



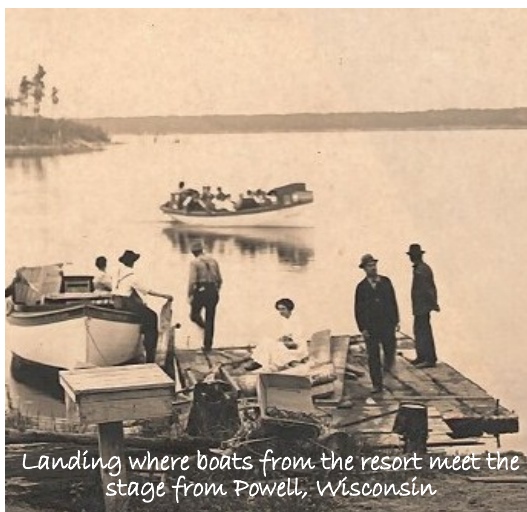
# MANITOWISH WATERS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## Manitowish Waters Leaders of Historical Preservation Awards



From left: Captain James Robinson, Ruth Dickerson Gardner, Homer Sykes, Elizabeth Sykes and Mark Liestickow.  
Not pictured: Michael J. Dunn III and David Dunn

### *This is the Historical Society's Highest Recognition!*



On May 16, 2018, the Manitowish Waters Historical Society (MWHS) proudly recognized seven community members as Leaders of Historical Preservation. Our celebration of "**historical pioneers**" marks the first MWHS recognition of what will become an annual event. The inaugural Leaders of Historic Preservation each contributed significantly to preservation of vital records. They provided images, narratives, maps, histories, artifacts and stories that are at the foundation of our community's identity. Though the recipients may have pursued historic preservation differently, each are vital to our ongoing documentation of our town's history. With great honor, we post names, pictures and stories of Manitowish Waters Leaders of Historic Preservation!

To view the bios of these amazing scholars, please go to: <https://www.mwhistory.org/about-us/preservation-awards/> and scroll down the page.



Jim Bokern

## President's Letter

The **Manitowish Waters Historical Society** (MWHS) enjoyed a busy and exciting summer in 2018. Our membership continues to grow. Each month we record histories of different longtime residents and new historic photographs and

documents. They are scanned so as to be an exciting addition to our historic collections. Recently, many new pictures and family histories have been acquired from the estate of **Cal LaPorte** and the **Gruttner/Flancher** and **Rintleman families**, adding new insights and scenes from the earliest days. Importantly, we received a **grant from the Wisconsin Historical Society** to help pay for digital archiving software that will organize our community's important documentation for future generations. In addition, MWHS society did community outreach at the **Fourth of July celebration, Cranarama, Music in the Park, and Chamber after 5 at McGraw's Chippewa Retreat**. We also **co-sponsored both a presentation on the history of summer resident Charles Nash at Camp Jom and a cemetery walk at Pine Lawn Cemetery**.

2018 was an important year for the MWHS launching new programs and initiatives. We closely collaborated with the **North Lakeland Discovery Center** offering a series of

pontoon boat tours that included **archaeologists Mark Bruhy and Katie Egan-Bruhy** who added a strong prehistoric component to the pontoon tour experience. **Kay Krans** and I also led Rest Lake pontoon tours supported with new historic images allowing participants greater historic context at each stop of the tour. Continuing the tradition of gathering important historic information from our longtime residents, we sponsored historic gatherings with select Manitowish Waters residents at Koller Library. Using 1937 aerial photos as a baseline of information, longtime residents helped locate key businesses and residences to create a permanent record for future generations. The MWHS also launched a **recognition programs to honor Manitowish Waters historians** with a formal presentation at the North Lakeland Discovery Center. The charter members of **Manitowish Waters Leaders of Historic Preservation** are featured in a different article of the newsletter. Finally, we will continue to redesign the MWHS webpage, adding documentation and new narratives illustrated with images from the past for all to enjoy.

Thank you for your support of the Manitowish Waters Historical Society and please let us know if you have any interest in working on our projects or have ideas for new programs.

