

## 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

Thursday - Monday  
Noon to 4pm  
Open Memorial Day  
Weekend  
through 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](mailto:Info@polkcountymuseum.org)

HANDICAP ACCESSIBLE  
ELEVATOR FOR ALL  
THREE FLOORS  
AIR CONDITIONED



## this issue

From the Director's Desk **P.1**

Scholarship Winner Announced **P.2**

Museum News **P.3**

History Highlight - Water Pageant **P.4**

## From the Director's Desk

We are open and the 2021 season is off to a great start. We had a successful opening weekend with over 100 visitors.

I would like to invite everyone to visit the museum this season. Exciting new and remodeled exhibits have given the museum a new look for you to enjoy.

The new exhibit to the museum features the Polk County Ledger Press newspaper history. We also updated the Military Room with two new WWII exhibits. The museum underwent rearrangement of several other exhibits including the law library, early kitchen, hardware store and many others. Also, new this season, we will be offering private guided tours that will feature specific exhibits. These tours will be promoted on Facebook, Instagram and on our website.

Our events this season will kick off with the Balsam Lake Freedom Fest. We will be serving root beer floats on the front yard on Saturday and Sunday. Our Pioneer Schooling sessions are taking place at the Lanesdale school, and we will be hosting our Halloween Trick or Treating event. A large event fundraiser is planned for the Fall. Follow us on Facebook and Instagram for more information on these events.

Come visit this beautiful historic 1899 building that houses an enormous collection of Polk County history and artifacts that the Polk County Historical Society has been working on since 1937. We are always looking for help; please contact us if you have an interest in volunteering.

Donations are much needed to continue our work at the museum and I would like encourage you all to become a member of the Polk County Historical Society to help preserve the past for future generations.

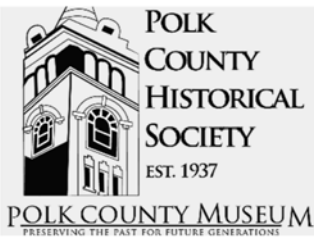
*Leslie Waggoner*

Polk County Museum Executive Director

Check out our  
website!

[www.PolkCountyMuseum.org](http://www.PolkCountyMuseum.org)

Follow us on Facebook and Instagram!



**MUSEUM DIRECTOR**

Leslie Waggoner

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

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Board President

Bernie Desmarais  
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Tom Magnafici

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Larry Smetak

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Sharon Kelly

**Board Meetings are held the 1st Thursday of the month.**

# 2021 Scholarship Award

On May 19, the Polk County Historical Society awarded Oscar Lahti of Frederic High school a \$1,000 scholarship. Oscar joined President, Greta Palmberg, and board member, Ruth Mugerauer, at the museum for a tour and the presentation of the scholarship. Oscar will be attending the University of St. Thomas to study Actuarial Science.



This year's scholarship essay: Choose a significant event that happened in 2020 and compare it with an historical event that happened at least 50 years ago. Oscar's essay is on display at the museum along with the three runners-up. The Polk County Historical Society offers a \$1000 scholarship every year to a high school student that plans to attend a post-secondary school. The essay question is selected by the Society's Scholarship Committee. Applications are sent to all Polk County high schools in the spring.

## History Highlight

### First Annual Balsam Lake Water Pageant August 25 and 26, 1950

The first Balsam Lake Queen was crowned in August of 1950, which instituted the future of what we are familiar with as the Freedom Fest. The first Water Pageant was hosted at the Balsam Lake Aqua Theatre (now the beach area). The contestants were judged on their presentation of evening gowns, swim wear, and answering a question.

They held a water sports show including swimming races, canoe tilting, diving exhibitions, water skiing, log rolling, and bait casting stunts, as well as motorboat races, and a fishing contest. The events were broadcast live over WCCO radio. A floating parade showcased the contestants around Balsam Bay (now Town Bay). A Tourist Queen was also crowned honoring a summer vacationing resident.

