

SPRING 2024

The New

COMPLIMENTARY COMMUNITY MAGAZINE



IN THIS ISSUE:

Boom Lake History
St. Patty's Day Parade
Artistic Alchemy

... **and more!**

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Stephanie's Spring Strawberry Swirl

By Christian Bovet

Embrace the arrival of spring with this vibrant and flavorful cocktail, the "Spring Strawberry Swirl." This delightful drink combines the sweet tang of fresh strawberries, the tartness of rhubarb, Irish Cream and a touch of Caribbean rum, creating a perfectly balanced and refreshing beverage.

Ingredients

1 oz Strawberry Real Puree
1 oz Fruitful Rhubarb
2 oz Plantation Silver Rum
(or any white rum)

1 oz Five Farms Irish
Cream Liqueur
Club Soda

In a tall glass, add the following in this order:
Real Strawberry Puree
Fruitful Rhubarb
Five Farms Irish Cream

Now, fill the glass with ice and Plantation Silver Rum.

Top with Club Soda, and garnish with a strawberry or any other fruit that makes you smile!

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Well, goodbye weird winter, and hello to an early spring. As I look out onto the river, the wildlife and the trees seem to be unfazed. They are all going about their business as if nothing bad happened at all. Maybe we can all take a lesson from nature. No matter what happens, let's keep moving forward. Let's try to be resilient, go with the flow. Everything will be alright.

So this spring, I am going to try to relax and have more fun. Get out in the sun more, swim, hike and bike more. Enjoy the nature around me and realize that everything will be alright.

I hope you enjoy this issue. It includes some history from Kerry Bloedorn of Boom Lake and early logging in Rhineland. Dan Hagen tells us about Camp 10. Amanda Anderson tells us about several creative women in the Northwoods. And, as always, please frequent the businesses that support this publication.

Happy spring,



Jaclene Tetzlaff
Publisher
The New North Magazine

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CONTRIBUTORS



1. JACLENE TETZLAFF
Editor, Publisher, Sales



2. ANDREW EGAN
Graphic Designer



3. KERRY BLOEDORN
Feature Writer, Historian



4. TOM BARNETT
Designer, Illustrator



5. DAN HAGEN
Feature Writer

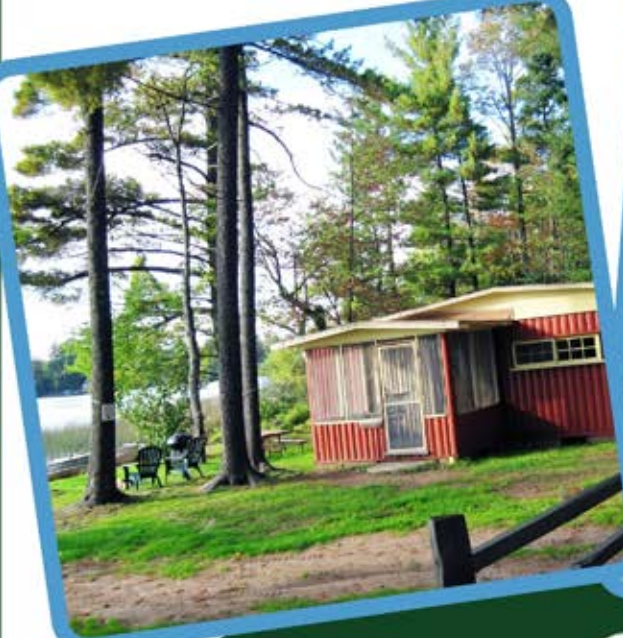


6. JANET JAMISON
Positively Rhinelander



7. AMANDA ANDERSON
Poetry and Feature Writer

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Boom Lake

THE BROWNS

THE FOUNDING OF RHINELANDER

by Kerry Bloedorn

Spring is a great time of year to talk about the Wisconsin logging boom and how it shaped the founding of Rhinelander. Snow is melting, and the waters are high on the Wisconsin River and its tributaries. During this season, it's easy to see the reasons why Rhinelander became a logging boom town, laying the foundation for the city it is today.

Prior to the 1850s, no serious logging had been done on the upper Wisconsin River north of Grandfather Bull Falls, between current-day Merrill and Tomahawk. From the source of the Wisconsin River at Lac View Desert to Grandfather Falls, the upper Wisconsin was a tumultuous stretch of water, its course a boulder-strewn torrent made up of a series of rapids that made driving logs difficult, if not impossible, certainly not feasible by the industrial logging standard of the mid-1800s.

The first logging north of Merrill, then called Jenny, Wisconsin, was done around 1856 near present-day Eagle River by Fox and Helms Company. The first log drive down the river was an absolute disaster that took months of work, was twice abandoned, and ended with a death. If the upper Wisconsin was to be logged, the river needed serious "improvement."

Consider that no roads or railroads had been built into the area yet, and the only way to bring timber to sawmills was by floating them down rivers. In 1857, the Wisconsin River Improvement Company, owned by lumber magnates from Wausau and Stevens Point, received permission through an act of the Wisconsin State legislature to "improve" the upper Wisconsin River, which is to say, do whatever necessary to allow the passage of logs and lumber rafts down the river.

The work done by the Wisconsin River Improvement Company involved widening the river, blasting rocks, and building dams that would allow a head of water to be built up, so logs and lumber rose over rapids and other impediments along the river. One such rapids was located just above the confluence of the Wisconsin and Pelican Rivers. Prior to 1850, the area at the Pelican and Wisconsin River junction was an intermittent campsite used by Native Americans for hundreds, possibly thousands of years. A well-worn foot trail, later known as the Ontonagon Trail, traveled from the Rib Mountain area to Lake Superior, crossing the Pelican River at its junction with the Wisconsin, and traversing the future site of Rhinelander. The Ojibwe people that had migrated into Northern Wisconsin in the 1700s, pushing out Santee Sioux tribes that had

inhabited the area previously, called the area around the junction "Zhedegizhiiwan," translated as Pelican Rapids. Early explorers to the area also translated it as "big rapids." One of the lakes that feeds the Pelican River was called "Zhedeg-zaaga'iganiing" or "place of the pelican." These places gave the future site of Rhinelander the name Pelican Rapids to early trappers, voyagers, and lumbermen.

The Wisconsin River above Rhinelander is a twisting channel that flows through thousands of acres of wetlands. All of its water has to flow through a narrow channel of rock at the top of the Pelican Rapids, which caused the river to back up into a small tributary we know today as Lake Creek. This backflow caused a small cattail-choked lake to form, surrounded by swamp land, that the Ojibwe called Fish Lake. It was all of these natural features that set Pelican Rapids up to become the future logging boom town of Rhinelander.

Around 1871, a 21-year-old Anderson Brown and one of his father's friends, a Civil War vet and Union Army cavalryman turned woodsman, Anson P. Vaughn, traveled up river on a timber cruising mission in search of business opportunities for the family's growing lumber company. After taking a stagecoach from their home in Stevens Point, to Jenny, now Merrill, they purchased a birch bark canoe and continued up the mighty Wisconsin. Portaging a number of gnarly rapids along the way, they reached the bottom of Pelican Rapids at the junction of the Pelican and Wisconsin Rivers, approximately 100 miles north of Stevens Point.

The men stayed at a small river station called "Riversides," owned by John Curran, who had set up shop there some years before. Upon exploring the area above the confluence, Anderson found an uncut tract of pine timber along the banks of the Wisconsin and Pelican rivers that was 18 by 40 miles in size, and estimated to contain a billion feet of logs. The remains of those towering pine groves would later become Shepard and Pioneer Park. The small lake above the rapids could be raised with a dam and would be perfect for storing logs coming down the river. The most





Lumber down in Rhinelander destined for southern markets below the first Davenport Street Bridge



Boom workers on Boom Lake in the 1900s

attractive part of the place was the Pelican Rapids themselves, which would allow for a water power plant to be built and operate sawmills. Anderson, or Andy as he was known, envisioned a lumber town springing up at the site.

The sandy ground between the Pelican and Wisconsin would indeed become the city of Rhinelander.

Andy would return to the locale many times in the following years, each time sizing up its prospects and planning the birth of a city in his mind. The argument he brought home, of purchasing the property, was a hard one for his father Edward, who was on the relatively safe side of the lumber business, not in the speculation of starting towns in the Wisconsin wilderness. Until then, it was the course of the railroads that dictated the sites of towns, and whether they lived and thrived, and their routes into the north country had not been set yet. The gamble was too risky for prudent Edward Dexter Brown. And so Anderson's idea of a mill town would wait.

