

Volume 45

Number 4



A quarterly newsletter from the

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

P.O. Box 424
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Winter 2021

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We are consolidating our website under a single domain -

ForestHistoryAssociationWI.com - please update your bookmarks

and remove ChipsAndSawdust.com

Chips and Sawdust

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*Dedicated to the discovery,
interpretation, and preservation
of the forest history legacy of the
State of Wisconsin*



From The President's Chair

Greetings Folks,

As 2021 evolves there is a positive attitude within the public and within FHAW that better days are coming! In the following tribute to John, I noted there are very large opportunities on the FHAW horizon, and I perceive there is a new energy within the organization.

When the vaccine becomes a fact of everyday life, we will be in a great position to take full advantage of those opportunities. However, we do not have to wait to begin our progress, the board soon will be meeting via ZOOM to work on fulfilling the strategic plan as well as planning for an exceptional fall conference for our members.

The Fall conference will commemorate the 150th anniversary of the Peshtigo Fire of 1871 and will be held in Peshtigo, Wisconsin. What an opportunity for us to dig into a nationally important historic forestry event right here in our own state! Please put October 8 & 9, 2021 on your calendar today!

Since I write this at a time that it is -8 degrees outside you might forgive me for being a bit philosophical. Over the years my views on forest history have evolved from one of thinking in terms of acres, board feet, fire death numbers and other "things" to a more encompassing view. The following quote from Aldo Leopold as conveyed by Matt Blessing's article Reading the Landscape¹ expresses some aspects of my present thinking on our forest history. "The mere propagation of biological facts, however interesting, is sterile unless those facts are woven into the cultural patterns of the community." Leopold was talking about wildlife, but I see forests as fitting into the same mindset. In the Wisconsin forest history world, the genealogy of people and of communities are a serious part of the story just like the trees and geology.

There are two additional points that I would like to share with you. First too many people think the forest history story of the original forests and that the white pine lumbering era has been fully researched and documented. I differ in viewpoint and would encourage additional scholarly investigations into that era. Second, all too often we only focus on the pine era with far too little energy applied to the forest history of the years since 1905, from people to trees, to equipment, to products of the forest, to the evolution of the human communities in the forested regions there are many stories yet to be told. Always remember that even yesterday is history, write it up and share it.

AS I SEE THE STRATEGIC PLAN AND 2021

The board of directors went through a lengthy strategic planning process that reaffirmed much of what has been done for some time. However, it seems to me that one evolution or change that came out was that perhaps we had grown inward looking, merely putting on programs and putting out information one year after another and doing so primarily for the membership. Today the organization hopes to maintain solid programs for the membership, but also be much more outward looking and working toward becoming more of a nexus of forest history education across the

state. Emphasizing partnerships with schools, school forests, Trees for Tomorrow, county forests, the Society of American Foresters, UW, forest industry, log a load, and a host of others. Standing tall in this outreach are the county historical societies, these societies are found in almost every Wisconsin county and hundreds of thousands of people are reached by them each year. By working through these partner groups, we can have far more impact in informing and educating the public than we can have alone. I would emphasize that our board's recently expanded numbers and new diversity of experiences have provided insights and connections which increase the likelihood of success in this initiative.

More specifically the dream would be for the FHAW to produce short historically and scientifically accurate videos, a variety written materials as well as website-based information for use in classrooms and museums across the state, in this FHAW would not be the primary presenter but would be working through any local organization willing to participate.

As we move forward, we are surrounded by opportunity, over the winter the board will select a few targets to focus on for 2021 so that we move forward toward defined goals as time and dollars are available. If you would be willing to help, please let us know, your efforts can help us move forward much more quickly!

Ed Forrester

¹ Wisconsin Historical Society, Wisconsin Magazine of History, winter 2020 edition P-24-25

THANK YOU JOHN GROSMAN!

