



A quarterly newsletter from the

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

P.O. Box 1001
Marinette, WI 54143

Fall - 2001

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Chips and Sawdust

Volume 26, Number 3

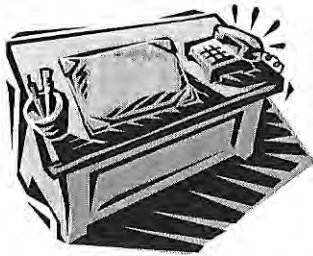
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Happy Holidays



from the FHAW



From the Editor's Desk

Logging Lines Did Much More Than Transport Logs

In the decades surrounding the turn of the twentieth century, logging operations entrenched themselves in the pine-stands of northern Wisconsin. During this period logging railroad lines crisscrossed the region. The primary role of these lines was, of course, to transport logs from the woods to a logging operation's mill, or river-backwater holding pond. In fulfilling this fundamental role, however, the logging lines of northern Wisconsin became much more. Often the lines gained "common carrier" status which allowed them to transport cargo beyond company stock, including passengers. This role resulted in a close-knit relationships between logging lines and the tiny communities that sprung up in the cut-over regions of a logging operation's holdings.

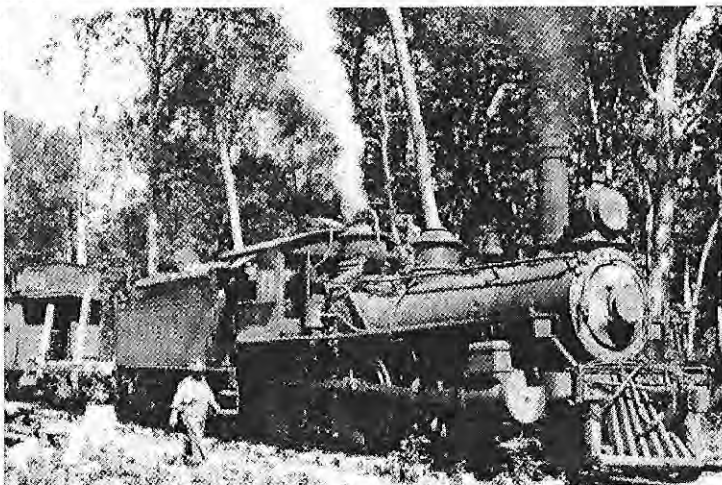
Fostering the development of small communities within a company's holdings was indeed a benefit to the lumber company. Settlement provided a ready workforce for their winter logging operations and a potential market for the sale of discarded stumpage acres after the trees had been harvested. As a result, many companies did all they could to encourage settlement, and in doing so, they often employed their logging railroads.

Company depots on a logging line's main track often developed into small frontier communities which flourished with the expansion of logging operations. Populated largely by lumberjacks and their families attempting to farm the cutover, many of these communities developed numerous amenities including: one room schools, general stores, churches, taverns, dance halls, and, in many cases, a U.S. Post Office. These hamlets were connected to the larger cities throughout the region, most often located along a major water route, by narrow or standard gauge logging lines. These lines transported merchant goods, mail and passengers along with the company logs.

A good example of this phenomenon is illustrated by the activities of the Robbins Lumber Company which operated a logging narrow gauge out of Rhinelander, Wisconsin from 1894 to 1919. In an attempt to spur settlement around one of its depots about 10 miles north of the company headquarters, Frank Robbins, the owner of the company, incorporated his rail line and began transporting goods and passengers to and from the small community. The community prospered to a certain extent and adopted the

name Robbins in appreciation of the lumberman's role in settlement.

In addition to providing the basics for a community's survival, logging lines also provided a unique form of entertainment for company employees and the public at large. Logging lines provided transportation for hunting and leisurely excursions for employees and their families or townspeople.



The Roddis Line which operated in Price, Ashland and Iron Counties acquired a caboose for leisure excursions. Here engine No. 7 is coupled to the caboose. Photo reproduced from Harvey Huston, *The Roddis Line*, Winnetka, IL.: self published, 1972.