Although Webster was the younger brother to Anderson, it was Web who held the most sway with their father. Where Anderson was tenacious and prone to adventure, Webster was more studious and careful. One summer while Webster was home from college at UW Madison, he accompanied his brother on a

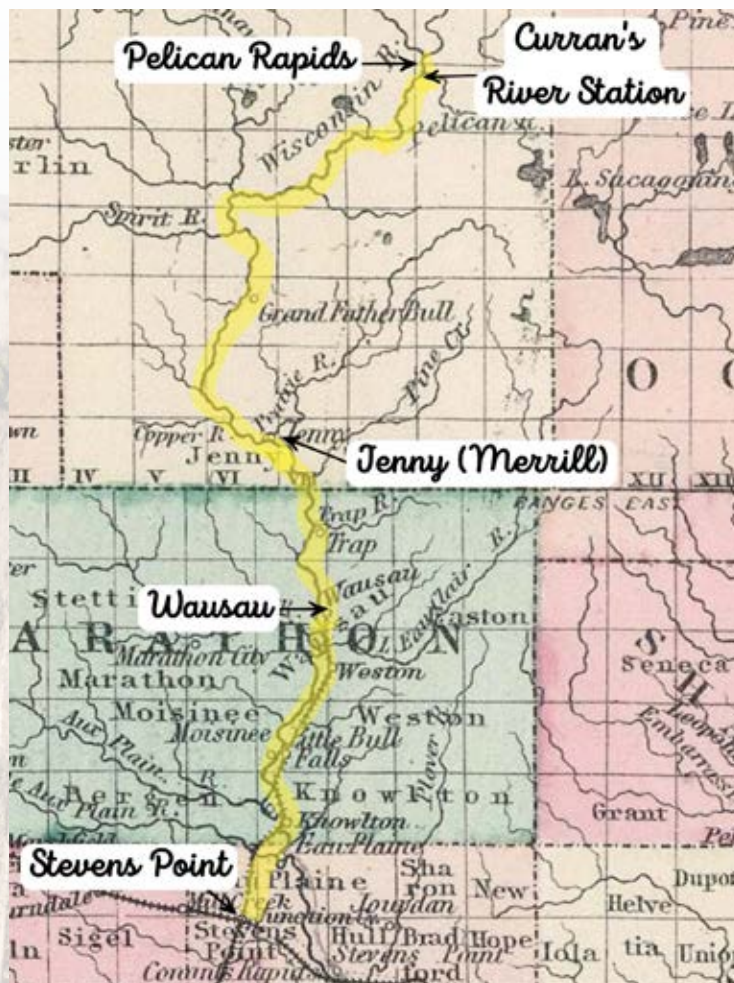
land-looking trip to the Pelican Rapids area. Anderson had done much work taking notes of properties and listing the good tracts of timber. Upon their return, Webster's positive review of the area began to change Edwards' mind

with regards to purchasing the lands.

Anderson and Webster pooled their money together and took a proposal to their father. They also included their uncle Thomas Anderson in the deal to purchase 1500 acres at the Wisconsin and Pelican River confluence, each man owning one-quarter interest. The land was purchased in 1875, and in 1878, Edward, and his two sons would buy out their uncle, securing the future site of the Village of Rhinelander.

In 1875, Anderson and Webster formed the Brown Brothers Lumber Company. First building a planing mill near their father's rough-cut mill in Stevens Point. They later expanded, building a rough-cut sawmill of their own. The railroad had only reached Stevens Point in 1873, and the Brown Brothers began taking full advantage of shipping their lumber by rail to markets around the

Midwest. Previously lumber was rafted from the Brown mill to markets as far away as St. Louis, with Anderson making one such trip as early as 16 years old. Becoming adept at the lumber business, the brothers knew the railroad would be the key to the dream of a new community



at Pelican Rapids.

The brothers watched closely as the Milwaukee, Lakeshore, and Western Railroad laid tracks north from Milwaukee to Appleton and on to New London, Wisconsin. The plan was to continue up through Antigo and on to a place called Monico Junction, just 16 miles east of the Brown land holdings at Pelican Rapids. In 1878, the Browns approached the railroad, attempting to persuade them to reroute through Pelican Rapids, citing the freight volume expected from the upcoming lumber boom town. The railroad initially declined, but after years of negotiation, the M, L, & W Railroad made a final offer. In exchange for half the Browns' lands at Pelican Rapids, and exclusive rail service rights, they would build a spur from Monico Junction to the Brown site. A deal was struck on May 12, 1881, with a promise to complete the spur by November 1882.

1882 marked a significant year for the Browns' emerging town. Anderson and Webster welcomed a new partner, their younger brother Edward O. Brown, a recent graduate of West Point. Before the railroad reached Rhinelander, Milwaukee, Lakeshore, and Western Railroad engineers planned the new Village of Rhinelander, naming streets after themselves, such as Young Street and Thayer Street. The first train arrived in Rhinelander on November 7, 1882. The construction of the new town commenced in earnest, evolving from a tent city to frame buildings seemingly overnight. The sound of the sawmill closely followed.

The Brown Brothers shifted their business dealings to Rhinelander, constructing a large sawmill in 1883. Lots along the eastern shore of Boom Lake were designated for sawmills, and in a short time, more than half a dozen mills occupied the area, spanning from the current dam at Phillip Street up to current Hwy W, covering the land that now includes Wisconsin Avenue, Lake Shore Drive, and Hodag Park neighborhoods today.

Between 1882 and 1890, Rhinelander experienced tremendous growth. The overlap of log driving and railroad service brought thousands of loggers in and out of the town, turning it into a proverbial boom town with dirt streets, boardwalks, and swinging saloon doors during its peak. The period from 1880 to 1900 is considered the golden era of Northern Wisconsin logging, and Rhinelander played a significant role in that history. The Brown family encouraged friends and neighbors from Stevens Point to join them in the new frontier town, resulting in the migration of prominent businessmen and residents northward. By 1900, almost 5000 people were living in Rhinelander. In a short time, Pelican Rapids transformed from Wisconsin wilderness to the bustling town of Rhinelander, primarily due to the efforts of the Browns and the logging boom.



A section of the Pelican Rapids

Zhedegzhiiwan

The Ojibwe word for Pelican Rapids, gave the future site of Rhinelander its earliest name. One of the lakes that feeds the Pelican River was known as Zhedeg-zaaga'ig-aniing, translating to, "place of the pelican", and known today as Pelican Lake. White Pelicans were found to have been nesting in the area by the Ojibwe people. These place names may be the oldest in Oneida County. White Pelicans have been spotted on Pelican Lake in the last decade, as they expand their range back into the great lakes region once again.

The Brown Family

The Brown family originally came to America by way of Baptist minister Chad Brown, who came to North America from England in 1633 and settled in the colony of Massachusetts Bay. Later, the family moved to Rhode Island. By the Browns sixth generation in America, a branch of the Browns were living in New York state. From this family came Edward Dexter Brown, born in Southfield, Oneida County, NY on June 14th, 1824. In 1846, two years before Wisconsin became a state, a 22 year old Ed Brown bought 120 acres at \$1.25 an acre near the tiny town of Lake Mills, Wisconsin. An attempt to carve out a farm there ended in failure, as he returned to New York, citing rugged conditions, primitive roads that didn't allow him to get his products to market, and brutal swarms of mosquitoes. While building up a successful farm in New York, Edward and his wife Helen Margaret nee' Anderson had 4 children; Anderson Wesley 1849, Webster Everett, 1851, Frank 1853, and their first daughter Emma in 1855. In 1856, Edward sold his lucrative farm and headed again to Wisconsin, this time purchasing a small sawmill on the Plover River two miles from Stevens Point. Edward Dexter Brown built up a sizable business dealing in timber lands, and logging, and once again farming. His eldest sons Anderson and Webster went to work for the family business, learning the trades at a young age, and setting them up for future success on the upper Wisconsin River.



Riversides John Curran's Home

Eugene Simeon Shepard

A year before Anderson Brown first visited the site that would become Rhinelander, Gene Shepard of Hodag fame was working as a young surveyors apprentice with A.A. Webber of New London. He had this to say about his early visit:

"Away back in 1870, A. A. Weber of New London rescued this writer from a job on a farm and made him into a cruiser, cook, compass man, beast of burden and canoe man. After traveling up the Wisconsin River to Eagle River, we returned and arrived at what was then called Pelican Rapids and camped on the poplar grove point at the mouth of Lake Creek where Tolman and Conro (later) built their sawmill. I came down and explored the flat country where the city now stands. The land was covered with a thick growth of jack pine and larger long-slim norway. Mr. John C. Curran had settled at the mouth of the Pelican River some 16 (actually 11) years before and had a clearing made where the City park (Shepard Park) now stands. He was engaged in buying furs from the Indians and, in a small way, logging in company with L. S. Coon (Cohn) of Wausau and Berlin. About a dozen yoke of oxen were grazing around the country and about a dozen families of Indians were living in teepees around the place. Martin Lynch lived down the river a mile or so. He and Mr. Curran were the only white men living on the river between Eagle River and Grandfather Falls at the time." - Excerpt from History of Lincoln, Oneida, and Vilas Counties, 1924.

The Site before the City

"According to several first-hand observers, the business district was originally a high sand flat covered with blueberry bushes, jackpine and a few larger scrubs. On the west bank of the Wisconsin, where the Rhinelander paper mill would stand, was a tamarack swamp. North above the rapids and south by the Pelican-Wisconsin junction, including most of what is now the city's south side, lay magnificent stands of white and norway pine. What remained of the south side pines after settlement would become two parks: Shepard Park on the west end by the river junc-

tion and Pioneer Park overlooking a crook of the Pelican River to the east. An old cloth map showed a lake on the site of Pelham Street and the South Park School. A large pond occupied what would be the intersection of Lincoln and Anderson Streets with Oneida Avenue, the busiest junction of highways in the county. Beyond what would be Stevens Street on the east edge of Rhinelander's shopping district, heavy timber ranged clear to the swamps that would cut off further expansion on much of the city's east side. Where a wilderness clearing broke the dense forest, the Oneida County courthouse would one day stand.