Respectfully submitted,

Jim Bokern  
President, Manitowish Waters Historical Society

### A Great, if wet, Fourth of July!



It started out as a beautiful day for a parade until a giant clap of thunder was followed by a deluge. The storm, which wasn't due until later in the afternoon, had appeared early. But It didn't damper the spirits of our wonderful community .

### Board of Directors

**Jim Bokern** President - jimkb@aol.com  
**John McFarland** Vice President  
**JoAnn Miller** Secretary  
**JoAnn Miller and Barbara Bartling** Treasurers  
**Janelle Kohl** Board Member  
**John Hanson** Board Member  
**Ruth Gardner** Board Member





# Many thanks to our Collaborators!

## Manitowish Waters Historical Society's Collaborative Model

As a relatively new historical society in a small town, collaborative relationships have been vital to the development of the Manitowish Waters Historical Society (MWHS). Our greatest partner is most certainly the **Koller Library**. **Janelle Kohl** serves as a MWHS board member, and the Koller Library facilitates our meetings, presentations, oral histories, archiving and technological needs. The Koller Library staff and volunteers have made amazing contributions to preserving the history of our community for decades. Thankfully, our partnership continues to grow and has led to greater capacity in preserving an array of key historic resources.

Many other community partnerships continue the spirit of collaboration that is central to the operation of the MWHS. The **North Lakeland Discovery Center (NLDC)** partnership has provided support in hosting presentations, technology for the Charles Nash presentation, advertising (including historical questions in the "Float Your Boat Trivia Rally"), historic preservation, and, most importantly, providing a pontoon boat for our historic tours. The challenge of insurance liability for pontoon tours was overwhelming, but the NLDC's leadership stepped up and created a solution to ensure we can work through the NLDC and expand this very popular historic opportunity.

**The town of Manitowish Waters and Chamber of Commerce** continue to provide important support to the MWHS. The town has provided secure archival space for documents and artifacts protecting key cultural resources that shape our community's identity. Additionally, the MWHS has provided key historic research and endorsements to support town initiatives. Just this year, an attempt to rename the iconic island on Manitowish Lake to "Monkey Island" was thwarted by a collaborative effort between the MWHS and the town of Manitowish Waters. Importantly, this collaboration is continuing with the addition of the **Lac Du Flambeau Historic Preservation Office** to formally name the Manitowish Lake island "Manito" to align DNR naming with our community's traditions. For the past four years, the Chamber of Commerce has co-sponsored the MWHS at their popular Chamber After 5 events. The chamber also gives material support and advertising, and sponsors the MWHS at events like the Fourth of July and Cranarama.

**Scott Bertz**, the owner and operator of **Webworklife**, has donated the MWHS domain name, provides server storage for our web site, writes code and provides detailed instruction for MWHS web developers. This generous arrangement empowers the MWHS to be autonomous over the format, architecture and content of the web page. Importantly, when we get stuck, Scott immediately corrects our problems.

**Camp Jorn, Friends of Koller Library, Pea Patch, Blue Bayou, Manitowish Waters Cranberry Company, Pea Patch, Voss'**

**Resort and Chippewa Retreat** have partnered in hosting and/or supporting MWHS community events. Without their support, **Chamber After 5 presentations, the Charles Nash presentation, Music in the Park concession, and pontoon tours** would not be possible. Many other business have also pitched in, like **Dano's Tree Service**, which helped capture a rare maple tree stump from an historic sugar bush on the chain.

**The Wisconsin Historical Society, Wisconsin State Archaeologist and the Lac Du Flambeau Historic Preservation** office have all collaborated with the MWHS to support exciting projects and initiatives. The Wisconsin Historical Society has supported the MWHS with grants, insights regarding webpage development, and regional support. **Jody Miller and Jim Bokern** also traveled to Madison in January, supporting the mission of the State Historical Society by meeting with our state representatives who all saw merit preserving Northwoods history. **The State Archaeologists John Broihahn and Lac Du Flambeau Tribal Archaeologist Cynthia Stiles** worked with Jim Bokern on three different cultural sites earlier this fall, focusing on a Vance Lake logging feature, Civilian Conservation Corps camp 660, and ricing camps along Rice Creek. More information regarding these investigations will be forthcoming as we will continue field work in the late fall. A notable offshoot of these collaborations has been insights into the **Devine family** and their substantial influence on the development of our town. Dan Devine was likely the first non-Ojibwa resident of Manitowish Waters with his wife Kate, who was a Lac Du Flambeau tribal member. Collaborating and sharing of our town histories and tribal records, we now have new and in-depth insights into the earliest settlers of our town.