Many companies acquired a caboose to provide comfortable transportation for small hunting and fishing excursions. Often times the logging company would sponsor excursions for employees and their families for no charge, while townspeople would need to purchase a train ticket for the regularly scheduled excursions for the public. In either case, a day's excursion, typically scheduled on a weekend, would take the passengers along the logging line into the northern Wisconsin wilderness. Once the train reached its destination, most passengers ate the picnic lunch they had brought and engaged in leisurely activities such as a baseball game, hiking and/or swimming in a near-by lake.

The Robbins Railroad continually ran excursion trains into the area around the Robbins Depot for its employees and the townspeople of Rhineland. In 1902, to further assist the budding community which was developing around the depot, Frank Robbins ran his excursion train for the benefit of the Catholic parish which maintained a church near the depot. Not only did the Robbins Line bring a large number of people to the parish carnival, but the company also donated the fares, that totaled several hundred dollars, toward the improvement of the church building.

Robbins eventually sold his logging operations. The community that originally bore his name gradually became known as Sugar Camp. Shortly after the ownership changed and the Robbins Railroad became the Thunder Lake Narrow Gauge, the line into Robbins was pick-up and moved to accommodate the movement of the new owner's tree harvesting operations.

Although the special relationship between a community and a rail line had indeed passed, the Thunder Lake Narrow Gauge continued with many of the non-lumber related practices of its predecessor. The *American Lumberman* recorded one such activity, an employee party, in August of 1920:

Employees of the Thunder Lake Lumber Co., accompanied by their families made Sunday, Aug. 15, a gala day in the history of the local industry, as picnic guests of the Thunder Lake Lumber Co. The special train on the company's narrow gauge road left the city at 9 o'clock in the morning and on arriving at their destination — Camp One on Lake Julia — at 10:30, a special program of entertainment and athletic sports was carried out. Ball games were played between teams composed of the railway crew and the mill crew and the woods crew and the office force. Six innings were played and the winner of each contest again played to decide the winner of the championship. After lunch at the lake, the company serving ice cream and doughnuts gratis to all who applied, two interesting and amusing contests were held in which winners were decided as to the best log roller and the one who was best able to walk the greased pole. These contests were followed by swimming and races of various sorts. At 4 o'clock a dance was held at the company store, accompanied by an orchestra of celebrated musicians. A tired, well satisfied crowd assembled again at 6 o'clock for the return trip to Rhinelander.

The use of logging railroads for community development and leisure was certainly not confined to the Robbins Railroad and later the Thunder Lake Narrow Gauge. Most logging lines that operated in northern Wisconsin and elsewhere have similar stories. Indeed, those who attended the Forest History Association's Annual Meeting last September were treated to an engaging lecture by David Jankoski about the Stanley, Merrill and Phillips Railroad. The SM&P Railroad operated in and around Stanley, Wisconsin and engaged in many of the same non-lumber related activities as did the Robbins Railroad and its predecessor. To be sure, logging lines did much more than transport company logs.

-Kurt Korten Hof



Board of Directors' Update

Minutes of the September 21, 2001 Meeting

The Meeting was called to order at 7:50 PM by President Cline in Room 101 of the Super 8 Motel in Stanley.

Minutes of May 23, 2001

A motion by Baumann, supported by Lambrecht to accept the minutes as printed and mailed to the directors was approved, all in favor.

Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Albrecht distributed a printed report of the fiscal activities from 7-01-00 to 6-30-01 and reported on the financial details. A net gain of \$3,100 was experienced during the fiscal year. He presented a printed report for 7-01-01 through 9-21-01 and reported on the details. A motion by Lambrecht, supported by Baumarm, to accept both reports was approved, all in favor.

Auction

Brisson reported that he and Karl Baumann would operate the auction 9-22.

Chips & Sawdust

Brisson reported that the newsletter is being prepared and printed by Korten-hof in Minnesota and shipped to Brisson who labels, sorts and mails it.

Distinguished Service Awards

John Cline reported he had a supply of wooden plaques prepared for the award to save costs.

Forestry Hall of Fame

Chairman Lambrecht reported that Forest Stearns would be inducted by Gerald VandeHei, Chair of the Wisconsin Forestry Hall of Fame Committee, with his daughter present at the members meeting 9-22.

