



MANITOWISH WATERS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

November 2022

A TRADITION LIKE NO OTHER

One of the many things that November brings us is the annual deer hunt. Is anything more steeped in tradition and history to our area than deer hunting? We take a look back at some stories and memories that demonstrate the importance of deer hunting and deer camps to many.



The LaPorte family had a homestead on Murray Landing Road in Manitowish. This shack was not far from the homestead and was used by the extended family for hunting and fishing.

By John Hanson

When Northern Wisconsin became a tourist destination after the logging era ended, it also became a destination for that fall ritual for the family gatherers: deer hunting. In the '40s, '50s, '60s and '70s, a major part of the deer herd was located in the northern part of Wisconsin.

The gun hunting season opened the third Saturday in November. Thousands of hunters came north and stayed in hunting camps of all sizes located throughout the area. Some camps had all

the modern comforts of home, but most were simple one- or two-room shacks with no electricity. They would be equipped with a pitcher pump for water, an outhouse for the library, a wood stove for heat and cooking, an ice box, and kerosene or Coleman lamps for light. Modern amenities would be a LP gas stove and lights, a Servel gas refrigerator, and a Super Flame gas space heater.

There would usually be from four to as many as a dozen hunters at each camp. Obviously, there had to be a lot of male bonding going on, especially by the end of

a 10-day season. There were no laundry services available. Imagine that many sleeping on bunk beds in that close proximity. Many cords of wood were sawn each night. Pity the poor guy who was a light sleeper. Despite all of this, there were very few, if any, incidents that required intervention from outside authorities.

As a result of all this activity, the busiest day of the year at **Hanson's Hardware** store was the Friday before opening Saturday. Yes, even busier than Memorial Day or July 4th. We sold a lot of hunting licenses. You had to purchase your license before opening day, so we filled out dozens of them,

Continued on page 3



A Word From Our President



Jim Bokern

Greetings!

Summer and early fall of 2022 marked a continuation of MWHS's strong dedication to historic preservation, making history an outdoor experience and documenting new discoveries. So many folks have enthusiastically joined

us at presentations, pontoon tours, hikes and/or on-line, helping us meet our mission to share local history. What has become abundantly clear, both newcomers and generational families prize our community's fantastic histories.

Our collaborative efforts on the **Camp Mercer Trail** will continue in 2023 with several projects in the works, including restoring the mound sign at the gate of the camp. Our team of archivists and researchers has continued documenting oral histories, historic images and stories. Many of these historic treasures are quickly added to our **YouTube channel** and on-line archives for folks to easily access and enjoy.

In the great Northwoods, we are blessed with historic sites that are best understood through outdoor experiences. We now have pontoon tours for all lakes on the MW chain, Big Lake, and the Turtle Flambeau Flowage. Partnering with the **North Lake-land Discovery Center**, we offered more pontoon tours in 2022 than ever before. We also added Forestry and YCC driving tours that allow greater access for participants to explore our amazing historic sites. We

upgraded the MW Pub Crawl to include a digital tour sponsored by the CLIO historic project, allowing visitors and residents the ability to do self-guided tours. Finally, we continue to offer a half dozen historic hikes with NLDC naturalists, delivering an interdisciplinary outdoor experience.

Special projects documenting area history included creating 10 interpretive signs for Camp Jörn, nine DNR interpretive signs along Trout Lake, and documenting rare cultural sites like the pine pitch trees at Chippewa Retreat. **Archaeologist John Broihahn**, GPS'ed, photographed, and sketched these extremely rare trees at **Chippewa Retreat**. Stay tuned as we share more about unique MW historic sites being preserved in partnership with the Wisconsin Office of Historic Preservation.

We partnered with the **MAC, River's Edge, Little Bohemia, FE University, the NLDC** and other businesses to share history in an array of presentations. Importantly, **Bridges Library System** in Waukesha and Jefferson counties requested I share a 30-minute presentation on how the MWHS collaborates with **Koller Library** and other libraries. 87 librarians from 24 libraries were amazed at how our small community could quickly build effective and diverse partnerships through libraries and community organizations. Koller Library stood out as an exemplar of best practices!