Locally, we collaborated with the **Northern Caucus of Historical Societies and the Northern Waters Genealogical Society** to sponsor key events, advance preservation of cultural resources and share our common historic legacy. The Northern Caucus meets about twice a year to advance common goals, provide best practices and training in key areas of historic preservation, and champions local histories. The most exciting development led by the Northern Caucus is placing themed historic photos from each township in the large corridors of the new Vilas County Courthouse. Manitowish Waters will join our neighboring communities to illustrate the many historic legacies in our county. The **Northern Waters Genealogical Society** co-sponsored the cemetery walk at Pine Lawn Cemetery, featuring the stories of six town pioneers. Actors using scripts prepared by the Northern Waters Genealogical Society delivered stunning performances of our earliest residents.

Strong collaboration will remain a pillar of the MWHS operation. Please feel free to suggest partnerships that would better advance the mission of the MWHS.



# The Haunted Island and the Legend of Manitowish

Lights which flicker here and there on an island, isolated by about one fourth of a mile of deep water from the shores of Lake Manitowish, queen of the northern Wisconsin lakes has enchanted and terrorized human beings since the wilderness was invaded by white settlers.

The dismal moaning of the lake breezes through the tall pines enhances the weirdness of the lonely island. Neither man nor beast will inhabit the spot. Not even a snake can be seen writhing its way under the moulding logs or driftwood on the shore. The island is protected from intrusion on almost every point by jagged rocks and "deadheads" of wood which reach up from the lake's bottom.

The island, which is just a hilly piece of land, assumes a deep purple at sunset; it is a vivid green during the daytime when the waters of Manitowish vie with the sky in blueness; it is a mysterious black at night when the sky above is a canopy of velvet freckled with tiny gold stars which pay tribute to a pale moon.

## Curse of the Man Devil

A weird Indian legend is told about the place. It has been handed down by word of mouth from ancient chiefs to their successors, and has been passed on by old settlers and trappers who tell the tale to wide-eyed children of the campers on Manitowish during the summer months.

Several hundred years ago, the Land of Lakes region of Wisconsin was the site of many tribal wars. A certain tribe legend says its name "Wisconsin" was led by a particularly wicked chief. During the ferocious battle, this chief was killed by the arrow of its enemy, much to the relief of his numerous enemies, and not a little to the relief of his own tribesman. For his death meant a release from the reign of terror he had cast over the northern regions.

His body was placed in a homely grave on the furthest point of a peninsula which jutted out from the shores of Manitowish Lake. The chief was known among the tribes as the "wicked man" or the "man devil." The name Manitowish signifies "man devil"\* in the Indian tongue. Thereafter the lake and its surrounding lands were known by the name of Manitowish.

## Spot Shunned by Guides

A curse was placed upon the spot where he was buried by the Indians. The spirit of the wicked chief was supposed to roam at will over the waters and surrounding land, and whenever it rested near an Indian camp evil and famine would follow. No Indian would even set foot upon the point, and passing in his birch canoe would send it flying past the spot. To this day, half-breed Indian guides will not conduct a tourist party to the burial mound of Manitowish. They speed up their motors as they pass, giving wide berth to the spot.

## Editor's Note

MWHS newsletters have often included an old historic journal or article. In that tradition, we are featuring, "The Haunted Island and the Legend of Manitowish" for a second time. This article is relevant today because of the controversy over the attempted renaming of the Manitowish Lake island, and our town petitioning the DNR to formally name the island "Manito." This story was written through the lens of an early visitor. We think the article was published in the Milwaukee Journal during the early 1920's. An excerpt of the original article is included for context.