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The east-west ridge where Frederick Street would run, separating the north side from the east side and downtown area, was mantled every spring by great splashes of arbutus. It grew so thickly thereabouts that Arbutus Street would be named for it. Northwest of the shopping district was a swampy lowland where Hungry Hollow would see boom and bust. Boom Lake, the great storage pond of Rhinelander's logging days, hardly existed at all. Until the first dam partially created it, there was only a backwater lagoon surrounded by flat wooded swamps. It was fed by Lake Creek, a small channel choked with rushes and willows which meandered on to the Wisconsin River. Throughout the Rhinelander area, springs welled up through the soil. The most prominent one, located on a hill flank of the future city's north side, would be known as Taylor's Spring. Enclosed by two rivers and swamp belts, the Rhinelander locale was like a sandy high-ground island."

Excerpt from T.V. Olsen's *Birth of a City*, 1983.

The Dam

During one of Anderson Brown's visits to their land holdings at Pelican Rapids in 1878, he was angered to find a dam had been built at the spot he had planned one. Logging interests from Eagle River had long been thwarted by the rocky stretch called Pelican Rapids. The dam was built to assist floating logs over those rapids, although done illegally, and with both ends of the dam touching Brown property. There is conflicting historical information about where exactly this first dam was placed, some saying it was at the current location of the Davenport Street bridge, and some saying at the current crossing of Phillip Street. Wherever it had been placed, this rock, log, and mud dam had been built, and raised the water in Fish Lake, causing it to form into a good boom water for logging operations, and flooding out some of the Brown's timberlands. Anderson made a trip up to Eagle River to confront the organizers of the dam project, and demanded they pay a fee for its use, and a toll for every log sluiced through it to that point. The men in Eagle River said they'd just as soon blow it up then pay the tolls. Anderson sent word to his brother Webster in Stevens Point who brought a wagon up to the dam with a family friend, Alva Leadbetter, a brute of a man weighing 300lbs. They set up camp on the dam and guarded it at gunpoint, not allowing any logs to pass before a deal could be made. Nevertheless, the dam was maintained, and not blown up, and in 1883 was replaced by an improved structure, the second dam at the site.

Rhinelander Named

First called Pelican Rapids, Rhinelander was named after the president of the Milwaukee, Lakeshore, and Western Railroad, Frederick W. Rhinelander. The Brown family that developed the Town of Pelican, petitioned the railroad to build a spur from their northerly headed railroad

from Monico Junction, to the fledgling boomtown, in exchange for land holdings in the area of Pelican Rapids, and the honor of having the new village named after him. The Browns hoped by naming the new country after an influential railroad owner, he would take some interest in it and help it grow. Unfortunately he did not. Although he had visited the city on at least two occasions while inspecting his new rail line, he sold the company to the Chicago Northwestern 10 years after Rhinelander's founding, and never returned. The Browns' gamble of enticing the rail spur to Rhinelander paid off, for in later years, the route through Rhinelander became the main trunk railroad continuing north to Lake Superior, and the line through Monico Junction was used less and less.

Boom Lake Named

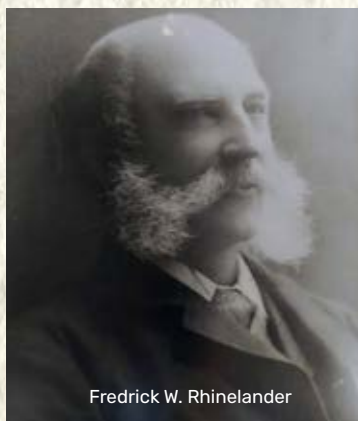
In 1882, The Pelican Boom Company was incorporated by the Brown Brothers to deal with the seemingly endless supply of logs floating down the Wisconsin River through their toll dam. A boom, or boimage, is a string of large logs connected together with chains to create a floating fence or corral, used to keep loosely floating logs in a particular area. Logs floating down the Wisconsin River from numerous logging camps north, were boomed at Rhinelander, giving its lake the name Boom Lake. Boomage workers would inspect the ends of each log, looking for a stamp hammer mark placed on the logs while decked in the logging camp, much like a cattle brand, and used to determine who owned which logs. Logs destined for mills down river were let to pass and recorded for a toll. Logs destined for the new sawmills along the banks of Boom Lake, were sorted and boomed accordingly.



Webster Brown



Anderson Brown



Fredrick W. Rhinelander



Gene Shepard



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Artistic

A L C H E M Y

by Amanda Anderson

Artistic Alchemy is a local collaboration project of artists who aim to bring a sense of magic and play back into the busy lives of those in this area and beyond. The stresses of adulthood have caused many of us to shy away from things like dress-up, dancing, and experiences that bring us a pure sense of joy — but this group desires to change that. Artistic Alchemy's primary focus is to create a space where individuals can truly express themselves, embrace their uniqueness, and connect with like-minded people who share a passion for creativity. Through their immersive photo shoot packages, they aim to capture the essence of their clients' manifestations, and thus create extraordinary and memorable moments.

Artistic Alchemy is currently made up of a team of four talented professionals; Shelley Novotony, Shakti artist, who brings your vision to life as a designer and intuitive stylist, EmilyMae King-Ryder, creative guide and client liaison, bringing the energy together while serving you, Christina Bayer, makeup specialist, who sees your inner beauty and brings it to the surface through the enhancement of your physical appearance, and Amanda Anderson, professional photographer who captures your soul's essence through her lens.



Each of these women have experienced the depths of personal growth within their individual journeys, as life has brought them both happiness and hardship. They have each known the disillusionment that comes with transitioning from childhood to adulthood and have had to fight to keep imagination and play alive as the years have gone on. They are warrior women who desire to bring their individual gifts and experiences together and alchemize them into something full of meaning and beauty. The word alchemize means to “transform

IN A WORLD SATURATED WITH "FILTERED PERFECTION," THE ARTISTIC ALCHEMISTS ASPIRE TO GUIDE YOU AWAY FROM MASKS.....



the nature or properties of (something) by a seemingly magical process,” and thus has birthed their first photo experience package, “The Magick Experience.”

The Magick Experience is an all-inclusive, completely real photo shoot, where these alchemist women don’t just capture beautiful images — they strive to photograph the essence of your manifestation. Whether you envision yourself as a mythical creature, a powerful warrior, a whimsical fairy, a character in a Halloween horror, or a woman with galactic wanderlust, they will go above and beyond to create a visual representation that is truly exceptional.

Each time Artistic Alchemy comes together to create for themselves and for clients, they always experience something new. There is fresh laughter, taking in the clean air of nature, and a new level of each person’s innate essence discovered through the process.

In a world saturated with “filtered perfection,” The Artistic Alchemists aspire to guide you away from masks, encouraging you to embrace the inner Magick within. They believe in this not simply for the fun of it, but also the mental health aspect. As the alchemist women have found what makes them tick, they want to encourage others to find the things that bring them life, joy, and a sense of peace and contentment. The world is struggling in this area more than ever, and it is so crucial to cheer one another on to pursue what makes them feel alive.





THE WORD ALCHEMIZE
MEANS TO “TRANSFORM
OR PROPERTIES OF (SO)
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Their unique package provides a glimpse into your authentic sacred self, capturing the essence of soulfulness. Whether you’d like a special experience for a Personal Milestone (Birthday, Graduation), a Spiritual and Wellness Retreat, an Empowerment Workshop, a Women’s Circle, Alternative Bridal Experience (Bridal Shower, Bachelorette Party, Artistic or Cultural Festivals, Corporate Team Building, Art and Fashion Events ... or just a time spent solo or with the besties ... the list is endless for what they offer!

But Artistic Alchemy’s desire for community involvement doesn’t stop at these photoshoots and experiences. It goes beyond into a facebook group entitled, “Artistic Alchemy of the Northwoods,” where anyone can come enjoy connecting with like-minded individuals and seek to grow in love for self and others. They will offer giveaways and creative events, so make sure to join the group to see what they have to offer in the future! They also look forward to collaborating with other local businesses: bakeries, floral shops, and more.

The ladies of Artistic Alchemy are so thrilled for what these experiences will bring to the overall wellness of those in our community and hope that it stretches further into whatever part of the world is craving what they have to give!

FROM THE NATURE
(SOMETHING) BY A
PROCESS"

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THEY HAVE TO OFFER, BE THE FIRST TO KNOW
ABOUT EVENTS, AND TO SET UP A CONSULTA-
TION WITH EMILYMAE REGARDING INTEREST
IN THE MAGICK EXPERIENCE, PRICES, IDEAS,
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Find Part 1 of The Joe & Nellie Story in the Winter 2023/24 Issue

THE JOE & NELLIE STORY: *Pioneers of Northern Wisconsin Tourism* **PART 2** by Kerry Bloedorn

For 20 years, Joe and Nellie Mercedes traveled the world with their mind-boggling musical telepathy act.