Exhibits

Benson reported he would be taking the exhibit to the Wisconsin Forestry Legislative Tour Day at Wisconsin Rapids 10-22-01. Lambtecht reported the Green Board exhibit had been coated for protection and photographed.

Membership

Brisson reported membership has continued fairly steady with 199 current members.

Proceedings

Benson reported he had distributed the 2000 Proceedings to more than 500 foresters and legislators at no expense to FHAW.

Publicity

Brisson reported on meeting with publicity chair Carl Krog and that news releases on the 2001 meeting had been distributed to a variety of media in Wisconsin.

Scholarship

Lambrecht reported that Sohasky would continue to work with Saemann in preparing and distributing announcements. Saemann, Rohe and Krog will review submissions.

Annual Meeting 2001

The board lauded Eugene and Dolores Harm for a great meeting and tour today. Harm suggested a stipend for the Stanley Historical Society for providing meeting space. Moved by Brisson, supported by Baumann, to provide a \$200.00 donation to the Stanley Historical Society was approved, all in favor.

Annual Meeting 2002

Brisson reported that Carl Krog was working with people in Oconto to propose a meeting in Oconto. Brisson and Baumann reported they would assist.

Nominating Committee

Don Lambrecht reported on the slate of nominees to be presented to the membership meeting 9-22. Brisson distributed a printed history of all directors since FHAW was formed.

Next Meeting of the Board

10:00 AM, 9/26/01, Black Forest Restaurant, Shawano

Board of Directors Elect Officers

New officers were elected at a Board of Directors' Meeting held on September 26, 2001. New office holders include:

- ◆ Miles Benson, President (two year term)
- ◆ Randall Rohe, Vice President (two year term)
- ◆ Bob Brisson, Executive Secretary (one year term)
- ◆ Thomas Albrecht, Treasurer (one year term)

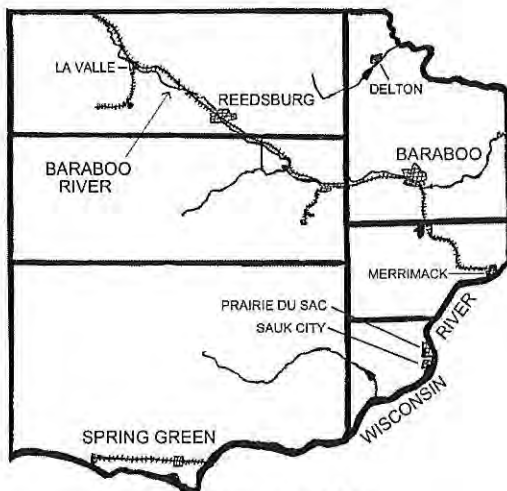
Complete minutes for the September 26 meeting will appear in the next issue of *Chips & Sawdust*.

The Reedsburg Saw Log War of 1851

by Peter Shrake

Nestled amongst the ancient Baraboo bluffs and washed by the waters of the Wisconsin River watershed, Sauk County is a place that exudes a romantic beauty. Its beauty, however, belies a community seething with rivalries. In the east, on the banks of the Wisconsin, the twin communities of Prairie du Sac and Sauk City constantly find themselves in conflicts that most probably began when one community was settled by Germans the other by New England Yankees. Spring Green in the southwest tends to isolate itself from the entire county. In the center of the county, two cities, Reedsburg and Baraboo, both located on the banks of the Baraboo River, have fostered a fierce rivalry spanning over 150 years.

Reedsburg and Baraboo are both communities that were founded as lumber mill towns. The river they share was full of rapids that attracted many settlers in the 1830s. The rapids were excellent locations for the construction of dams the first of which were built in 1837 at the site of the modern day City of Baraboo.



Sauk County in 1849

Editor's Note: Peter Shrake holds a B.A. in History from the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point and an M.A. in History from the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire. He is currently the Executive Director of the Sauk County Historical Society and a member of the Forest History Association of Wisconsin.



Baraboo, Wisconsin Circa, 1867. Courtesy of the Sauk County Historical Society.

