

FALL/WINTER 2023-24

The New

COMPLIMENTARY COMMUNITY MAGAZINE



IN THIS ISSUE:

Historical Courthouse

Wild Lakes to Explore

Holiday Lights Tour

... *and more!*

Let go

I saw a meme on Facebook that said, “Be like the autumn leaves. Show the world your beauty, then let go.” I wanted to share this thought with everyone. Sometimes, when the world seems cruel or unfair, it is best to just let it go. With the holidays upon us, let’s give our attention to the lights, the sweets, the impending snow, and the heavens that let it sprinkle down. I hope you enjoy our holiday and winter edition of The New North. Featured is the history of our spectacular courthouse with its glorious dome. Also, a history of The Rhinelander Woman’s Club and the many contributions the group makes to our community. Dan Hagen takes us on a kayaking tour of hidden lakes in the area. Several talented artists are featured including Brett Winters, Shelley Novotny, Pat Klunder, Amanda Anderson’s poetry, and the many photographers who contribute their beautiful works. And, as always, a huge thank you to our advertisers. Without you, this publication would not be possible. Please frequent their businesses, especially now for the holidays, and thank them for supporting our local community. Happy holidays!



Jaclene Tetzlaff
Publisher
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George Washington's Eggnog Recipe

We have all had a cup or two of eggnog around the holidays, but have you ever wondered if it would taste better if you made it yourself? Well, the answer is yes. Here is a recipe that is easy to make and tastes loads better than the eggnog that comes out of a carton.

Ingredients

6 egg yolks	½ teaspoon ground nutmeg
½ cup sugar	¼ teaspoon vanilla extract
1 cup heavy whipping cream	Pinch of salt
2 cups milk	Ground cinnamon for topping

Whisk the egg yolks and sugar together in a medium bowl until creamy. I used an electric mixer. In a saucepan, combine cream, milk, nutmeg and salt. Stir often with a spoon until mixture reaches a simmer. Now, add the hot milk to the egg mixture, one ladle at a time, so the eggs can temper. While adding, whisk until all of the milk is added. Then, add everything back into the saucepan and whisk until the mixture is slightly thickened. Now stir in the vanilla. Pour into a pitcher, cover and place into refrigerator. It will thicken more as it cools. Store up to one week. When serving, pour a shot of Rum, Bourbon or Brandy, then the eggnog. Use fresh whipped cream and a sprinkle of cinnamon or nutmeg on top. Delicious! For the best selection of Rum, Bourbon or Brandy, visit Stein's Liquors on Lincoln Street in Rhinelander.

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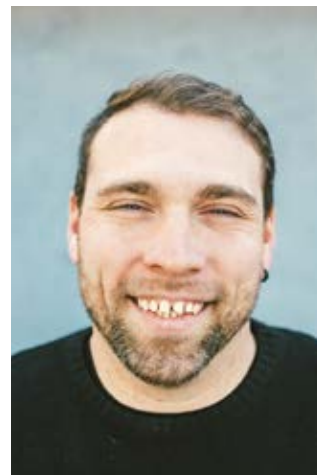
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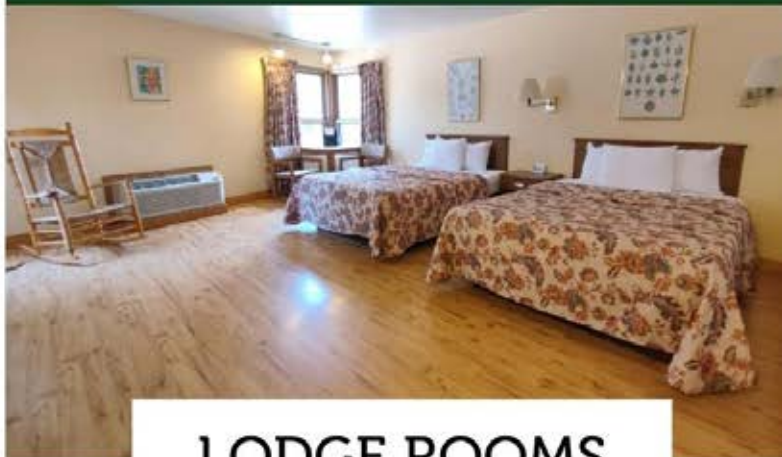
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THE HISTORIC ONEIDA COUNTY COURTHOUSE

by Kerry Bloedorn

The Oneida County Courthouse in Rhinelander, Wisconsin is the county's most well-known landmark. Its green lantern dome can be seen for miles in every direction. Its appearance and architectural features are unmatched within Oneida County, making it one of the most photographed buildings in the Northwoods.

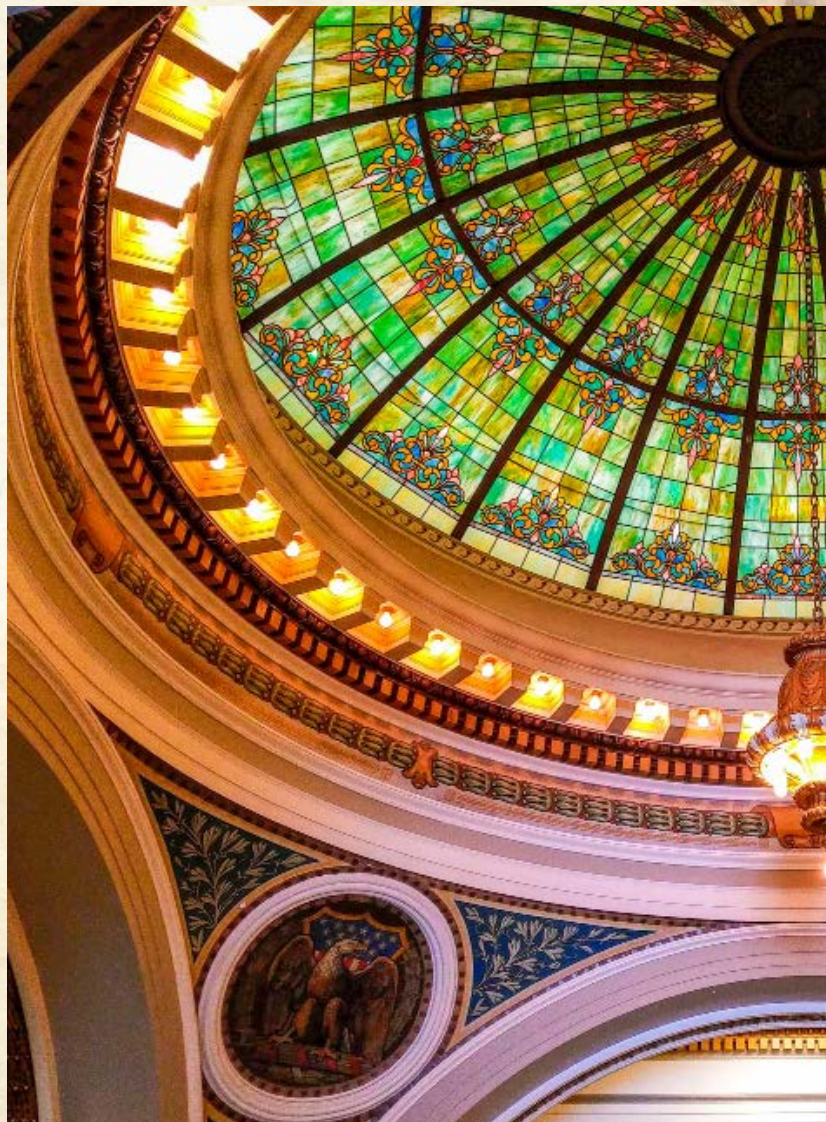
Oneida County was formed from Lincoln County, beginning its history on January 1, 1887. The founders of Rhinelander, the Brown family, were originally from Oneida County in New York, and that area was named after the Oneida Tribe. And so, the courthouse was named, The Oneida County Courthouse. The first county board was appointed by Wisconsin Governor Jeremiah Rusk, and its first Judge was J.W. McCormick. The board initially met in an upstairs room in a building located on the southwest corner of Stevens and King Streets. It then moved to quarters in a building where the Oneida Hotel on Brown Street was later built. Some of the first business conducted was to construct a proper courthouse.