As a charter member of the Forest History Association of Wisconsin John Grosman returned as president for the last two years, and quite the two years they have been! With a seemingly endless rolodex and the long arm of his trusty cell phone, John injected tremendous energy and outreach into our organization at a time that this energy and outreach were greatly needed.

Beginning with a serious revalidation of the organizations strategic plan his tremendous energy flowed to increasing and diversifying the board of directors, vastly updating the website and electronic media, replacing the 2020 annual conference with a series of successful webinars during the Covid-19 pandemic as well as setting up outreach and communications with a host of organizations with interests in history or education. His tour of duty also included a new initiative to restore the publication of the conference proceedings for our members with assistance from UW-Stevens Point.

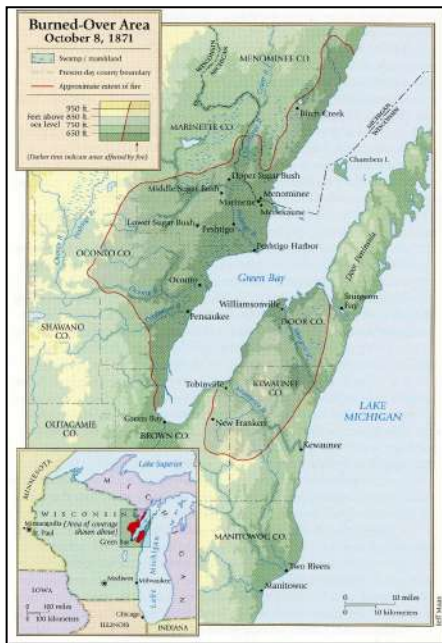
At this point John is leaving the board and, in his terms, "becoming a worker" with a special interest in improving the FHAW archives at the Area Research Center housed at UW-Stevens Point. This is an incredibly significant task as these important archives need to be more user friendly and possibly digitized for web access by our members and the public.

The Forest History Association of Wisconsin is indebted to John for all his energy and his accomplishments during his presidency, the organization is far better situated for the future due to him! Thank You John Grosman!

“Peshtigo Fire” to be Focus of Fall Conference of Forest History Association of Wisconsin

The 2021 Outdoor Fire Prevention Week will mark the 150th Anniversary of the Peshtigo Fire, which occurred on Oct 8, 1871. This fire which burned more than 1.2 million acres of land, and killed an estimated 2500 people, remains the single most deadly and destructive wildfire in US history. The Forest History Association of Wisconsin is working with the City of Peshtigo and the Wisconsin State Historical Society to schedule their Fall Forest History Conference in that City during the period Oct 7-9, 2021. The Conference will be preceded by a series of free webinars that will address the Fire Behavior and the Fire Weather Meteorology of the event. This historic fire covered parts of what are now Marinette, Oconto, Brown, Kewaunee and Door Counties in Wisconsin.

Friday, Oct 8, 2021 will be devoted to a series of presentations at the Peshtigo Community Center, with lunch provided as part of registration. An optional evening banquet



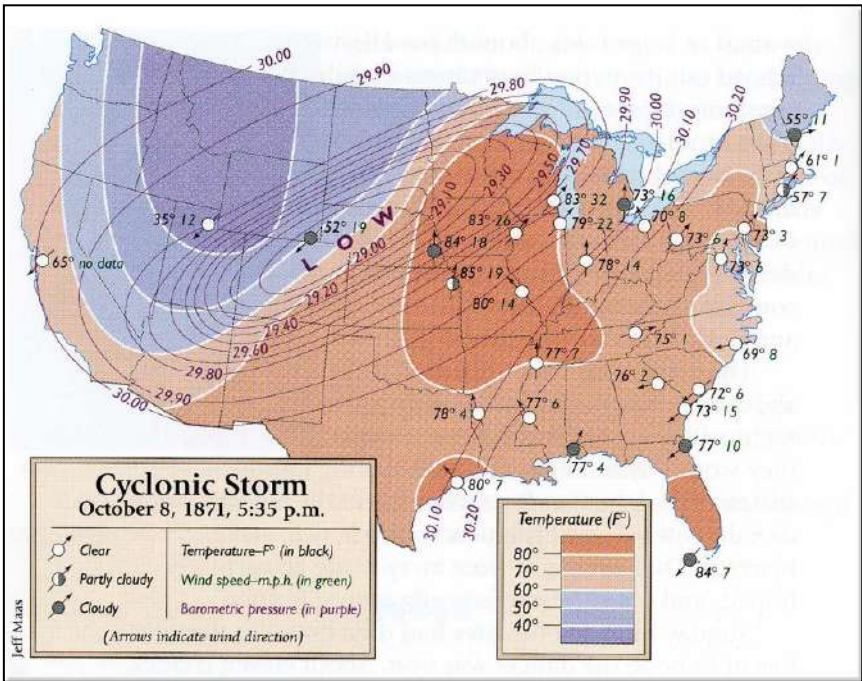
Burned Over Area at time of Peshtigo Fire, October 8, 1871.