In the early years of settlement the western reaches of Sauk County were thick in pine. Just to the north the counties of Monroe and Juneau also had vast stands of timber. Here again the Baraboo River proved to be a useful resource. Due to the fact that it flowed through all three counties, loggers harvested timbers and shipped them down the Baraboo to the mills.

In 1841 the first pine log drive took place on the river. A second, organized by George Willard, took place the following year. Willard sold some of his logs to mill operations in Columbia County across the Wisconsin River, but others he sold to the mill in Baraboo. Before long Willard himself was an operator of a mill in the Baraboo area. The flow of logs in the Spring was ever constant down the little river and for a few years things ran smoothly.

Several miles up the Baraboo in a swampy morass another settlement was taking shape. In 1844 two men came to the swampy land to explore possibilities of setting up lumbering operations but were soon distracted by the small quantities of copper they found in the area. In 1847 David C. Reed purchased lands along the banks of the river. Like his predecessors he had come to the area eyeing the possibility of setting up lumbering operations. He had

also noticed the rocky condition of the Baraboo's banks and quickly realized that his new property was an ideal site for a dam and mill. Soon construction was underway and by 1848 Reed, like his competitors to the south at Baraboo, was in the sawmill business.



Reedsburg, Wisconsin Circa, 1875. Courtesy of the Sauk County Historical Society.

Prior to constructing his mill, Reed had also founded a small community of five rambling, shabby huts called Shantytown. The buildings were constructed from the logs floating down river (generally believed to have belonged to Willard) and chinked with mud from the nearby swamp. The roofs were constructed from the bark of adjacent elm trees. Shanty Row, as the little community was called, was a desperate village place indeed.

With the construction of Reed's mill, however, things began to look up for the little community. In the years between 1848 and 1851 the village grew and its name changed to Reedsburg. Competition stiffened between Reed's mill and the mills at Baraboo but for a time Reed graciously allowed the logs of the Baraboo mills to pass over his dam. Each time a raft or a flotilla of logs came down the Baraboo, Reed would lower his dam and allow the loggers to pass. Over time however, the wear and tear of raising and lowering

his dam began to take a toll on his operations.

It also began to dawn on Reed that if he restricted the logging traffic of the Baraboo millers, it would not only save the wear and tear on his dam but also, by collecting vast amounts of logs in his millpond, he could buy the lumber at a much lower price. The year of 1851 was a year of hard times in the Sauk county area both money and common provisions like flour were becoming scarce. For Reed the decision must have been a simple one. Save the destruction of his dam, and make more money at the same time.

Predictably, Reed's actions enraged Willard. Reed had literally cut off Willard's source of logs. Riding up to Reedsburg, Willard, in the company of his brother, confronted the owner and demanded he open his dam. It was quite a standoff. Reed, however, had the physical backing of the entire community of his village and flatly refused the request. Defeated, the Willard's returned to Baraboo and began making preparations to return to Reedsburg with a large collection of their own friends to forcibly destroy Reed's dam.

Meanwhile in Reedsburg the citizens of the community, fearing that some form of retribution was on its way from Baraboo, summoned the U.S. Marshal from Madison. The Reedsburg contingent hoped the Marshal would support their cause because the logs in question were cut from government lands and technically illegal property (which was a common practice amongst nearly all the early loggers of the area including Reed). To their great dismay, however, the Marshal immediately ordered Reed's dam cut open. Watching the dam be destroyed and the logs rush their way down river to Baraboo was emotionally wrenching for the citizens of Reedsburg. Feeling that the Marshal had overstepped his authority, the citizens of the village demanded that their constables arrest the Marshal, which they promptly did.

A crisis was at hand for the village of Reedsburg. Their dam, their only successful means of livelihood was for all present purposes destroyed. Some effort had been made to fell trees across the river, and jam the logs and prevent them from flowing down to Baraboo but the effort had been for naught. Now they were without a dam, without logs, and with a federal marshal sitting in their jail.

Reed called for an "indignation" meeting and assembled almost everyone in the community in a local store. Many speeches were made, some quite passionate and highly inflammatory. Others attempted to calm the crowd and let reason prevail. Ultimately the group decided that there was no real way to over-rule the authority of the United States and soon a writ of *habeas corpus* forced local authorities to release the Marshal.

