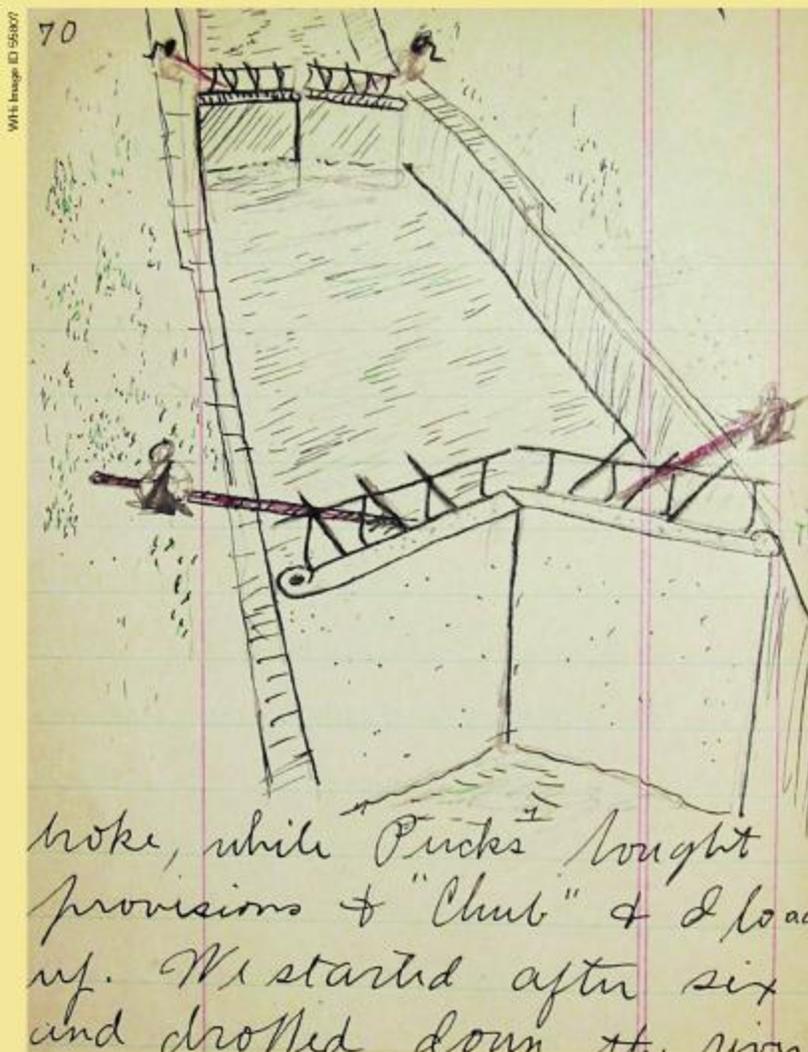
In them we saw the employees making all the articles used in the army and I suppose some for the navy. Carved furniture, targets, artillery carriages, tongues, saddles, bags, cartridge boxes, hair ropes, pads, brushes, turbine bevel wheels, etc.

At one part of the grounds there are hundreds of round shot weighing five pounds or less piled into a fence. Inside this fence are numbers of old cannons & mortars captured or made at different periods. In the side of one good sized brass cannon was a large dent, showing plainly that a shot had struck it a glancing blow. The bore was dented in also making the cannon useless.³⁵

The Rock Island Arsenal is also the site of a former Civil War prison camp and the Rock Island Confederate Cemetery. Between December 1863 and July 1865, a total of 12,409 Confederate soldiers were quartered in its eighty-four barracks.³⁶ Following the Civil War, the island saw a period of activity as the barracks and stockade were razed and ten stone shops were erected for the overhaul and manufacture of artillery and small arms.³⁷ It is these buildings which Reynolds refers to as "the finest machine shop buildings in the country."³⁸