When the Village of Rhinelander was platted in 1882, a block bordered by Brown, Stevens, Frederick, and Rives Streets was set aside for a courthouse. The founders of Rhinelander had the intention of establishing a new county from the start. Abandoning the original courthouse site, a more obvious location became apparent at the terminus of Davenport Street, which at the time was a potato field at the eastern edge of the village. The building would be seen prominently from the Davenport Street bridge over the Wisconsin River, a major thoroughfare in Rhinelander. Completed in 1887 for \$7,700.00, the first courthouse was a white, two-story frame building, with a turret on its northwest corner. It was a stately building for a logging boom town on the Wisconsin frontier, but Oneida County would quickly outgrow it.

Two other buildings were also built on the courthouse block, completed in 1889, a boiler house on the east side, and a conjoined county jail and sheriff's residence on the southeast corner. The sheriff's residence was a unique design, featuring an onion-shaped turret on the house. A more imposing red brick building with barred windows was built attached to the sheriff's residence. The sheriff's



The first Oneida County Courthouse around 1890





on Over Courthouse Dome 1983 Photo by Pat Yentzer in PPHC Archive



First Oneida County Courthouse as seen looking down Davenport St. Circa 1890



Aerial photo showing the new Courthouse and the old courthouse together around 1950



Oneida Co. Teachers Training School, Rhinelander, Wis.



Looking down Davenport Street at the Oneida County Courthouse

family lived at the residence and his wife took the job of head cook for the inmates. In the early days it catered to drying out lumberjacks on occasion. A fire in 1905 that decimated the entire north side of Rhinelander made county board members fearful for their wooden-built courthouse. After the northside fire, state inspectors determined the building was a hazard, with insufficient space to safely store county records. This development spurred plans to build a more substantial courthouse.



Arthur Taylor, a 13-year board member, and chairman of the county building committee, traveled to cities around the Midwest in search of ideas for a new Oneida County Courthouse. Arthur was a prominent businessman, and the strongest proponent for a new courthouse. On the evening of the vote to authorize a new building, Mr. Taylor heard that a group of out-of-town board members, and dissenters of the new courthouse, were meeting at the Q-P Saloon to develop a plan to kill the measure. (The Q-P was located where O'Melia Law Offices are today on the corner of Stevens and Davenport Streets).

Arthur Taylor was the founder of the Rhinelander Telephone Company, and used his powers at the switchboard to call every pro-courthouse member with a phone, spending the remainder of the night traveling to visit with others. According to the bylaws in those days, board meetings were to start at 9 a.m., but due to difficult travel from all corners of the county, didn't usually start until all members were present, around 10 or 10:30 a.m. On this occasion, a majority was present promptly at 9 a.m., coincidentally all supporters of the new courthouse. By the time the rest of the board arrived, the matter had already been settled, a new courthouse was to be built, thanks to some wholly legal, if not quick-witted politicking by Arthur Taylor.

German-born architect Christian H. Tegan of Manitowoc was selected to design the new courthouse. The construction was undertaken by Ryckman & Sons Co. of Kalamazoo, MI. The cornerstone was laid by the Rhinelander Masonic

Lodge on November 10, 1908. Despite inclement weather, a large audience was in attendance with people from across the county. A copper time capsule was set into the block with proceedings of the planning process, a member list of the county board, building committee, and the Masonic Lodge. Also added was some money, a program from the Rhinelander Woman's Club, and a copy of every newspaper in Oneida County, including the New North newspaper.

In preparation for the new building, the original courthouse was moved east across Baird Avenue. It became the Oneida County Teachers Training School or Normal School. The school closed in 1943 during WW2 for lack of students. It was later used as an emergency veterans' home for WW2 soldiers, and eventually torn down in 1953, making room for St. Marks Church and a parking lot.

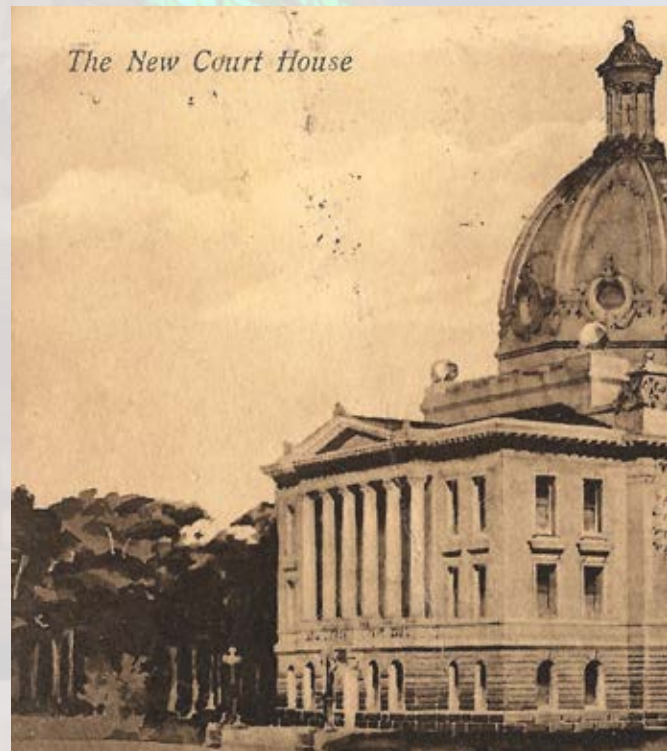
Work on the new courthouse could only be done during the warm months of the year given its construction style. It was completed in 1911. The three-story, Neo-Classical Revival limestone ashlar building was 112 feet long, 96 feet wide, and 38 feet tall, not including the dome. The building was made of limestone, marble, concrete, and metal, and was fireproof. Two-story Ionic columns appear on the exterior of the building. The inside features a large rotunda with county offices surrounding its three floors. Columns on each level represent the three classical styles of architecture; Doric on the first, Ionic on the second, and Corinthian on the third.

In 1919, Conrad Schmitt of Milwaukee was given \$5000 to decorate the interior of the courthouse. Gold stenciling and eagles on a starred field embellish the third floor rotunda with artistic flare. Franz Bieberstein was commissioned to paint three works; two murals in the stairwell leading to the third floor; one depicting an early scene of Native Americans along the Wisconsin River, the other of a logging and milling scene. He also added a Black Hodag on the third floor, Rhinelander's mythical creature. The courthouse dome structure, which is approximately 70 feet tall, is taller than the actual courthouse building itself. Prominently positioned at the center of the building, it is made up of two separate Tiffany-style, stained-glass domes; the green exterior dome is made up of 2,400 glass pieces. Illuminated at night, it can be seen from many vantage points around Rhinelander. The more intricate, and colorful interior glass dome, made up of over 7,000 glass pieces, can be viewed from the building's rotunda. The outer dome is 42 feet across, the peak of which is 50 feet above the inner dome. The inner dome is 22 feet across and sits 57 feet above the first floor, or 20 feet above the third floor.

The domes were designed and created by Schueler and



The first Oneida county courthouse built in 1887

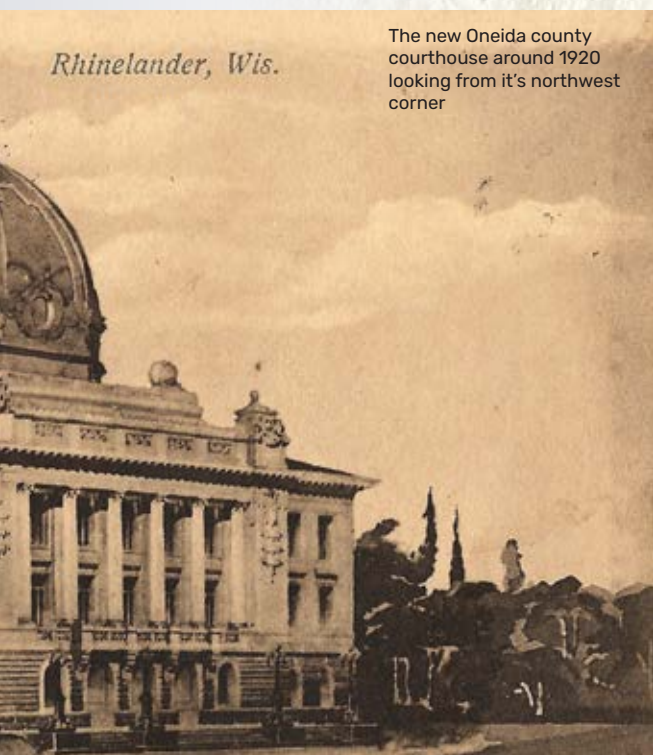




Modern Day Courthouse. photo by Andrew Egan



The new Oneida county courthouse around 1920 looking from it's northwest corner



Rhinelander, Wis.