They had performed for presidents, dignitaries, and royalty. Their routine was simple:

Joe walked the aisles of a theater, hair slicked back, mustache waxed, a red carnation boutonniere expertly placed, and asked an audience member to whisper a song selection to him. His wife, Nellie Stanton, seated blindfolded at a grand piano on stage, would immediately, with no communication, announce the song and begin playing. It convinced the most sound scientific minds of the age that Joe and Nellie had a superpower; no other explanation could be had.

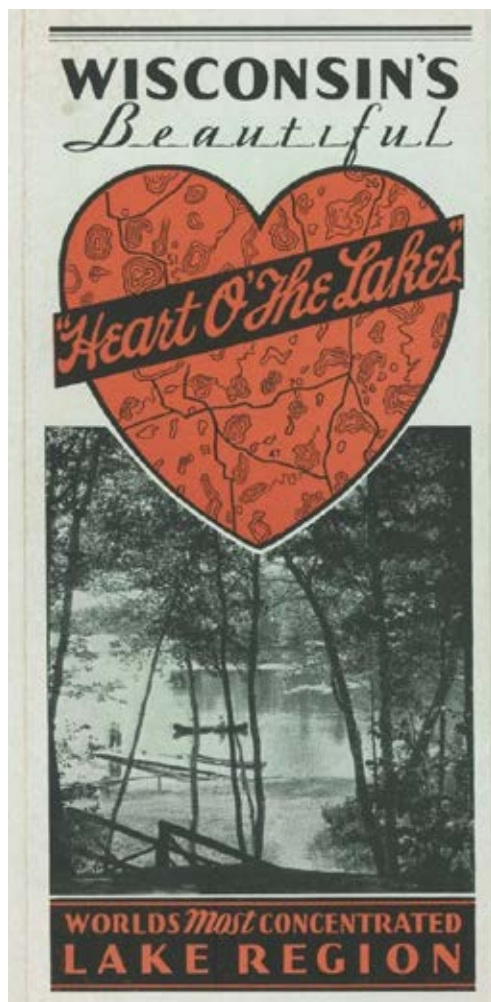
In 1933, Nellie was severely injured in a stage accident, which left her unable to perform. The couple left the lime lights and theater marquees behind, retiring to the Northwoods of Wisconsin. Without Nellie, Joe couldn't continue the act they had developed together, and so they would turn a new page.

Around 1926, amidst the height of their careers, Joe and Nellie had purchased a lovely little property on Blue Lake south of Minocqua. It was here that they could live in relative peace and enjoy some amount of anonymity. During their off-season, they fell in love with Northern Wisconsin. The smell of sunlight hitting the pine forest floor, the lap of water hitting the shores of a glacial lake, the towering tree lines, and the friendly people.

During summer visits to their Blue Lake home, even before Nellie's accident, they used their celebrity status to help the Minocqua area. They had a soft spot for children, as they did not have any of their own. They sponsored a boy scout troop and organized grand 4th of July celebrations in Minocqua in 1929 and 1930. One summer, the couple brought a busload of Woodruff and Minocqua kids

down to Rhinelander for a visiting circus.

In 1930, they performed their famous act on stage in the northwoods, one of the rare times they would do so in their careers. Newspaperman Jack Corey organized a benefit show at the State Theater to raise money for new playground equipment in Rhinelander. The Mercedes were happy to oblige. On that occasion, the couple had been out of town for a funeral. Jack Corey asked what they needed for the performance. They asked simply for a piano on stage, nothing more. Arriving just in time, they required almost no set-up. As usual, they left the crowd befuddled and in awe.



In August of 1932, Mercedes organized a four-day Northwoods Outdoor Exposition in Minocqua. It featured circus acts, an Indian village, lumberjack shows, a 180-foot by 65-foot big top, and displays of all kinds. The whole of Minocqua was decorated for the event, and it was a huge hit that drew thousands of people to the area. It was due to these efforts that the Mercedes were among the most well-known and beloved people in Northwoods at the time.

The tragedy that struck Nellie on stage in 1933 and caused them to retire from show business caused them to shift entirely to their budding tourism promotion endeavors in Northern Wisconsin.

The couple shifted gears fast. Joe pulled out a map of Wisconsin and drew a big heart around Minocqua, with the intention of bringing its communities together for the shared purpose of promoting Northwoods tourism. He started a regional tourism organization named "Heart O The Lakes Association." He then drew a big red line from the heart straight south, following US Hwy 51,

which he named the Heart O The Lakes Trail. It was by this artery that visitors from down south would flock to Northern Wisconsin's vacation paradise. The plan was in place, and now for the work.



Joe and Nellie opened an agency, the official-sounding “Wisconsin Tourist Bureau,” at 209 N. Michigan Avenue in Chicago, of which Joe was the Executive Director and Nellie his partner. Bringing all their abilities and experience to bear, Joe would visit countless northwoods resorts and businesses. Accompanied by his dog Sparkie, he began developing personal relationships with hundreds of business owners, city mayors, and chambers of commerce within his heart-shaped region, as well as up and down Hwy 51.

Also in 1933, the World’s Fair was held in Chicago, titled A Century of Progress. Joe’s first order of business was for Wisconsin to have a good showing at this huge event. Working day and night with his resort industry friends and the governor of Wisconsin, Albert G. Schmedeman, he organized a caravan from Northern Wisconsin to Chicago, picking up more and more vehicles, including the governor’s retinue, along the Heart O The Lakes Trail. He garnered hundreds of advertisers and donors for a booklet promoting the Heart O The Lakes area. 25,000 of them were distributed from the Heart O The Lakes booth in the Travel and Transportation building at the World’s Fair.

The following year, 1934, Joe organized the Wisconsin Outdoor Exposition, showcasing all the Northwoods of Wisconsin had to offer, but this time in Madison. Articles written tell of the weeks leading up to the event, with Joe working 18–20 hours a day, never stopping to rest. He was in a constant state of fundraising for the expo, visiting with business owners and Madison shakers and movers. It was said that his red carnation could be seen everywhere, all at once. Nellie attested to the fact that in five weeks of work, she had spent only two meals with her husband.

The Wisconsin Exposition began on July 2 with a parade to Brittingham Park along the shores of Lake Monona. Mercedes boasted that attendees would be able to learn in a short week all of what Wisconsin had to offer, which would take a person a year to visit. Boat races, parachute jumps, Native American dances, and exhibits by the Wisconsin Conservation Department took up an entire big top tent. A hippodrome with stage and circus acts from all over the world, and a grand exhibit featuring a recreated Northwoods forest with animals and fish was set up. The list of activities and displays went on and on, covering the entire 20-acre park. The Wisconsin State Journal ran full-page information articles and included inserts dedicated to the exposition in the days and weeks leading up to it. Mercedes expected 200,000 people to attend, and hopes were high.

Unfortunately, after all of Joe’s work, the Wisconsin Outdoor Exposition was a total bust. Rain was a big factor in poor morale and attendance. But most of all, Joe, in all his talents, failed to impress the city of Madison. He struggled to get cooperation from the city and its people. Where his former expos went over well in small towns, this one was a dud. On the second-to-last day of the event, Joe was served with a fine for not acquiring the correct license to hold the exposition. It was just another in a list of blows Joe took on the chin. He lost thousands of dollars at the event. He swallowed his pride, begged, and borrowed from creditors and friends he had made up north to pay the debts he owed on Exposition. Joe returned to his Minocqua home down, but not out.

After the failed exposition in Madison, Joe went to work harder than ever promoting Northwoods resorts, working out of his Chicago office. Despite the tough showing in

Madison, many people understood the positive impact of Joe's work. So much so that the State of Wisconsin Conservation Department moved its official tourism office into the same building the Mercedes were in.

All the while, Nellie refused to give up on her talents, despite her injuries. She acquired a dummy piano, and in their Blue Lake cottage, she began to retrain her fingers, forcing the muscle memory in her body to remember all her years of performing. After months of painstaking work, she regained the ability to play.

In 1942, the Heart O The Lakes Association held a dinner at the Oneida Hotel in Rhinelander. Every member of the group, including business and resort owners of the Northwoods, was in attendance. To their delight, a special performance was held. After nine long years, Joe Mercedes and Nellie Stanton would return to the stage! Joe appeared with his signature mustache and red carnation boutonniere, and Nellie used the same red blindfold that brought the couple to world-wide fame years before.

The show was spectacular and, as usual, stunned the audience. Joe and Nellie also announced that they had accepted an invitation by the USO to go on a ten-week tour to military bases throughout the country to perform for the troops. The couple would then have performed for soldiers during both World Wars. They had also booked more than a hundred shows throughout the Chicago area in the coming seasons. Joe insisted that, due to the hard work of the Heart O The Lakes Association, the Northwoods region had never seen so much success with tourism, which was entirely true. Joe and Nellie's efforts had laid the groundwork for a new era in Wisconsin tourism that had no equal. Those attending the banquet agreed. Joe said that they would continue the work of promoting the area during and after their tour.

Following their 1940s tour, the couple purchased a home in Rhinelander at 423 Lincoln Street. They used this as their Northwoods home office and continued staying in Chicago over the winters. Joe routinely popped up around



the state for every tourism booster photo op that could be had. Over the years, he organized a number of campaigns promoting Northwoods tourism with his Heart O The Lakes brand. Pamphlets and other materials were sent all over the country, enticing vacationers to the area. Like nobody else before or since, Joe Mercedes was able to bring the Northwoods chambers of commerce, local mayors, and their communities together in the shared vision that, if it's good for the Northwoods as a whole, it's good for my town. In the years the Mercedes

operated their agency, tourism to Northern Wisconsin flourished and thrived. The Mercedes' never charged a fee for their services, instead working off resort booking commissions. In contrast to her stage work, Nellie found a new life content to help behind the scenes and was rarely seen in the photo ops Joe was so frequently involved in.

