



MANITOWISH WATERS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

March 2022

Welcome to our Resort!

Many have come to know Manitowish Waters over the years through one of our many welcoming resorts. Our first resort may have been Peter Vance's Riverside Lodge that, unfortunately, burned down in 1903. Other early residents like the Devines and LaFaves also had early resorts, and by the early 1900s, resort owners and guests were ushering in the Resort Era as the importance of tourism on the local economy began to play out. The Manitowish Waters Historical Society undertook an aggressive fundraising campaign a year ago to raise money to increase our ability to capture more of our community's history, with an initial emphasis on resorts. We feature a handful in this issue of our newsletter, and we invite you to visit [Resorts](#) on our website for the history of several others. This is a work-in-process, and we will continue to add resorts. *Enjoy this issue!*

Circle Lily Lodge

By Kay Krans

Louis Laffin was born in 1893 in the town of Hewitt, Wisconsin. He served his country in World War I. In 1922, he married **Clara Hahn**, a teacher in the towns of Texas and Hewitt. He served as a constable in Hewitt in 1924. However, it was his main career as a logger that brought him to the Northwoods. By 1930, he had built **Circle Lily Lodge** (first known as the Wayside Inn), located along the shore of the Manitowish River. The Laffin's land also bordered Circle Lily Creek and covered 40 acres.

The Great Depression and Prohibition brought hard times to the area, and Louis Laffin was charged in 1932 with violating the national prohibition laws, specifically with possession and sale of moonshine whiskey and wort beer. He never was sent to jail but faced a heavy fine. Clara and Louis had two sons, **Loyal and Warren (Sonny)**. During World War II, Warren was a high school student in Wausau, while Loyal studied at Ashland College. In 1943, Loyal joined the military while attending Texas A & M and served his nation stateside.

(continued on page 3)



A Word From Our President



Jim Bokern

groups will increase your access to fun MWHS historic connections.

Last year's successful fundraising drive will ensure our digital experts can archive numerous historic documents, using PastPerfect archival software. We are diligently catching up on the 130+-year backlog of community documents. Our interns are also focusing on area resorts, adding stories, images and narratives to our webpage, allowing everyone free access.

We are continuing the tradition of gathering important historic information from our long-time residents. These interviews focus on capturing oral histories from community members to further preserve our heritage. Importantly, 2022 oral histories immediately migrate to our [YouTube Channel](#), allowing you

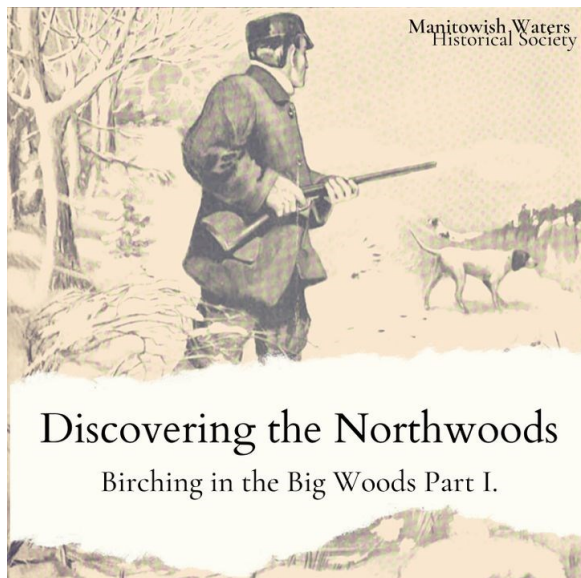
easy and free access.

The **North Lakeland Discovery Center** and the MWHS continue to offer a series of pontoon tours, hikes and events. The MWHS is also going to continue a recognition program of Manitowish Waters' historians. We celebrate these long-time historians by formally recognizing their contributions and legacy annually as "Leaders of Historic Preservation." This event and a presentation on the history of the Statehouse Youth Conservation Corp camp will take place at the North Lakeland Discovery Center on June 6th.

Community outreach activities continue to be an exciting tradition for the MWHS. Collaborating with the Chamber of Commerce, Manitowish Waters Athletic Club and other organizations, the MWHS is thrilled to have you attend several of our events.