Close up detail of glasswork on the interior dome photo by Kerry Bloedorn

Mueller of Chicago, which specialized in church stained glass windows. County board minutes show the cost of the domes was \$650 at the time of their construction, just over \$3,000 today. The outer structure which holds the exterior dome is encased in copper, as is the roof of the courthouse proper, giving it a green appearance. Groundskeepers and courthouse staff have etched their names into the copper below the dome, a tradition going back to its earliest days.

Over time, decades of weather beating down on the courthouse took its toll on the building, including a direct lightning strike in 1949, and a severe windstorm in 1964. The neglected domes fell into disrepair and some of its panels were patched with tar. A proposal in 1964 almost saw the removal of this iconic feature of the building. Fortunately, the decision was made to keep it. Restorations of the exterior dome took place in 1965, completed by the Hauser Art Glass Company of Winona, Minnesota, and again in 2004 by Oakbrook-Esser Studios of Oconomowoc, Wisconsin. The interior dome was restored in 1987 by Chappel Art Glass Company of Fridley, Minnesota. The exterior dome got a light upgrade in 1981, and in 2018 LED lighting systems were installed in both domes allowing brighter, more efficient illumination. These lights have the ability to change the dome's color to coincide with holidays and special events. Today, both domes are in excellent condition, and jewels of the Oneida County Courthouse.

In the 1950s, several breakouts from Oneida County's jail caused the state to condemn the aging building. Few images of it are known today. In 1955, additions were made to the east side of the courthouse, which became known as "the annex." This utilitarian designed building housed county boardrooms, the Oneida County Sheriff's office and a jail. Just like the original county jail and sheriff's residence, the new annex also provided living quarters for the sheriff and their families. A new county jail was built on the edge of the Rhinelander city limits in 1999, opening up the annex to other county department offices.

Updates made during the 1960s attempted to make the building more energy efficient, but covered up many of

the distinctive features of the Branch 1 courtroom on the third floor. It helped heat the building during the winter, but seemed to make summer conditions worse. In 1989, a visiting judge refused to hold court in the building, citing the unbearable heat in the courtroom due to lack of air conditioning. The case was moved to the Claridge Inn conference room a few blocks away.

In 1991 a major restoration of the courthouse was undertaken. When the Branch 1 courtrooms drop ceiling was removed, original decorations in the courtroom were exposed, including a dusty outline of the original judge's bench. Judge Robert Kinney persuaded the county board to restore the courtroom. The board agreed, and it was returned to its original design.

The Oneida County Courthouse was added to the National Historic Registry in 1981, cementing its place in history. Other historical features on the courthouse square include markers noting Oneida County as the first in the state to hire a County Extension Agent, as well as being the first county in the nation to adopt comprehensive zoning ordinances in 1933.

The courthouse block also includes a memorial to those United States Service Members from Oneida County that have died while serving the country. Naturally, at the beginning of its Davenport Street walkway in front of the courthouse, is a Hodag statue, the symbol of Rhinelander, the county seat. The Oneida County Courthouse's Architect, Christ Tegan, also designed the Manitowoc County Courthouse, built just a few years earlier in 1906. The two buildings look very similar and are considered sister courthouses, although they feature different styles of domes. The Grant County Courthouse in Lancaster, Wisconsin shares the same dome structure as Oneida County, as both were selected from a stock design. Grant County's dome features clear glass, unlike Oneida County's green glass, but the two buildings are much different. These features highlight some

interesting history connecting the three Wisconsin counties.

The Oneida County Courthouse remains a busy place, much as it has for over 130 years. Day-to-day business is conducted at the courthouse, with work done by the county board and its many county departments. In 2022, a self-guided tour was installed, allowing visitors



Original Rhinelander plat showing original proposed courthouse location 1882



Aerial view of the Courthouse square showing original courthouse to the east of Baird Ave.



to learn more about the historic building. The Oneida County Courthouse remains one of the most beautiful buildings in the county. More than just a place to conduct government business, its architecture, history, artful interior dome, and the shining green beacon on top, make it an important landmark for the area. Don't forget to check out the courthouse during the holiday season! The festively decorated courthouse is a must-see at Christmastime.



Exterior Dome illuminated at night photo by Tom Wiensch

Looking up to the exterior dome from inside the base of the domes infrastructure photo by Kerry Bloedorn (below)



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WILD LAKES TO EXPLORE

by Dan Hagen

SILENCE IS HARD TO COME BY...

Chances are, you're probably close enough to a road to hear a car whizzing by. Or the refrigerator in a room over is making a constant hum. Luckily in the Northwoods, there are convenient places to escape the noise – a favorite trail or a tranquil lake, perhaps. I went paddling this fall on lakes with no development on them, and tried to listen to the silence. It isn't so silent after all. First, I notice the rustling of leaves. But there are sounds below that. An eagle flying overhead produces a low whooshing sound when it flaps its wings. But there are sounds below that. My heartbeat. A gentle thrumming of bugs. White noise, which is the sound that electromagnetic waves make as they travel through space. This type of silence can be unnerving at first, but research shows it can benefit our brain and body. Scientists in the UK found that people who listened to nature sounds like water and wind reduced their stress levels significantly more than those who listened to artificial noises. Other research found that two minutes of silence led to bigger drops in measures of relaxation like blood pressure and heart rate compared to a handful of other relaxation techniques. But it's not just the

relative silence of nature that calms us down. Visual stimuli play an important role as well. Nature is full of fractals, which are complex patterns that repeat over and over in different sizes and scales. A tree is a fractal. A branch breaks off from a trunk. Then another branch breaks off of that branch. And another. And so on. A lot of nature has this fractal geometry. Buildings, on the other hand, do not. They are usually flat with hard, right angles. Research done by a professor at the University of Oregon found that people recovered better from stress if they viewed fractal imagery. Mercer Naturalist John Bates published a book last year titled, *Wisconsin's Wild Lakes: A Guide to the Last Undeveloped Natural Lakes*. He takes the reader through nearly all of the wild lakes left in Wisconsin. But what is a wild lake? Simply put, a wild lake has no private homes visible from the lake. Bates also includes puts in a minimum of 30 acres, so that they're worth the effort of putting in the canoe or kayak. On these lakes you'll have silence of varying degrees and uninterrupted views of nature. This fall, I decided to paddle all of Oneida County's wild lakes. All of them had something different to offer.

HEMLOCK LAKE

I visited Hemlock Lake with my parents on a Friday morning in October. The 38-acre lake is incredibly clear, with plenty of shallow water vegetation. I saw some wildlife – a group of ducks and a turtle. There were a lot of trees fallen into the water, which is what the turtle was resting on. The shoreline had plenty of fall colors at the time, plus some rare older-growth hemlocks. There is no dock, making it less accessible than some other lakes; but there is no muck whatsoever, making it easy to step in from the water if you don't mind getting your feet wet. Woodruff Road runs the length of the lake and has some traffic on it, so the tranquility of the lake will likely be interrupted by the sound of a passing car. If you want to move your legs after a paddle, nearby Raven Trail is a perfect spot to hike.



LITTLE BASS LAKE

My parents and I stopped by Little Bass Lake next. The 44-acre lake was just as clear as Hemlock, and it was easy to step into the sandy bottom to take off from the launch point. The lake is shaped like an X, and there are different nooks to explore. Right off the launch there was a beaver house to the left. As we circumnavigated the lake, two eagles, one mature and one immature, flew back and forth from tall pines along the shore. Also, we saw a pileated woodpecker, blue jays and fish. No hemlock trees, but some birch trees add a nice spot of white to the shore. This lake is tucked away and not too close to a busy road, so nothing disturbed the sounds of nature.



CUNARD LAKE


Technically, Cunard and Sweeney are connected via a creek. My parents and I attempted to bridge the gap. We paddled to a small pool of water just north of Cunard, and made our way down a small creek. Unfortunately, this small creek led us to a dead-end bog. We pulled out our phones and, using the GPS, realized we took a wrong turn. We made our slow way back to the small pool. The water was shallow and mucky. We then tried a different creek and made it most of the way to Sweeney, but beaver dams slowed us down and we turned around because of time constraints. Doable, but definitely difficult. Anyway, Cunard itself was clear and very pretty. We had to rush off of it, so we didn't get a chance to look around the entire 44-acre lake. Saw some beautiful fall colors. Lake is very accessible with a sturdy dock. I saw a harmless Fishing Spider on the dock, which are the largest spiders native to Wisconsin. Nearby Cunard Campground seemed like a great place to camp.