FHAW Fall Conference at Peshtigo Planning Committee first members, left to right, Cathi Malke, Peshtigo Mayor; Chuck Gardon, Peshtigo Fire Chief; Mike Folgert, Peshtigo Township Fire Chief and FHAW past-president, John Grosman.

with informative program is planned. Program Speakers are being recruited from historical societies within the counties impacted by the fire, along with a focused presentation on the impacts on the Native Population and the story of an emergent leader in what was the infant National Weather Service at the time.

While priority will initially be given to members of the FHAW, an open enrollment is planned to welcome all that may be interested. FHAW is keenly interested in serving K-12 School Districts, and especially those within the area impacted by this event to help connect students to their 'sense of place'. Watch for further news postings at www.foreshistoryassociationwi.com. A limited number of Poster session participants will be welcomed to the Oct. 8th session. Inquiries on participation or program suggestions can be directed to thefhaw@gmail.com



2021 FHAW Officers Elected

The FHAW Board of Directors met during December via zoom. The final agenda item was election of new officers for the Association. The results were as follows: Ed Forrester was elected president, succeeding now past president, John Grosman; Tom Jerow was elected vice-president, replacing Forrester; Bob Walkner was re-elected as treasurer, and Jane Severt was elected secretary to follow Don Schnitzler.

Congratulations to each of the new officers!



2021 “Wisconsin Forest History Talks”



FHAW Launches New 2021 Webinar Series

Those interested in learning more about the state’s rich forest history are invited to attend a new monthly lecture series called, “Wisconsin Forest History Talks.” Through these presentations the Association aims to share the legacy of our Wisconsin forests. Like the 2020 Fall Webinar Series, these will be presented virtually via the Zoom webinar platform so that they can be enjoyed from the comfort of your own home. By offering these monthly webinars at a predictable time each month, the third Wednesday of each month at 6:30 pm, it’s hoped that those interested in participating will plan for them in advance.

At this time speakers have committed to sharing five presentations, but the schedule for those presentations is still a work in progress. As titles, descriptions, dates, and registration links are finalized, those details will be shared with members by email, in future issues of *Chips and Sawdust*, accompanying the monthly electronic newsletter, *Woodchips*, and on the Association’s website and Facebook Page.

Like our previous webinar series, these talks are *FREE* and open to members and the public alike. Also like the previous series, preregistration is necessary and required to join the live presentation.

Our first, *Forest History Talk*, will be presented by Don Schnitzler, titled, *One of the State’s Best Kept Secrets, the Forest History Association of Wisconsin*. Do you want in on the

secret? Then join us to learn more about the Forest History Association of Wisconsin’s history and growth since its founding in 1976 as Schnitzler highlights past accomplishments, on-going activities, and upcoming efforts of the Association to inform, educate, archive and publish the legacy of Wisconsin’s forest history. The talk is set for Wednesday, February 17, 2021 at 6:30 pm.