**August 31, 1950 Polk County Ledger article**

Over seven thousand persons attended the first annual Water Pageant at the Balsam Lake Aqua Theatre on the shores of the bay here Friday and Saturday and saw Cedric Adams place the crown of the Pageant Queen upon Miss Iris Cox, 17-year-old Lykens farm girl.

Miss Cox, Daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Elmer Cox, was selected from 17 candidates from the Balsam Lake area. Chosen b the judges as her attendants were Miss Esther Randall, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Wm. Randall of Fox Creek and Miss Mildred Rohde, formerly of Shell Lake but now employed here in the county clerk's office. The queen was sponsored by the Polk County Farm Bureau. She is employed at Minnesota Mining Co., St. Paul during the week and spends the weekends on the Cox 240 acre farm. While both Friday and Saturday drew a goodly  
*(The article continues on the back page)*



A photo of the first Water Pageant Queen of Balsam Lake, Iris Cox.



A photo of the first Tourist Queen of Balsam Lake, Ginny Evans.

# Museum News

## Pioneer School Sessions are back!

The Polk County Historical Society will be hosting two three-day sessions to children aged 6-14, August 3-5 and August 10-12 at the restored Polk County Lanesdale rural school located in Balsam Lake. The class day will begin at 10 am and conclude at 2 pm. Children are being asked to dress in 1900's clothing and to bring a lunch in a basket, pail or handkerchief with a drink in a lidded glass jar. Clothing and lunch pails are available to borrow. The children will experience reading, writing and arithmetic lessons as taught 100 years ago. There will also be lots of old-fashioned games, stories, music, and a tour of the Polk County Museum. There is a cost of \$35 per student. Scholarships to attend a session are available. For more information call Leslie, Museum Director at 715-485-9269 or to sign up the registration form is available online at [polkcountymuseum.org/new-events](http://polkcountymuseum.org/new-events). Registration must be completed by Monday, July 26 and can be dropped off at the museum, mailed or emailed.



## Museum Operations

We are open! Our new entrance is in the lower level of the museum. Start your tour of the museum with the history of the over 125 year old County Ledger Press newspaper.



To introduce and call attention to our new entrance. We have a new sign and now open flags to welcome and direct our visitor in the right direction.



Volunteer, Pamm Torrence planted flowers around the museum in preparation for the summer season and our opening weekend.



Come visit us at this year's Polk County Fair, July 29-August 1. We will have a display near the Little Red School house.



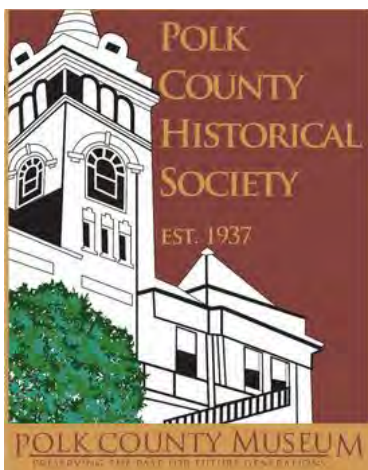
Fred C. and Katherine B. Andersen Foundation

## Grant Announcement

The Polk County Historical Society successfully submitted and received two grants this Spring. A \$1,000 grant was received from Polk Burnett Operation Round-Up. The funds received from this grant were used to purchase new shelving to store archive storage boxes. The Society also received a \$10,000 grant from the Fred C. and Katherine B. Andersen Foundation. These funds are being used for operation costs. In addition, we have received numerous private donations that have allowed us to install new window tinting to reduce cooling costs and protect our artifacts.

## Become a Member

Please consider joining or renewing your membership to the Polk County Historical Society. The PCHS is a non-profit organization which relies on gifts, grants, donations and annual memberships for its financial stability. Mail to P.O. Box 41, Balsam Lake, WI 54810 or click on our "Donate" button on our website ([polkcountymuseum.org](http://polkcountymuseum.org)) to sign up for membership. 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.



(Article cont. from pg. 2)

number of spectators to view the water sports and motor boat races, the Saturday afternoon events and Saturday evening's program drew the best. Saturday night the sloping amphitheater shores of Balsam Lake were packed.