In 1949, Joe was made an honorary Colonel by former Wisconsin Governor Oscar Rennebohm and dubbed



the state's unofficial "ambassador of goodwill." He lived up to the title by organizing frequent caravans, like the one to the world's fair. He received permission on behalf of Wisconsin governors to give gifts and "keys to Wisconsin" to governors in other states, traveling as far as Washington, DC. He visited hundreds of communities, trailering his mobile tourism showcase, a log building on wheels featuring windows into Wisconsin. He also showed an hour-long feature film

about the Badger State. He staged popular lumberjack dinners in Rhinelander and dozens of other cities. His endurance in promoting Wisconsin seemed to have no bounds or limits.

Another way the Mercedes brought in money and worked to increase tourism to the Heart O The Lakes was by publishing an annual magazine highlighting all that Wisconsin had to offer. "This is Wisconsin," was edited and published solely by Mercedes. It featured wonderful professional photography of the state and poetic waxing in only the way showman Mercedes could offer.

The book was sold and distributed to all 50 states, with a big focus on Midwest cities. Although the entire state of

Wisconsin was recognized, the Heart O The Lakes region always received notable attention, with 28 communities within the area in the spotlight. The paper used for the book was printed on Rhinelander paper mill stock, which had a three-page spread that year. In 1954, 40,000 copies were sold for 35 cents each. At least 23 issues were published over the years.

In 1959, Joe and Nellie had spent 60 years in show business and tourism promotion, with 25 of those years operating their Wisconsin Tourist Bureau. After countless meetings, photo ops, luncheons, dinners, and events, the couple decided, for all intents and purposes, to retire from the tourism industry. But Joe still had energy left in the battery and went back into show business the following year.

Joe, now using the name Colonel Mercedes, developed an attraction called "The Circus Sideshow Museum of the 19th Century." Under contract with the Wisconsin Historical Society, it was set up at Circus World Museum in Baraboo. The display featured life-size replicas of P.T. Barnum's 16 original attractions, including Tom Thumb, the Cardiff Giant, the Bearded Lady, and more. The famous elephant Jumbo was recreated in a diorama of the "world's largest elephant." The museum was a huge hit, with over 400,000 people visiting in the three years it operated. During that time, Joe and Nellie stayed in a trailer home on Circus World property.

After the sideshow museum contract was up in 1963, Joe expanded the exhibits and set them up in an empty lot next to their Lincoln Street home in Rhinelander (today a real estate office sits on the site, and the home is still there). The property was built up with colorful circus-style tents and painted side-show facades. Colonel Mercedes himself was the tour guide in true carnival barker fashion and, by all counts, gave a riveting telling of the circus and its sideshow history. But Joe was aging, and after a few years, he made the difficult decision to retire the museum.

In March 1966, Joseph Mercedes suffered from a stroke. He spent time in local rehab facilities, eventually ending up at St. Mary's Hospital, where he passed away on July 6 at 6:10 p.m. He was 77. During all his years in the Northwoods, he was remembered in the highest esteem, always wearing his red carnation boutonniere, mustache, and a lumberjack shirt.

Nellie continued living at their Lincoln Street home in Rhinelander for several years, remembered for being a quiet and caring neighbor. Her humble attitude belied her decades as an international vaudeville headliner. Nellie even-

tually moved into the Friendly Village nursing home in Rhinelander, where she lived out her days. She passed away peacefully on Friday, February 5, 1971, just one year shy of 80. Both Joe and Nellie were buried at Oakwood Cemetery in their hometown of Chicago.

And so it was the end of an era. Joe and Nellie, the magical couple that came from humble beginnings, entertained millions of people, and worked relentlessly to promote tourism in their adopted home of Northern Wisconsin, had passed. So highly regarded was Mercedes' work that, in 1953, Rhinelander honored the couple with "Mercedes Day." Thankfully, the couple was around to see how appreciated they were. Nobody before or since has been able to accomplish all they did. To bring the communities of the Northwoods under one umbrella and share in the work for the benefit of all during the golden age of Northwoods resorts.

Joe and Nellie performed their musical telepathy act only one other time in the Northwoods for a small group of friends as they were preparing to close up their Blue Lake cabin. Jack Corey, the friend and newspaper man who had organized the Rhinelander playground equipment benefit, was in attendance. At the end of the evening, Joe invited Corey to stick around as Joe helped direct cars while leaving the property. During that time alone, Jack the skeptic admitted to having a look around, lifting up rugs, checking for wires, anything. But he found nothing to explain how the act was anything but real.

Now you know the Mercedes story, at least in part, for the stories of how Nellie and their work could fill a book. Truly, Joe and Nellie were special. They had a gift, and the Northwoods of Wisconsin were lucky to have them in it for a time. They most certainly deserve to be remembered.

The logo for Heck Capital Advisors features a large, stylized blue 'H' on the left. To its right, the word 'HECK' is written in a large, blue, serif font, with a registered trademark symbol. Below 'HECK', the words 'CAPITAL ADVISORS' are written in a smaller, blue, sans-serif font. At the bottom of the logo, a blue horizontal bar contains the phone number '715-361-1500 or 877-432-5330' in white, bold, sans-serif text.

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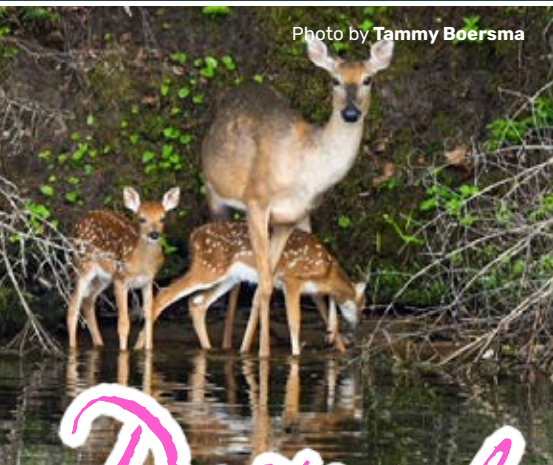


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Photo by **Tracie Schoone**



Photo by **Bev Engstrom**



Rhineland will be celebrating its 4th Annual Hodag Heritage Festival on May 18th, 2024 at Pioneer Park.

It seems like every day is “Hodag Day” in Rhineland, Wisconsin. The omnipresent green beast of lumberjack folklore appears on everything from its city police cars, to water towers, it’s even the high school mascot. So why have a dedicated celebration for Hodags?

Hodag Legends go back to the mid 1800s, when the lumberjack creature appeared sparingly in newspaper articles around the country. Long known to logging camp lumberjacks, along with the likes of Paul Bunyan and his Blue Ox, Hodags were a tall tale told in the smoky, dimly lit bunkhouses deep in the great pineries of North America. Hodags didn’t really enter the public eye until Rhineland surveyor, map maker, and woodsman Eugene Shepard elevated the creature to the place of honor it holds today. In the early 1890s, Northwoods personality Gene Shepard owned a resort near Star Lake Wisconsin, on Ballard Lake. It was here that

he fine tuned stories he had heard in logging camps while working as a surveyors apprentice years earlier. He carved a rudimentary Hodag out of a log, which became the first effigy of the strange animal. He kept it in a “den” at the resort, telling the legends along with it to guests. In 1893, he had an article published which told his tale of attempting to capture a Hodag. The battle, which involved large bore squirt guns filled with poisonous water, hunting dogs ripped to shreds, and a large amount of dynamite, ended with the charred remains of the brute. True to the tale, his first Hodag had been burned in a fire.



In 1895, the Oneida County Fair board approached Gene about concocting a calling card for the first fair, to be held in 1896. Shep had just the thing in mind. He enlisted the help of his friend and fellow woodsman Luke Kearny and together they produced an elaborate, realistic looking Hodag to display at the fair. Passed off as a genuine animal, thousands of fair-goers left the grounds believing it a real creature!

The news of a real live Hodag captured in the forest near Rhineland, Wisconsin went viral, and in turn captured the imaginations of people around the country. In the decades that followed, the City of Rhineland adopted the endearing Hodag as its own calling card. The horned, spiked, four legged, seven-foot long, three-hundred pound, black furred creature, with the head of a frog and grinning face of an elephant, morphed into the green beast we know today, seen in just about every place you turn. Stories and legends of Gene Shepard’s Hodag have since been added to, and embellished, taking on a life of their own. Hodags have become an institution in Rhineland, and the state of Wisconsin.

Cities around the nation have their own ways of promoting themselves, Las Vegas has casinos, Roswell has aliens, New York has its...Apple? But none other than Rhineland can boast of having Hodags! Traveling the country, I’d say about fifty percent of the people I encounter recognize the Hodag on my shirt, pin on my hat, or bumper sticker on my car, as being a distinctly Rhineland creation. For

the other half of the folks that don’t know what the heck a Hodag is, it’s a wonderful opportunity to talk about the Northwoods of Wisconsin, the land where Hodags roam. It’s majestic pine forests, it’s thousands of clear glacial



lakes, and beautiful wetlands, a vacationer paradise. All the reasons why it's a beautiful place to live, work, play, and be proud of.

