

THE COUNTY CHRONICLER

POLK COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

2005

June

JLW

The Evolution of the Gas Engine



<http://www.oldengine.org/members/diesel/GasEngine/Gas12.htm>

Wayne H. Olson is our speaker for the 7:15 p.m., Tuesday, June 28th meeting. at the Justice Center, Balsam Lake.

Wayne is a geologist by trade, but a gas engine enthusiast by heart. He has been active in the Almelund Threshing Days for many years.

Olson now lives on Idlewild Drive in Balsam Lake and we are happy to welcome him to our group.
5:45 Executive Board Meeting

Annual Potluck Picnic At Pine Park, Balsam Lake West of Tuttle Street

The potluck will be at 6 p.m., July 26th.

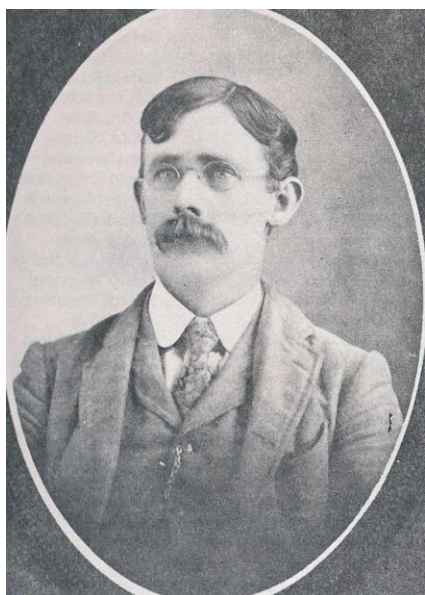
Forrest Stuempges, known as
“The Mountain Man”
will be our special guest.

All Historical Societies in the County are
invited to join us.

Bring a dish to pass and your own
utensils.

Coffee and Lemonade will be available.

See Page 2 on the Hemming Madsen
Family.



M.P. Madsen was born in 1878 to Hemming and Bodil (Bille) Madsen. Elvira C. Johnson was born in 1877 to Neils Peter Johnson and Eleanora Davidson.

Barn's History Begins in Denmark

By Lester L. Madsen

A barn situated in Laketown township, Polk County, Wis., has as unusual history being the plans for it were drawn up in Denmark about 133 years ago.

My father's father, Hemming Madsen (1849-1917), attended a vocational school in Roskilde, Denmark, in the early 1860's. There he was preparing for what he thought at the time would be a career in civil engineering and surveying. Simultaneously, he had the intense dream of some day becoming a landowner in the United States under the U.S. Homestead Act of 1862.

The Homestead Act was passed by the U.S. Congress with the goal of accelerating the development of vast acreages of vacant land that the U.S. government owned. Some parcels of this land were available at a cost of \$50 for 40 acres with a \$13 down payment, plus pledge that the homesteaders would live on that land for a minimum of 5 years and develop the parcels into operating farms.

This legislation was a magnet that drew thousands of Europeans to U. S. shores, because at that time, land ownership in Europe was a privilege available only to the very wealthy, or to the feudal land barons. So many Europeans homesteaded in various parts of Wisconsin...

Grandpa Madsen, while studying at the Roskilde vocational school compiled a 54-page meticulous notebook. I have this notebook in my possession. It contains many detailed geometric diagrams, charts and maps. Included in this very neat notebook are the elevations and the floor plans that he drew for the barn he hoped to build in America.

Grandpa Madsen's dreams became realities because he became a naturalized U.S. citizen on June 14, 1887. We estimate that he built his dream barn in 1875.

The barn accommodated a herd of about 18 dairy cows, young stock, box stalls and draft horses. This was long before the advent of farm tractors...

The farm [Laketown Township, section 24]¹ consists of 120 acres. Like many small Wisconsin farms, dairying has discontinued there. The farm is now used for cash cropping. The barn no longer houses livestock. It is now used for storage.