This early 20th century article has many shortcomings and remains controversial. Most offending is the reference to "...half-breed guides..." mocking the Devine family who were among the earliest pioneers of our town. Sadly, one other early historic article used racial slurs against the Devine family as well. Modern research suggests that Kate and Dan Devine may have been the first pioneering family that settled in Manitowish Waters, raised a strong family, and operated several exemplary businesses when Manitowish Waters was a rugged frontier.

Many residents and local historic accounts reject the article's premise that "Manitowish" means "man devil" or "bad spirit." Translations from Ojibwa to English have always been challenging, and the Ojibwa language has several dialects making absolute understanding of translated terms difficult for non-Ojibwa. Regardless of the true translation for Manitowish, Manitowish Lake and its iconic island near its outlet defines a major watershed of the Chippewa River and our community.

"The Haunted Island and the Legend of Manitowish" is an important story from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century that offers one interpretation regarding the Ojibwa community on Manitowish Lake, the cultural roots of Manito Island, and how a lake came to define an entire region of the Northwoods.



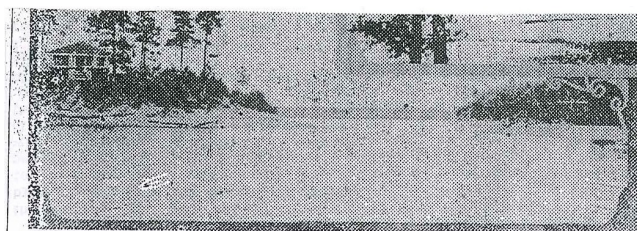
The waters of Lake Manitowish were the most ferocious in times of storm, and the most placid in times of calm. The endless lapping of the waves on the narrow strip of land finally caused the point to become separated from the mainland. Through the wear and tear of several hundred years, over a fourth of a mile has isolated the spot from the shore. The island formed from the peninsula is gradually becoming smaller and smaller.

About thirty years ago the first white campers, venturing into what was then a forest wilderness, were told about the haunted island by casual Indian visitors. An old timer whose camp had been the same tumbledown shack for 20 odd years observed that no tourist has pitched his tent on the haunted island for more than one night. He insists that there must be something to the tale concerning the wandering spirit of Chief Manitowish and calls all efforts to place the flickering light phenomenon on the phosphorescent foxwoods which is peculiar to the damp territory "all bosh."

Old Indian braves insist that four-footed creatures wander around the shore of the island at night, when neither man nor beast are near the place.

Last summer an elderly man, dressed in smart city clothes, described by campers as "most unnatural" stayed on the island for several days. At night he always departed in a battered row boat, but was seen moving around on the island with the first rays of dawn. When asked as to his occupation, his inquisitor probably having adventurous visions of a treasure stored there by some trapper, he replied indifferently "I just spend my days here; I love it. It is a very excellent place in which to sit, or in which to think if the mood stirs."

The island is a good place in which to sit and think. The beautiful lake, connected by narrow thoroughfares with several others, stretches off into an erratic shoreline. Its waters are unsafe for light boats, and when the strong breeze blows up, the campers along the shore are wont to say; "Old Manitowish is on the warpath again."