Register in advance for this webinar:

https://us02web.zoom.us/join/register/WN_QoF3PaycSrWHpu8HvUQEca

Call for Presentations

The Forest History Association of Wisconsin is pleased to issue this Call for Presentations for the 2021 *Wisconsin Forest History Talks* lecture series. If you have a special interest or area of expertise related to Wisconsin forest activities, we encourage you to consider sharing that information with fellow FHAW members and others as a webinar presenter. Your talk can remind citizens of the importance of forests in Wisconsin’s past and present.

Proposals can be submitted to the webinar committee at the FHAW email, thefhaw@gmail.com. Not interested in submitting a proposal but have some ideas for programming, webinars, or speakers? Submit them to the same address, we’d love to hear them! Committee members can provide technical support for the presentation platform as needed.



**From the
Newspaper Archive**



**THE STORM OF FLAME
An Awful Calamity in Wisconsin
DESTRUCTION OF PESHTIGO
The Fire Blown by a Tornado Entirely Across the Village.
GREAT LOSS OF LIFE.**

A correspondent writing from Menasha, Wisconsin., on the 11th instant (11 October), describes the destruction of Peshtigo. (from the Harrisburg Telegraph, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17 Oct 1871, Tuesday, Page 1)

The village was situated on Peshtigo River, seven miles from Green Bay. It was a nice little town of about 2,000 inhabitants, quite regularly laid out; had fine hotels, stores, churches, schools, &c., besides the large factory owned by the Peshtigo Manufacturing Company, a sash, door and blind factory, also owned by the same company, who owned nearly every building in the town. The factory was devoted to the manufacture of pails, tubs, broom handles, &c., and gave employment to about 700 hands in the different branches.

The town is nearly surrounded by pine forests, the suburban portion being built "among the pines." The inhabitants have for the past ten days been fighting fire in the woods, trying to save the town, and had settled down into a feeling of comparative security, since the woods on all sides have been more or less burned over.

On Sunday night they were awakened from this feeling of security by a noise like distant thunder, which increased in volume until the crash of falling trees and the roar of the wind and fire could be plainly heard. Soon after a tornado burst upon the town, unroofing a number of buildings, and quickly followed by a solid sheet of flame, extending the whole length of the village and far beyond each way.

In an instant the whole exposed side of the place was in flames. Men, women and children rushed into the street, and, surrounded by fire on all sides, were soon either smothered or burned to death. In the less exposed portions the people fled to the river, and, jumping in, many were drowned. Some saved their lives by keeping their bodies well under water, and once in a while putting their heads under as the heat became insufferable. Others took refuge in wells and cisterns, and were saved. Quite a large portion of the inhabitants ran to a field to the leeward of the fire, and by lying on the ground were saved, although some

of these were badly burned. There is but one house left standing, and that is isolated, and lately built, of green lumber. As near as can at present be ascertained, two hundred and fifty lives have been lost, mostly women and children. Although a good many men have perished, there are seventy-five who are badly burned, many of whom will die, and nearly all are more or less burned. The destruction has been so complete that the streets cannot be traced, all being covered with sand, which was swept in great clouds by the tornado, in some instances bodies have been found completely covered by sand.

I could fill columns with heart-rendering incidents of this conflagration, but will only give a few as illustrative of the rest. In one instance a man took his family and fled to the bridge spanning the river. The bridge was soon on fire, and the poor unfortunate family were nearly roasted alive, and then jumped into the river and were drowned. A woman, on seeing the fire approaching, put her little girl, a child of six years, in a well, which was nearly dry, and ran to the river herself for security. The woman was saved, and, as soon as she could, found out the locality, and her joy was so great at finding the little one alive and well that she swooned, and on recovering clasped her child in her arms, and ran off crying for joy.

Too few, alas, were so fortunate. In many cases whole families have perished. In other cases men have lost their families, they being, at the time of the fire, working to save the factories. In other places men perished in their endeavor to save their families. In one case to which my attention was called, a little boy of seven years is the only surviving member of a numerous family. As soon as the fire had sufficiently subsided, all that were able went to the relief of the sufferers.