Wishing you and yours a great holiday season!

A handwritten signature in blue ink, likely belonging to Jim Bokern.

Jim Bokern Receives WHS Award

Jim Bokern received the 2022 Board of Curators Historic Preservation Award from the **Wisconsin Historical Society**. The award is for Bokern's leadership in establishing the **CCC Camp Mercer Interpretive Trail**.

"I am honored and humbled to receive this award, and I do so on behalf of the many partners we had in making this great historic site a reality that all can enjoy and learn from today and in the future," Bokern shared.

The award was presented to Bokern at a private dinner on Monday, October 17th at **Aurora Borealis**. **Dr. Daina Penkiunas**, state historic preservation officer, made the presentation.

The Board of Curators is the Wisconsin Historical Society's governing body and is composed of both elected and appointed members from across Wisconsin.





A very active deer camp for the LaPorte family, circa 1910.

and they included the iconic back tag whose number had to be the same as the license number. The popular ammunition was 30-30 and 30-06, 20 cartridges to a box. The price was probably under \$5. One of the first ammo customers I had when I started running the store in 1956 was **John Iverson**. He bought a box of 30-30s, and he said he bought his first box from my dad the year he opened the store in 1936. In the years between, John shot 20 bucks with one shell a year. Nothing wasted there.

Red was the safety color for clothing at that time, and red and black wool clothing was the most popular garb. To provide more visibility, hunters would buy red

bandanas and pin them to their backs or on top of their caps. Dozens of them went out the door.

White gas (remember that?) and kerosene were the biggest sellers of the day. Both came in 55-gallon drums, and we stored them outside behind the store. In order to dispense them, we had to clamp a metal stand to the side of the barrel, remove the small plug on the end, install a barrel faucet, and then tip the barrel on its side. The stand held it about 15 inches off the ground so you could get a can underneath the faucet. White gas always had to be dispensed into a red can. Kerosene could be put in anything but a red can. Gallon glass

jugs were not uncommon. White gas was \$.25 and kerosene \$.19 per gallon. We usually went through two or three barrels of each on that Friday. Everyone looked forward to having to go out in the snow when it may have been 10 degrees and tapping a new barrel.

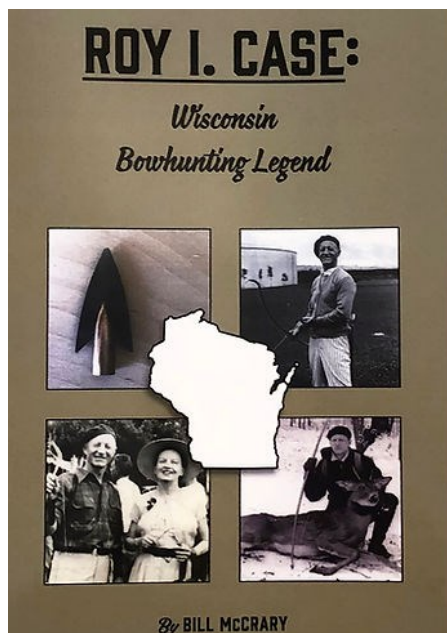
By the time the day was over, everyone was exhausted, but we were satisfied because we knew we helped make an important and lifelong experience for many hunters more enjoyable. Fathers couldn't wait until their sons got old enough to bring them north and pass the tradition from their generation to the next, and that is true to this day.

If you have a story to tell, please submit it to us at <https://www.mwhistory.org/story-submission/> so we can include it on our website.

DEER HUNTING AND DEER CAMPS



Roy Case Jr. (seated left) and **John Devine** (seated right) with bow and arrows, circa late 1920s. Case (1888-1986) is the “Father of Wisconsin Bowhunting” and a member of the Archery Hall of Fame and Museum in Springfield, Missouri. Case’s efforts led to Wisconsin’s and the nation’s first bowhunting season in 1934. Case was the first licensed archer to take a whitetail deer in 1930.



