

MISSION STATEMENT

Preserving the past for future generations by collecting a unique and enduring collection of Polk County history shared with the public through programs, exhibits and research.

MUSEUM HOURS

2022 Season: 5/26 – 9/5
Thursday - Sunday
Noon to 4pm
Open on Memorial Day and
Labor Day

ADMISSION

No fee for admission.
Donations appreciated.

102 Main Street
PO Box 41
Balsam Lake, WI
54810

715-485-9269

Email:
info@polkcountymuseum.org

HANDICAP ACCESSIBLE
ELEVATOR FOR ALL
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AIR CONDITIONED



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New Staff Member

Hello everyone!

My name is Lauren Viebrock, and I am excited to be joining the amazing board of directors here at the Polk County Historical Society as the intern for the museum. I will be here during the summer months and hope to see you when you visit us to see the exciting new changes we have made to exhibits.

I was born and raised in Polk County, living in Osceola, St. Croix Falls, and now Amery. Since I was a young girl, I have been fascinated with history, especially local history. I remember digging in the rocks outside a retaining wall at our house, eventually finding an antique, rusted farm tool. I was elated! I had found something from the past that others long before me held in the palm of their hand. This seemingly minor event sparked an intense interest in local history that remains to this day. I love discovering the significance of an old building or the lost connections between people and events that complete a story or solve a puzzle. Above all, I love how knowing local history creates a sense of purpose for my place in Polk County and anywhere else I may go—that I am not inconsequential because hundreds before me paved the road that I am currently walking.

I am a Senior at the University of Northwestern, St. Paul, graduating December 2022 with a BS in History and Biblical and Theological Studies. I love reading British mysteries and almost anything in the realm of historical fiction and nonfiction. I am looking forward to continuing to work with the museum, especially after opening for the season. See you soon!

Lauren Viebrock

Polk County Museum Intern

Check out our
website!

www.PolkCountyMuseum.org

Follow us on Facebook and Instagram!



MUSEUM INTERN

Lauren Viebrock

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Board Meetings are held monthly.

“The Greatest Generation” Saluted

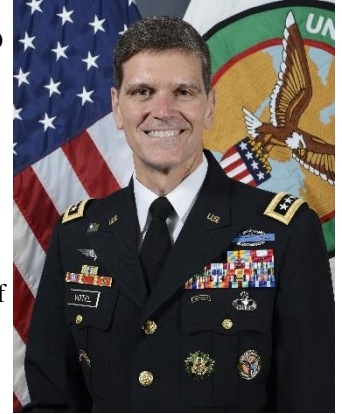
Our event on November 13, 2021 was certainly a fitting memorial to our fighting units from the World War II era. It was outfitted like a 1943 USO show celebrating the end of the war 75 years ago, which had been fought on two fronts.

Over 240 guests attended the event, and there were some special guests in attendance worth honoring by name. Osceola pilot Dick Patton, who flew B-17 missions, was the oldest in the room and is the oldest surviving veteran of World War II in Polk County at 103 years old. Bob Clark of Centuria served in the US Navy in the Pacific. Two more local veterans of the war were invited to the original meeting, intended to be held back in 2020.

The guest speaker was four-star general Joseph Votel, who served as He had previously served as commander of the United States Special Operations Command. A great meal was enjoyed by all, with music provided by The Nostalgics as well as the classic Big Band. A silent auction was conducted with special bidding on several larger items. The event brought in over \$30,00 for the PCHS. The money will be used to upgrade the military displays and other important “to-dos” at the museum.

Tom Magnifici stated it best in these words: “We want to make the museum a focal point of the county.” Others have labeled it “our county treasure”. The Polk County Historical Society and Museum really does hold historical treasures, each of which tells a story of people, places, and events in Polk County’s past. It is events like these that help to ensure that the museum’s doors stay open for anyone and everyone to come learn about and experience the heritage of our beloved county.

General Joseph Votel



Polk County Historical Society

is honored to present
OUR ANNUAL FUNDRAISING EVENT
WWII
A SALUTE TO
THE GREATEST GENERATION
HONORING THOSE WHO SERVED FROM POLK COUNTY

Calvin Coolidge in Polk County

A century has passed since a President has set foot on Polk County soil. In August of 1923, Calvin Coolidge became the President of the United States, following the death of Warren Harding. Those years were peaceful and prosperous, but lifestyles were changing as the boisterous “Roaring Twenties” unfolded.

Apparently, Coolidge is still recognized as the only President to visit Polk County. In a recent article, Coolidge is said to have stayed on the Bois Brule River near Superior, led by a guide named John LaRock. Interesting photos of his time spent there show the President in his full business suit while in a canoe or wading knee-high in the water.

Between June 15 and September 10, 1928, Coolidge took his final vacation while still in office. When the President stepped off the train, he found himself at his destination, Seven Pines Lodge in Lewis, just a few miles east of Balsam Lake. While at the lodge, they would listen to Country and Western music, often facilitated by a group of lively fiddlers. It seems that security and telegraph services were bolstered for the occasion. The Lodge is now in the National Registry.