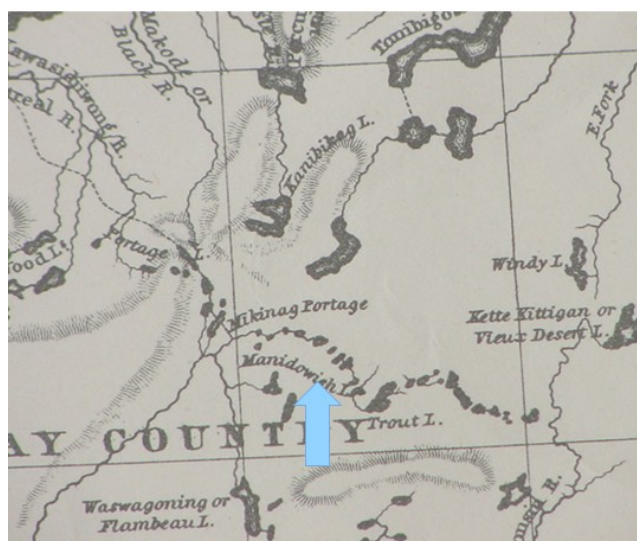


## The Haunted Island and The Legend of Manitowish

BY SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT OF THE JOURNAL.  
Hurley, Wis.—Lights which flicker here and there on an island, isolated by about a fourth of a mile of deep water from the shores of Lake Manitowish, speak of the southern tribes' wicked chief. During a ferocious battle, this chief was killed by the arrow of an enemy, much to the relief of his numerous enemies, and not a little to the relief of his own tribesmen. For

By Special Correspondent of the Journal

## Nicolet Map 1843



## A Reminisce of Belter's Island



From a 2010 interview with Cal LaPorte, conducted by Janelle Kohl:

Cal remembers that Belter's Island was there before 1925. Years later, when Cal turned 21, he was allowed to go there for a beer. Drinking age was 21 back in the 40's.

"Belter's Island Resort was neat and clean. It was a local bar and run nicely. Lots of music and dancing. Mrs. Belter had a lot of antiques. She also had a piano that she played. In order to get there, one would have to get picked up from the mainland and taken over by boat. Whenever you wanted to leave the island, you could get a ride back. Belter's owned the island and Beaumont's were there too. They were related by marriage. Mrs. Beaumont was the daughter of the Belter's."

Cal recalls a story about a happening on the island:

"There was a bachelor named ---. He always had his car at the main landing to get to the island. In the winter, you walked over to the island. A few people each year might take a chance and drive over. --- was known to drink a lot. One winter he disappeared. Townspeople looked for him all winter, and no one could find him anywhere. Come spring, when boats were out and about, he was found in the bottom of Stone Lake at the main landing. Evidently, he took a drive right into the lake and never made his way back out. All on the Stone Lake parking lot to the island."

# Manitowish Waters Historical Society Best Practices Regarding Archaeology and Historic Preservation

The Manitowish Waters Historical Society created an ad hoc committee to clarify questions and promote best practices regarding archaeology and historic preservation that can be viewed at: <https://www.mwhistory.org/prehistory/>. There you will discover each document: 1) an MW Prehistoric Overview, 2) Cultural Resources Best Practices Q & A and 3) Laws Protecting Cultural Resources. Below is what our website looks like.



As part of our research regarding archaeology and historic preservation, **Jim Bokern** and **Jodi Miller** met with **John Broihahn, the Wisconsin State Archeologist**, at a Wisconsin Historical Society conference. The Manitowish Waters Historical Society also worked closely with **Cindi Stiles, the Lac Du Flambeau Historic Preservation Office archaeologist**.

*Just this fall in Manitowish Waters, several people in two vehicles parked in front of a no trespassing sign and attempted to enter private property with metal detectors. When approached by the property owners, the trespassers announced, "We heard this is a good place to treasure hunt." Before leaving the private property, the "treasure hunters" mentioned, "We will just go across the river and get what we want," suggesting that the metal detector group was going to attempt to loot artifacts from public lands.*

This disturbing story should be a caution to all residents who value the preservation of historic resources. Above all, we should follow the law. Below are some excerpts from the webpage that may help clarify the laws and best practices as they apply to private and public properties. For greater insights, go to our new website and read the narratives and explore the links to government sites <https://www.mwhistory.org/prehistory/>.

Private property owners control artifacts on their property. Property rights for owners of private property extend to the original water line/shore. Impounded waterways (like Manitowish Waters above the dam) are treated differently, and private property rights extend to the original/pre-dam water levels. River properties are treated differently from

lake property, and private property owners' rights extend to the middle of the river.

Private property owners must be careful when giving permission to artifact collectors on their property and should only do so if the collector keeps detailed records including location and inventory of artifacts discovered. Written permission should be secured by the collector from the deeded land owner. Logically, collectors trying to gain access to private property without permission are trespassing.