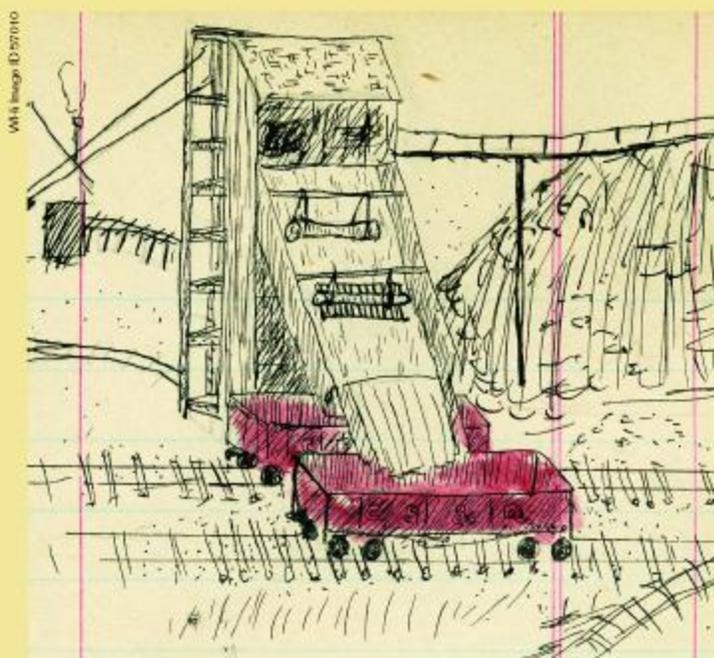
... We wandered on till we came to a restaurant where we ate an enormous dinner. We then separated, "Chub" and I going down to the court house and Post Office while the others went down to see a saw mill. We took a car back to Davenport where we got all the information about the Rock River we could, bid goodbye to Mr. Henrichs and went down to the boat landing. Sid fixed the paddle he broke, while "Pucks" bought provisions & "Chub" & I loaded up. We started after six and dropped down the river to the canal where we portaged our stuff around the first lock, paddled up the canal about a mile and camped.³⁹

The Rovers do not paddle directly up the Rock River, but rather up the Hennepin Canal that links the Rock River to the Mississippi for boat traffic. They start after 6:00 p.m., but only make it about four miles before they stop to camp for the night about a mile past the first lock on the canal that they encounter—the last lock prior to the Mississippi. At this point, Chub Fowler and Reynolds "folded up the canvas canoe and



Dam and lock system

Drawing of train cars lined up to receive coal



[. . .] packed our duds and started for Coloma."⁴⁰ Returning by train, they arrived in Madison late on Tuesday, August 11, 1903. The Wisconsin State Journal reported that "A leaky canvas canoe made it necessary for [them] to abandon the trip."⁴¹ Sid Jackson and Pucks Anderson were estimated to arrive home about "two weeks hence."⁴² The travails of Reynolds and "Chub" did not end when they folded the canoe. The two dirtied young vagabonds raised the suspicions of the local constabulary. "We certainly looked like a couple of sports with coats out at the elbows, pants grimy with dirt, hands and face black with the same article and a bum look all around," Reynolds wrote of the journey home.

The floor in the mens waiting room was covered with bums sleeping and the stench was something to dream about. We stood it out doors as long as we could then went into the ladies waiting room, where we tried to rest & keep warm. A cop came and asked us a lot of questions but let us stay there.

"Don't you see those signs on the doors?"

"Yes Sir."

"Well what are you doing in here then?"

We got sick in the other room.

"Well stay in here if you can behave yourselves" . . .

Our train arrived & we hustled aboard. The news agent sold "Chub" a Wild West book. . . . We changed cars at Davis Jc. and headed for Rockford where we arrived about seven oclock. We had to wait here till nine fifteen so we viewed the town.

One dam was all we could see across the river, we had been told there were about fifty, & that there were about three miles of river covered with buildings. Our eyes must have been on a strike for we failed to see them. We visited the Carnegie Library which is not yet completed. It will be a swell building when it is.

The North Western has a fine depot with a small park beside it while the St. Paul has an antiquated old shack built when Washington was a boy. . . .

At 9:15 we left for Beloit and the north. . . . We went through Stoughton and all the other Cities on the line, reaching Madison about half past eleven.

Chub and I hustled the canoe up to Mr. Jacksons and then hiked home to get some dinner.

