

Volume 36

Number 2



A quarterly newsletter from the

**Forest History
Association of Wisconsin, Inc.**

P.O. Box 424
Two Rivers, WI 54241-0424

Spring 2011

Officers and Directors 2010—2011

Sara Witter Connor
President

P.O. Box 366
Laona, WI 54541

Dr. John Kotar
Vice President

2662 W. Princeton Avenue
Eau Claire, WI 54703
jkotar@wisc.edu

Beverly West (2013)

35 Ridgewood Drive
Stevens Point, WI 54481-4377
(715) 344-7818
nain@charter.net

Michael Sohasky (2013)

1435 Neva Road
Antigo, WI 54409
(715) 627-1025
sohasky@frontier.com

Don Schnitzler

301 S. Cedar Avenue
Marshfield, WI 54449
(715) 897-7260
Schnitzler.donald@charter.net

Ray Noffke (2013)

Secretary
1434 E. College Avenue
Appleton, WI 54915-2749
(920) 739-1997

Bob Walkner

Treasurer
3103 Maplewood Road
Two Rivers, WI 54241
(920) 793-4010
anvils@charter.net

Thomas Albrecht

N6031 Opperrman Way
Shawano, WI 54166
(715) 526-6728
tomalbrecht@frontier.com

Dan Giese (2013)

976 Coppens Road
Green Bay, WI 54303-3865
(920) 497-8236
dgiese8028@aol.com

David Peschau

W5733 Sherwood Drive
LaCrosse, WI 54601
dpeschau@compuserve.com

Forest History Association of Wisconsin members are encouraged to submit items of interest for this newsletter to the editor:

Don Schnitzler

Editor

301 S. Cedar Avenue
Marshfield, WI 54449
Schnitzler.donald@charter.net

Chips and Sawdust

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Inside!

**Forest History Association
of Wisconsin
36th Annual Meeting**

**September 15—17, 2011
Holiday Inn Conference Center
Marshfield, Wisconsin**

**19th Annual
Maple Fall Fest**
Marshfield, Wisconsin
September 17 - 18, 2011

(Same weekend as the FHAW Annual Conference)

150 Arts & Craft vendors, Pancake Breakfast, Maple Seminars, Amish Specialties,
Farmers Market, Children's Area/petting zoo, Food Court and Beer Garden.



From The President's Chair

Dear Friends,

You never know when you are going to run into a FHAW member! On our way back from Montana, we stopped at the Minnesota Forest History Center in Grand Rapids, Minnesota. www.mnhs.org/foresthstory. Keith Matsen, a former WDNR forestry and FHAW member, was splitting a pile of wood and gave us information about the center. They have a reconstructed logging camp to visit and a beautiful visitor's center. Thank you Miles Benson for recommending a stop there!

Spring 2011 has been eventful! Bruce and I were in Alabama during the tornadoes and our guardian angels were watching over us in various close calls at Lake Guntersville and Huntsville. We are huddling by the fire this spring in the North woods, but the trilliums are out and that gives us hope that summer is around the corner!

Congratulations to Don Schnitzler, FHAW - *Chips and Sawdust* Editor, longtime Marshfield Historic Preservation, as well as Community History Project author. He was awarded the Wisconsin and National Society Daughters of the American Revolution – American Heritage Award for Historic Preservation at the May 2011 WSDAR State Conference.

At our Board meeting this month (May), we heard from Don Schnitzler, who is organizing a fantastic conference in Marshfield, September 15-17th. We are having terrific entertainment with “Louis the Lumberjack” – a great program! More entertainment on the Friday evening, after a great day of touring, with Lumberjack songs by Brian Miller, who recently performed at WHS in Madison. Saturday, we have wonderful talks at the Marshfield Library. Throughout the Conference, we will have an “Antiques Logging Road Show” – Bring your photos and items for identification. Also start collecting your treasures for the Auction! See inside for more details. Encourage your friends. We have joined with the Marshfield Historic Preservation, Chestnut Avenue Art

Center, and Marshfield Library for the Conference.