On public properties, all artifacts are protected on land, shoreline, to the original waterline, all lake beds/basins and half of river beds. Again, all original lake beds are public properties and artifacts are protected. On public lands and water areas, metal detecting is a permitted activity and is strictly limited to recovering lost personal property. Metal detecting on DNR property without a permit is a violation. On public lands, no permits are given to metal detector operators for ground disturbance except to recover itemized lost personal property cited on the DNR permit.

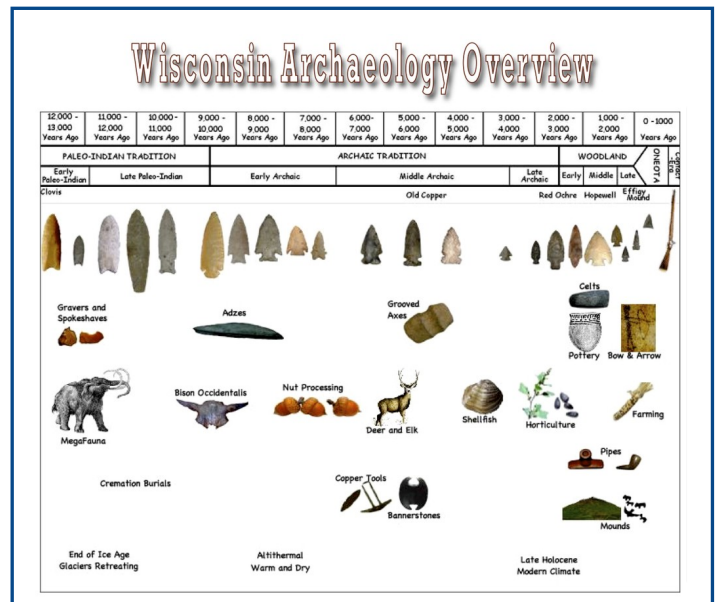


Image from Wisconsin Archaeological Society  
<http://wiarcheologicalsociety.org/educational-resources/>

DNR permits empower an individual for a limited time period, and the state restricts all metal detecting on DNR land to May 1st and October 15th (from either 7 a.m. until 10 a.m. or from 6 p.m. until 9 p.m.).

Much of the metal detecting in the Northwoods is done by collectors who seek copper artifacts to sell or for personal collections. Unless these artifacts are collected with written permission from the private landowner, artifacts should be considered illegal. The tradition of metal detecting in the Northwoods has been problematic for those who prize historic preservation.

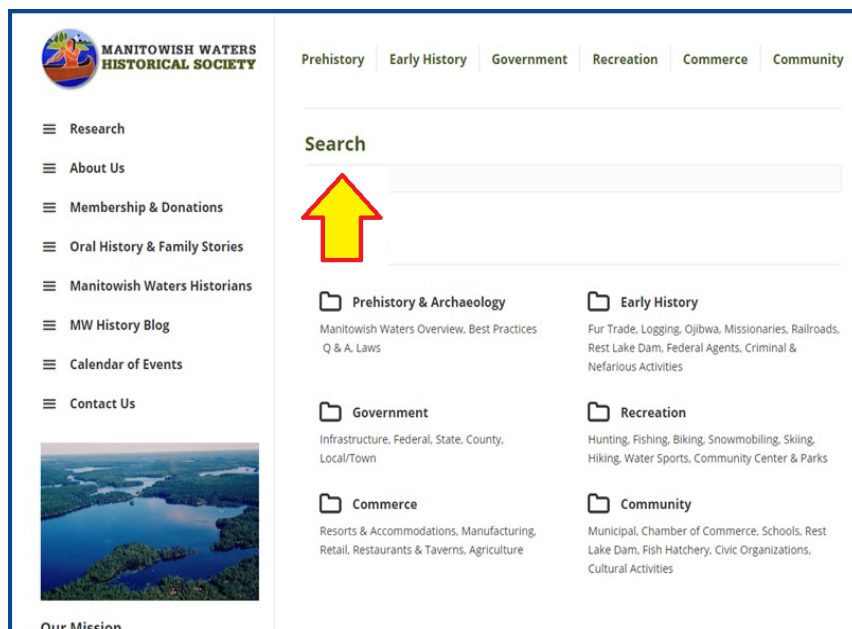


# Manitowish Waters Historical Society's Mission

**"The collection, preservation, and dissemination of materials and information relating to the history of Manitowish Waters."**