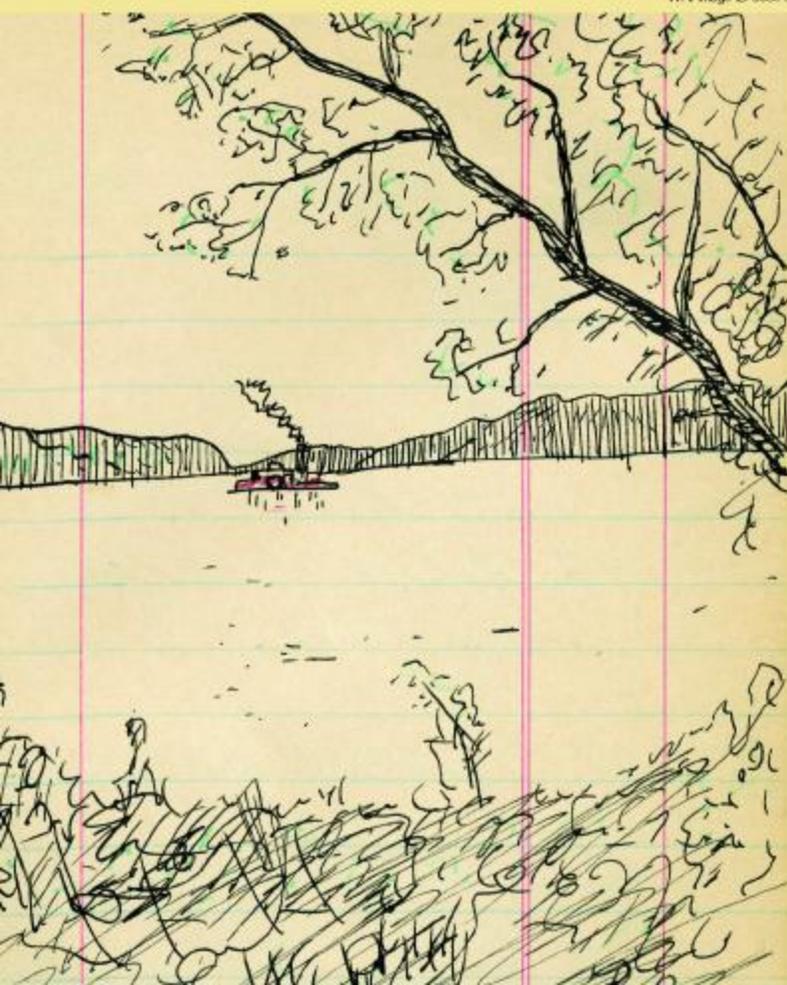
The folks were surprised to see me.⁴³

Author's Note

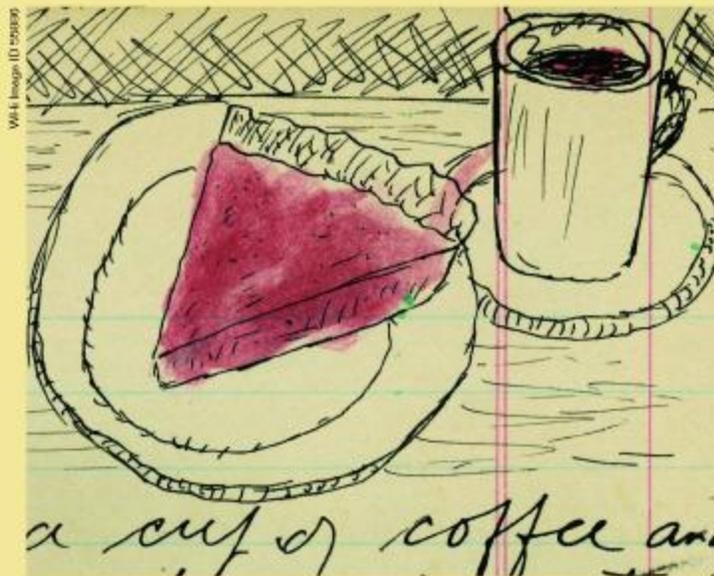
Transcription and research by the UW-Oshkosh River Rovers Research Group: Amelia Crane, Wendy Diehlman, Keith Fairchild, Marguerite Helmers, Michelle Monte, Alexis Pegram, Kevin Poquette, Aaron Schneider, April Schumacher, Sarah Staerke, Christine Sprangers, Steven Stary, and Jason Zirbel. The group thanks Joshua Ranger for his generous assistance.

Steamboat on a river

W4 Image ID 95004



Custard pie and coffee, a "sumptuous repast" enjoyed at a "railway eating hous."



Notes

1. 1908 Logbook of Preston Reynolds, 91. This abridged transcription of the 1908 Logbook of Preston Reynolds was created from the original logbook archived at the Wisconsin Historical Society (#1711). Biographical information about the River Rovers is available through the Social Security Death Index (Ancestry.com); Federal Census records for 1880, 1900, 1910, 1920, and 1930 (Ancestry.com); and the Badger Yearbooks of the University of Wisconsin (University of Wisconsin Digital Collection). A digital image of the logbook pages, together with a transcription of the page text, is available at <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.d1/WI.ReynoldsP>. Hereafter cited as Reynolds.
2. Reynolds, 19.
3. Reynolds, 88.
4. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Wisconsin Section of the Climate and Crop Service of the Weather Bureau, *Annual Summary* (Milwaukee, WI: 1905), 3.
5. Reynolds, 4-10.
6. Dells Country Historical Society, *Others Before You: The History of Wisconsin Dells Country* (Friendship, WI: New Past, 1995), 135-37.

