



MANITOWISH WATERS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

November 2019

Early Times

As part of the May 22nd award ceremony celebrating Manitowish Waters' Leaders of Historic Preservation, Jim Bokern shared a robust presentation on the Earliest Pioneers of Manitowish Waters, featuring 11 first families who arrived before 1900. These early families shared an amazing work ethic, a love of the Northwoods, and a dedication to building our community.

For instance, both Abe LaFave and Robert Loveless arrived first at Mann's Manitowish Resort on Trout Lake in the early 1890's as young men with great ambition and keen skills as woodsmen. After working as guides and loggers, each man followed a different path to helping build what would become Manitowish Waters.

LaFave began to expand his guiding service into a series of tent camps on Island Lake and formally

established his Island Lake Resort by 1895. Abe and his wife Sarah worked tirelessly, building their resort and raising a large family on the island. LaFave's prowess as a guide, resort owner and his athletic 6'4" frame added to his legendary identity as a hardnosed Northwoodsman.

Loveless was of a smaller frame, but possessed equally large desires to succeed and a unique creative flair. Loveless' skill as a talented woodsman and guide caught the attention of Richard Southgate, and Loveless became the caretaker of Southgate's ambitious wilderness estate on Little Trout Lake. After Southgate's death, Loveless developed his Alder Lake property, which showcased his many gifts. Loveless continued as a guide, caretaker, builder and logger.

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Forrest Johnson was honored as one of our four 2019 Leaders in Historic Preservation at our August 1st Chamber After 5 event. Jody Miller presented him with the certificate. The other three were recognized in May. Forrest is married to Olive LaFave, who was the daughter of John LaFave and the granddaughter of Abe LaFave.

Inside: Youth Invade the MWHS!

A Word From Our President



Jim Bokern

This summer the Manitowish Waters Historical Society enjoyed fantastic community support while delivering a record number of programs. Specifically, the MWHS and the North Lakeland Discovery Center collaborated on 14 pontoon trips, with most trips having waiting lists. Seven community presentations on the area's history were complemented by six additional presentations requested by community groups and other historical societies. We also featured the first ever MWHS Fun Night on June 27th. It was attended by 100 history enthusiasts who enjoyed refreshments, formed teams, and played a friendly game of MW historical Jeopardy. In January, the MWHS plans to repeat this event.

Our community responded with amazing support. MWHS membership doubled over the summer. New and long-time members stepped up by making MW historic recipes to be shared at the *Chamber After 5* event. Most importantly, community members continued to share documents, artifacts, pictures and stories that are being investigated and archived for future generations.

The MWHS held a strategic retreat in September and is planning an exciting 2020 line-up. Please stay tuned and check out our 2020 calendar at <https://www.mwhistory.org/events/>.

For a complete list of the MWHS's 2018-2019 accomplishments, please check out <https://www.mwhistory.org/2016/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/2019-accomplishments.pdf>.

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'J. Bokern'.

MWHS Board to Expand



Uncle Jim Wants You!!

As the Manitowish Waters Historical Society continues to grow, we are expanding our board of directors and recruiting individuals for leadership roles.

If you or someone you know has organizational skills and is motivated and interested in learning about the history of our community, these skills could serve as an incredible benefit to our non-profit organization. You do not need to be fluent in the history of Manitowish Waters!

If interested, please contact board member **John Hanson**, chairperson of the MWHS nominating committee, by December 1, 2019. John can be reached at mwchair@centurytel.net.

MW Historical Society 2020 Calendar

Go to the website <https://www.mwhistory.org/events/>

A local Renaissance man of sorts, Loveless expanded his areas of expertise to include musician, daredevil tight rope walker, saw mill operator, entertainment promoter, dance hall operator, owner of multiple resorts, proprietor of a roadside store and gas station, saloon keeper, inventor, moonshiner and zoo keeper.

The LaPorte family arrived in 1889, according to Ruth Gardner. Henry and Susan LaPorte worked at the Rest Lake Dam lumber camp, likely run by the Mississippi River Logging Company. Based in Marathon County, the LaPortes traveled seasonally in order to make a living, wintering in the Northwoods for logging, and timber cruising during the summer and fall. The LaPortes were very transient and industrious, relocating several times a year to new communities to complete a variety of tasks associated with the logging and lumber industries. According to Henry and Susan LaPorte's obituaries, they moved permanently to the town of Manitowish at the turn of the 20th century. Members of the larger LaPorte family ultimately were pioneers of the communities of Mercer, Manitowish and Manitowish Waters.



To learn more about these three and the other eight early pioneering families, you can view the entire 2019 Earliest Pioneers of Manitowish Waters presentation at: <https://www.mwhistory.org/2016/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Pioneers-of-Manitowish-Waters-5-22-19-upload.pdf>.

Jim Bokern plans to present an updated version of this presentation as part of the 2020 MWHS Saturday morning series at the newly renovated Koller Library. Importantly, the MWHS has recently acquired many new documents and images regarding our earliest pioneers that will bring new insights into the town's founding families.

Formal Notice of Annual Meeting and Officer Elections

The Manitowish Waters Historical Society will hold its annual meeting and elect officers for 2020 at 5 p.m., December 18, 2019 at the Koller Library.

All members of the MWHS are invited to attend and participate.

Board of Directors

Jim Bokern President - jimkb@aol.com

John McFarland Vice President

Jody Miller Secretary

Barbara Bartling Treasurer

Janelle Kohl Board Member

John Hanson Board Member

Ruth Gardner Board Member

Fun Things to do this Winter!