SWEENEY LAKE

My parents and I next attempted to start in Cunard Lake and paddle into Sweeney Lake. We were unsuccessful, but more on that later. I visited Sweeney at a later date and found it to be lovely. The 191-acre lake is different than the other lakes on this list in that it is a very popular fishing spot with plenty of motorboats during the day. The water is incredibly green, with visibility only going down a foot or two. A sign alerts people of the loons and osprey that often call this lake home. This lake is very accessible with a sturdy pier.

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WILD LAKES TO EXPLORE

CONTINUED

ZOTTLE LAKE

What a funny little lake. Quiet, secluded, and a little hard to get to. The access is unsigned, so from Hwy 47 in Lake Tomahawk, take Rainbow Road east, immediately turn onto Kelly Road, which becomes Hasbrook Road. In a mile, turn left on Gritzmachen Road. A little less than a quarter mile later there will be an unmarked path just wide enough for a car. But soon you'll arrive at small 27-acre lake nestled in a valley. The water is incredibly clear, and there is a nice spot to sit and enjoy some solitude.

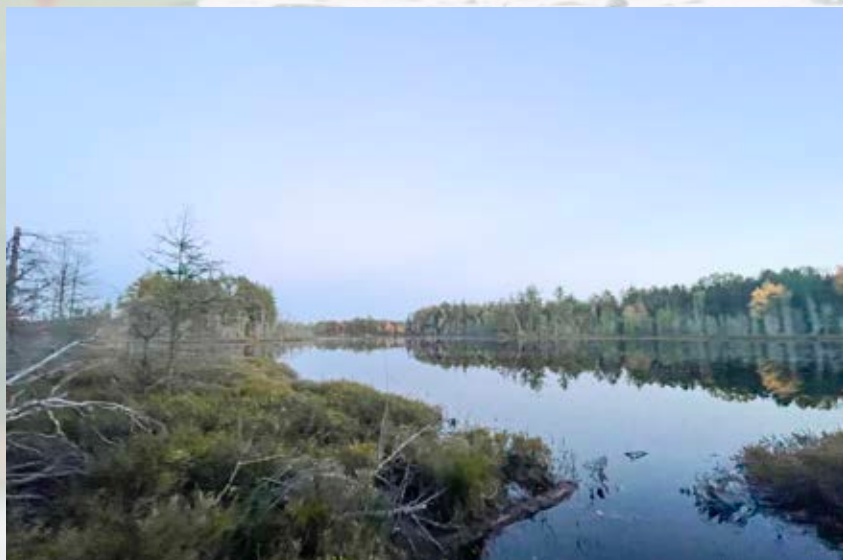


SHALLOW LAKE

Shallow Lake is, well, shallow. It's a 29 acre bog lake located within the 103-acre Shallow Lake State Natural Area. The entire shoreline is bog, dominated by a lot of dying trees. The mucky bottom likely means a messy entry and exit from the canoe or kayak. I saw a muskrat enjoying a nice swim.

MCNAUGHTON LAKE

The lake I would recommend the most. It's 121 acres, so larger than the other lakes which makes for more time adventuring. I paddled with a group of friends on a Tuesday night in mid-September, and we were likely too loud to see any wildlife besides a few swans in the distance. On the southern end of the lake, there's a hidden away spot that feels almost mystical. The sediment of the lake is a lot of muck so not the best place for swimming. No dock, but not mucky at the launch to make it difficult to get into your kayak or canoe. The lake is fairly quiet most of the time, but there is a lot of logging activity in the area. The parking area for the lake is right on the McNaughton Hiking Trail.





RICE LAKE

A blissfully silent experience, except for the wind, the birds, and the bugs. This lake feels different than the other lakes since it's surrounded by meadows, thickets of bushes, and scattered spruces. The 122-acre lake was extremely shallow, and I didn't see much rice when I visited in mid-September. I did see hundreds of birds, including ducks, geese and songbirds. There was some heavy vegetation in parts of the lake so I couldn't completely stay to the shore.

SPUR LAKE

The 113-acre lake is quite lovely to look at, but somewhat frustrating to paddle through as it's dominated by aquatic plants. For this one, I'd just make a quick stop after Rice Lake to take in the view.



HARRISON LAKE

I'm cheating with this one in two ways. First, it's not a wild lake. Second, it's not in Oneida County. There are only two properties on the lake from what I could tell, and they're not viewable from much of the lake. But it's only ten or so miles from Rhineland, and it certainly feels like a wild lake. I had a wonderful time paddling this lake with my friends Amanda and Emily. The lake is full of nooks and islands so there was a lot to explore. There were also a lot of dead trees in the water, which might sound not-so-good but we found it kind of fun. We each posed for pictures with the trees strategically behind us in order to become unicorns. We were slightly delirious at the time. Anyway, Harrison definitely feels like a wild lake even if it isn't one technically. We saw a nesting pair of swans with two baby swans. We also saw an eagle. Beautiful, beautiful lake – which is why I had to include it on this list.





THE JOE & NELLIE STORY

A Magical Mental Telepathy Show

by Kerry Bloedorn

Joe Mercedes passed away quietly at St. Mary's Hospital in Rhinelander, Wisconsin on July 6th, 1966 at the age of 77. After almost 60 years of his absence, not many people know his name, are aware of the incredible life he lived, or the

work he did for our beloved Northwoods of Wisconsin. This mustachioed Vaudeville super star turned marketing master had done more in his life to further Northwoods tourism than any individual in history. With his charm, tenacity, and love for his adopted home of Wisconsin, he was able to accomplish what many have tried at and failed. By magic, he drew together the hamlets of the Northern Wisconsin lakes country into a unified campaign for the benefit of all, beating as one "Heart O' the Lakes." But first, we need to set the stage for Mercedes, and start with the amazing telepathic ability, and connection he had with his partner Nellie Stanton. An act that made them world famous. This is the Joe Mercedes Story.

stage show to work in theater advertising in the famed White City amusement park of Chicago. Joe spent the next few years learning the art of advertising and promotion, a talent he would put to use throughout his life.

In 1908, Joe found a job as an assistant to a famous acrobatic troupe leader and yogi, Hassan Ben-Ali, and was given the opportunity to travel to India with him on a circus tour. It was during this trip to the land of ancient mysticism that he came up with an idea for an act that would change his life.

Years later, Joe would tell a love story about meeting his partner and future wife, Nellie L. Clement, who would become the second half of his amazing telepathy act. Joe and Nellie were neighbors growing up in the ghettos of Chicago. Nellie had moved with her parents from Michigan where she was born. Joseph, aside from his talents with magic, was a child violin prodigy. Joe would visit Nellie who would accompany his violin on piano. As they grew older they developed a romantic relationship. While Joe was working in a factory as a young man, his hand was caught in a machine cog which severely injured one of his fingers, and he developed blood poisoning. Joe spent weeks at Nellie's house recovering, much of the time delirious from high fevers as he fought to recover. During this time his mind kept going back to one of his favorite songs, which he asked Nellie to play for him.

Part One: Magic of the Mind

Mercedes was born Joseph H. Cohen in Chicago on September 12th, 1888. He grew up in a poor family, the oldest of five children. Joe left school after the 3rd grade, and took to the streets of Chicago, running errands, selling newspapers, and sneaking into the city's famous theater shows. As a boy he became enamored by the circuses, side shows, magicians, and thrill acts he saw in the late 1800s. He quickly learned he was able to figure out many of the sleight of hand, and magic tricks he saw on stage. In 1899 at the age of 11, he performed a magic show on an amateur program, winning first prize of \$2.50 in the contest. This taste of showmanship would only be the beginning of an illustrious stage career that would take him around the world, and to the top of the 1920's Vaudeville circuit.

In 1902, another name in magic thrill shows was hitting headlines, Wisconsin native Harry Houdini. Taking the cue, Joe developed a show where he escaped from a trunk on stage, which accompanied his magic act. In 1903 he had his first paid performance at the Clark Street Theater in Chicago, using the name "The Great Mercedes". His show included magic, and thrilling escape artistry. But before the rise of moving pictures, show business was tough, and the magic business crowded, so he quit his



MERCEDES, MUSICAL ENIGMA, TOPLINER AT ORPHEUM THEATER

Without mentioning the name of the song, she began to play the melody from his mind, "Ave Maria" by Gounod. It was then, they realized they had a deeper connection than just love; Joe could transfer his thoughts to Nellie, and she could read his mind.

In the months after Joe's illness, he and Nellie would practice this new found mental ability they shared. Nellie's parents were horrified at this development, thinking Joe had their daughter under a trance of sorts. Their misunderstood ability was blamed on the devil. Nevertheless, they started a show of their mysterious talent, billed as "Joe Mercedes and Mademoiselle Stantone", and began playing small theaters as they attempted to break into the popular Vaudeville industry.