This stern-looking police officer accosted Reynolds and Chub at Rockford.



7. Dells Country Historical Society, 139-142.
8. Reynolds, 12-15.
9. William A. Titus, "Historic Spots in Wisconsin," *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 11, no. 3 (1928): 323.
10. James McManus, "The Tragedy of Richland City," *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 7, no. 1 (1923): 76.
11. McManus, 78.
12. Reynolds, 20, 28.
13. William L. Black, *A New Industry, Or Raising the Angora Goat, and Mohair, for Profit* (Fort Worth, TX: Keystone Printing Company, 1900), 104.
14. John L. Hayes, *The Angora Goat; Its Origin, Culture, and Products Containing the Most Recent Observations of Eminent Breeders* (New York: Orange Judd Co., 1882), 58-60.
15. The editors had no success defining "hippocanceous." The word has no entry in the *Miriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* nor in the *Oxford English Dictionary*.
16. Reynolds, 15-27.
17. Reynolds, 25.
18. J. M. Turner, "Rafting on the Mississippi," *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 24, no. 1 (1940): 57.
19. Eric Temte, "A Brief History of the Glimming and Pearling Industry in Prairie Du Chien, Wisconsin" (Dissertation, UW-La Crosse, 1965), 1.
20. Temte, 10.
21. Reynolds, 34.
22. Walter W. Jacobs, *The First One Hundred Years: A History of Guttenberg, Iowa* (Guttenberg, IA: Guttenberg Press, 1994), 65.
23. Reynolds, 34.
24. Reynolds, 25, 28.
25. Reynolds, 29-36.
26. Ann Cooper Funderburg, *Chocolate, Strawberry, and Vanilla: A History of American Ice Cream* (Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State UP, 1995), 97-98.
27. Miranda Abney and Marti Pupillo, "The History of Ice Cream," available at <http://www.idfa.org/facts/icmonth/page7.cfm>.
28. Reynolds, 36-61.
29. Reynolds, 55-56.
30. Reynolds, 39.
31. Dennett, Muessig & Associates Ltd., *Historic American Engineering Record*, National Park Service, Department of the Interior, (Washington, DC: 1982), 21. Available at http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/habs_haer/ (enter search term "Eagle Point Bridge").
32. Reynolds, 63.
33. "A Great Bridge," *Davenport Daily Tribune*, May 23, 1895.
34. "Best in United States," *Davenport Daily Republican*, November 18, 1896.
35. Reynolds, 65-67.
36. Clifford Stephens, *Rock Island Confederate Prison Deaths* (Rock Island, IL: Blackhawk Genealogical Society, 1973), 39.
37. "The History of the Rock Island Arsenal Garrison," United States Army, May 7, 2007.
38. Reynolds, 66.
39. Reynolds, 69-70.
40. Reynolds, 79-80.
41. "Voyagers Break Up," *Wisconsin State Journal*, August 12, 1905.
42. *Ibid.*
43. Reynolds, 84-97.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Marguerite Helmers is a professor of English at the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh. She is the author of *The Elements of Visual Analysis* (2006) and *Writing Students* (1995), editor of *Intertexts: Reading Pedagogy in College Writing Classrooms* (2002), and co-

editor with Charles Hill of *Defining Visual Rhetorics* (2004) and with Tilar Mazzeo of *The Traveling and Writing Self* (2007). She has contributed articles to the scholarly journals *College English*, the *Journal of Advanced Composition*, and the electronic journals *Enculturation* and *Kairos*.

The Wisconsin Historical Society Board of Curators

The Ruth and Hartley Barker Director:
Ellsworth H. Brown

Officers

President: Judy Nagel
President Elect: Ellen Langill
Treasurer: Ken Conger
Secretary: Ellsworth H. Brown

Board of Curators

Betty Adelman, *Mukwonago*
Ruth Barker, *Ephraim*
Angela Bartell, *Middleton*
Murray D. "Chip" Beckford, *Cascade*
Terese Berceau, *Madison*
Mary F. Buestrin, *Mequon*
Thomas E. Caestecker, *Kenilworth, IL*
Linda Clifford, *Madison*
William J. Cronon, *Madison*
Craig Culver, *Prairie du Sac*
Laurie Davidson, *Marinette*
George Dionisopoulos, *Pewaukee*
Victor Ferrall, *Orfordville*
Mark Gajewski, *Madison*
Conrad Goodkind, *Whitefish Bay*