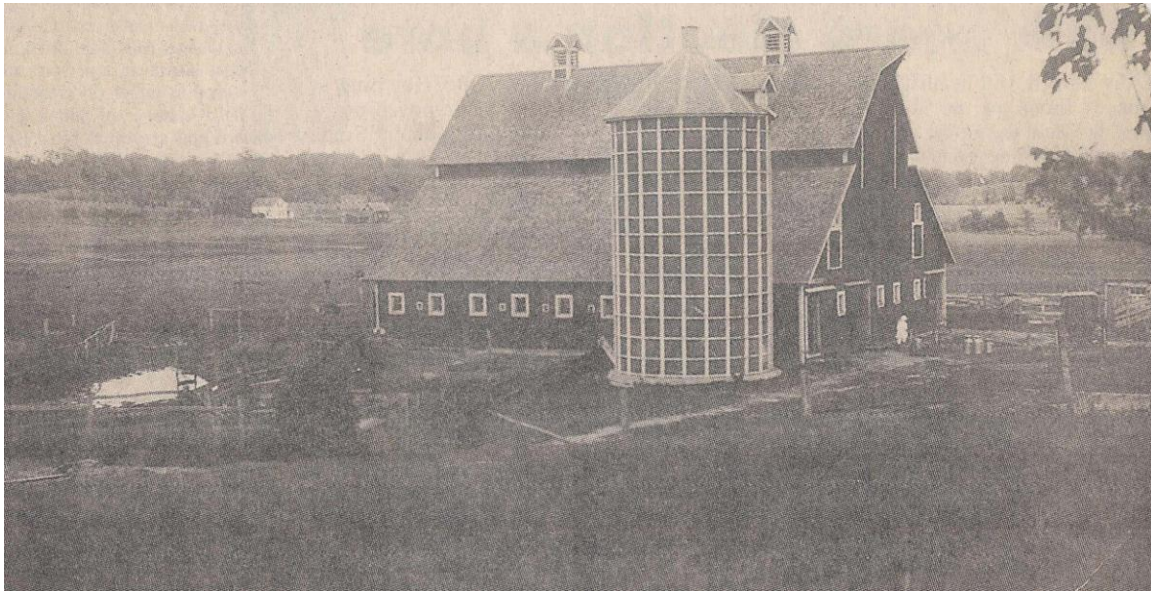
The silo (believed to be the first silo in Polk County) was built with studdings spaced about 2 feet apart and the space between them was filled with short pieces of lumber. A 1953 windstorm twisted it into an unsafe condition so it was torn down then.

The parcel of land is similar to many of those selected by the early homesteaders because it contains a flowing creek. This provided Grandpa Madsen with a source of water for his livestock; thereby saving him the cost of digging or drilling a well which he could water his stock.

¹ Drawn from actual Surveys and County Records by C. M. Foote & Co., 309 Nicollet Avenue, Minneapolis, Minnesota, 1887 Plat book of Polk County, Wisconsin, Wm Hart, 125 N. 4th St., Philadelphia. 1887.

Another similarity – the land included a natural marsh. This provided a suitable source of marsh hay that he could feed to his cattle and horses until such time when he could be growing tame hay crops such as timothy, clovers, alfalfa, etc.

Grandpa Hemming and Grandma Bodil Christine (nee Bille) – also an immigrant from Denmark – developed this tract of wild land into an attractive and productive farm. They built the barn, a stately farm home and several outbuildings. They raised a family of seven children: my father, Meds Peter (Sept. 26, 1878, to Jan. 18, 1952), plus my two uncles and four aunts.



Hemming Madsen designed his barn while he was still living in Denmark, and completed construction of the structure in about 1875 in section 24 of Lake town Township, Polk County, Wisconsin.

“M. P. Madsen was born in September 1878 to Hemming and Bodil Madsen who were among the first to homestead in what is now Laketown township. After his marriage to Elvira C. Johnson in 1906 of Balsam Lake, they set up housekeeping ... across the street from the Luck High School. For several years he operated a large Watkins route, selling medicines, spices, livestock remedies and cosmetics door-to-door from horse drawn vehicles... Children were: Clifford, Lowell, Laura, Viola, Helen and Lester.”²

“Clifford Madsen was President of Dana College in Blair, Nebraska. Lowell Madsen, the second son of M. P. Madsen had a long and active life of service to the Luck Community.”³ Lester Madsen worked for the Production Credit Association in Luck, where he became general manager and worked for 25 years.⁴

² Alpha Askov, Carol Weitz, Co-editors, *Luck Diamond Jubilee, 75th-1905-1980*, Polk County Ledger, Balsam Lake, Wisconsin and The Luck Enterprise, Luck, Wisconsin, 20-June-1980. 47.