In truth, Joe and Nellie had not grown up together, but met around 1910 when Joe sought out a pianist for his telepathy act upon his return from India. Nellie had been married to a man named John Stanton, who's name she adapted for use on stage as an accomplished pianist. But what is certainly true is that Joe and Nellie did fall in love and had a special connection that transcended the romantic relationship they developed. Parts of the story were true, much of it was show business, but the act was real.

Their performance was unique among the comedy troupes, and singing and dancing groups of the day. A typical show went as follows:

Mr. Mercedes, dressed in a black suit, slicked back dark hair, and commanding presence, walks the aisles of the theater. He stops at an audience member's seat. On the stage, a white gowned Nellie Stantone, seated at a beautiful grand piano, her eyes covered with a heavy blindfold. Mr. Mercedes would speak quietly with the selected audience member who was asked to put in mind a song, any song they could think of, and whisper it to Mercedes, but not speak of it aloud. Joe would then say the magic words "Please play the selection." In a moment's time, Mademoiselle Stantone began to play the very song, thought only in the mind of the audience participant, on her keys of ivory. The song was heard throughout the theater, but unseen was the telepathic ability between Mercedes and Stantone. Joe was able to transfer it to the stage with thought alone to Stantone, who promptly named the selection and began to play. The crowds that witnessed this spectacle were astonished. This act continued until the whole audience was utterly convinced that the couple possessed true clairvoyance. And frankly, there was no other explanation for it.

In 1911, the couple was performing at the old Orpheum Theater in Madison and several UW faculty from the college's psych department were in attendance. In disbelief, they suggested the act worked by way of wires

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Mercedes, from the audience, transmits in silence to his assistant on the stage any musical selection suggested, and she immediately plays it on the piano. Editor Mayor, of the Scientific American; Professor Jastrow, of University of Wisconsin; President Wilson, Charles Schwab, William Randolph Hearst and others have all tested him and been baffled by the wonderful results achieved.		
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MERCEDES.

► Continued on page 22 ...



strung between the two as a means of communication. They invited Joe and Nellie to perform for Wisconsin state Governor Francis E. McGovern, and during this test of their abilities, they would be separated.

Joe's part of the demonstration was set up in the governor's office in the Capitol, and Nellie was seated at a piano in the window display of the Forbes-Meagher Music Store, a block away on West Main Street. Of course the two couldn't even see each other, let alone set up wires to communicate. Mr. McGovern chose a song, "I Love a Lassie", and then a telephone call was placed to the music store, with Joe simply asking Nellie to "please play the selection". Within an instant she began to play the song to the amazement of those witnessing the demonstration, including the university professors.

The next day, newspaper headlines around the world touted the incredible thought transference act of Mercedes and Stanton. They went from making \$150 a week in small theaters and Vaudeville show houses, to making \$1000 a week for their performances. The couple's names were soon lit up on the marquees of the biggest theaters in the country as they traveled the globe with their act.

The Mercedes' became one of the highest paid attractions in the world through the 1920s. Their show took them all over the United States, and overseas. They performed for scientists, psychologists, heads of state and mayors of major cities. They did shows for the United States congress, at the White House for three different presidents, WW1 soldiers, kings and queens of Europe, even spending a year in Paris performing. They headlined shows with the greatest names in Vaudeville, from Fred and Adele Astaire to Will Rogers, and many more. At their peak, the couple was making \$4000 a week, about \$75,000 by today's numbers. Through the years, Joe had taken to wearing a red carnation in his coat, and a waxed mustache, signature traits he carried with him the rest of his life.

During their performances, sometimes the musical selection was whispered to Joe, sometimes written on paper to confirm its title, but never was it spoken out loud. Nellie always played the right song. Joe denied that their ability was a "mind reading trick", and explained it as musical thought transference, or an exercise in mental telepathy, scientific in nature. He insisted there was nothing supernatural about it, merely a physical talent they had developed. At one point Joe wrote a book about



their act, "Force Thought Revealed" which purported to explain how it was done, but in true showman fashion, it didn't really explain anything.

During thousands of shows, Joe and Nellie baffled audiences wherever they went. Of course, skeptics were met at every turn, and time and time again left awestruck. Newspaper articles from the 1910s and 20s marvel at their shows. In New York they performed their feat for the mayor of Utica, with a distance of 50 miles separating them as Nellie played in front of the Mayor of Syracuse, with no telephone connection this time. A call was established only after Nellie had begun to play the song, and of course it was the one requested! At another test for the Pennsylvania house of representatives in Pittsburgh, the couple captivated the legislators with a performance. Still there were doubters among them, and some requested Nellie perform a different demonstration where she would call out words written on paper in secret, and she succeeded. She then named every member of the house down the line, with correct spellings, never erring once! Joe claimed Nellie was 85% of the act, and it would seem she possessed a remarkable talent. Nellie was said to have a musical repertoire of over 25,000 songs. Together with Joe's knack for showmanship, they performed an act that's never been equalled. All the scientists and great minds of the day attested their presentation must actually be the best example of real mental telepathy ever performed.

After years of working together, their show and love continued to blossom. The couple was married on December 26th, 1923, and they took a trip to Northern Wisconsin. They loved the area so much that in 1926, they decided to build a cabin on Blue Lake south of Minocqua. It would be their retreat from a grueling tour schedule. It was here they developed an appreciation for the forests and lakes of the Northwoods. A quiet place they could escape from the pressures of the limelight.

In 1933, after hundreds of performances, tragedy struck the Mercedes during a show at the Paramount Theater in Staten Island, New York. During the final curtain call, the couple was taking their bows on a mechanically elevated stage. As it slowly lowered, Nellie's white gown became caught in the stage gears as it pulled her in. By the time the malfunction was noticed, the left side of her body had been severely maimed. The couple headed to their Blue Lake home for Nellie to recover. She was told by doctors she would never play the piano again, ending Mercedes' illustrious career in show business.... for now.

With this, we will close the first chapter on Joe Mercedes and Nellie Stantone. Come back again in the next issue of the New North Magazine for Part 2 of the Joe Mercedes Story and how the couple would magically transform the early tourism business of Northern Wisconsin in a way never seen before, or since.



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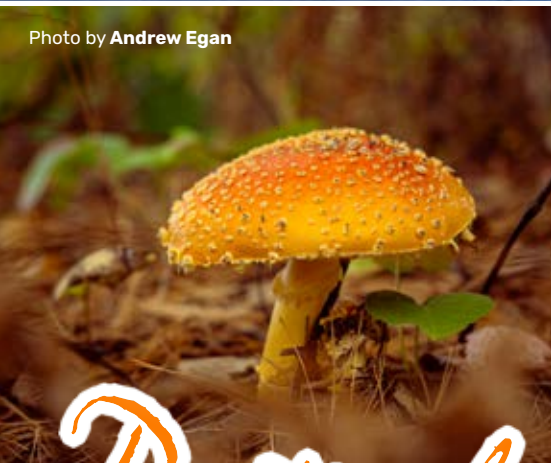


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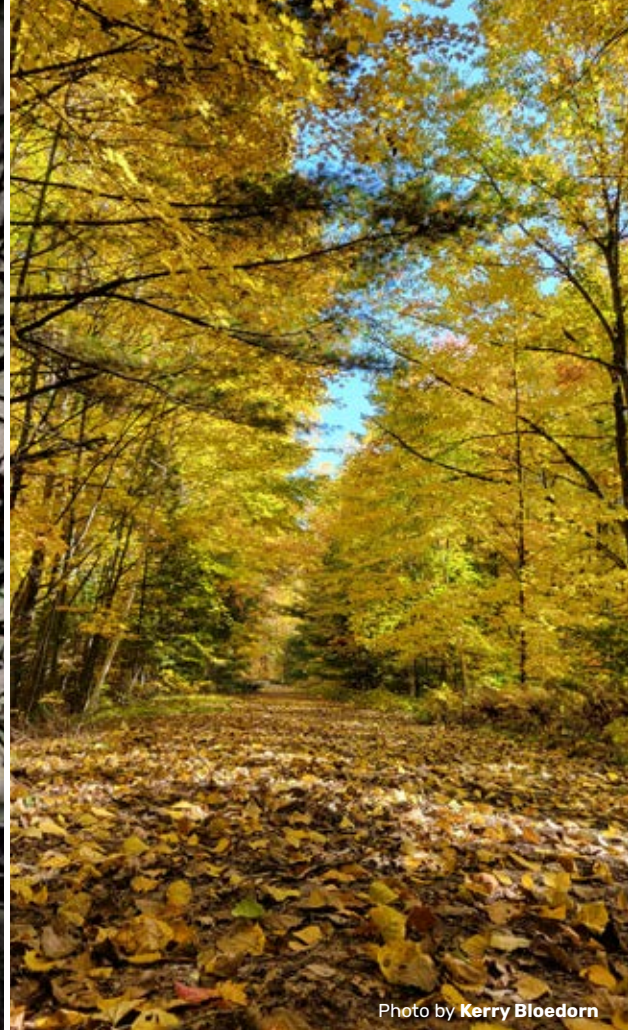


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RHINELANDER CHRISTMAS

Lights Tour

The Ho Ho Hodag city has become a popular destination for Christmas light displays, with spots throughout Rhinelander getting spruced up for the Holidays. Each location compliments each other, and visiting them on a Rhinelander Christmas Lights Tour makes for a great time with friends and family!