It is important to remember our local heritage not just for the sake of remembering, but also to better understand why and how we got to where we are today. What is the significance of Calvin Coolidge visiting Polk County? Perhaps it is that the beauty of the local flora and fauna captivated the attention of someone who could have traveled anywhere but chose here. It could be a number of other things. All I know is that our local history is more dynamic and exciting than watching a good movie and I’m looking forward to discovering more. Who’s with me?



“Wiskonson” as a Territory



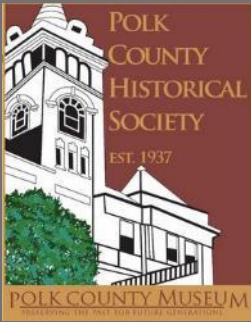
Let us transport our minds to an earlier era as a new territory was taking shape, circa 1836. Some unusual names were used as what we know as the state of Wisconsin became a territory with borders. “Wiskonson” and “Mesconsing”, the Native American name for the territory, were used before settling on the name for a state in 1848. These historic names can be found on title deeds of land parcels sold in the early 1800s.

Soon came the founding of lumber mills, towns, post offices, schools, and farms. These advancements came as a result of land cession treaties signed with the Ojibwe in 1837 and 1842 (the last one being signed in 1854, giving all Ojibwe land to the U.S. and establishing reservation territories). Within the “Wiskonson” territory, three counties had been established prior to Polk County: Chippewa, Crawford, and St. Croix. It is worth noting that the original territory consisted of all of what is today Minnesota, Iowa, Wisconsin, and the Dakotas east of the Missouri River.

The early settlers were a mix of former soldiers from Fort Snelling, land speculators, lumbermen, and farmers. By 1839 two sawmills were operating, one at Marine on the St. Croix, the other at Falls St. Croix. The 1840 census of these settlers totaled 351. That same year a petition was brought to the legislature to create a new county (St. Croix) in order to have a county court closer than Prairie du Chein. Two signatures on that petition belonged to William S. Hungerford and Washington Libbey, residents of Falls St. Croix. August 3, 1840 was the first county election with Falls St. Croix sending Calvin Tuttle to serve as one of three commissioners. Later that year, two legislative candidates were elected: J.R. Brown and Theophilus LaChapelle (both Democrats).

Within the next few years, a lumber mill was also established and operating in Osceola. The population in the wider St. Croix County grew to 970 by 1842. Numerous male settlers arrived to work at the mills.

We encourage our readers to visit our local museums and libraries to fill in events of the early times of Polk County and beyond. We hope this information inspires you to keep digging for interesting facts about the county, keeping the appreciation and heritage of Polk County alive and able to be passed down to future generations.



Membership

Please consider joining or renewing your membership to the Polk County Historical Society!

Individual: \$15.00
Family Annual: \$25.00
Patron Annual: \$50.00

Your membership is important to the success and future of the Polk County Historical Society!

Why is museum membership important?

- **The Polk County Museum is a non-profit organization which relies on gifts, grants, donations and annual memberships for its financial stability.**
- **Membership dues at the Museum are unrestricted, which means they support our annual operating costs and are not restricted to a specific program or fund.**
This is important to distinguish, because much of the Museum's other funding, such as grants and major gifts, frequently is restricted to specific projects and doesn't cover our day-to-day operating costs.
- **Membership is an invaluable cultural component to the Polk County community.**
Not only do memberships provide significant financial support for our museum to operate on, it allows us to continue to offer FREE admission into the museum and offer free educational events and activities to schools, organizations, and our Polk County community.

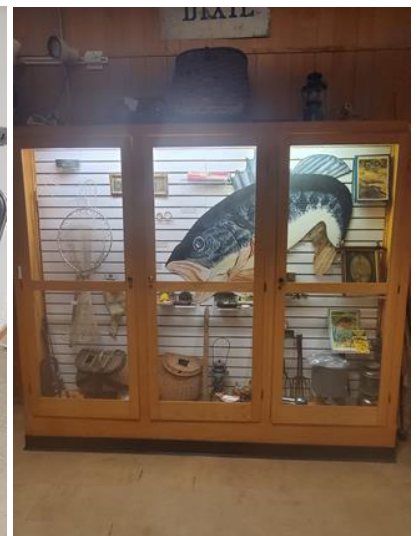
How do I join or renew my membership?

To become a member or renew your membership:

- ❖ Click on our "Donate" button on our website (polkcountymuseum.org) to sign up for membership
- ❖ OR Mail membership dues to:
Polk County Historical Society
PO Box 41, Balsam Lake, WI
54810

Museum Highlights

We have made some exciting changes in the museum since last season! We have a new exhibit in progress featuring hunting, trapping, and fishing paraphernalia from Polk County's past. A big thank you to Tom and Reid Binfet for building the display and to Bob Swanson for organizing the exhibit and the volunteers who dedicated their time and resources to make this happen.



Our theme for this summer is "Lake Life" in Polk County. We will be featuring items and information on resorts in our county's history as well as various lake-themed items from local history that are sure to inspire a day on the water. Come check it out Memorial Day through Labor Day!