Trees for Tomorrow is having a Forestry Day on August 6th. The FHAW “History of Wisconsin Logging” will be on display. The exhibit was at the Marshfield Library during the winter and has been part of Marshfield Historic Preservation Month this May and continues its tour. If you would like to have the exhibit, please contact any of the Board members.

If you are traveling this summer around Wisconsin, you might want to take the new WHS Beyond the Trees by Candice Gaukel Andrews with you. Not only does it guide you around the State and National forests, but the author has some interesting insights as you walk along the trails with her. Very easy to read, Ms. Andrews also tells some good stories!

Please send a get well to Board Member, David Peschau, dpeschau@compuserve.com Your Board is working on projects and visibility!

I hope you all have a wonderful summer! With four small grandchildren and another one on the way, it will be a fun summer of family. I am working on a book for the Ohio University, WWII – War and Society in the Midwest, as part of a series, mine is about Wisconsin and the wood products industry’s economic mobilization during the war. If you have any information that you think would be of interest to the project, please contact me.

See you in Marshfield!

Sincerely,

Sara W. Connor

**Something New
First Ever — Forest Fest**

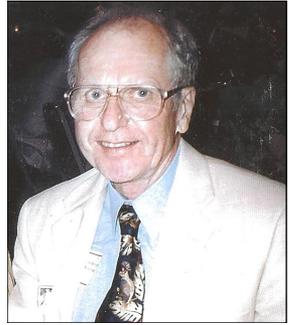
A Celebration of All the Forest Has To Offer

**Saturday, August 6, 2011
Eagle River, Wisconsin**

(www.TreesForTomorrow.com)

The Fire Tower

By Fred Brechler



Introduction (1949 – 1979)

I hope you will not be disappointed with my story. There are others who have much more to say about Marathon's Fire Tower than I. Phil Boettcher for one. Phil, along with his father, actually dismantled the tower in 1979. He now owns the parts, plans, and pieces – all which he has carefully preserved. Next there is James Miller of the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) in Madison who “worked” the tower as a ranger for the DNR. Much of this article draws upon the experiences of these two men; the rest is from my memory and research as a landowner.

Most people call it simply the “Fire Tower” although government (geological) survey maps identify it as the “Marathon Lookout Tower.” That’s a trivial point though. The fire tower enjoyed a prominent place in the Marathon Township, visually and symbolically. It was built on Hardwood Hill, the highest point in the township, a hilly range lying between Ed’s Road and Alpine Road near where Alpine joins County Trunk Highway “O”. Nearby towers erected about the same time were Bevent, aka Pike Lake, and Mosinee. Mosinee also being the dispatching center.

The Marathon Fire Tower was a handsome, eye-catching structure approximately 90 to 100 feet tall with a shelter on the top called the “cab” (short for cabin). For some 30 years (1949 – 1979) it looked out on the townships of Marathon and Mosinee, south to Lake DuBay, and toward Marshfield to the southwest.

The tower was constructed by the Wisconsin Conservation Commission (now the DNR) in 1949. Fire towers of this time period were look-a-likes, but the Marathon Tower gained publicity because of its difficult terrain. Road construction crews from the Antigo Ranger Station had to struggle through quartzite and red granite, dynamite blasting their way along the rocky edge, going from north to south, to reach the

top of Hardwood Hill where the base was laid.

I remember that my dad got a hearty chuckle out of the whole process, particularly the blasting part. He remarked to me, and mom, “I could have told them that they would have problems with that rock,” smiling when he read aloud an article about it in the Wausau paper.

Background (1920 –1945)

This story actually has roots shortly after 1900 following what is call the cutover when Wisconsin’s great pine forests were logged off and the land made barren or left only with stumps, slash, and hardwood poles. Hardwoods would be cutover later. The cutover deprived lands of their natural cover and they became fire hazards to homes, farms, and people. Something had to be done and fire towers were one answer in prevention.

Archives photos show that early, pre-World War II, fire towers were nothing more than farm windmills with wooden platforms for the ranger to stand on. The platforms were bare except for the protective railings around the edge for safety and balance.