CHRISTMAS AT THE MUSEUM

When?

Christmas Open House on Friday, December 1st 4pm-8pm,

Where?

Pioneer Park Historical Complex and Railroad Museum - Pioneer Park, Rhinelander

Pioneer Park Historical Complex has been decorating the museum in it's off season with a great lights display. The display features logging equipment, museum buildings, and it's famous narrow-gauge locomotive and train, all lit up for the holidays. The Rhinelander Railroad Association puts on a wonderful Christmas Open House at the old Rhinelander Soo station the first Friday evening and two Saturdays of December. Come down for hot cocoa, cookies, and to see the depot decked out for the holidays. Speeder Rides, Santa Visits, and Christmas themed model railroad displays are set up for the open house. Plan to come down during the open house, or take a drive through Pioneer Park anytime after dusk to see the lights.

For more details, visit; www.rhinelanderpphc.com



RONDELE RANCH CHRISTMAS LIGHTS DISPLAY

When?

December, Dates and Times TBD

Where?

Rondele Ranch, Hwy K, Harshaw

Rondele Ranch, the private estate and events grounds just west of Rhinelander, has been decorating their grounds for the last few years. Open to the public, this amazing display includes a beautiful walking path between a myriad of displays. A lodge with refreshments are also available. Information on official dates and times the display will be open is still in the planning stages for 2023. Keep an eye on the Rondele Ranch website as the holiday season draws near.

www.rondeleranch.com

HOLIDAYS WITH THE LEGENDS

When?

Tuesday, December 5th, 2023

Where?

Rhineland Area Chamber of Commerce.

The Rhineland Chamber will host its second annual Holidays with the Legends event which pairs two legends, the Hodag, and Santa Clause. Stop by and get a photo taken with both Legends for this special red and green holiday event. Treats and cocoa will be served.

For more information visit; www.rhinelandchamber.com



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DOWNTOWN RHINELANDER

When?

Brown St/Davenport St - Rhineland

Where?

Every Christmas, downtown Rhineland turns into a Norman Rockwell painting. Store windows are decorated for the season, and Christmas lights hung across Brown and Davenport Streets with care. Add a dash of snow in the air and it looks like a scene from one of your favorite Hallmark holiday movies. Driving downtown between the Pioneer Park and Hodag Park displays is a perfect stop for a bite to eat, a holiday cocktail, or just to walk around and enjoy the window shopping. Also, don't miss downtown Rhineland's Holiday Open House the weekend before Thanksgiving, November 17th-19th.



LIGHTS OF THE NORTHWOODS

When?

December 1st – January 1st, 5pm – 9pm

Where?

Hodag Park – Rhineland

The Lights of the Northwoods is setting up its Christmas lights display for its 6th year at Hodag Park in Rhineland. Featuring more than a million lights, this display can be toured on foot or from the comfort of your vehicle. This year's event schedule will include holiday music and a bonfire. Refreshments and Santa visits will also be available in the Hodag Park boat landing pavilion on select weekends. Again this year, a New Years Day fireworks display will start at 7pm January 1st. Every year, this event helps provide donations to our community.

For schedule details visit;

www.lightsofthenorthwoods.org



LIGHTS OF THE NORTHWOODS

IN HODAG PARK

The goal of the Lights of the Northwoods is “a bigger and better event each year,” and that requires a tremendous amount of collaboration with many businesses, individuals, civic and community groups, and local government. It begins with our sponsors who provide the resources to purchase new displays and lights or provide materials and services that allow us to fabricate our own local displays and repurpose older items that have been donated.

This season will showcase over 70 new locally made and refurbished items as well as several new commercial displays. Both the set-up and take down in Hodag Park is a multi-week effort that involves many individuals and groups. Without the support of all these volunteers this event would not be what it is today. In 2023 we are collaborating with Boy Scout Troop 660, Rhinelander Area Food Pantry, Tomahawk Food Pantry, Elcho Food Pantry and Trigs who will be setting up music sections in the park, some including their own unique displays.

We hope to expand on this with other businesses and community organizations in the future. During the event we also have many groups supporting the nightly operations that are essential to making the event run smoothly and

most importantly, an enjoyable experience for all. Those who wish to pass along a suggested gift item big or small, or just take a photo with Santa will have the opportunity to do so on three weekends this year: Dec 1-2, 8-9 and 15-16. Once again, the GWFC Rhinelander Woman's Club is planning a menu of what is sure to be delectable holiday treats in the main pavilion. Also mark your calendar for the fan favorite fireworks on January 1, which will conclude the 2023 event.

What started just 6 years ago with a comment, “Wouldn't it be cool if we could decorate Hodag Park for the holidays” has evolved into a community wide effort to bring the sights and sounds of Christmas to all. There is no fee to attend, but we do accept free-will donations that support many groups that serve the local area in a variety of ways. Here's an early wish that you and yours have a joyous, safe and very Merry Christmas. We'll leave the lights on for you.

Anyone interested in volunteering and helping us spread a little Christmas cheer, please reach out to us.

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OF THE
NORTHWOODS

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www.lightsofthenorthwoods.org

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BRETT WINTERS

by Amanda Anderson

By the time I first heard Brett Winters perform at a local Northwoods venue, I had been living in Wisconsin for a few years and had listened to other live musicians, but I had yet to experience anything as deep, introspective, and eccentric as what he brought that night.

He sat on a box drum that he kicked to the beat with his left foot, while a tambourine played snare drum on his right. In between a mash-up of Coldplay's "Don't Panic" with a minor key version of John Denver's "Country Roads Take Me Home" and a hint of Cat Stevens' "Wild World," he played harmonica and layered his ethereal falsetto with three-part harmonies. Before I could come back to Earth, he transitioned into an original song in an alternative guitar tuning with made-up words like "formerglow," "coruscational," and "unwash."

Through his pun-filled banter with the crowd, artful melodies, and cryptic lyrics, I recall being able to connect deeply with my inner self through his performance, and I was in awe of his genuineness as he played and sang. It was a type of spiritual experience I had been yearning to have.

Fast forward to today, the depth of singer-songwriter, musician and producer Brett Winters has reached the Mariana Trench. While his music career has had its ups and downs, he continues to connect with the depths of his own authenticity and bring light and connection to those around him. Through whatever life brings, that is his ultimate goal — to be light in this world and to share it with

others, whether that be through musical performance or other avenues his path may lead him toward.

Brett began his musical journey at a young age, dabbling in various aspects of music throughout the years, but he

didn't become serious about pursuing live music until 2018. Ironically, at the beginning of that year, he had decided that music was not for him and wanted to quit

altogether. But after recording an EP at Bloomington, IN's Airtime Studios for his late friend Paul, Brett had an inkling that a career in music could actually be in the cards for him. After performing at a variety show in Three Lakes, multiple people implored him to keep playing. He took that as a sign to contact venues, and so began his journey playing gigs through Vilas, Oneida County, and beyond.

Since 2018, Brett has continued to improve his chops and expand his song repertoire. He has grown immensely as an artist and as a person, but this hasn't been without trials. At the beginning of 2021, Brett went through a difficult break-up while the world was enduring an unprecedented pandemic, and there weren't many opportunities for live musicians in the area. On a search for something more, he traveled

west to the land of Boulder, Colorado. Little did he know what hardships he would face ahead and how much the move would influence where he is at today.

While many difficulties barraged Brett during this time, one stands out as the most traumatic. On day four in Boulder, he was grocery shopping for an InstaCart client and heard the sound of gunshots behind him. He inadvertently found himself in the line of fire of a mass shooting that would take the lives of ten innocent people and wound many more. Thankfully, he managed to escape through a corner exit of the store, but it took time to process the acute trauma, work through the survivor's guilt, and figure out his next steps.