Beverly A. Harrington, *Oshkosh*
Norbert Hill, *Oneida*
John O. Holzhueter, *Mazomanie*
John Kerrigan, *Oshkosh*
Steve Kastell, *Elkhart Lake*
Helen Laird, *Marshfield*
Jerry Phillips, *Bayfield*
Fred A. Risser, *Madison*
Brian Rude, *Coon Valley*
Michael Schmudlach, *Brooklyn*
John Schroeder, *Oostburg*
Dale Schultz, *Richland Center*
Anne M. West, *Whitefish Bay*
Carlyle H. "Hank" Whipple, *Madison*

Ex-officio Board of Curators

Riene Wells, *President, FRIENDS of the Society*
Betty Havik, *President, Wisconsin Council for Local History*
Bruce T. Block, *President, Wisconsin Historical Foundation*
Ken Frazier, *Director, General Library System, UW-Madison*

The Wisconsin Historical Foundation

Officers

President: Bruce T. Block, *Bayside*
Vice-President: Walter S. Rugland, *Appleton*
Vice-President: Dennis R. Dorn, *Portage*
Treasurer: Rhona E. Vogel, *Brookfield*
Secretary: Melinda V. Heinritz, *Madison*
Asst. Treasurer & Asst. Secretary: W. Pharis Horton, *Madison*

Directors

Diane K. Ballweg, *Madison*
Renee S. Boldt, *Appleton*
Robert M. Bolz, *Madison*
John R. Evans, *Verona*
Rockne G. Flowers, *Madison*
John J. Frautschi, *Madison*
C. Frederick Geilfuss, *Milwaukee*
Michael R. Gotzler, *Madison*
Fritz P. Grutzner, *Madison*
Henry G. Herzing, *Milwaukee*
Daniel A. Kohl, *River Hills*
Roy C. LaBudda, *Milwaukee*
Mark D. Laufman, *Madison*
Thomas J. Mohs, *Madison*
Jeffrey D. Riester, *Appleton*
Peggy A. Rosenzweig, *Wauwatosa*
Richard L. Schmidt, *West Bend*
David G. Stoffel, *Whitefish Bay*
Kathleen A. Wilson, *Brookfield*
David A. Zweifel, *Monona*

Emeritus

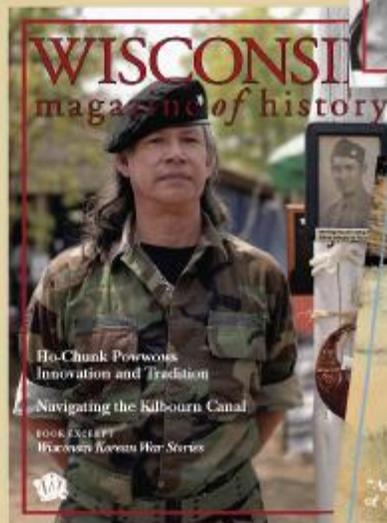
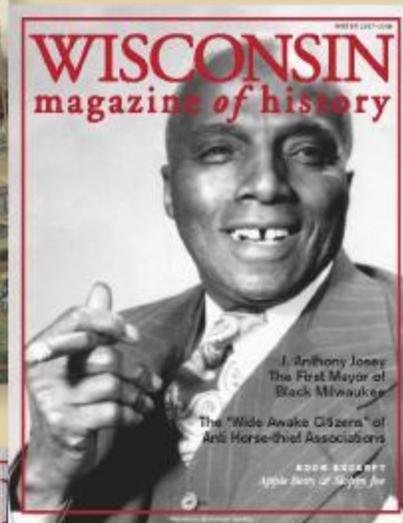
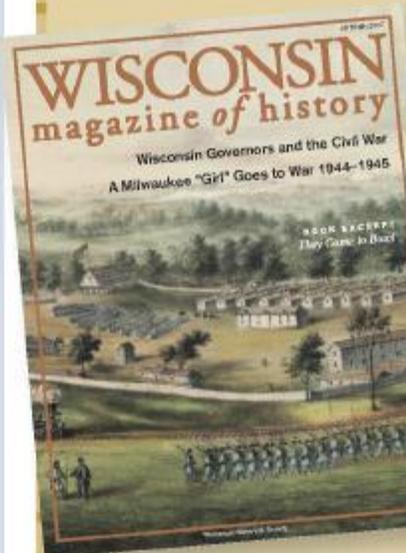
Hartley B. Barker, *Scottsdale, AZ*
Thomas H. Barland, *Eau Claire*
Richard H. Holscher, *Lake Tomahawk*
Margaret B. Humleker, *Fond du Lac*
Paul F. Meisner, *Milwaukee*
George H. Miller, *Ripon*
Carol T. Toussaint, *Madison*
Edwin P. Wiley, *Milwaukee*
Robert S. Zigman, *Mequon*