Please go to <https://www.mwhistory.org/events/> to discover times and dates for our special events. We look forward to seeing you in 2022!

Highest Regards,



Visit our Podcast and YouTube videos for more insight into the history of Manitowish Waters [here](#).

MWHS Board of Directors

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Any questions or comments on our newsletter can be directed to Jean Bettenhausen at jmcbett@gmail.com or Frank DiLeonardi at fdileonardi@icloud.com.

Circle Lily Lodge (continued from front page)

Louis and Clara ran the resort and lodge from 1930-1950. During this time, they worked hard at building a well-known resort, raising two sons, and serving wonderful meals and experiences for their guests. The Circle Lily Lodge was built as a hunting and fishing lodge and soon hunters brought their families for vacations as well. There were six cabins, and many of them were along the Manitowish River shore. In the 1930s, during deer season, hunters could stay at the lodge for \$2.50 a day. Louis extended hunting trips for guests and friends by taking them on Canadian moose hunts. In 1937, his party brought back two moose, one weighing 1,200 pounds fully dressed for display for all in Manitowish to see.

The lodge became one of the most important community gathering places for families from Spider Lake (which became Manitowish Waters in 1940), Manitowish and Mercer. The American Legion Northern Lakes Post 424 met there often, and Louis served the legion in many capacities such as commander and service director. Clara was very active in the American Legion Auxiliary, and many of those meetings were at Circle Lily Lodge. For example,



during the 1944 season, an Armistice Party was held at the lodge followed by a turkey shoot. People from miles around could bring their guns and enter the contest by shooting targets or trap to win their Thanksgiving turkey. 1945 found the Circle Lily Lodge hosting a "March of Dimes" party sponsored by the Auxiliary to raise money to fight polio. Many wedding parties and birthday celebrations were held here as well.

Louis gave of his time to help out at Camp Mercer CCC Camp

660 in the 1930s. For example, he refereed a Sparta District Boxing Match at the camp in 1937. In 1939, he and others met at Circle Lily to form a local athletic club. Louis was very involved in conservation practices as well. He served on the Iron County Fish and Game Committee. In 1945, he worked very hard to close the deer season in Northern Wisconsin because there were so few deer. Through the hard work of this family, the Circle Lily Lodge became a tourist destination as well as a welcoming gathering place for those who lived and worked in the area. In 1950, Clara and Louis sold their place on a land contract to **Ray and Virginia Newbold**. Right after taking over Circle Lily, the lodge was designated as a place for dinner for a group of Wisconsin beauties. **Miss Milwaukee, Miss Green Bay, Miss Neenah-Menasha, Miss Madison, Miss Kenosha and Miss Waukesha** had dinner there, and then went on to an "old-fashioned shindig" that was held at the Manitowish Waters' town hall. Miss Milwaukee, Gloria Lange, went on to become Miss Wisconsin in 1950. [Read more.](#)





Mr. and Mrs. Charles H. Doriot

By Jacob Bertognoli

In October of 1908, **Charles Doriot**, a sawmill operator from Wausau, announced he would build a summer resort called **Cedar Lodge** on the large island on Stone Lake. The resort would include a 30' x 60' main building with a dining hall and several small log rental cabins dotting the southern shoreline.

Advertisements appeared in newspapers as far away as Indianapolis, highlighting the

numerous recreational opportunities available to potential guests — fishing musky, pike, walleye and bass on the lakes of Manitowish Waters; hunting deer or partridge; and rowing or yachting.

Guests would make the long journey, first by train and then stagecoach, and finally by boat to Cedar Lodge from late May through September. It did not take long for Doriot's resort to gain a reputation for fun and entertainment as fishing adventures were published in noteworthy outdoor magazines like *Outers' Recreation*, and dance parties were advertised in local newspapers.