JANUARY

Toy Lake Hike with NLDC

January 25th 1 - 4 pm

Manitowish Waters History Trivia Night!

January 28, 2020 4 - 7:30 pm

Community Center

FEBRUARY

Toy Lake Hike with NLDC

February 23 1 - 4 pm

For more information on the hikes contact the NLDC

Youth Invasion!



When Youth Meets History

North Lakeland Elementary School Field Trip

A group of 12 budding historians and students from North Lakeland Elementary visited Koller Library on September 23rd to see what Manitowish Waters Historical Society resources were available for their National History Day projects. The students were guided by the theme of *"Breaking Barriers in History."*

MWHS president **Jim Bokern** made a presentation on how to set up and write their reports, and also gave them ideas on subjects for their reports, using information from the MWHS website. **Kay Krans** from the North Lakeland Discovery Center also talked about the Civilian Conservation Corp camps, and **Janelle Kohl** took the students through the library to point out additional resources.

"The kids were very interested, and one of the students said to me that she learned the most from the MWHS than from any of the other sites they visited that day," Kohl shared.

Meet Our First Intern!

The Manitowish Waters Historical Society was fortunate to have our first intern, **Emily Magyar**, this summer.

Emily is scheduled to graduate in December from UW-Stevens Point, where she has been the student manager of the University's art gallery and permanent art collection. She is especially interested in historical documents, so she was a perfect fit for an internship with the MWHS.

"Emily did an amazing amount of archival work over the summer," reported **Janelle Kohl**, MWHS board member and Koller Library director. *"Her contributions were invaluable and greatly appreciated. She learned about processes and protocols relating to archiving, collecting and handling historical documents and information."*

Emily shared that her resume now includes this statement: *"The MWHS taught me about making connections, why and how you should love and learn about your community, and what work really goes into documenting historical artifacts."*

Having spent the last two summers in MW living with her grandparents, Nancy and Ron Nerby, Emily also worked at Aberdeen and Greer's this summer.

Following graduation, Emily hopes to pursue her Master's degree in art history. We wish Emily the best this year and in the future!



Emily Magyar

New Student Membership Program

The Manitowish Waters Historical Society is now accepting student memberships, which are available to students at any level of study. The annual membership fee is \$2, and it renews each May.

Eighth grade students at North Lakeland Elementary School will be provided free memberships for their eighth grade year if they participate in the National History Day competition, which includes a field trip to learn about Manitowish Waters and other local history.

"We believe that the student membership program is an excellent way for students to build their resumes with ongoing involvement in a civic and academic organization," said Jim Bokern, MWHS

president. *"Our hope is that student members will engage with the MWHS for the long term and enjoy the benefits of differentiating themselves when competing for scholarships and collegiate applications. We encourage adults to sponsor local students, whether a child, grandchild or neighbor, to help inspire students to engage in civic and service community groups."*

The MWHS is in the process of developing an MWHS Scholarship to help a local student with college expenses. Details will be announced in 2020.

Dues can be mailed to the MWHS or dropped off at the Koller Library.

Student Membership Application

Name _____

School/Grade _____

Home Address _____

Email Address _____

Phone Number _____

Why are you interested in the MWHS?

**Dues are \$2 per year,
renewable each May.**

**Dues are waived for 8th
grade students of North
Lakeland Elementary
School.**

**Dues can be mailed to
the MWHS or dropped off at
the Koller Library.**

Thank you!



Then and Now



Then: Abe LaFave's Island Lake Resort, circa 1895.

Now: Image shows the resort as it is now, and has been for some time, as a private residence.



Then: George LaPorte displaying the results of his beaver trap line beside his family home in downtown MW in mid-1930's.



Now: After several LaPorte family members resided in this residence, it was sold and converted to a gift shop and residence called the Cricket Cove. It currently houses Dave Gouwens' Calm Water Solutions.



Then: Robert Loveless' tavern as part of his Virgin Forest Park complex in 1936.



Now: Loveless Tavern has changed hands many times over the years but continues to remain a favorite watering hole today as the Howling Dog.

Now photos courtesy of Jim Cagney.



Encore of Summer 2019 Fun Night MW History Trivia

January 28, 2020

4 to 7:30 pm

Community Center



Who, What, Where and When?



Do any of these men look familiar? Well, they were

members of the Civilian Conservation Corps 660th Company from Camp Mercer. During the winter of 1933-34, they were setting the concrete and steel footings for the new 100-foot fire tower for Rest Lake on top of the hill behind Angler's.

The new tower replaced a 55-foot tower built in 1912. Over the years, the fire tower was manned by state forest rangers, CCC men and YCC boys from State House Lake.



Who can determine the location of this famous site in our community?
What do you think they were doing and when?

Please submit your thoughts to: jmcbett@gmail.com.

We will follow up in our next newsletter with feedback from MWHS newsletter readers.

The Manitowish Waters Historical Society is featuring nearly 100 early images from the Wisconsin Historical Society collections at <https://mwhistory.pastperfectonline.com>.

This special collections reveals life during the early days of the CCC.

Membership & Donations



Painting by Emily Bokern

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.

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 web page, attend MWHS events and reach out to board members.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ **State:** ____ **Zip:** _____

Phone: _____ **Cell Phone:** _____

Email: _____

Thank you for supporting the Manitowish Waters Historical Society.
Memberships renew each January.



MANITOWISH WATERS
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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