Sometimes living in Rhinelander, the Home of the Hodag, it's easy to take its 130 year Hodag history for granted. It's all around us, all the time. But it is important for us to remember that it IS special, it IS unique, and it IS definitely worth celebrating.

So let's have a Hodag party! Saturday, May 18, 2024, at Pioneer Park in Rhinelander. The 4th annual Hodag Heritage Festival will celebrate all things Hodag, with Hodag side-show style reenactments, Hodag history bus tours, Hodag calling contest, speakers, kids activities, bounce houses, vendors, food and beverages. Of course a party wouldn't be complete without live music, and this year's festival will feature one of the best touring tribute groups in the Midwest, Hypnotized, a tribute to Fleetwood Mac. The goal of Hodag Heritage Festival is to bring the residents of Rhinelander together, and bring people from out

HODAG STORIES

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1893 - Hodag Legends begin

1903 - Van Meter Visitor sighted, Van Meter, IA

1933 - Nessie first spotted in Loch Ness, Scotland, UK

1936 - Beast of Bray Road, Elkhorn, WI

1955 - Frogman sighted in Loveland, OH

1958 - Bigfoot popularized, California

1966 - Mothman sighted in Point Pleasant, WV

1995 - Chupacabra first popularized, New Mexico

LONG LIVE THE HODAG!

of the area to Rhinelander so they too, can be a part of the Hodag legacy, and celebrate with us. So spread the word, and we'll see you at Pioneer Park for the first big event of the season.

A full schedule of events can be found at:
www.rhinelanderschamber.com/hodagheritagefestival
 Or visit the Hodag Heritage Festival Facebook Page



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THE HISTORY OF **Camp 10** SKI AREA

by Dan Hagen



In 1979, Gren Rudd saw an ad in the Wall Street Journal. A ski area in Rhinelander, Wisconsin was for sale. He was still a young engineer at the time. And while he was doing well, he wasn't overloaded with cash. About six weeks later, the same ad showed up in the Milwaukee Sentinel, and the price had dropped quite a bit.

"My co-workers gave me a hard time about how I'd always wanted a ski area. They said 'why don't you at least make a call?' So, I picked up the phone and spoke to a gentleman who was the vice president of a local bank in Rhinelander and on the board of directors for the Rhinelander Tomahawk Ski Corporation. While my friends were in the background, I was sort of negotiating over the phone."

The next thing Gren knew, he made a trip up to Rhinelander to see the facility. He only had two hours on sight because he had engineering obligations in Birmingham, Alabama. Even with only that short visit, Gren and his wife Eileen bought Camp 10 Ski Area.

Gren planned on moving up to Rhinelander. His full-time occupation would be building and running the ski area. His wife would work at the local hospital. But they held off on the move until after the first season. It ended up being a disaster because of the weather.

"We came to the decision that maybe we better keep our day jobs for a while."

Gren admits he made a lot of mistakes in the first few years, starting with the two hour on-site visit. He was too rushed to see all the flaws that he had to fix.

"For insurance, an engineer from the National Ski Area Association came in for an inspection. After two days he sat me down and said 'Gren I want to tell you, of the 140 ski areas I've inspected in the Midwest, this is the most unsafe one I've ever been at.' That's almost an exact quote because it's still engraved in my brain."

The inspector gave Gren nine pages of single-spaced notes about standards that were not being met. And 30 days to fix some of the problems. It was only because Gren was an engineer himself that the inspector didn't shut the place down.

Gren was able to fix what he needed to. For 43 years, Camp 10 has been open during the Christmas season and winter weekends. The most recent was different – worse even than the 1979-1980 season.

"So far through mid-February, we've operated a grand



Camp 10 adds new ski run

In anticipation of the opening of the skiing season, Camp 10, located near Rhinelander, has announced that it is opening a new run.

Through the cooperation and assistance of Owens-Illinois and Camp McNaughton, the necessary trees were cut, logs removed and brush burned. Bulldozing has been completed and hay has been spread over the run.

The new run is located just to

the east of number six run and will be served by the same tow, which has been moved to the opposite side of the slope. This will be the longest run at Camp 10 and is expected to provide an exciting and challenging ride.

The manager of Camp 10 this year will be Jon Leonard, the golf pro at the Rhinelander Country Club. Camp 10 is located west of Highway 17 off County trunk A, in between Tomahawk and Rhinelander.

total of three days. This comes after we set a record on season pass sales purchased last spring. It's been almost disastrous."

Gren said he's seen climate change affect his business. He's observed a trend of the ski season starting later. He's hoping to work with WPS to boost the amount of energy he can use to make snow.

"I can't make the assumption that this winter was an aberration. I've got to be proactive in my thinking now as though we are going to encounter the same thing next year. And what can I do differently for both the survival of the ski area and our customers."

Gren is 83 years old now, and he's excited about the team he's built around him. While he can't do all of the physical labor and problem solving he used to, he enjoys collaborating with his staff who bring in excellent skills from other industries or other ski areas with formal ski area management training and experience.

Even with the tough beginning, Gren has no regrets about purchasing Camp 10 all those years ago. He encourages people to not be complacent if they're unhappy. Gren wanted a new challenge in late 1979, so that's exactly what he did. Because of him, countless smiling faces have come speeding down the slopes of Camp 10.

"I literally never paid myself a nickel out of the business. But as far as personal satisfaction, seeing families with young kids and then over time seeing those kids grow up and get married and have kids. It's made it all worth it."



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by Dan Hagen

Josh Otte

← (AH-dee)



At first, Josh Otte did not want to be interviewed.

"I've read all of your articles about musicians and they're all professionals. They're all well-established. And I'm a well driller who sings at the bar."

It's true, Josh spends his days drilling wells and squeezes in performances when he can. Music is not his number one priority right now.

"My son is five, he loves me and I don't want to change that. He will grow up and be a teenager. But as it is now, he's just a sweet little kid. And I don't want to miss out on watching him grow up. Because when you play music, you're out every weekend."

When that day comes when his son is more independent, Josh wants to be ready to play music full-time.

"I'm good at physical labor now but I can't do it forever. I'm trying to plant the seed that maybe, just maybe, music can be my future career."

Josh has been planting the seed for a while

now. He grew up in Fond du Lac and first got the itch to play in grade school, when everyone was handed a plastic recorder. He was a natural at it. In high school he started playing guitar, and was surprised to learn that some of his favorite songs were easy to play. "I looked up tabs for All the Small Things by Blink-182 and could play it almost immediately."

Tabs, short for tablature,

are shorthand charts for stringed instruments that show fret positions rather than notes on a musical staff. They're available on the internet for pretty much every song.

Josh joined punk bands after high school. He even played bass in a band for almost 10 years. Now in Rhinelander, his live performances are a one-man-show. While he includes a few songs from his favorite genre, he leans into

the crowd pleasers.

"It's Bad Moon Rising, it's Sweet Caroline, it's Fishing in the Dark. It's everything that people want to hear. Everyone goes home happy. There's no division. There's no politics. There's no religion. Music's for everybody. When I say 'Sweet Caroline,' you say 'bah, bah, bah.' It's what unites us all."

Josh does draw a line for some songs. He gets a lot of requests for Luke Bryan, a pop country star.

"I only play music that I like, and it makes for an eclectic mix. I also take requests seriously. If I don't know the songs, I write them all down to check out later and see what I can do. It's very important that I keep a balance between pleasing the crowd and staying true to myself."

It's a winning combo for Josh, who feels his best when he's at a bar playing.

"I've always had a hard time fitting in. Even to this day I feel that way. But over the past two years doing this I've felt accepted for who I am for the first time ever."

When asked if he has any advice for people who feel similar to him, Josh's

message is simple: be yourself.

"People can tell when you're faking it. People can tell when you're forcing a sound or a style. Even just conversation, people can tell. When you are authentic, people appreciate that a lot. And more importantly, life is just a lot more fun."

Look on Josh's Facebook page "Josh Otte Music & Art" for updates on where he'll be playing next.



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GEOFF WELLER

by Dan Hagen

MORE THAN FORECASTS

It's impossible for Geoff Weller to have a quick trip to the grocery store. Really, a quick trip anywhere. Even at Kwik Trip. Geoff may be the most recognizable face in the Northwoods, having delivered more than a thousand weather forecasts in 7 years at WJFW News-watch 12.

"There was this one time when I was in Walmart. I was literally in the underwear aisle and someone asked to take my picture. I said OK, but let's change aisles, first.

But I get it. We're a smaller TV station where most of this area watches us. I think it's fun. Sometimes I'm in a hurry, but it never gets old."

Since the age of three, Geoff knew he wanted to be a meteorologist.

"My family would take trips down to Florida and instead of being on the beach with my friends I would be inside watching The Weather Channel."