Blackened, charred corpses were lying in every direction, with their clothing, as a general thing, nearly or quite burned off. Many dead bodies were found in the river, and many more have since been recovered. A number have died from their bruises, while others are crippled or fearfully disfigured. The most imaginative mind cannot begin to realize this fearful calamity, much less my poor pen to describe it. The shrieks and groans of the dying, add of those who had lost near and dear friends; the ghastly aspect of the blackened corpses; the shocking appearance of many who badly burned and almost destitute of clothing, were running they knew not where; others in the last agonies of death, made a picture too horrid for contemplation. The sufferers have all been taken to Green Bay and other towns, where they will be kindly cared for, as hospitality is one of the marked traits of the West. The loss to the Peshtigo Company, who owned the factories and most of the town, besides large pine lands, is estimated at three million dollars, besides the loss of their extensive warehouses in Chicago.

Menekaunee, a town of seven or eight hundred inhabitants, is all destroyed but three houses. Fortunately no lives were lost here. Mari-

nette is also nearly all destroyed. Business in this section is partially suspended. All the saw mills and factories at Oshkosh, Fond du Lac, and other neighboring towns are stopped by an order of the authorities.

In Wisconsin — Burning of Williamsville — from Fifty to Sixty Lives Lost

By Guillaume Delauzerne, from Union Town, we learn that the entire settlement at Williamson Brothers' Mill, five miles from the shore of Sturgeon Bay was burned on Sunday night. The proprietor, John Williamson, his wife and two children — his entire family are burned to death, and about fifty-three other persons in the same settlement perished. Scarce a soul is left to tell the tale.

Charles Kusterman, of Little Sturgeon, writes us further particulars. There were twelve families about the mill, and fifty-two men in and about the mill. Of all these people, but two were saved uninjured, and ten injured persons still living were found, and were sent on Monday by the tug Ozaukee to Big Sturgeon Bay for medical treatment. Every other individual in the settlement is dead. Mr. Gardner sent twenty-five men to chop through the woods to this settlement, our correspondent being one of the number. They found the remains of six persons in one house, and piled the partly charred remains of fifty-five bodies of men, women and children in one pile. Three or four persons attempted to save themselves in a well containing three feet of water. One of them had his head badly burned, and the others were burned to death.

One of the party sent out by F. B Gardner called upon us on Wednesday. The party went from Little Sturgeon to the head of Little Sturgeon Bay by the tug Ozaukee, and thence chopped their way through the timber fallen across the road for four miles. The other mile they clambered over the timber. On the road they found three of the wounded trying to reach the shore. Others of the wounded got to Kent's place, four miles from Big Sturgeon, where they are lying.

Reaching the site of Williamsville they found no living creature but an ox. Twenty-nine human bodies lay on a spot about ten feet square some with arms and legs burned off, and all with clothing gone. A few rods off, on every side, were others, and a man and child were found dead in a well. They found fifty-five dead bodies, and think the total number must be from sixty to seventy.

Menekaunee and Part of Marinette Burned — Loss of Life at Birch Creek

We get the news of the burning, on Sunday night, of a considerable portion of the Village of Menekaunee, at the mouth of the Menomonee River, part of Marinette, adjoining it on the west, and some property on the north side of the river, in Menomonee. Spalding, Houghtelling, &

Johnson's large new mill at Menekaunee, Bagley's planing mill, a church, school house and all the buildings in the lower town, in the south side, except a few shanties on the bay shore, are burned.

The flames leaped across the river and burned R. Stephenson's Mill (formerly Spafford & Gilmore's) in Menomonee.

Many of the people fled to the bay shore for safety, and remained in the water all night. The steamer Union, lying in the river, took some three hundred women and children from Marinette to a place of safety in the harbor. The women and children of Menomonee were placed on board the steamers, Favorite and Dunlap, and several vessels lying at anchor in the roadstead. The male portion of the population of the village spent the whole night in fighting fire.