Things settled down pretty quickly after that. The Marshal returned to Madison, and no legal charges were brought against the people involved. But for the City of Reedsburg a residue of bitterness has always remained. In time the city would recover from the loss of the dam and eventually the town prospered. As the years wore on the Saw Log War was forgotten, remembered only in dusty history books written and published by local authors. But always there remained a lingering jealousy towards Baraboo. Today the two communities are still great rivals. The High School teams of both cities always get nasty when they play each other. And again a brief conflict flared in the early 1990s when citizens of Reedsburg tried to get the county seat moved from Baraboo to their town. In this attempt, like the Saw Log War of 1851, Reedsburg was unsuccessful. Still to this day it appears that the relationship between Reedsburg and Baraboo is tainted by a string of conflicts that began with the Saw Log War of 1851.

Sources

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Goc, Michael J. Many a Fine Harvest: Sauk County, 1840-1990. Park Falls: Sauk County Historical Society and New Past Press Inc., 1990

Krug, Merton E. History of Reedsburg and the Upper Baraboo Valley. Madison: Democrat Printing Company, 1929

Sesquicentennial History Committee. Reedsburg Remembers 150 Years: A History of Reedsburg Wisconsin 1848-1998. Chelsea, MI: Book Crafters, 1997



News From Around the State



Two Notable Trees Meet their Demise

Two of Wisconsin's most historic trees met their demise over the past two summers. The following articles from the *Wisconsin State Journal* and the *Green Bay Press-Gazette* reviewed the trees' history and noted their passing.

One of oldest trees in Wisconsin dies of old age

Wisconsin State Journal [Friday July 21, 2000]

Death knells have sounded for a 300-year old white pine tree in Sawyer County believed to be the oldest specimen of its kind in Wisconsin.

Already a sturdy pine before George Washington was born, the 130-foot-tall tree in the Flambeau River State Forest about 100 miles southeast of Superior survived lumber barons, forest fires, windstorms, drought and disease.

"It died of old age," said Chuck Norgren, a forestry technician with the state Department of Natural Resources. "Its amazing that it lived this long."

State Officials are expected to gather Aug. 15 [2000] at the tree's base for a cutting ceremony and memorial service.

A 16-foot log from the tree will be preserved in a shelter in a picnic area or at park headquarters.

"It's sad," said Jim Bishop spokesman for the DNR's Northern Region office in Spooner. "This is one of the last of those old giants to go."

White pines blanketed northern Wisconsin before European settlers arrived in the late 1800s. It remains a mystery why loggers spared the tree while virtually leveling the rest of the white pines at the turn of the century to build homes across a growing nation, Norgren said.

The pine survived a devastating storm July 4, 1977. Hurricane-force winds destroyed a vast stretch of virgin timber, known as the big block, in the same forest. Barely a handful of virgin pine and hemlock remained.

The tree, a stout 13 feet in circumference, was weakened in recent years by numerous lightning strikes.

A Cutting Ceremony and memorial will be held for the 300-year-old giant

Insects got into the wounds and woodpeckers preyed on the bugs, riddling the wood.

400-year-old pine felled by fire damage

Green Bay Press-Gazette [Wednesday, July 11, 2001]

An old-growth white pine tree believed to be at least 400 years old has toppled in northern Wisconsin after being damaged in a fire that remains under investigation.

The tree, dubbed the MacArthur Pine in honor of Gen. Douglas MacArthur, who once lived in Milwaukee, stood on state-owned land surrounded by the Nicolet National Forest and had become a tourists attraction in recent decades. Highway signs advised motorists of its location, and it also was included in some guide books to northern Wisconsin.

"This tree is a piece of history in and of itself," said Dan Wisniewski, executive secretary for the state Board of Commissioners of Public Lands. "It symbolizes a lot of history in northern Wisconsin. ...the logging that took place, the total change in the forest environment, what's happened since in terms of preserving the remaining stands of virgin timber."

The pine crashed to the ground on June 23 [2001].

Officials said the fire had enlarged a 35-foot high cavity at its base, and the tree succumbed to the weight of its 27 tons of wood, needles and branches.