To learn more about Roy Case, you can check out this book at the Koller Library.

The Ironwood Daily Globe, 3 December 1932

Manitowish

Louis La Porte, one of the oldest guides of this territory, bagged the prize winning deer in this vicinity. The buck weighed 330 pounds and it had 42 points on its antlers.

Louis Laffin bagged a large buck which had a freak horn, one prong of the left horn turning downward

Sheboygan Press, 27 October 1949

Attention!

Deer Hunters

Make your reservations now at **30-30 LODGE.**

Rate \$40 per person for the season.

30-30 LODGE

Manitowish Waters, Wis.

Wausau Daily Herald, 8 November 1938

Attention

DEER HUNTERS

\$2.50 per day

In the heart of the Deer Country

— Write —

Louis Laffin

Circle Lily Lodge,
Manitowish, Wis.

The Manitowish Waters Historical Society Will Hold its Annual Meeting and Elect Officers for 2023



December 14, 2022
4 p.m.
Community Center
Airport Road and Highway 51

All members of the MWHS are invited to attend and participate

DEER HUNTING AND DEER CAMPS

Kenosha News, 27 Nov 1941

Hunter Killed Near Boulder Junction

Boulder Junction, Wis. — (AP) — Daniel A. Devine, 51, of Winchester, Vilas county, was fatally wounded Wednesday while hunting near here. He was struck in the right shoulder by a stray bullet, according to Coroner P. J. Gaffney of Eagle River, who said there would be no inquest.

Near Devine when he was hit was his son, Clarence, 22, Al Billett of Fort Atkinson, and William Jeller, Manitowish. The injured man died while being taken to a hospital at Ironwood, Mich.

Excerpt from Carol Keller Minch Oral History

Dan had two daughters and one son and then I remember oh it was maybe seven, eight, nine years later they had a little girl. So there were four all told. And from what I understand today none of them are living. **Now Dan was shot by a hunter. Dan was at the end of our driveway talking to my father and a stray bullet hit him. It just missed my father. Dan was standing next to the open window and it could very well have happened the other way around. So my father some how or other got Dan into the car and headed for Ironwood which was the closest medical help. But he died enroute.** (Now, do you remember how old you were when this happened?) I would say this was when I was about 20, 22 years old, it was before I was married. And then Dan's sister had two beautiful daughters. Dan's sister's name was **Mary Haskins**. Apparently, that's where **Haskin's Bay** got their name.

You can read more of the interview with Carol Keller Minch [here](#).

DEER HUNTING AND DEER CAMPS



Deer camps were often not very luxurious!



Local guide Richard Sleight Jr. carrying off a fork buck.

Discovering the Northwoods

In the Heart of the Wild Woods, Part 1

This is an excerpt from a podcast on our website of a 1900 article in "Forest and Stream."

"I informed Allen by going slow and careful we may get a shot before reaching the runway. Day is just beginning to break, forms take on distinctness, and in a few minutes we will be able to distinguish objects. We had not walked more than ten minutes, when, looking to my left in a clearing, not more than twenty rods distant, stood two yearlings – handsome, alert, but not especially afraid. They have never been shot at. Had probably never seen a man before. Fascinating beauties looking us straight in the eye. I motioned to Allen not to move. He saw the deer and stood

perfectly quiet.

"Now, Allen, stand; quiet make no sudden motion and do what I say and we will get both. Now raise your gun slow – very slow. When you get it to your shoulder, I will count 'one, two, three,' then aim and say 'Ready?' When I say 'Fire' shoot. You take the one to the left; leave the other one for me."

What happened next? To find out, listen to the podcast "**In the Heart of the Wild Woods, Part 1**," about an 1899 hunting and fishing trip in the Manitowish Waters area [here](#).