One man died from fright and exhaustion after he had been taken from the water. Another, who was sick in a house which was burned, died before he could be rescued. There are other reports of deaths, but as yet unconfirmed.

A sad report comes from Birch Creek Settlement, on the State road, eight miles north of Menomonee. Here thirteen people are reported burned. This place is only a station for the changing of horses on the stage line, and it seems scarcely possible that so many persons should be here at this time of year. It is, doubtless, an exaggeration in the main.

We heard of one case that showed great presence of mind and much calmness. A man who had been with Sherman in his "march to the sea," was caught in the midst of a fire which was approaching him from all sides. Having no matches to create what is called "setting a back fire," and death staring him in the face, his wit suggested a "gopher hole" setting at work with the will that a man would use who was working for life, he attacked the sod with a large hunting knife, cutting a large piece away; he rolled it back and at once commenced throwing the soft dry earth upward and outward, and soon had a hole dug of sufficient size to admit his body. Carefully drawing the sod toward him he succeeded in drawing it over his body, and then filled up the "chinks" with dirt from within. He lay there until the fire passed over him and was speeding furiously on its way miles distant; then slowly he crawled out of his living grave, heated fearfully, but injured in no way whatever. His soldier experience had saved his life.

No one who has not witnessed this besom of destruction on the "plains," can form any adequate idea of its magnitude, its velocity, its fiendish-like cruelty, its thundering roar, and its vast destruction.

The latest information we had was that the fire had reached the "Big Woods," about two hundred miles northwest of La Crosse, and was raging furiously, destroying everything it came in contact with; horses, barns, cattle, everything is lost to settler and farmer who are in the track of the destroying element. In the peat country the fire will linger much

longer than on the prairies, and do much more damage, as it destroys the earth.

The Forest Fires In Michigan — Their Extent — The Refugees at Port Huron (from the Detroit Post)

The counties of Huron and Sanilac, which constitute the principal scene of the fire, contain about 24,000 inhabitants. Of these it is believed that 10,000 are already rendered homeless. They have lost their houses, their barns, their mills, even their clothing. Some of them almost literally have to commence the world over again, being nearly as naked as when they were born. The people of Port Hudson are in constant receipts of messages asking for provisions and clothing, and the victims of the fire are still flocking in from the interior to the towns on the shore. Already the towns of Verona, New River, Sand Beach, Huron City, a portion of Port Hope, Crescent, Centre Harbor, Elm Creek, White Rock, Paris, Crows, Minden, Forrestville, and the Polish settlement near Forrestville, have been destroyed; those on the lake to the very water's edge, as the docks in many instances have been swept away. These towns represent a population of at least 6,000 people. The loss of property in these towns amounts directly, without doubt, from \$1,500,000 to \$2,000,000, at a very low calculation, and not including lumber and timber destroyed. The vaguest guess work only could estimate the loss of property in the interior. Some of the people, burned out of house and home, were substantial farmers, showing that the fire has swept over the cleared and cultivated districts, as well as through the woods.

Port Huron is already a hospital for the maimed and an asylum for the destitute. Thompson's Hall, a long low attic in a wooden building on Sixth Street, is the rendezvous of the poor wretches brought in here from the north, in tugs, steamboats and scows. Thence after their primary necessities are attended to they are distributed to the care of private families. The number is destined to be larger, and the hospitality of the people of Port Huron is likely to be stretched to the utmost. Last night I visited this Hall. Three or four bedsteads had been put up, and half a dozen or more straw beds were laid on the floor. On these were stretched in rows, 30 or 40 people, being the last cargo of wretchedness brought into the town. Men, women and children, the latter ranging from a dozen years of age to the sucking babe, were lying in rows. They were nearly all in sound sleep wearied out in their prolonged exertions in fighting the fire, in fleeing from it, in standing in the cold water of the lake hour after hour. Several of them apparently were kept awake by their pain; their hands or fingers, or eyes or ears were bandaged, the fire having often blistered them, and in some cases burned their feet to a crisp. The effect of the smoke upon the eyes and lungs is particularly severe.