This experience was a foreshadowing of what was to come for the rest of Brett's time in Colorado. He truly could not catch a break and everything that could go wrong did go wrong. It became clear that staying in Boulder was hurting more than helping.

And so, after about 8 months out west, Brett made his return back to the Northwoods. He told me that things feel "so much better" and realized that in order to appreciate everything he had here, he had to be away from it for a while.





Brett says that while the early morning rumbles of road construction have been “rather annoying,” he appreciates many things about being an artist here in Rhinelander. He loves the tight-knit community and how “everyone kind of knows everyone.”

Now that Brett has found his way back to the Northwoods, he is sinking roots deeper into the community. While he plans to continue playing live music with his very niche one-man-band setup, he has invested his time and energy into music production as well.

Following many months of using his “limited carpentry skills” alongside the help of his friend and Rhinelander Community Garden leader Mike Haasl, Brett was able to acoustically treat a room in his own home. In said room he has produced many of his own songs as well as my own

single, “The Space Between.” (You can find this song and Brett’s music on all streaming platforms!) He told me that with every song he produces, he is getting exponentially better and enjoys the craft that much more.

When asking Brett about the heart behind his desire to build a studio and produce music, he said, “I consider creativity to be an outpouring of something greater than ourselves. You hear artists often say that it feels like they aren’t the ones creating ... that they are channeling something greater. That ‘something greater’ doesn’t have to be divine or spiritual; it can just be a connection to something beyond the mundane. What I want is to provide a forum for others to tap into that mystery with me, and use it to alchemize darkness into light.” With that, he has chosen to call this endeavor, “Be Light Studio.”

As a local singer/songwriter, musician, and now music producer, Brett Winters is open to wherever that leads him. Whether you experience his live music or have a calling to record your own, Brett desires to be of service in whatever ways he can.

“The unfortunate reality is that we have a lot of darkness in this world. We always have. Plague, famine, war, atrocities, abuse, neglect, toxic shame, people leaving this planet too soon ... My hope is that as I find light in my own darkness, I can shine it out and inspire other people to do the same, so that we can spread more light ... and be the light that we wish to see.” -Brett Winters



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JC WEDDLE BOOKSTORE

by Dan Hagen

"UNCONVENTIONALLY AUTHENTIC"

Jeff Weddle, one half of the JC Weddle Books team, wrote a blog post earlier this year about his vacuum cleaner. It was an item he and his wife Cindy (the other half) rescued from the garbage pile when they took over 71 S Stevens Street in April of 2022. Jeff did a few repairs on it and gave it a spin. Here's what he wrote:



The first time I used our rejuvenated vacuum it was, well, it wasn't impressive. "I'm sorry, mister. I'm not what I used to be. I can't lie. There's a reason they put me in the garbage. I'm just no good. I suck." "Not at all, little buddy," I replied. "The problem is that you don't suck."

Unconventional. It's the approach taken by Jeff and Cindy, and it seems to be working. For starters, a used book store in the 21st century is generally not thought of as a big moneymaker. Before they opened, a lot of people told them it was a bad idea. And people are still telling them that. "People who come up in the summer told us 'we're so surprised you guys are still here,' said Jeff. Like even now we still get people doubting. But it's understandable, it's not like we're becoming millionaires here." But the JC Weddle Books is becoming a place with a steady stream of customers who buy a lot of books.

The idea of opening a used bookstore started around 5 years ago. Jeff was a longtime pastor in the area

and Cindy worked for the library. Both thought opening a used book store would combine their passion for books and interest in entrepreneurship. Whenever Jeff and Cindy traveled, they made a point to visit used book stores. They were able to see things they liked, and things they didn't like.

"There's one I remember – it was just a bunch of two-by-four shelves with only paperbacks," said Jeff. "And when we walked in, there were four people sitting in lawn chairs watching TV. They didn't even say 'hello.' I was like 'what is this? Did we just walk into



someone's house?" So we didn't want to do that." Once both their children had graduated high school, the Weddles decided it was a good time to go for it. They quickly made their store one-of-a-kind, with plenty more items than just books. PEZ candy dispensers, memorabilia from the cartoon "Peanuts," and an alien-

themed restroom just to name just a few of the quirks. Kids can even transport themselves into the world of C.S. Lewis by going through a wardrobe into a hidden room.

Another surprise are the prices on the books. It is pretty easy to walk into JC Weddle with a few dollars and walk out with a few books. Their theory is to keep prices low to move product faster.

"It's been interesting, a lot of the classic literature moves pretty well, which has been surprising," said Jeff. "Poetry is also a little more popular than I was assuming it would be. Just because I don't really like



Shoppers will be greeted by Koda

poetry and I assume everyone is like me. Apparently, that's not true."

Sarcasm comes quickly to Jeff, and he is quick to unleash it on JC Weddle's Facebook page:



There is only one taxidermied blowfish left! They are selling like hotcakes. Very slow selling hotcakes.

Actually I have no idea how hotcakes sell. Everyone says that though, so I assume everyone else knows how hotcakes sell and allegedly they sell well. If so, however, you would assume there would be a ton more hotcake stores. Poor guy down the street with his coldcake store going out of business. D'oh! He was so close to a million dollar idea.

Jeff's regular posts have ballooned the store's following on the social media site to over a thousand users.

"I have a dumb sense of humor, and I just include that in there," said Jeff. "And that annoys some people. But for the most part, it's going well. People like authenticity."

If you're looking for that remaining taxidermied blowfish, you're unfortunately too late – they're all sold out. But there are still taxidermied starfish available. And thousands of books. And a vacuum cleaner that doesn't suck.

Visiting the bathroom is like visiting another world

A person is bowling at Nick's Hodag Lanes. The person is in the middle of a bowling motion, with their arm extended and the ball released. The bowling lane is visible, with pins at the end. An American flag is hanging on the wall in the background. The logo for Nick's Hodag Lanes is in the top right corner, featuring a bowling ball and pins.

NICK'S
HODAG LANES

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The advertisement for Rhinelanders Brewing Company LLC features the company logo at the top, which includes a green circle with three white pine trees. Below the logo, the text "Rhinelanders" is written in a large, red, serif font, followed by "BREWING COMPANY LLC" in a smaller, green, sans-serif font. The phrase "Live Music" is prominently displayed in a large, green, sans-serif font. Below this, there is a list of four items, each preceded by a small green circle with three white pine trees: "Family and Dog Friendly", "Large Retail Selection", "Growler and Howler Fills", and "Crawlers and Cased Beer". At the bottom of the advertisement, there is a photograph of three glasses of beer: a dark beer, a red beer, and a green beer. Below the photograph, the address "43 South Brown Street, Rhinelander Wisconsin 54501" is listed, followed by the phone numbers "Brewery General Line: 715-550-2337 Direct: 715-420-0580", the website "www.RhinelandersBrewery.com", and the instruction "See events on our Facebook page".

Rhinelanders
BREWING COMPANY LLC

Live Music

- Family and Dog Friendly
- Large Retail Selection
- Growler and Howler Fills
- Crawlers and Cased Beer

43 South Brown Street, Rhinelander Wisconsin 54501
Brewery General Line: 715-550-2337 Direct: 715-420-0580
www.RhinelandersBrewery.com
See events on our Facebook page

SEASONS OF THE PAST

by Michael Haney

We only lived in Rhinelander for five years, from 1959 to 1964, but those years from sixth grade through my sophomore year in high school were very significant years for me. Coming from the plains of Kansas, I adapted well to the forests and lakes of northern Wisconsin. One thing I particularly enjoyed was the parade of seasons. Each season had a beginning and an end. Each season had its own feel and activities unique to it. What I came to enjoy the most, though, was the changing of the seasons, the transition from one season to the next.

It was easy to sense the rhythm of change, to ponder the visual transformation that took place as the cycle-of-life played out during the year. I found myself very fond of autumn. It was the bridge between summer and winter. The green canopy of the forest suddenly erupts into a dazzling display of color. There is the first chill in the air and the first whiff of smoke from a fireplace or wood-burning stove.

It was also a time for reflection. Even as a youth I had a sense of loss and gain during autumn. Summer was gone until next year. Hot days, swimming, vacation from school, all had drifted into the past. Then the leaves fell, leaving the trees bare. The underbrush died out.

Now, one could see into the forest, into the hidden places, the secret places that had been concealed by the lushness of summer.