U.S. Forest Service officials said they were investigating the possibility of arson because of the lack of any thunderstorm activity that weekend that could have started the blaze by lightning.

"I think it's really sad," Wisniewski said. "I can't think of any reason why anyone would want to destroy a magnificent creature like this."

Most of Wisconsin's white pines were cut by loggers in the late 1800s. Their massive size and straight trunks made them a first choice for loggers.

ABOUT THE TREE

The pine may have been a seedling before Christopher Columbus set sail for the New World, said Ed Wenger, a Forest Service district ranger. That would mean the pine was growing strong before the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth Rock in 1620 and long before the Declaration of Independence was signed in 1776.

But the MacArthur Pine was on state trust land and was protected from loggers.

"It kind of grew in obscurity for a long time," Wisniewski said.

At 148 feet tall and with a diameter of 5 feet, 7 inches, it was believed to be the nation's largest white pine before losing the top 40 feet to a severe windstorm in 1971. It also weathered several lightning strikes over the past 50 years that may have helped strengthen the base, Wisniewski said.

"I think it's remarkable that it lasted this long," he said. "Every year was a gift."

The Board of Commissioners of Public Lands plans to commemorate the tree in some way, possibly by cutting sections of the trunk for display in museums.



A Slice of History - The General MacArthur Pine Commemoration September 13, 2001

At noon on September 13, 2001 the Board of Commissioners of Public Lands held a commemoration ceremony for the fallen General MacArthur Pine (see **"400-year-old pine felled by fire damage"** above). Dan Wisniewski, Secretary of the Board of Commissioners of Public Lands, and master of ceremonies, introduced several distinguished speakers. Speakers included: Douglas La Follette, Secretary of State; Jack C. Voight, State Treasurer; and Bob Lueckel, Acting Forest Supervisor of the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest. The ceremony also included a gun salute from the Cook-Elfors VFW Post 6823.

Sawyers using two-person crosscut saws will cut slices from the tree. The slices will be given to museums and local governments for public display.





News and Announcements

FHAW Member is searching for information on Lumber Companies and Communities

Matthew Theroux, a new member of the FHAW, is searching for information about two lumber companies and the communities in which they operated.

- ◆ D.K. Jeffris & Company of Jeffris—a.k.a. Bundy, Wisconsin (Lincoln County)
- ◆ Stearns Lumber Company of Odanah, Wisconsin (Ashland County)

If you have any information for Matthew, contact him at:

Matthew Theroux
5420 North 38th Street
Milwaukee, WI 53209

2001 FHAW Annual Meeting a Success

The 2001 FHAW Annual meeting was held at the Stanley Historical Society on September 21 and 22, 2001. The Friday tour of surrounding points of interest and the Saturday presentations, business meeting, tours of the Stanley Historical Society collections, and auction were all a resounding success. The FHAW thanks Eugene and Dolores Harm for excellent work coordinating the meeting, and the Stanley Historical Society for hosting our visit. A summary of the tours, presentations, annual business meeting and other related information will be published in the Annual Proceedings of the 26th Annual Meeting. Look for it this Spring.

2002 FHAW Annual Meeting Scheduled to be held in Oconto, Wisconsin

The 2002 Annual Meeting is tentatively scheduled to be held in Oconto, Wisconsin. Director Carl Krog will serve as meeting coordinator. Look for more details in future issues of *Chips & Sawdust*.

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 (\$5.00)
- _____ Individual Membership (\$15.00)
- _____ Family Membership (\$25.00)
- _____ Non Profit Organization Membership (\$25.00)
- _____ Corporate Membership (\$50.00)
- _____ Individual Life Membership (\$250.00)

Other Contributions:

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

Name: _____ Phone #: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Detach and mail this application with payment to:

Executive Secretary
Forest History Association of Wisconsin, Inc.
P.O. Box 1001
Marinette, WI 54143-1001

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Committee Chairs 2001—2002

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Forestry Hall of Fame

Kurt Kortenhop
Publications Editor

Carl Krog
Publicity

James Adamson
Exhibits

John Saemann
Scholarship

Unfilled
Archives

Mike Sohasky
Auction

Unfilled
Membership

Randall Rohe
Distinguished Service Awards

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

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