The Pandemic Reader

By Ed Forrester

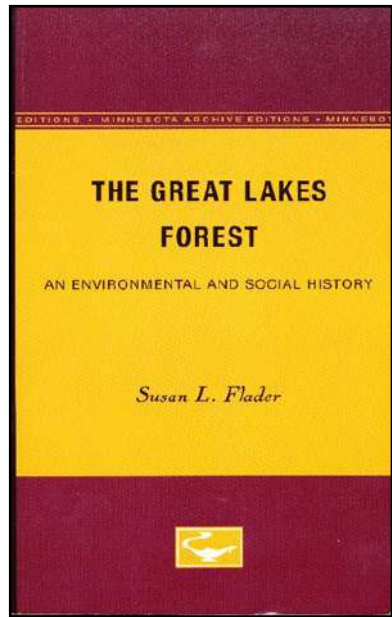
With the social distancing brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic many people are reading a lot more, we hope that some of that reading relates to forest history of Wisconsin or the Lake States. As we churn through the various books there are times when we exhaust our inventory of good books and we look around for the next one.

To help the members of the Forest History Association of Wisconsin we will open our *Chips and Sawdust* newsletter to suggestions from you! What have you read or what are you reading that you like? The suggestion does not have to be complicated or a great drain on your time, even just a title and a paragraph about the book will do.

To kick this initiative off I offer my best book of 2020. This book, *The Great Lakes Forest*, is an environmental and social history published in 1983 by the University of Minnesota Press in cooperation with the national Forest History Society was a very pleasant surprise. A surprise because I had not seen any reports on it over the many years and a surprise in how well it encompassed a complicated history in under 350 pages.

It begins with a description of the forest that was seen by the very first Europeans who traversed the lake states and moves through the impacts of humans on it. Other chapters focus on the Menomonie experience, the lumbering era, changing land use the evolution toward agriculture and the industrialization of forest product production.

The authors involved include famous names in forest history such as Charles Twining and James Willard Hurst plus newer experts such as Richard Skok of the University of Minneso-



ta. All in all, it is a great read, and one that you will make a note to revisit as it will serve many as an excellent reference as the years go by. If your library does not have the book I am sure they can order it for you.

We sure do want to hear from you on your best forest history read of the year! Send your short write up to thefhaw@gmail.com

Get Involved: Join a Committee And Make a Difference

If you're looking to get the most out of your FHAW membership, then consider joining one of our committees. In addition to providing valuable networking opportunities, these committees serve as a forum where individuals can share best practices and make a difference in the success of our Association.

Contact Ed Forrester to learn how you can join a committee. Assistance is needed with finance, special events, publications, membership and marketing. ed@theforresters.net

46th Fall Conference Committee
(Peshtigo, Wisconsin)

John Grosman
Cathi Malke
Chuck Gardon
Mike Flogert
Janet Seymour
Don Schnitzler

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47th Fall Conference Committee
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Bob Walkner
Jerry Theide

Nominations Committee

John Grosman
Ed Forrester

Membership Committee

Bob Walkner
Tom Jerow
Jane Severt

Archives Committee

Joe Hermolin
John Grosman
Jim Bokern
Matt Blessing
Neil Prendergast
Ricky Kubicek
Don Schnitzler
Brad Casselberry
Neil Prendergast

Finance Committee

Bob Walkner
Arno Helm
George Shinnars
Ed Forrester
Don Schnitzler

Exhibits & Annual Proceedings

Don Schnitzler

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)	Other Contributions:
_____ Individual Membership (\$20.00)	
_____ Family Membership (\$30.00)	\$ _____ Student Awards
_____ Non Profit Membership (\$30.00)	\$ _____ Capital Fund
_____ Corporate Membership (\$55.00)	\$ _____ Operations
_____ Individual Life Membership (\$250.00)	

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





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