³ Edwin Petersen, Researcher and Editor, *A Little Bit of Luck*, Inter-County Leader Cooperative Publishing Association, Luck, Wisconsin, 71.

Luck Celebrates Centennial

In 1868, the trail between St. Croix Falls and Clam Falls was developed for use as a logging road, covered wagons and stagecoaches. It has been said that it was a two day drive to Clam Falls and if they got to north shore of Big Butternut Lake by the evening of the first day, they were in Luck, Thus the name!

Early pioneers were mainly of Yankee origin until the Danish immigrants arrived in 1869, and took homesteads in the area around Luck. The Village of Luck was incorporated March 17, 1905.

Schedule of Events – 2005

Monday, July 18	Opening Ceremony Indianhead Chorus Ice Cream Social Central Park, 7 pm
Tuesday, July 19	Dixie Land Band Central Park, 7 pm
Wednesday, July 20	Blue Grass & Jazz Central Park, 7 pm
Thursday, July 21	Old Fashion Style Show and Beard Contest Central Park, 7 pm
Friday, July 22	Historical Review Extravaganza, 7 pm Luck High School
Saturday, July 23	All School Reunion 9 am – 1 pm Luck High School Parade 3:30 pm Food 5 pm Dance at Fire hall 7 pm



The Little Red School House

The Farmington Center School was built in 1859 for a cost of \$300.

“Sometime during the period during 1875-1885, the white siding was replaced by tin. A large porch with pillars was built across the east side of the schoolhouse. The building was painted red and white to represent brick siding; therefore Farmington Center became known as the Little Red Schoolhouse...

The school was closed in 1957. In 1963, it was moved to the Polk County Fairgrounds at St. Croix Falls. Children all over the county donated pennies to pay for the moving.

The bell has been sitting in the entry of the school since 1963, when it was

moved. We are happy to announce that the bell is now placed above the school in a replica of the original belfry.”⁵

We wish to thank all the people who help with The Polk County Historical Society with their gifts of time, money and artifacts. The following is a list of some of our donors:

Darrell & Barbara Peterson
 Amery Lions Club
 Arlette Soderberg
 Art & Patty Young
 Wal-Mart
 Richard Kohout
 Leona Cummings
 S & C Bank
 Unity Youth Lion's Club
 Mary Martin & Family
 Fred & Merna Salmon
 Marjorie Price
 St. Croix High School Students
 Martha Filip
 Marilyn Reiten
 Dave Knutson
 Trivent
 Steve Chouinard
 Larry Behne
 Amery United Way

Special thanks to the tour guides; Mark Biller, Marge Hallquist, Ralph LaDuke, Jim Gisch, Phyllis Gabrielson, Leona Cummings and Martha Filip.

⁵ Gloria Larson, compiler, *I Heard The School Bells Ringing*, Inter-County Cooperative Publishing Ass'n., Frederic, Wisconsin, 267.

Director's Thoughts

Thank you for those who help during our clean up days. The following displays were cleaned & changed; General Store, Radio Room, Potato Room, Library Room and entrance to the Library Room. Please show your appreciation by visiting the museum to see the new fresh clean rooms.

It was exciting in May to show the new displays to the students from Clayton, Clear Lake, St. Croix Falls and Frederic. The museum was moving and shaking with fifteen St. Croix Falls High School students working to get the dust bunnies out of the shut up rooms from the closed winter months and the glass shine. It was fun to hear their laughter, giggles and wows as they made progress in giving a facelift to the building and the yard.

The County Financial Board granted us \$1800.00 to replace the insulation in the attic and an additional \$1,000.00 for our replacement of sidewalk on the south side of the building. A total of \$3,000 was spent on the sidewalk. The grant received from Polk Burnett Round Up was used for chipped limestone around the building foundation to enhance the new sidewalk.

Do you hear what I hear? Finally after four years the Belfry is completed at the East Farmington School located at the Polk County Fair Grounds in St. Croix Falls. Contractor, Larry Behn and assistants Darrell Kittleson and Dave Knutson did a wonderful job of duplicating the eight-sided belfry. Steve Chouinard raised the bell. A huge Thank You to all of you involved.