Interestingly enough, however, concern about fires didn’t really get much public interest or support until World War II when increased demands for forest products forced action. Towers were seen then, as now, for spotting, locating and reporting forest fires. The Marathon Fire Tower was one of them.

As time progressed, improvement and variations came about in Wisconsin and elsewhere. For example, in Western states, fire towers on federal reserves were often “self-sufficient,” meaning they provided living quarters and thus could be staffed around-the-clock during the fire season.

The Marathon Fire Tower provided rangers no overnight lodging. It was a 10-to-6 facility. There was a cab (shelter) on top as protection from the weather and the windows could be opened for observation and ventilation. The cab also provided safe storage for instruments used in detection.

Residents of the township will remember the “cage.” To reach the cab, the ranger had to climb almost “straight up” the ladder protected only by a circular cage which wrapped around the ladder. Entry to the cab at the top of the cage was through a trap door in the floor.

The cage arrangement was very familiar because of the many stories of daring – or just plain curious – souls who “climbed the tower” if not to the top, at least a little way up. One story, which circulated for years was that some excep-

Continued on page 6

tionally brave and creative person had carved initials on top of the cab! This story was found to be untrue by examination of the rooftop in September 2005.

The 1950s and 1960s

The Marathon Fire Tower was distinctive because it sat so high above the landscape looking out over a grid of roads below. Hiking the ridge and the hill to the tower took forethought; it was not a drive-up or “convenience” type of facility. The Bevent Tower on the other hand was “people-friendly” and visitors were encouraged to climb the tower or look around the grounds. They could sign a guest (log) book, a copy of which was made available to this writer in 2005.

Although living away from the area most of the 50s and 60s, I made occasional trips home to join my parents in typical woodland activities of the time, -- berry picking, cutting firewood, hiking over the quartz rocks, and a special project they had of removing contents from a decaying garage, then removing the garage itself.

If there were ranger activity at or about the fire tower, I regret to say I never saw it. No sign of a ranger’s truck, no rangers ascending the tower or going off to fight fires or that sort of thing. Perhaps there would have been more action at the dispatch station in Mosinee or at another tower.

Technology and Change

As one might expect, the 50s and 60s brought changes in fire prevention techniques thanks to technological advances. One sign of change was seen along Highway O where an electric line was extended eastward to the tower in 1950. This was for the state telephone line between the ranger station and the tower. It was further connected with the vast communications system of the Conservation Commission (now the DNR), a system which was actually larger than the combined utilities system in Wisconsin at that time!

Likewise, portable radios gained popularity with government law enforcement agencies during this period and they were put to use in preventing fires from spreading. They linked towers with each other, enabling them to overlap in an effective triangular

fashion, an arrangement appealing to the department management.

James Miller, Ranger

It wasn't until I was introduced to James Miller that I learned what took place inside a tower's cab. Miller, now with the DNR headquarters at Madison, was assigned to the Antigo district office in 1958. His duties included the Marathon Tower, not on a regular basis, but when it was warranted. The Marathon Tower was used only as a secondary tower and then when conditions warranted. The process inside the tower went something like this according to Miller:

Every spring, and dry summer and fall periods tower persons would climb the tower each morning around ten and stay in the towers until early evening, generally around six. Their job was to constantly perform a 360-degree visual check for smokes. When a smoke was observed, a compass reading was determined using the alidade (large compass) in the center of the tower. The number of miles to the smoke was estimated using local landmarks. The color and size of the smoke was also noted.

The tower person then called into the ranger station on the state phone line. They would let the ranger or fire control dispatcher know the degree reading to the fire and the estimated distance to the fire in miles. They would let the ranger know if the smoke was dark, indicating that grass was burning, and if the fire was spreading out. The local ranger was then dispatched to the location of the smoke and determined if it was forest fire or illegal debris burning. He would suppress any fires with the assistance of his/her fire control assistants and call for more help if needed.

It will be a disappointment for residents to hear that the tower was in a "secondary" role but, in forming a triangle with other towers, it had importance.