Celebrating a nice harvest at Chuck's Bar in Manitowish in 1946. We have identified John Siewert to the far left and Joe Startz in the back row center (see circle). Please let us know if you recognize anyone.

DEER HUNTING AND DEER CAMPS

Discovering the Northwoods

In the Heart of the Wild Woods, Part 2

This is an excerpt from a podcast on our website of a 1900 article in "Forest and Stream."

"Ed was very, very proud, and I did not blame him a little bit. The buck was a grand fellow, weighing easily 175 pounds.

"Tell us all about it, Ed," I ask.

"Joe, you do it," requests Ed of Joe. And Joe does tell the story and here it is:

Joe is proud, and Pete, I'm afraid is a little jealous. His eyes are gleaming and he's evidently concocting a scheme. I found out afterward I was right in my surmise. After all hands and the cook had taken a generous draught from Allen's bottle, Joe began his story as follows:

"We saw more dan feefty deer today, sure. Why should I say so it not true? Meester Allen tell you so—ask him! Of course, we could not shoot at all. Oh, no: too many trees between, but we see dem. Only tracks! No, sir, de real t'ing. But maybe not feefty, but about twenty. All morning see not'ing. Work, work, work, and find only one 'porky' — a red fox — but no shoot him; yes, we see bear track, but no bear." (Pete is painfully attentive.) "Den we stop to

rest, eat lunch and go to sleep before we know. Wake up, look around and see two does - biggest one in my life! Looking at me. Not move one bit. One big fool, he keep right on feeding. I wake Meester Allen, then deer scoot. About hour ago we come here. See dat brush? Good place to lay and wait. We do, and about half hour ago hear Meester Deer moving t'rough woods. Guess smelt our red bandannas. Meester Allen wide awake, he see buck quick as I. Buck stop not more than feefty yards, right at dat point" (pointing to spot in woods). "Both raise our rifles, Meester Allen shoot, buck jump t'irty feet in air, den come down and try to run away, and shoot again Meester Buck falls dead—hit clear t'rough de lights. There she is."

And sure enough it is a beautiful animal."

To hear the rest of the story, check out "**In the Heart of the Wild Woods, Part 2**," the second part of an 1899 hunting and fishing trip in the Manitowish Waters area [here](#).

MWHS Winter ZOOM Series

December 6, 2022 at 7 pm

Statehouse Lake Life and Contributions of a YCC Camp

With Kay Krans

February 7, 2023 at 7 pm

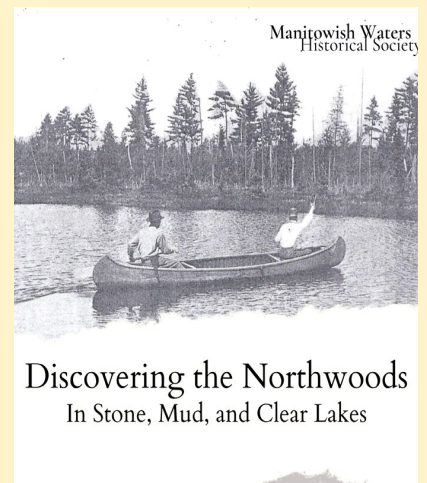
Manitowish Waters Farming

With Mike Bartling and Jim Bokern

April 11, 2023 at 7 pm

A Virtual Pontoon Tour Exploring Clear, Fawn and Stone Lakes

With Jim Bokern



MWHS Board of Directors

Jim Bokern President - jimkb@aol.com
John Hanson Vice President
Nancy LaPorte Secretary
Barbara Bartling Treasurer
Frank DiLeonardi Board Member
Ruth Gardner Board Member
Janelle Kohl Board Member
Kay Krans Board Member
JoAnn Miller Board Member
John McFarland Board Member Emeritus

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



Don't Forget to RENEW your 2023 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.

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: _____

Thank you for supporting the Manitowish Waters Historical Society.

Memberships renew each January.