Ex-officio

Ellen D. Langill, *Waukesha*
Judy K. Nagel, *DePere*

It's time to cast your vote

The William Best Hesselline Award was established in 1965 in memory of historian and Wisconsin Historical Society past president William B. Hesselline. Each year member readers vote for the best original article of the volume year. The award winner receives a \$100 prize. Voting ends August 31, 2008, and the results will be published in the winter issue of the magazine. To cast your vote online visit www.wisconsinhistory.org/wmh/hesselline/. You may also vote by email, hessellineaward@wisconsinhistory.org, or by postcard to: *Wisconsin Magazine of History*, 816 State Street, Madison, WI 53706-1417.



for the Hesselstine Award!

William Best Hesselstine Award Ballot

The following articles are eligible for the William Best Hesselstine Award for Volume 91 (Autumn 2007–Summer 2008) of the *Wisconsin Magazine of History*. Vote for only ONE article. Articles are listed here in the order in which they appeared in their respective issues.

Autumn 2007

Miniature Demons: The Young Helpers of Milwaukee's Glass Industry, 1880–1922, by Nicholas J. Hoffman

"The Union Must Stand": Wisconsin Governors' Contributions to the Civil War Effort, by Stephen D. Engle

"Hey Milwaukee": A Wisconsin "Girl" Goes to War 1944–1945, by James H. Madison

Winter 2007–2008

The First Mayor of Black Milwaukee: J. Anthony Josey, by Genevieve G. McBride

The "Wide Awake Citizens": Anti horse-thief Associations in South Central Wisconsin, 1865–1890, by Matthew Luckett

Viewing the Ruins: The Early Documentary History of the Aztalan Site, by John D. Richards

Spring 2008

If Ordinary Walls Could Talk: Piecing Together the History of My House, by Mark Speltz

Ho-Chunk Powwows: Innovation and Tradition in a Changing World, by Grant Arndt

Navigating the Kilbourn Canal, by Milton J. Bates

Summer 2008

On the Trail of Paul Bunyan, by Michael Edmonds

Observations on the Log Book of Preston Reynolds: One of the 4 River Rovers on a Trip Down the Wisconsin, Mississippi, and Up the Rock and Yahara River, by Marguerite Helmers

The Wisconsin Idea in Action: Reading, Resistance and the Door-Kewaunee Regional Library, 1950–1952, by Christine Pawley

Wisconsin Historical Society Business Partnerships

The Wisconsin Historical Society is pleased to recognize the following companies who help us preserve and promote Wisconsin's rich heritage. Those marked with an asterisk (*) are current participants in the Business Partnerships program. As a token of the Society's appreciation, Business Partners enjoy a package of benefits including discounts on membership for employees, subscriptions to Society publications, and public recognition of supporting one of the country's most active historical societies. To learn how your company can take advantage of the Wisconsin Historical Society's Business Partnerships Program, please contact Martha Truby at 608-261-9363 or martha.truby@wisconsinhistory.org.

John Muir Partners
(\$25,000 and above)
Mead Witter Foundation*
Robert W. Baird & Co.
Virchow Krause & Company
Wisconsin Preservation Fund*

Black Hawk Patrons
(\$10,000–\$24,999)
American Family Insurance
CG Schmidt Construction
DelawareNorth Companies
Northwestern Mutual Foundation
Old World Wisconsin Foundation