Removing the Tower (1979 – 1980)

Continued on page 8

I remember when Chuck Bright, DNR forester in the Rib Mountain office told me how the people taking down the fire tower (unknown to me at the time) were as careful as could be. He jokingly added, "Maybe they left one or two bolts and nuts at the site." I smiled at that evaluation.

Some twenty-five years later I was fortunate enough to locate Phil Boettcher, who with his father, had dismantled and removed the tower. We have met and we have corresponded. Here is his account from one of his letters in 2005:

The tower is still disassembled and in pieces in storage all these years ... buying (from the DNR) and taking that fire tower down made so many nice memories for me of my family, my mother, and especially my father who was an iron worker by trade.

He taught me a lot with this tower removal project about rigging and hoisting with a portable derrick in taking down a tower from the top down. It was just my father and I that worked on the tower itself. My children were observers from the ground. We mainly worked weekends and had a strict schedule for removal...

Safety procedures were adhered to religiously... It was the ultimate in father/son bonding working on those towers. (They also took down the Bevent Tower)

Phil also told a couple of interesting tales. For one, a swarm of flying ants drifted up the hill and encircled them while they were on the tower, and, from their dangerous perch had to be shoed away. Another condition they encountered was for some reason, the Marathon Tower, as compared to the Bevent Tower, had an unusual amount of corrosion, which made it more difficult to take apart.

The disassembly of the tower marked the beginning of the next chapter in the history of Hardwood Hill. There was a major timber cut, the first one in 40 some years, and, following that, extensive firewood removal to meet the demands of the energy crisis of the 1980s.

The road to the fire tower from the north was no longer needed by the DNR, but it remained intact. Aside from its convenience for hunters and hikers, the road was a handy way to bring logging

equipment and removing marketable timber.

And another family would come front-and-center, the Bob Schaeztl family from Schofield, who diligently served as forest caretakers by removing downed trees for firewood and performing woodlot maintenance.

The Tower Reborn (2005 – 2006)

“I really like having the fire tower there”
John Gilchrist, a neighbor, 2006

What if the Marathon Fire Tower was standing today? Would it still be an imposing structure? Or would it be dated and aging in appearance? Wisconsin still has staffed fire towers—couldn’t the Marathon Tower be one of them?

When I undertook this assignment, I never realized that fire towers could be controversial, then and today. Realistically, for instance, the tower was a dangerous magnet for those who took the challenge of climbing it. If the tower were standing, one troublesome safety feature would be corrected. Nowadays, the DNR uses a protective gate with a locked arrangement to seal off the stairs ladder, which provides access. Thus towers, we can assume, whether they are preserved for functional use or for historical value, are safer structures than they once were.

The Forest Fire Lookout Association records facts and figures on existing towers and demolished ones. There are about 10 to 15 per month, which are designated “preserved.” Ironically, the Marathon Tower will be preserved. But in another state! Phil Boettcher writes of his plans in 2006:

“My fire tower (the Marathon Tower) is still in our plans to install on our new land in Montana which is on a mountain ridge at 6,000 feet. We will be able to see 75 miles to three different mountain ranges...”

I wish Phil and his family the best in this venture. And we can hope that many other fire towers can be recycled in such a noble way!



From the Newspaper Archives



WON SOCKS ON THREE ACES

LUMBERJACK HAD WHOLE STORE
FULL OF GOODS AFTER
“SITTING IN” IN NORTHERN WOODS

Ashland, Wis., Dec 22 – Ole Oleson, a lumberjack, walked into town the other day carrying 1,750 pairs of gloves and mittens, 1,175 pairs of socks and 83 pounds of tobacco.

He offered the goods for sale at about one-fourth of their value and was arrested on suspicion. He protested to the police that he came into possession of the goods honestly. When pressed he declared that he won the articles at poker in the lumber woods.

Oleson said he had been in the woods many months. The lumberjacks received no money while in the woods, but were expected to wait until they returned to town for their pay. At the company “store,” in the woods, the men could get such articles as they desired, however, having them charged against their time. Accordingly, the men used merchandise instead of checks in their games.

Oleson said he played in good luck and in one game, where socks were the stakes, he won 1,175 pairs of the hosiery on three aces. The other man held a trio of kings.