The MWHS is dedicated to disseminating historic information by providing online and digital services free to interested parties. Using WordPress (<https://www.mwhistory.org/>) for our webpage and PastPerfect online (<https://mwhistory.pastperfectonline.com/>) for our archival software, we will be allowing visitors to easily access images, documents, narratives and key information on the MWHS. Importantly, each program has a powerful search engine that will allow the user to type in a key word to discover narratives, documents and images. MWHS patrons who want to research their favorite lake merely need to type in the name of the lake into the search bar and hit return or search.

## Webpage and online archiving

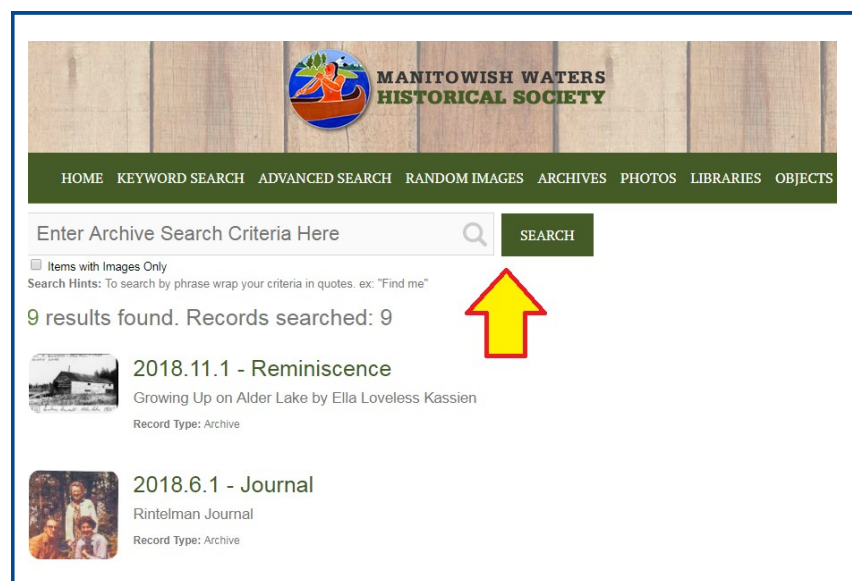


Below is the PastPerfect online main page for the MWHS. PastPerfect online Photo, Libraries, Archives and Keyword Search links all have a search bar to quickly find documents and images.



Alder

In future newsletters, we will feature a new tip on how to better use the MWHS webpage and PastPerfect online resources to increase your access to historic resources.



Below is the PastPerfect Archive page, illustrating the search bar to quickly find documents.





Painting by Barbara McFarland

## Membership & Donations

Those interested in joining the MWHS should complete the form below and send in your form with \$20 to:

**Manitowish Waters Historical Society**  
**P.O. Box 100**  
**Manitowish Waters WI 54545**

*Those considering joining the Manitowish Waters Historical Society are encouraged to explore our new web page, attend MWHS events and reach out to board members.*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

**Thank you for supporting the Manitowish Waters Historical Society, a 501c3 tax exempt organization. Memberships renew each January.**

### Donations

Donations can be sent to:

**Manitowish Waters Historical Society**  
**P.O. Box 100**  
**Manitowish Waters WI 54545**

**MW Historical Society is an approved 501c3 charitable organization, and contributions may be tax deductible. Please contact us for additional information.**

I am interested in the following committee(s):

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Membership Recruitment       | <input type="checkbox"/> History Collection    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fundraising                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Oral                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Education                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Family                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Publicity                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Cranberry             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Property Abstract Collection | <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Maps                         | <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-History\1600-1879 |



**MANITOWISH WATERS**  
**HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

**P.O. Box 100**

**Manitowish Waters WI 54545**

**Email: [mwhistoricalsociety@gmail.com](mailto:mwhistoricalsociety@gmail.com)**