Cedric Adams, WCCO and CBS commentator and television personality, entertained the crowd following the water sports with "victims" from the audience, including Balsam Lake Mayor Holmberg, Adams proved himself the versatile emcee.

The queen candidates were of course, all lovely in their evening gowns as they were interviewed by Adams and presented to the audience. In the selection of the queen and her two attendants, Adams was assisted by Ted Hagg of Sarona and Murray Dawson of Balsam Lake.

The floating parade around Balsam Bay at 10:30 was composed of beautifully decorated and novel floats built around boats and barges. First prize went to Indianhead Lodge for its decorated barge on which Toby Brown and his orchestra were playing; Sportsman's Bar was awarded second place for their float in which two boats supported a large platform on which a tepee was erected and Chief Mike Moose of the local tribe sat before a real campfire smoking his pipe of peace. Pine Bourgh decorated a float. Perry Mound's float was third and Emil Gehrke's float placed 4th.



A photo of the candidates from the swim wear portion of the competition.



The candidates receive some "nautical instruction" from the admirals of the Balsam Lake Pageant Navy, as published in the Sunday edition of the Pioneer Press in 1950.

### **Fishing Contest**

In Friday morning's fishing contest, Edward Maxa of Berwyn placed in the bass class with a four pound bass and Harmon Gore won in the northern class with a 5 pound 7 ounce fish. Rev. Clifford Nelson, Minneapolis and Balsam Lake summer resident, took the prizes in the panfish division with a one pound crappie and 7 ounce sunfish. Vince Martinson, who announced the two-day fete donated his services for the event. He is a Twin Cities announcer. Nell Binkley, Balsam Lake coach, was in charge of the water sports.

### **Tourist Queen Selected**

Selected as the Tourist Queen Friday evening was Miss Ginny Evans of St. Paul. The candidates were all from outside the Balsam Lake area as an honor to the many folks who vacation here. Miss Evans was chosen by a committee of three mayors: Hjamer Holmberg, Balsam Lake; Harry Pomeroy, St. Croix Falls, and Lloyd Christenson, Amery. Following the coronation ceremonies, the Queen's Dance was held at the school auditorium.

### **Adams stalls broadcast**

For the first time since he's been on the air, Adams was unable to start his 10:00 o'clock news broadcast Saturday night with his usual manuscripts. Instead, Adams filled in with a short description of the pageant and some remarks about Balsam Lake until the typewritten copies of his news reached him. The teletype machine that received the news from Minneapolis was in the Lutheran Church and somehow or other the copy of the news didn't get from the church to the speakers stand at the beach in time.

The water sports were all highly entertaining and provided a good show all the way from swimming races, canoe tilting and diving exhibitions to water skiing, log rolling and bait casting stunts.

Gene Chapman, secretary of the Balsam Lake Commercial Club, was chairman of the pageant and managed the event with its many details, from the day of its inception the middle of July, only a month before.

### **Amateur Boat Racers**

In the amateur boat racing contest, the winners were: 1 ½ H.P. Motors - Terry Kiessling, first; Rolfe Nelson, second. 16 H.P. - Robert Holin, first; Carl Nelson, second; Clem Nelson, third. 10 H.P. - Russell Hermstad, first; Jerry Kuny, second; Butternut Lodge, third. 5 H.P. - Carl George, first; Eugene Ausen, second; Allan Paulsen, third.

### **Swimming Winners**

Winners in the swimming contest were: Boys, 12 and under: Jon Weber, first; Allan Paulsen, second; Larry Jensen, third. Girls, 12 year and older - Mary Moore, first; Connie Hoskins, second; Charlene Wedlund, third. Boys, 12 years and older - Bob Nybo, first; Eugene Ausen, second; Chester Jensen, third. Free for all - Bob Nybo, first; Eugene Ausen, second; John Weber, third.

### **Casting Contest**

In the bait casting contest, Traffic Officer Dick Miller won the South Benner casting rod.