In a game for mittens, Oleson said, the limit was high and in three hours of play, he had mittens enough to supply a regiment of soldiers.

His story sounded reasonable and he was released to go and “cash” in his checks. *(from the Eau Claire Leader, Eau Claire, Wisconsin, Sunday, December 25, 1904, Page 12.*



**Forest History Association
of Wisconsin
36th Annual Meeting**

**September 15—17, 2011
Holiday Inn Conference Center
Marshfield, Wisconsin**

The 36th Annual Meeting of the Forest History Association of Wisconsin is set for September 15 – 17, in Marshfield. The three day event includes unique tours, living history presentations, special lectures, and musical entertainment that are sure to make this meeting an all-time favorite of association members. Make plans to attend, and of course, bring a friend.

The meeting's opening event will be held at the Historic Parkin Place, 108 West Ninth Street in Marshfield; located just south of the Holiday Inn and Conference Center. Parkin Place's West 14th Restaurant was awarded with the title of "Best Overall Dinning Experience" for Marshfield in 2010 and will be the site of our dinner, first living history presentation and auction.

In Marshfield everyone knows that great food is a given at West 14th, but for our opening event, that will only compliment the great entertainment provided by FHAW member, Sterling Strathe, appearing as "Lumberjack Louie." Sterling created the character of "Lumberjack Louie" a few years ago to teach forestry to school children. But, why should the kids have all the fun? Come prepared to be engaged in Louie's interactive program. It's full of Wisconsin logging history and lumberjack tales so you will find it both informative and entertaining. And just like the school children, when the program is complete, you will remember what "Louie" had to share about our Wisconsin Forest History.

The evening event would be incomplete with out our annual auction. So auctioneer, Sterling Strathe, will round out the evening's events with the sales of logging items and memorabilia donated by FHAW members.

Friday morning, just a 15-minute bus ride from Marshfield's Holiday Inn and Conference Center is the George W. Mead State Wildlife Area. Covering 33,000 acres in portions of Marathon, Portage and Wood counties, "the Mead" encompasses different ecosystems including grasslands, conifer bogs, hardwood forests, wetlands, ponds, uplands and agricultural fields. This diversity allows the Mead to meet the wildlife area's objectives of resource management, recreation management and environmental education. The natural resources educator at

Continued on page 12

the Mead, Pamela Resech, is preparing a program tailored specifically for the Forest History Association of Wisconsin members. It will provide attendees an opportunity to explore Native American history at the Mead and forest management for wildlife habitat. A wagon ride through the Mead Wildlife Area will allow attendees to explore the different habitat layers of a forest, and observe various forest management techniques first hand.

A hot lunch, catered locally will be served in the Stanton W. Mead Education and Visitors Center at noon.

Then following lunch, we'll board the bus for another short ride to the Wisconsin Conservation Hall of Fame, located in the Schmeeckle Reserve, in Stevens Point. Here we will meet Dr. John G. DuPlissis, Extension Forest Specialist, at the University of Wisconsin, Stevens Point. Dr. DuPlissis is in the process of completing a 10-year review of the Woodland Leadership Institute and has some very interesting data to share with the FHAW members. In addition to the institute, Dr. DuPlissis will also tell us about the Master Woodland Steward Programs. Then after a short break, Jeremy Solin, Director of LEAF (Learning Experiences and Activities in Forestry), the Wisconsin K-12 Forestry Education Program, will tell us about this program, and how it has integrated learning in and about Wisconsin's forests in K-12 schools to provide knowledge, skills and ways of thinking necessary to sustain our forests and communities.

Then after allowing time for questions and answers, an opportunity to view displays at the Wisconsin Conservation Hall of Fame, and shopping at the gift shop, we'll board the bus and depart UWSP to return to Marshfield.

Back in Marshfield, there's another great event planned with a Marshfield-

Hotel Accommodations

Holiday Inn and Conference Center
750 South Central Avenue
Marshfield, Wisconsin
715-486-1500

Two Queen Beds ~ \$99.00
One King Bed a sofa sleeper ~ \$94.00

Mention rooms being held for the FHAW and ask about this special room rate when calling to reserve your room.