Running a resort on the island did not come without its challenges. It was reported in 1911 that Mr. Doriot's son was rescued by his mother after falling off a pier. The cold winters and long spring seasons presented another burden, and by 1913, he moved his family to the mainland for the winters. While there is

Cedar Lodge

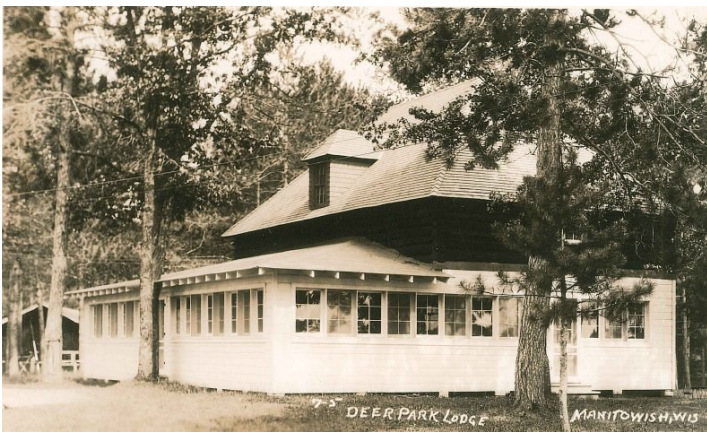
no record of a specific reason for its closure, in 1917 Mr. Doriot shuttered the doors of Cedar Lodge. For the next three years, the resort would remain closed until **Mr. Gus Koerner** purchased it in 1920.

Mr. Doriot did not abandon the resort enterprise, however. Instead, he purchased **Deer Park Lodge** on Manitowish Lake and for more than two decades, it became synonymous with first rate service, excellent fishing, and pleasing beaches. To read about successor resorts on the same site go to [Belter's Island here](#) and [Beaumont's Island here](#).



Then and Now

After Charles Doriot sold Cedar Lodge, he opened up **Deer Park Lodge** on Manitowish Lake. The Lodge changed several times over the years and was one of the area's central spots for lodging, dining and entertaining for many years. Of course, today it remains one of the jewels of the area as Chippewa Retreat.



Joe Ilg's Resort

We are located on Rest Lake in the Manitowish Waters Chain, about 400 miles from Chicago on Highway 51. Turn on County Trunk "W" and our entrance is about one quarter mile on the right hand side of the road next to the Ox Yoke.



WELCOME
to a Vacation of
HAPPINESS at

Joe Ilg's Resort
ON
REST LAKE



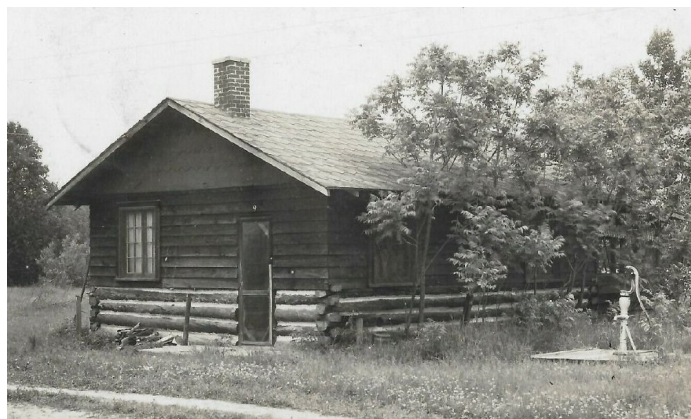
JOE ILG'S RESORT - MANITOWISH WATERS

REST
FISHING
SWIMMING
RECREATION



Manitowish Waters, Wisconsin

For further information write or phone —
Joe Ilg's Resort
Joe and Esther Ilg
Phone 715-543-8880
MANITOWISH WATERS, WIS. 54545



1900s, establishing a fishing camp near the Rest Lake Dam as reported in the *Montreal River Miner* and *Iron County Republican* paper in 1914. Joe Ilg Sr. (1872-1955) was a Grand Trunk railroad executive, and he and his wife **Leonore** spent many years in the Manitowish area. According to a notice in the *Iron County Miner*, the Ilgs officially bought the land in 1935: "Joseph Frank Ilg, of Manitowish, Wisconsin, who, on December 3, 1935, made homestead entry..."

In the 1930s, the resort had 10 log cabins with three or more rooms in each, with a main lodge that served meals to hopeful fishermen and adventurous families. He and his wife were members of the Manitowish Waters region for 40 years. His obituary in 1955 stated: "Everyone in the Manitowish Waters and surrounding towns knew Joe Ilg and respected and loved him."