Geoff's parents picked up on his interest, and steered him toward math and science classes. During this time, Geoff also developed a love for Wisconsin. Growing up, Geoff's summers were spent at the family lake house in Amherst. "I was that guy. Wisconsinites have a name for people like me who visited north central Wisconsin seasonally. But I feel so lucky to be able to get away every summer. There's something about driving north on I-94, passing the Welcome to Wisconsin sign. After getting around Milwaukee the land opens up and the air just smells different."

After high school in Grayslake, Illinois, Geoff attended University of Oklahoma – widely regarded as the best school for meteorology. But he didn't stop with just weather classes, he ended up with three majors upon graduation: meteorology, political science and communication. "I had the best college experience ever. I really look back at that time as the best time of my life. I was a weather geek who was able to take meteorology classes during the day before driving up to Oklahoma City for an evening internship at

FOX KOKH. For this internship I got to do everything, including storm and tornado chasing. There's nothing that brings out the weather geek more than intercepting

and reporting on tornadoes. That moment is something special. That moment and how its reported impacts people's lives directly."

Geoff also got a job at TGI Fridays – his first introduction into the restaurant business. After college, Geoff put his dreams on hold and chased the paycheck. He joined Cheesecake Factory as a traveling manager.

Essentially, Geoff would support restaurants around the country that were having some difficulties. It was eight or nine months at each restaurant before he was sent across the country for the next one. He had the chance to pay off his student loans and live in different parts of the country. "I was working constantly and had no social life. The money was great, but there was always that voice in the back of my head telling me that I can't do this for the rest of my life."

Instead, Geoff pursued another lifelong dream of becoming a pilot. He joined a flight school and ended up getting all the necessary licenses needed to become a commercial pilot and flight instructor.

"I loved aviation but I realized I loved meteorology more. In flight school, I taught aviation meteorology classes. They would pay me to teach while being a student with them, which is kind of cool. But I'll be honest, there were a couple situations where I felt I wasn't in control and it scared me. I started thinking. . . do I really want to do this?"

After pilot school, Geoff returned to Cheesecake Factory for a few more years. Then he decided to chase his real dream.

"I knew I wanted to do a meteorology internship to refresh my skills since I had been out of college for more than a decade. My friend Cameron Moreland was at NBC 26 in Green Bay and he offered to let me come on as an intern." Geoff did that for eight months before sending out appli-



Geoff Weller with his dog Theo



cations to four television stations. He soon received four offers. He ultimately chose WJFW because his family has a summer lake home in Amherst, which is on the edge of the viewing area.

"I thought it was so cool that my family could watch me on TV. I also knew the area had four distinct seasons, which for a meteorologist is fun to forecast." Geoff worked his way up from weekend meteorologist to chief meteorologist. He's been in that position for 6 years. His work has been well recognized by the Wisconsin Broadcasters Association including several wins for Best Weathercast. Most television broadcasters leave smaller markets after a few years, largely to make more money or just to climb the ladder.

"I have had several meteorology friends who have asked me about my goals. One person told me their goal was to become famous. That's not why I'm in it at all. I want to forecast the weather in a part of the country that I understand and where the community appreciates a good weather report."

Geoff has added more responsibilities in the last few years, becoming news director on top of all of his weather forecasting duties. He enjoys directing the newsroom into stories tailored for the Northwoods community. He has also created a positive environment at the television station.

"It makes me very happy when people extend their contracts, and want to stay with us. And I think we work really hard to do that. And that starts with me, creating an environment that people want to be a part of."

So, if you see Geoff Weller in public, feel free to go up and talk to him. You can even ask him for a picture – just make sure you're not in the underwear aisle.



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A stroll at the Nicolet College campus in spring.

Photo by **Amanda Anderson**

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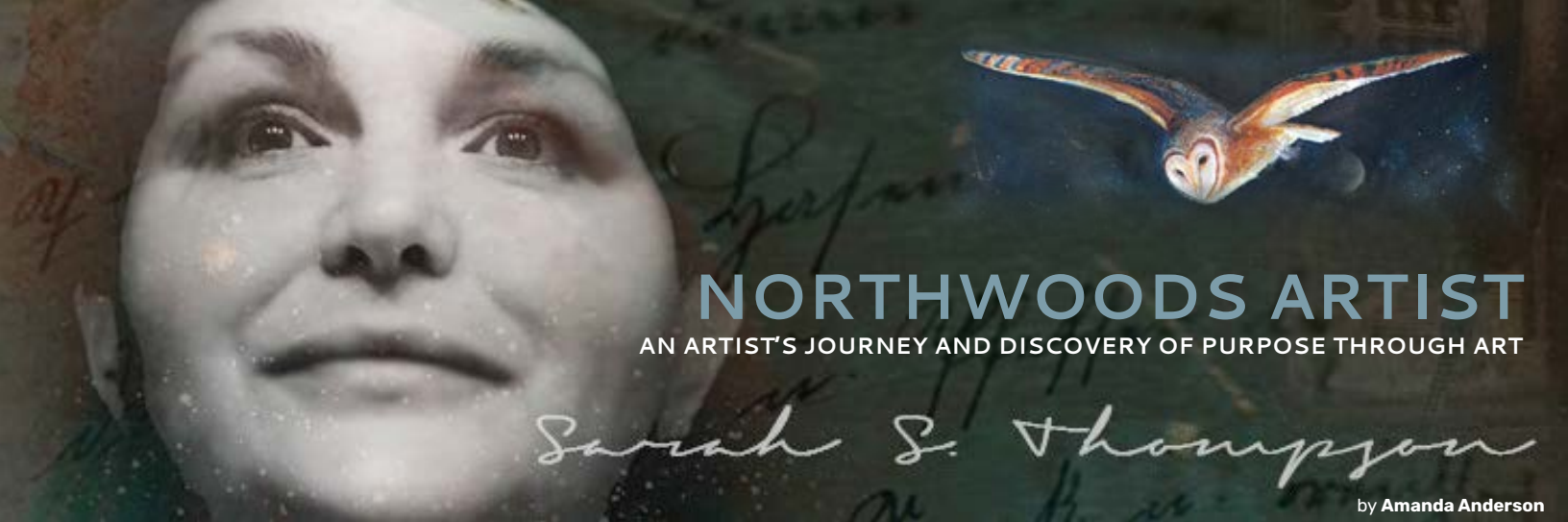


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NORTHWOODS ARTIST

AN ARTIST'S JOURNEY AND DISCOVERY OF PURPOSE THROUGH ART

Sarah S. Thompson

by Amanda Anderson

Sarah Thompson is a local artist, creator, and community builder, whose story is inspiring and unique, but also extremely relatable. Many of those who are on a similar journey of creativity can relate to what she has endured in order to get to where she is today; a woman who is strong in herself and who desires to use her past experiences and knowledge to help teach and lift others.

Raised on an organic farm, in Southwest Wisconsin with no television, Sarah had a lot of time on her hands to engage with her imagination at a young age. While her first love was oil painting in high school and time spent at the Art Institute of Chicago, she has followed the winding path of life, which now includes many art mediums.

In her college years, Sarah used her artistic talents to major in graphic design and marketing. She was blessed with an opportunity to advance quickly after graduation and was able to gain a lot through her experiences as a Creative Coordinator at an in-house ad agency. While she loved the job and was grateful for it, her next journey of becoming a mother to her son and daughter brought about a huge perspective shift. She began to think more deeply about her life, mortality, and the legacy she wanted to leave for her family. Her graphic design job started to make her feel as if she was making disposable art. There wasn't anything lasting in this process and she no longer felt fulfilled by the work she was doing there. Her experience of becoming a parent was helping her see that life isn't just about making money, but about having purpose.

With these new realizations and the support of her husband, Sarah stayed home with her son and then her

daughter for the formative years of their lives. While she continued to do freelance work during this stage of life, she also spent a lot of time adventuring around The Northwoods and beyond with her children – hiking, kayaking, canoeing, camping; you name it, they were doing it.

With Sarah's experiences in motherhood came an evolution of her creativity and lifestyle. She decided to change from oil painting, due to the solvents and toxic materials in the home, to acrylic and began focusing her artistic efforts on her family. She continued to paint through pregnancy and while raising her children, often making art for her kids, decorating and designing their rooms, etc. It wasn't until 2015 that she realized what her newfound love would become (and had been for a while, she just didn't know it yet) ... the art of "assemblage."

So, what is assemblage? Assemblage is an artistic medium usually created on a defined substrate that consists of three-dimensional elements projecting out of or from the substrate. It is similar to collage, a two-dimensional medium. It is part of the visual arts, and it typically uses found objects of historical significance with providence but is not limited to these materials.

Joseph Cornell was the first artist she studied in her scrapbooking days, and through that she learned how to make boxes with papers and beautiful treasures inside them, like shadow boxes, and soon upped it to marrying painting with assemblage, using paper, paint and objects to create art.