Rooms blocked for the FHAW until August 16, 2011

Reserve Your Room Early!

style “Taste of History” dinner at the Chestnut Center for the Arts, 208 South Chestnut Avenue. Living history presentations during the family-style dinner will feature appearances by two noteworthy former Marshfield residents, the honorable William D. Connor and Mary C. Upham. W.D. Connor was Wisconsin Lt. Governor (1906 – 1908) and a prominent Wisconsin lumberman and businessman. Mary Upham was the wife of the 18th Wisconsin Governor, William H. Upham, the major Marshfield employer during the late 1800s. In 1887, the Great Marshfield Fire consumed most of Marshfield and nearly all of William Upham’s businesses. Together he and his wife played pivotal roles in rebuilding the community. Mr. Connor and Mrs. Upham will share their stories, and some of Marshfield’s community history with FHAW meeting participants.

After dinner, we’ll move to the Chestnut Center Performance Hall where singer and guitar player Brian Miller, accompanied by Randy Gosa on banjo, breathes new life into the long-forgotten music of early logging camps. Brian performs top-notch music from an under appreciated branch of the Irish tradition. The show will provide a glimpse of what life was like up north during the late 19th century. During March 2011, Brian performed at the Wisconsin Historical Society for their Taste Traditions of Wisconsin event “Irish Lumberjack Brunch” to a sellout crowd.

During intermission, FHAW members and residents of the Marshfield Community will exchange stories about an assortment of logging related items and photographs on display in the back of the performance hall.

On Saturday, the meeting will continue at the Marshfield Public Library, 211 East Second Street. Following a short general membership business meeting, John Berg, a relative of former Marshfield blacksmith, will share tales of blacksmithing in the lumber camps and in logging towns during the 1880s and 90s. He will be followed by Don Schnitzler, who will highlight historic activities and opportunities in the Marshfield area.

After a short break, Mary J. Schueller, author of the book “Soldier of Poverty,” a tribute to the men of the Civilian Conservation Corps will join us for the final conference presentation. Ms. Schueller will share stories of the human spirit triumphing through courage and perseverance, and the honor that came with performing one’s duties above and beyond the ordinary. Enjoy this historic journey and what these remarkable men accomplished in Illinois, Wisconsin and Michigan during the Great Depression.

Throughout the meeting, forestry-related artifacts and other items, will be available for purchase to the highest bidder. The silent and live auctions are an enjoyable tradition of the FHAW meetings. While some items provide a learning opportunity, all the items provide you an opportunity to support the FHAW with your bid. Donations of auction items are always greatly appreciated.

The 36th Annual FHAW meeting is shaping up to be both educational and entertaining, please plan on attending.

Schedule-at-a-Glance

36th Annual Conference and Meeting

Forest History Association of Wisconsin — Marshfield, Wisconsin

Thursday, September 15, 2011

- 2:00 p.m. Board Meeting at Holiday Inn and Conference Center
- 4:00 p.m. To Be Announced
- 5:30 p.m. Reception (cash bar) West 14th/Blue Heron Brew Pub
- 6:30 p.m. Dinner and Living History “Lumberjack Louie” & Auction

Friday, September 16, 2011

- 8:30 a.m. Bus departs Holiday Inn to Mead Wildlife Area
- 9:00 a.m. Heritage and Forestry Presentations with wagon ride through the Mead Wildlife Area
- 12:00 p.m. Lunch
- 12:40 p.m. Bus departs the Mead for Conservation Hall of Fame
- 1:00 p.m. Lecture: John DuPlissis, “Woodland Leadership Institute and Woodland Steward Program”
- 2:00 p.m. Lecture: Jeremy Solin, “LEAF Program”
- 2:45 p.m. Break and tour the Conservation Hall of Fame
- 3:15 p.m. Bus departs Stevens Point for Marshfield (rolling auction)
- 5:30 p.m. Dinner, Living History, at Chestnut Center for the Arts
- 7:30 p.m. Brian Miller & Randy Gosa: “Old Lumberjack Songs and Stories”