Sometime in the 1940s, ownership passed to his son, **Joe Ilg Jr.** In the 1940s, '50s and '60s, the resort advertised its "...mosquito controlled grounds and sandy beach are ideal for families and we cater to the children." The resort also catered to archers, and it featured electric refrigeration, Alumicraft boats, and proximity to stores, restaurants and churches. Rates for cottages in the 1960s ranged from around \$65-\$100.

Ilg's Camp was a place where Joe and his family could celebrate their love for the Northwoods and nature. This enjoyment was something they had to share with others, turning Ilg's Camp into Ilg's Resort.

For more in-depth understanding about the Joe Ilg Resort and contributions of the Ilg family to Manitowish Waters, check out both the Joe Ilg Jr. video ([Video link](#)) and Judy Ilg Peterson video ([Video link](#)).

By Logan Duerst

"If I were asked where the finest fishing waters in Wisconsin are located, I would unhesitatingly say the headwaters of the Manitowish," said **Joe F. Ilg Sr.** in 1907 in an interview in *The Inter Ocean*, a short-lived newspaper out of Chicago. The interview highlights Ilg's passion for the Northwoods, fishing and his camp near the Rest Lake Dam. This camp would go on to be one of Rest Lake's most prominent resorts.

Ilg had vacationed along Rest Lake since the early 1890s. Between 1916 and 1917, he made his first land purchase along the western shore with a fantastic view of Fox Island. In the early years, Ilg relied on tent camps for accommodations. He enjoyed strong friendships with local Ojibwa families, and an "Indian Camp" or trading post operated next to his property in 1918. Officially running from 1936 to around 1973, Ilg's Resort (or Ilg's Camp) was located on the western shores of Rest Lake right off County Road "W," which today is Ilg Road, and was owned and run by the Ilg family, specifically Joe Ilg Sr. and his son, Joe Ilg Jr.

The older Ilg first came to this land from Chicago in the early

NOTICE FOR PUBLICATION
(Publisher)
Department of the Interior
General Land Office at Washington, D. C., Jan. 3, 1936.
NOTICE is hereby given that Joseph Frank Ilg, of Manitowish, Wisconsin, who, on December 3, 1935, made homestead entry, G. L. O. series, No. 05533, for Lots 11, 15, 16, Section 9, Township 42 N., Range 5 E., 4th P. Meridian, State of Wisconsin, has filed notice of intention to make final (three-year) proof, to establish claim to the land above described, before A. E. Mayer, Justice of Peace at Town of Spider Lake, Manitowish, Wisconsin, on the 21st day of February, 1936.

30/30 Lodge

By Kay Krans and
Emily Magyer

The first mention of **Mr. and William Mehl** coming to the Manitowish Waters area is in a 1934 article telling of their two-month vacation at their cottage on the Manitowish River. In this article, it is reported that the couple is spending their winter at their home in Allentown, Pennsylvania. By 1947, their summer home is said to be on Vance Lake and their winter home is in New York.

By 1949, an ad instructs deer hunters to make their reservations at the 30-30 Lodge where they can stay the entire deer season for \$40. Thus was the beginning of the **Mehl's 30-30 Lodge**. Early oral histories and some town residents claim the bar of the 30-30 Lodge was built around an old trapper's cabin.

The 30-30 Lodge became a popular spot for hunters and fishermen, and Bill was known as a great fishing guide. **Valerie Mehl** was known as a wonderful cook, and tourists chose the lodge as a great place for dining. Local families enjoyed the lodge as well and celebrated family events here. For example, in 1956, family and friends of **Mary Brunner** celebrated her 75th birthday at the lodge.

During the 1950s, Mr. and Mrs. Mehl not only ran a resort and served great food and beverages, but they also both ran for public office in Manitowish Waters. Bill ran as a candidate for town supervisor against **Henry Larson and Neal LaPorte**. At the same time, he also successfully ran for Justice of the Peace, a position he held for many years. Valerie ran for and won the seat of Town Clerk.



In the 1950s in the *Iron County Miner*, a Northwoods fishing fan wrote a poem dedicated to Bill and other guides of Manitowish Waters.