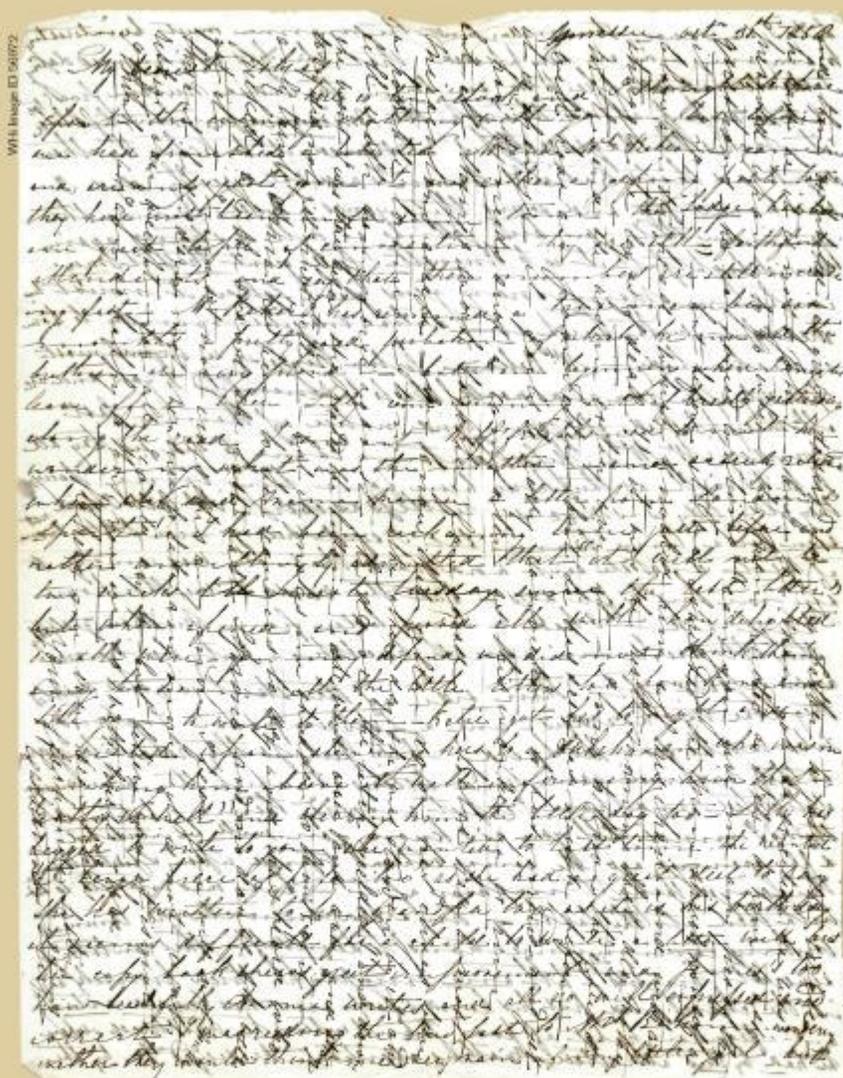
Belle Case La Follette Associates
(\$5,000–\$9,999)
3M Corporation
AAA Wisconsin
American Girl*
Argosy Foundation
Burke Properties
Cub Cadet
Culver's Frozen Custard
Foley & Lardner
Gilbane
Marcus Corporation
Name Badge Productions*
Reinhart Boerner Van Deuren s.c.
Spacesaver
Vogel Consulting*
Worzalla

Frederick Jackson Turner Society
(\$2,500–\$4,999)
Alliant Energy Foundation
Aurora Health Care
Beyer Construction*
DEMCO
Eppstein Uhen Architects
Godfrey & Kahn
Gorman & Company
John Deere Foundation
Kikkoman Foods*
Miller Brewing Company
The OTI Group
Quarles & Brady LLP
Webcrafters-Frautschi Foundation*
Wisconsin Broadcasters Association
Foundation*

The Director's Circle
(\$1,000–\$2,499)
Alliant Energy Corporation*
Alpha Investment Consulting Group*
Broydick & Associates
Capital Newspapers
The Coburn Company*
Experimental Aircraft Association
G.R. Manufacturing
Grape Lakes Wine & Spirits
Green Bay Packers
International Truck & Engine
Corporation*
Jackson County Bank*
Kohler Company*
The Manitowoc Company*
Marshfield Clinic*
Mead & Hunt*
MGIC
Milwaukee County Historical Society
Mueller Communications
S.C. Johnson
Smith & Gesteland
U.S. Bank*
Uihlein Wilson Architects
Wausau Paper
Windway Foundation*
Wisconsin Energy Corporation
Wisconsin Physicians Service*
Xcel Energy

Lyman Copeland Draper Supporters
(\$500–\$999)
Alphagraphics
Biewer Wisconsin Sawmill
Boelter & Lincoln*
Commonwealth Cultural
Resources Group
CUES*
Fisher Barton Blades*
J. P. Cullen*
Mercury Marine*
Northern Lake Service*
River Architects*
St. Mary's Hospital Medical Center
Twin Disc*
Urban Land Interests*
Wachovia Foundation
Weimer Bearing & Transmission*
WISC TV 3*

✎ Curio ✎



Genealogists spend countless hours searching for family documents like birth, marriage, and death certificates. Any scrap of information can help to flesh out the story a family's heritage, and letters that convey stories and intimate details across generations are a true treasure. Few of us will be fortunate enough to locate letters written between our ancestors, but sometimes, those who do have only cleared the first hurdle. Reading the letters themselves can be a challenge for a number of reasons. One dizzying obstacle is cross-writing. In order to save paper and postage, correspondents would fill a page, then turn the paper sideways and continue writing over the existing text. The resulting document, like this letter from John Steel of Waukesha to his aunt in England, may appear almost artistic, but can also prove quite a chore to read.