We will continue to upgrade our rooms in the museum and we invite you to join in on the fun. Believe me, volunteers are exceptional people; they are happy go to work folks.

The new intern this year is Megan Olson. She has already made a display in the hallways of wedding pictures.

Thank you,

Rosalie Kittleson, Director

Polk County Historical Society
Board Meeting May 24, 2005

Members present: Carl Johnson, Phyllis Gabrielson, Ralph LaDuke, Dianne Dueholm, LeRoy Schwan, Art Young, Darrell Kittleson, President, Muriel Pfeifer and Director, Rosalie Kittleson.

Call to order: Meeting called to order by President Muriel Pfeifer at 5:45 P.M.

Secretary's report: Rosalie Kittleson noted changes from the April 26, 2005 meeting as follows: Rosalie Kittleson only discussed floor buckling problem with contractors, she did not contact for bids. Leroy Schwan motioned to approve secretary's report, seconded by Art Young, motion passed.

Treasurer's report was given by Lois Hoff. LeRoy Schwan motioned to approve Treasure's Report, seconded by Carl Johnson, motion passed.

Director's report was given by Rosalie Kittleson.

Megan Olson is our new intern college student for the summer. Cleaning this month has gone well – the attic and yard have been cleaned and the basement was painted. Seventy-four Students from St. Croix Falls visited this week. Clayton and Frederic schools will be visiting the upcoming week. The Belfry at the Farmington School, Polk County Fair grounds, has been worked on by Larry Behne and David Knutson. Mary Stirrat from the Leader will be taking pictures. Thank you notes have been given to most that donated and helped at the auction. Rosalie Kittleson read the list of companies and individual who donated. Rosalie Kittleson recommended that Nicole Hanson and Judy Wester receive new members names and addresses from Lois Hoff to add to the mailing list. There was hardly any water in the basement this past month. Clean up in was done in the attic with Unity High School Community Service students. Randy Hughes hauled out the scraps. The following tours have gone through the museum this spring: Frederic, Clayton, Clear Lake, Homemakers Club, St. Croix Falls. The tour guides were Marge Hallquist, Ralph LaDuke, Leona Cummings, Phyllis Garbrielson, Mark Biller, Jim Gisch, Martha Filip, Marilyn Reiten, Rosalie and Darrell Kittleson.

Rosalie gave the county budget for 2004; we were in the red \$315.18 at the end of year. Rosalie also gave a money market account update.

Correspondence:

Rosalie Kittleson presented a new book written by Juanita Marotta. The author sent a letter asking if the society would like to purchase books on consignment and sell in the museum.

Muriel Pfeifer said they would be purchased at \$3.50 and sold for \$7.50.

Darrell Kittleson felt that a book on flowers would not be appropriate to sell at the museum and that there is a lack of space for such books. Darrell said we should sell history books.

Dianne Dueholm asked if the society had any policy addressing the purchase of books.

Darrell Kittleson motioned to decline the purchase of books by Juanita Marotta, seconded

by Carl Johnson, motion passed.

Discussion held as follows: Muriel Pfeifer discussed holding the book selection to the history of the county. Dianne Dueholm felt books on local flowers are a good idea to sell. Rosalie Kittleson said that the board should not make a policy buying of books. With future growth we will be able to have a nice showcase of books, leaving an open door for future books. Dianne Dueholm suggested that the new elevator addition could have a gift shop.

Darrell Kittleson received a call from a bus tour company inquiring if we could handle a tour bus of visitors, he said yes. On May 10th Darrell Kittleson gave a tour of the museum to the Wisconsin Department of Tourism, Hudson. Muriel Pfeifer said with the popularity of bus tours we need to have the elevator addition completed.