This poem is written by **CSS Judge**: ***"When I get lonesome, I try to cheer myself up by putting in rhyme my good thoughts about all you good lads who contribute so much to the popularity of our water."***

Our Guiding Stars

*I long to go fishin'
Ever am wishin',
Up north on the lakes 'mong
The pine,
Where muskies and pike,
Black bass and the like,
Make sport at the end of your line.
I long to go castin'
No more am I askin',
'Cept sure on my stringer are fish,
The sport it provides,
With far famous guides,
Of the Waters of Manitowish.*

As Justice of the Peace, Bill became very involved with cases involving game violations, and he worked hard to convict violators, confiscate their licenses, and take

away their weapons. He was also active on the board of the Manitowish Waters Sportsman Club, and in the early 1950s, the club worked hard to protect the deer population.

As a popular fishing guide, he often told his customers that the fish responded to the barometer as well as the wind, and he was often proven right in

these predictions. He was featured in a newspaper article about ice fishing in the *Wausau Daily Herald*. During the 1951 Muskie Marathon, he was named the most successful Manitowish Waters guide in the contest. He believed in teaching children to fish, but to "hook" them to the sport, it was necessary to have them fish with a cane pole for pan fish which took the line quickly and kept the kids entertained.

In the spring of 1961, the 30-30 Lodge was open for Easter dinner and served prime rib or roast turkey from 1 to 8 pm. Eight days later, Valerie Mehl died suddenly, and Bill was left to run the 30-30 Lodge as a widower.

By 1974, Bill had spent 66 summers fishing the waters of the Manitowish region. He told his fishing customers of the 1970s that summer now brought more than fishermen. They were the minority on these lakes as the fast boats and water skiers were taking control of the waters. The avid fisherman of long ago was being replaced by the family man who fished a little and bought fast boats for family fun. Bill went on to retire in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida and passed away in 1994.

The next owners of the 30-30 Lodge were **Dennis and Beulah Hughes**. One ad promoted the



Henry Larson (left) and Bill Mehl, both of Manitowish Waters, use power drill to make holes through the ice for fishing.

lodge as the fun land of the north with fishing, hunting, water sports, and horseback riding. At this point, the Hughes seemed to be running a family resort. However, by 1972, the focus of newspaper ads showcased **Go-Go and topless dancers**. Stories abounded about the Hughes' 30-30 Lodge, and it was no longer a family dinner location. Eventually, the business faded away, and the lodge was torn down.

In July of 2005, there was action again on the 30-30 Lodge property as **Denys Ray Hughes**,



son of the owners, returned to Manitowish Waters followed by federal law enforcement which

was aware of the potential threat of this man because of a car search in Kansas. The FBI and ATF sent agents to Manitowish Waters to search the Hughes family home. Homes in the immediate area were evacuated while agents determined the threat Hughes and the items he possessed were to the vicinity. He was arrested in Manitowish Waters on the threat of possessing explosives, illegal silencers, and bomb-making materials. His Arizona apartment also turned up similar items. He was not believed to be tied to terrorist organizations but claimed he was a militia man and survivalist. He was sentenced to seven years and three months in prison for trying to create a biological weapon and other bombs. In May 2011, he was being transported from a Colorado prison to a half-way house in Milwaukee by bus when he disappeared in Nebraska. His body was found in 2012 along the South Platte River in Nebraska. John Hanson, town chairman at the time of the raid by federal authorities in Manitowish Waters, was quoted as saying, "We haven't had this much police presence since Dillinger was here."

Thus, an exciting, frightening, and sad end to the legacy of a Northwoods establishment, the **30-30 Lodge**.



Join us for an Evening to Celebrate our
Leaders of Historic Preservation
June 6, 2022
5 pm to 7 pm

At the North Lakeland Discovery Center

Drinks and Appetizers will be Available; Donations Appreciated

MW Historical Society 2022 Calendar

For more information
go to: [https://
www.mwhistory.org/events/](https://www.mwhistory.org/events/)