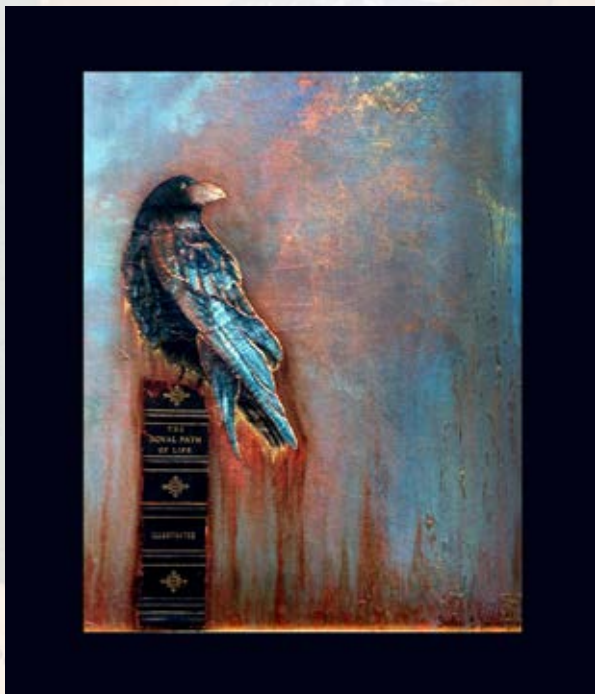
So, there it was, her new creative calling, the art of assemblage. Her personal connection to this art medium



was, as she describes it, “a way to combine my love for hoarding interesting objects and making art.” Sarah uses original historical objects and papers for most of these intricate works of art.


With a developing joy for assemblage, Sarah joined the Manitowish Art League and put a piece of hers entitled, “Raven” in their annual art show. She was then asked to have it shown at Moondeer and Friends gallery. That was when she knew she could sell her work.

Sarah says that the reason she was able to get to that point where her work was honored and acknowledged (and even sold!) was all of the encouragement she has had in her life from fellow artists, like Joanne Olsen,




her mentor that was teaching a community class through Nicolet College, who was especially inspiring and supportive at the time. Along with many other seasoned artists in her classes and community who always lifted her up with encouragement and support.

“I’ve been answering the creative call all of my life,” Sarah says, and now she has come to the point where she has curated a gallery, sells her work in galleries, and is confident in teaching children and adults. She is going forward on her journey and wants to take others with her. “The togetherness that brought me to where I am,” she says, “I want to spread it around. It makes me feel so good. I want to walk with people, not in front of them, to open the door of opportunity, not have it slam in someone’s face. I want to make the Northwoods into an even greater art community.”



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Sarah currently works as a Workshop Coordinator at Dillman’s Art Workshop Retreat in Lac du Flambeau, a non- profit helping bring advanced art workshops to the northwoods for almost 50 years. She continues to build community through local schools, libraries and art organizations. Her art can be seen and purchased throughout the Northwoods community at Three Lakes Center for the Arts, Moondeer and Friends Gallery in Boulder Junction, EarthGoods and Childs Frame Co. in Rhinelander. Please visit [Facebook.com/sarahsthompsonartist](https://www.facebook.com/sarahsthompsonartist) or [sarahsthompsonart.com](https://www.sarahsthompsonart.com) to view recent work and community projects.



NATH Frederick Place

by **Abbey M. Dall Lukowski**
Executive Director

Bill & Carol Miller, long time community members observed homelessness increasing in Northwoods' neighborhoods. It's hard to imagine that homelessness impacts northern Wisconsin just as it might a larger city, or better yet, a climate with consistent warmer temperatures. Winters are cold, springs are muddy, and while summer may engage camping, autumns can be unpredictable, too. In fact, while data can be tricky to collect regarding unhoused situations, current availability of data suggests that Wisconsin's homelessness rates are similar to national trends.

In 2008, the Millers, with their servant-minded experiences saw the need of providing sustainable, rehabilitation like services to those experiencing unhoused situations and led a community charge to prevent and end homelessness in the Northwoods. Community members from all backgrounds, including law enforcement, public health, social service agencies, health organizations, education systems, faith-based organizations, and others formed the initial group of like-minded community advocates and collaborators.



On August 14, 2009, Northwoods Alliance for Temporary Housing, Inc. became registered as an IRS recognized 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.



Later, through efforts of fundraising and community collaboration, 'the big white house on the corner' would be purchased, renovated with community hands and financial support, and opened to its first guest (resident) on January 31st, 2011. It was called Frederick Place.

While there were several locations considered for the initial shelter, the home located at 204 W. Frederick Street seemingly 'called' the then Board of Directors. Staff enjoy sharing the history of the Victorian home, once owned by Emma Lassig DeCanter and used as a boarding house of sorts for those traveling through or in need of a place to stay temporarily. As the shelter of Northwoods Alliance for Temporary Housing, it's become an opportunity for those in need of temporary housing to reset without expense from an uncomfortable season of life – homelessness. In 2023, the thousandth guest was served.

NATH is committed to ending and preventing homelessness, through provision of safe housing and basic needs, promoting self-sufficiency and independence. Expectations for guests living at



Frederick Place include following zero tolerance policies, participating in chores, and seeking employment and housing.

Tasked with raising awareness of unhoused situations in the Northwoods, NATH serves Forest, Langlade, Lincoln, Oneida, and Vilas Counties. As a charitable organization, NATH is heavily supported by the financial generosity of committed community members and volunteers.

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MOON



I didn't know it would catch me —
I've been screaming, and begging, and swearing it would never end, this
downward fall
But gravity had other plans
And landed me here.

As I made my way down to the ground,
The Earth stretched out her hands to cradle my gentle body
Whispering in my ear about the healing power of nature's force
As I whispered back in agreement, telling her how the Moon made me cry,

It always makes me cry.

I wonder what I ever did to deserve this newfound sense of peace,
And then I wonder why I think I ever have to deserve a thing,
As I recall how the dirt beneath my dirt-ridden feet holds electrons that give
life to my own

And it doesn't matter what I've done.

I am not apologizing anymore
For the things that move me
God is not merely present with those who wrap the Divine in nicely shaped
boxes
Nor does the Spirit whisper only into the ears of those with plastered-on
smiles.

"But His existence is here within these four walls!" they cry,
And so did I
Before I discovered God in the roots of the trees
And began to see magic in the eyes of every person I meet.

Isn't it ironic,
That what feels like a fall from grace is the very thing that landed me fully
here?
The place where the Earth holds me close
And the Moon makes me cry,

It always makes me cry.

Photos and Poems by **Amanda Anderson**

HEARTBEAT OF THE WIND

I heard the sound of the wind beating softly
into my ear

I say beating because I could not tell the dif-
ference between the whisper of the wind

And the resonance of the blood that was
pumping through my veins

My heartbeat, the wind —

One and the same.

I laid there in awe, mesmerized by the way
it moved gently through the trees, giving
them embodiment and motion

Knowing that my heart does the same with-
in this body of mine —

Moving faster, working harder in times
when I feel the need to run away from it all

Slower, more relaxed when I finally take the
time to rest, to simply be

It is this organ inside of my chest that plays
the same song as the wind through the
trees,

And I watch as they sway carelessly, with
no where they need to be

Nowhere but here.

Photos and Poems by **Amanda Anderson**



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THE RHINELANDER ST. PATRICK'S DAY PARADE

About fifteen years ago, a group of Irish descendants in Rhinelander gathered in a downtown pub and talked about holding a St. Patty's Day Parade. "Let's have one!" And so, the tradition began. Someone commented that the intended revelry landed during Lent. "But surely the Bishop will give us a dispensation!" laughed the Irishmen. The first parade had about 20 units, whether they were floats, decorated trucks, walking, or bicycling, people wore their finest green garb and marched down Brown Street.

Last year, Brown Street was packed with spectators young and old alike. Green washed the streets as the parade passed by. The Rhinelander St. Patrick's Day Parade was the second largest in the state of Wisconsin, only to be outdone by New London (who dubbed their name New Dublin for the day).

"THE PARADE DOES A LOT OF GOOD FOR THE CITY OF RHINELANDER"

-Jack Winkler



Mayor Kris Hanus, Jack Winkler

"The parade does a lot of good for the city of Rhinelander," says Jack Winkler, one of the parade founders. "It brings a lot of business to the motels, bars and restaurants downtown and everyone has a good time."

Winkler explains that his dream is to have a week-long festival with Irish dancers, storytelling, fiddle playing, and Irish food specials. "CT's Deli does a good job with food specials all week long leading up to St Patrick's Day. It would be nice if more joined in. There are a lot of Irish

people in the area and I think they would enjoy it."

All are welcome to join in, and there is no charge to be in the parade. In years past, high school bands and teams, the Nordic ski team, Cub Scouts, Girl Scouts, and even the Humane Society marched. "It is also a great way to showcase your business – let everybody see you in the parade!" says Winkler. "We've had bagpipers before, but it is hard to get bands to play because it can be a little cold in early March."

The Parade Committee holds a promotional Pub Crawl leading up to parade day. Tickets list all the Pub Crawl bars, and can be purchased up to Parade Day. Revelers visit all bars listed to get a signature, and when their ticket is full, they can drop it off at Big Daddy's to be entered into a drawing after the St. Patty's Day Parade. Winners can receive cash prizes in \$100 increments. You do not need to be present to win, but if you are, Big Daddy's will give you a chance to win an additional \$100. Proceeds from the ticket sales are split – half goes toward the cash prizes, and the other half benefits the "Safe Ride Program" by the Tavern League of Wisconsin.

This year's St. Patrick's Day Parade in Rhinelander will be held on Saturday, March 16. Lineup is at 12:30 on Brown Street next to the police station.



Leprechaun Nelson, Jaclene Tetzlaff, Ollie, Dan Hagen

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