Old Business

a. **Auction** – Darrell Kittleson gave a thank you to all the people and organization that donated time, money and efforts. Carl Johnson thanked Darrell for his hard work. Rosalie Kittleson said the Amery United Way gave a grant of \$400, Amery Lions Club donated \$100, and Wal-Mart Donated a \$1000. Rosalie said that Jim Gisch and Dave Knutson were instrumental in prompting Wal-Mart to donate funds.

b. **St. Croix Casino Exposition** - Carl Johnson reported that it was successful.

c. **Bus Tour** – Carl Johnson reported that he had 40 people signed up. He gave the money collected to Lois Hoff.

d. **Stationary** – Rosalie Kittleson presented the stationery with the changes suggested from the previous meeting. Rate: 1000 envelopes, 1000 letterhead, 1000 membership envelopes = \$457.00. Motion made by Dianne Dueholm allowing for the purchase, seconded by Darrell Kittleson, motion passed.

f. **Farmington School Belfry** – Darrell Kittleson said Steve Schneider will make the lifts for the yoke. Steve Chouinard will raise the bell and belfry. Mary Stirrat from the Leader will run a story on the belfry and the school.

g. **Attic Insulation** – Rosalie Kittleson met with the Polk County Finance Board and the Polk County Property Board, submitting a bid on insulation, they approved the costs.

h. **Sidewalk** – Rosalie Kittleson said the construction began on May 24, 2005. The Polk County Finance Board gave the additional \$1000 to complete the project with the existing costs.

Judy Wester gave a comment on the sidewalk progress. She noticed that the ground is higher than the sidewalk causing the water to drain towards the south side of the building. She demonstrated the need for landscaping with rock and clay to help with drainage.

Sherman Jensen gave additional explanation on the need to promote additional drainage. He read a letter protesting the sidewalk construction without fixing landscaping that would eliminate the moisture in the basement. He provided a list of contractors who would be able to provide the necessary services to improve the drainage.

- i. Bylaw changes at general meeting will be voted on tonight per Muriel Pfeifer.

New Business

The Polk County Board met at the Museum June 7 at 1:30 p.m. with the Financial Board and Property Board. Betty Jensen sent a letter giving her resignation from public activities read by Muriel Pfeifer. Martha Philip and Marilyn Reiten will join the display committee.

Rosalie Kittleson gave notice that picture molding is needed in the Art Room and Muriel will ask for contributions toward the expense during the general meeting. Muriel Pfeifer gave the agenda for the next meeting.

There was a motion to adjourn the meeting by Carl Johnson, seconded by Leroy Schwan, motion passed.

Secretary: Nicole A. Hanson

General Meeting of the Polk County Historical Society
May 24, 2005

Article II. Membership, Section 2.

Resolution amended to read: Membership shall be of 3 categories as follows:

Individual, student, Lifetime. Motion passed.

Article II. Membership, Section 3. Voting and Privileges

Each parent or guardian included in the family membership shall be entitled to the same voting and privileges as pertain to an individual membership.

Resolution amended to read:

Drop this from the bylaws because of no family memberships. Motion passed.

Article V. Elections

a. Directors shall be elected by the members at the meeting of the organization. Directors shall be elected for a term of three years.

b. Vacancies among directors occurring before the expiration of term shall be filled by election of the board of directors and those so elected shall complete the term of the director at large they replace **Resolution to be added:** c. No director shall be eligible to more than two consecutive terms in the same office. In filling vacancies for unexpired term, a director who has served more than half of a term is considered to have served a full term in that office. Motion did not pass.

Article VI. Meetings, Section 1. Meetings of the Board of Directors.

b. Five of the board of directors present and eligible to vote shall constitute quorum at any regular or special meeting.

Resolution amended to read: c. Two-thirds of the board of directors present and eligible to vote shall constitute a quorum at any regular or special meeting of the board. Motion did not pass.

Article X. The Polk County Historical Museum is owned by all of Polk County.

The following funds are set up as special trust funds of the Polk County Historical Society.

2. Art Fund – These funds can be used to acquire exhibit items or artifacts to enhance the museum.

Resolution amended to read: 2. Exhibit Fund – These funds can be used to acquire exhibit items or artifacts to enhance the museum. The Exhibit Fund allowance for purchases is \$1,000 per year. Curator and part-time curator authorized to spend up to \$200 without the Board of Directors approval. Motion did not pass..

3. Tricentennial Fund – These funds can be used with accumulated interest for the historical celebration of 300 years in 2076 AD.

Resolution: Tricentennial Fund to be eliminated. Motion did not pass.