<p>APRIL</p> <p>Explore Alder & Wild Rice Lakes ZOOM 4/19, 7 to 8:30 pm</p> <p>Partridge Lake and Creek Hike 4/22, 9 am to 4 pm Discovery Center</p> <p>Plum Lake Hemlocks Hike 4/29, 10:30 am to 5 pm Trail Head TBD</p> <p>MAY</p> <p>Camp Mercer Trail Hike 5/13, 1 to 3:30 pm Discovery Center</p> <p>JUNE</p> <p>Leaders of Historic Preservation 6/6, 5 to 7 pm Discovery Center</p> <p>Dillinger Pontoon Tour Including Lunch at noon 6/10, 9:30 am to noon or 1 to 3:30 pm Little Bohemia Lodge</p> <p>Histories of Spider & Island Lakes by Pontoon 6/15, 9 to 11 am, 11:30 am to 1:30 pm or 2 to 4 pm Blue Bayou</p>	<p>JUNE</p> <p>Rest Lake's Amazing History by Pontoon 6/22, 9 to 11 am, 11:30 am to 1:30 pm or 2 to 4 pm Discovery Center</p> <p>MW Historic Hike and Pub Crawl 6/23, 3 to 7 pm Koller Park</p> <p>Mysteries of Alder & Wild Rice by Pontoon 6/24, 9 to 11 am, 11:30 am to 1:30 pm or 2 to 4 pm Launch Site TBD</p> <p>Rest Lake's Amazing History by Pontoon 6/29, 9 to 11 am, 11:30 am to 1:30 pm or 2 to 4 pm Discovery Center</p> <p>JULY</p> <p>Manitowish & Little Star Lakes Tour by Pontoon 7/1, 9 to 11 am, 11:30 am to 1:30 pm or 2 to 4 pm Blue Bayou</p> <p>Pine Lawn Cemetery Walk 7/5, 5 to 7 pm Pine Lawn Cemetery</p> <p>Mysteries of Alder & Wild Rice Lakes by Pontoon 7/7, 9 to 11 am, 11:30 am to 1:30 pm or 2 to 4 pm Launch Site TBD</p>	<p>JULY</p> <p>Mysteries of Stone, Fawn, & Clear Lakes by Pontoon 7/11, 9 to 11 am, 11:30 am to 1:30 pm or 2 to 4 pm Clear Lake Boat Landing</p> <p>Legends of Manito Island & Pontoon Tour of Manitowish Lake 7/13, 5 to 7 pm, 7:30 to 9:30 pm Blue Bayou</p> <p>Dillinger Pontoon Tour Including Lunch at noon 7/14, 9:30 am to noon or 1 to 3:30 pm Little Bohemia Lodge</p> <p>Turtle Flambeau Flowage by Pontoon 7/18, 11 am to 4 pm Discovery Center</p> <p>Sunset Tour of Turtle Flambeau Flowage by Pontoon 7/18, 5:30 to 9 pm Springstead Boat Landing</p> <p>Histories of Spider & Island Lakes by Pontoon 7/21, 9 to 11 am, 11:30 am to 1:30 pm or 2 to 4 pm Blue Bayou</p> <p>AUGUST</p> <p>Dillinger Pontoon Tour Including Lunch at noon 8/24, 9:30 am to noon 1 to 3:30 pm Little Bohemia Lodge</p>	<p>AUGUST</p> <p>Big Lake Investigation Pontoon 8/26, 9 am to noon, 1 to 4 pm Discovery Center</p> <p>Mysteries of Stone, Fawn and Clear Lakes by Pontoon 8/31, 9 to 11 am, 11:30 am to 1:30 pm or 2 to 4 pm Clear Lake Boat Landing</p> <p>SEPTEMBER</p> <p>Dillinger Pontoon Tour Including Lunch at noon 9/8, 9:30 am to noon or 1 to 3:30 pm Little Bohemia Lodge</p> <p>OCTOBER</p> <p>Forest History Driving Tour 10/7, 11:30 am to 4:30 pm Discovery Center</p> <p>Time Traveler Trail: Trout Lake to Palette Lake 10/13, 1 to 3:30 pm North Trout Lake Boat Landing</p> <p>Thank you to the YCC Driving Tour 10/18, 1 to 4 pm Discovery Center</p> <p>NOVEMBER</p> <p>Plum Lake Hemlocks Hike 11/5, 10:30 to 5 pm Meeting TBD</p>
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Don't Forget to RENEW your 2022 dues! Membership & Donations

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.

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

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.

Student Memberships are available for \$2, renewing each May.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Cell Phone: _____

Email: _____