Saturday, September 17, 2011 (at Marshfield Public Library)

- 9:10 a.m. Coffee and breakfast breads
- 9:10 a.m. FHAW Membership Meeting
- 9:30 a.m. Lecture: John Berg, “Blacksmithing in Camps & Towns”
- 10:15 a.m. Lecture: Don Schnitzler, “Marshfield Historic Opportunities”
- 10:45 a.m. Break
- 11:00 a.m. Lecture: Mary J. Schueller, “The Soldier of Poverty,” Stories of the Civilian Conservation Corps
- 12:00 noon Book Signing and refreshments

Watch the Forest History Association of Wisconsin website
<http://chipsandsawdust.com/>



FHAW 36th Annual Meeting Registration Form



Name(s) _____

Address _____

City / State _____ Zip _____

Phone () _____ E-mail _____

Conference Registration (\$20) \$20 _____

Thursday, September 15, 2011 (\$35*) _____

Reception (cash Bar)
Dinner & Living History Presentation
"Lumberjack Louie"

Friday, September 16, 2011 (\$25*) _____

Bus Tour to Mead Wildlife Area & Wisconsin
Conservation Hall of Fame
*(includes transportation, lunch, lectures,
wagon ride and admission costs)*

Friday, September 16, 2011 (\$30*) _____

Dinner with Living History Presentations
Brian Miller and Randy Gosa "Old Lumberjack Songs"
(includes dinner and all performances)

Saturday, September 17, 2011 (Included with Registration)

Coffee, Rolls and assorted snacks
General Membership Meeting and Lectures

* All prices include tax and gratuity Total: _____

Any Special Dietary Considerations: _____



Please Register by September 7, 2011

**Make Checks Payable to FHAW and send to:
Robert Walkner**

Forest History Association of Wisconsin, Inc.

Membership Application

Please enroll me as a member and participant in the Association's program of developing the educational and historical aspects of Wisconsin's forestry and logging industry. Attached is payment for:

- _____ Student Membership (\$10.00)
- _____ Individual Membership (\$20.00)
- _____ Family Membership (\$30.00)
- _____ Non Profit Organization Membership (\$30.00)
- _____ Corporate Membership (\$55.00)
- _____ Individual Life Membership (\$250.00)

Other Contributions:

- \$ _____ Student Awards
- \$ _____ Capital Fund
- \$ _____ Operations



Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone Number _____

E-mail Address _____

Detach and mail this application with payment to:

Forest History Association of Wisconsin, Inc.

P.O. Box 424

Two Rivers, WI 54241-0424

Committee Chairs

36th Annual Conference

September 15-17, 2011

Marshfield, Wisconsin

Membership

Bob Walkner

3103 Maplewood Road

Two Rivers, WI 54241

(920) 793-4010

anvils@charter.net

FHAW Website

Dan Giese

976 Coppens Road

Green Bay, WI 54303-3865

(920) 497-8236

Newsletter

Don Schnitzler

301 S. Cedar Avenue

Marshfield, WI 54449

schnitzler.donald@charter.net

Exhibits

Miles Benson

2511 Lovewood Drive

Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54494

(715) 423-4203

mkbens@charter.net

Publicity Committee

David Peschau

W5733 Sherwood Drive

LaCrosse, WI 54601

dpeschau@compuserve.com

Annual Proceedings Editor

Dr. John Kotar

2662 W. Princeton Avenue

Eau Claire, WI 54703

jkotar@wisc.edu

Forestry Hall of Fame

Representative

Sara Connor

P.O. Box 366

Laona, WI 54541

Scholarship & Distinguished

Service Awards

Michael Sohasky

1435 Neva Road

Antigo, WI 54409

(715) 627-1025

sohasky@frontier.net

Awards Committee

Auction Committee

Archives

The post office will not forward bulk 3rd class mail.
Please inform the membership chair of any change in address.

Bob Walkner

3103 Maplewood Road

Two Rivers, WI 54241

920- 793-4010

anvils@charter.net



Forest History
Association of Wisconsin, Inc.
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Two Rivers, WI 54241-0424

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