Wisconsin Historic Sites

Plan now for some of the most exciting events of the season!



**Buffalo Bill's
Wild West Show
Circus World
(Baraboo, Wisconsin)
July 4-6**



**Laura Ingalls Wilder Days
Old World Wisconsin
(Eagle, Wisconsin)
July 26-27**

**50th Anniversary Celebration
Madeline Island Museum
(La Pointe, Wisconsin)
June 22**



**Carriage Classic
Villa Louis
(Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin)
September 6-7**

**Old World County Fair
Old World Wisconsin
(Eagle, Wisconsin)
August 16**

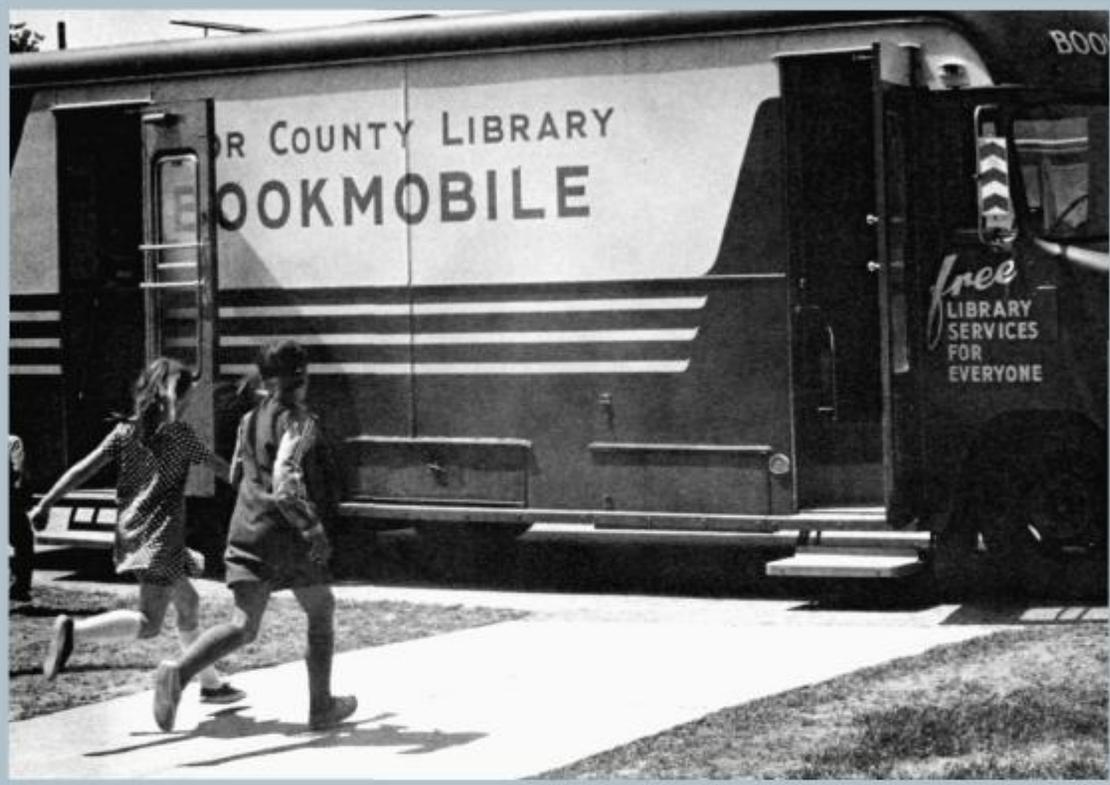


**18th Annual
Civil War Weekend
Wade House
(Greenbush, Wisconsin)
September 27-28**



**WISCONSIN
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY**

For a complete listing of more than 40 events and dozens of workshops, visit wisconsinhistory.org/calendar



Young girls rush to the bookmobile. With such a resource, communities could iron out the differences between wealthy and poor districts, and could reach even the most remote rural readers by sharing a common pool of materials. Yet, there was community opposition to an experiment that brought public library services to Door and Kewaunee Counties. Read more about it in Christine Pawley's "The Wisconsin Idea in Action: Reading, Resistance, and the Door-Kewaunee Regional Library, 1950-1952."



WISCONSIN
magazine of history