Winter was coming. Soon shorter days, colder days, would be upon us. Yet, as a youth, there was still much to anticipate in the season ahead. We had some friends who had a cabin on Black Lake. Each winter they would build a toboggan slide that ran down the hill from their cabin, across the dock, and out onto the lake. It was always an exhilarating ride as we flew down the hill, faces red from the cold, and laughing as we coasted to a stop out on the ice-covered lake. I don't think we knew what warp speed was back then, but I'm sure we felt that we were well on our way to catching the wind.

In town, there was skating at Pioneer Park. Part of the ball field would be watered down, and it became the place to go in Rhinelander for skating. Music would play through the loud speakers. Friends were there. For those daring enough (at least among the young ones), there was the chance of holding hands with a girl as you skated around the ice. Of course, no one wanted to admit they were cold, but there were two warming houses, one for the girls and one for the

boys. You could take off your skates, put your feet near the heat, and soon feeling would return to your toes. Then, back out onto the ice for more skating.

Without a doubt, for me, the most special time of the Rhinelander winter was Christmas. Christmas in Rhinelander was made wonderful by a combination of home and town, of family and friends, of warmth and cold. It was an atmosphere that elicited a sense of comfort and joy.

We always looked forward to our family's holiday routine. We would attend the Christmas Eve service at church. Then it was home for our traditional light, snacky Christmas Eve meal. When we were done, one of us would read the Christmas story from the Gospel of Luke. Finally, it would be time to open presents.

I also found the festive atmosphere of the town to be a major part of the holiday spirit. Evening walks during Christmas season were gifts that didn't need wrapping. There would be a light covering of snow on the sidewalks. Big, fluffy flakes would fall softly, gently, gracefully out of the darkness and through the illumination of the street lights. Except for the occasional sound of a vehicle passing by, it was a time of relative silence. Those evening walks defined the word "peaceful".

But what a change as you approached your destination! Downtown was an oasis of light. There were bright colored lights hung above the street. The store windows were ablaze with their Christmas displays. And, you were certain you would see people you knew downtown. Shopping could be a challenge for a young person. Trying to finance the purchase of presents for the family wasn't always easy, but it always seemed to work out. Maybe there would be time (and money?) for a cup of hot chocolate before heading home. Being downtown made me happy. Rhinelander was really home, my home. If those evening walks to town defined the word "peaceful," being downtown defined the word "joyful."

Looking back through the years to those days of long ago, I know that those days weren't perfect, but they filled my heart with warm, wonderful memories. No, those days weren't perfect, but they were magical, and the magic remains strong.



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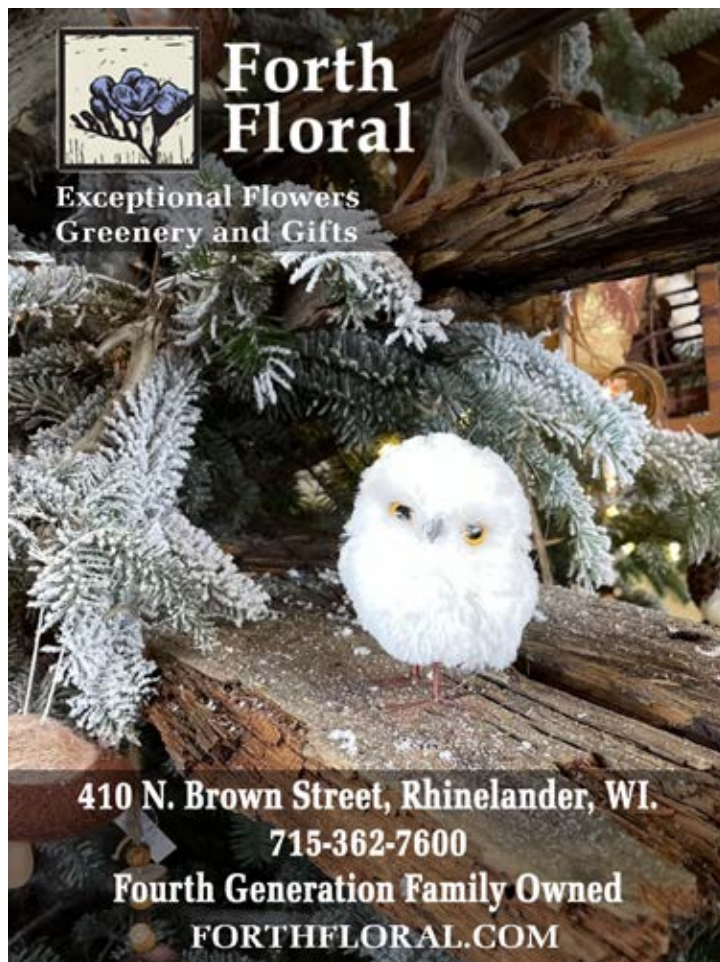
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Shelley Novotny

NORTHWOODS

by Dan Hagen



Shelley Novotny, a Shakti artist from Northwoods Wisconsin, is deeply attuned to nature and possesses a fervor for eco-friendly, mixed media, and recycled art. She crafts one of a kind handcrafted wearable art ensembles and headdresses to adorn and empower women. She will tell you her most recent accomplishment has been bringing to fruition, “The Artistic Alchemists”. This is a local group of diversely talented creatives who are energetically aligned, pulling their divine natural gifts, creative skills, and energies together. Looking through Shelley’s headdresses and garments is an otherworldly journey. Photographer Amanda Anderson artfully captures Shelley’s designs, style, and overall vision during fantasy photoshoots they call, “The Magick Experience,” which inspires soul expression, transforming women into an enchanting realm. Shelley appropriately conveys her confidence in doing something so different than everything else. This confidence is newfound and based on realizing she is now living what she calls “her soul purpose or Meraki.” Meraki is a Greek term that means to do something with love, passion and creativity; to put something of yourself into your work. That’s a kind of confidence that doesn’t come easily, and Shelley has been through a lot to get to this point.

The main component to Shelley’s art is gathering and recycling. She gets nearly all her items in nature or second-hand, through thrift and a network of people who donate items to find a place in her art. What’s now an aesthetic and intentional decision was born out of necessity. Years ago, Shelley was a single parent raising young children. “At that point I did not have a lot of money,” said Shelley. “But I loved art and creating. So, I would thrift, find things in nature, that sort of thing.” Shelley couldn’t afford trips to Michael’s or Hobby Lobby but found other ways to make art. She had a network of nearby farmers that would let her dig through their junk piles accumulating for generations, filled with rusty patina and farm treasures. Through neighbors and friends who owned auction and estates sales businesses, she accumulated dress forms, mannequins, old windows, furniture, and vintage

clothing. This set her on the journey of repurposing and upscaling as “junk art,” giving the vintage, forgotten, and discarded new life.

“I have a keen eye for seeing what things can be transformed into. My kids would cringe because I’d be driving them to school, still in my pajamas, and then pull over when I saw something on the side of the road,” said Shelley. “They’d be hiding, they were so embarrassed. But I would bring it home and make it into something new.” Eventually, Shelley made her way up to the Northwoods. She had stopped the “junk art,” and began to work on herself. Taking classes, she realized that the process of creating was the key component to finding her joy. “I realized I was kind of creating for other people to make them happy, or to make a sale at an art fair,” said Shelley. “And not even realizing it’s about how I feel when I’m doing something, when I’m in my creative mode.”

She made a commitment to herself to expand and create new opportunities for growth. To begin a new life pattern, she branched out of her social circle and started joining different local women’s workshops and gatherings, some in-person and some online. She tried new things such as felting, hooping and cold-water dipping. Within these groups she met people who were uplifting and positive. They encouraged her to pursue her own identity which included her unique brand of art. This involves the trans-

ARTIST



formation of natural elements and recycled materials into wearable art. She regularly deconstructs thrifted clothing for raw materials like yarn, buys bags of broken jewelry for cheap, and collects pieces of nature like pine boughs from the woods near her home. These seemingly dissimilar items she then brings together into her wearable art.

Shelley is now doing what she loves, with what she calls a tribe or sisterhood of creatives who nurture her growth. "It's amazing to meet people who support you and actually believe in you," said Shelley. "I'm always like that with other people, but sometimes it's not reciprocated. Now I'm finding beautiful, great people just by putting myself out there.

To put it simply, Shelley's advice is to pursue what makes you happy, and surround yourself with people who support that mission. Even if it is "out there" or different. New opportunities keep popping up for Shelley. A local creator asked her to make costumes for a horror film. It's something Shelley had never considered before, but she's already totally on board with the project. "Doors just keep opening," said Shelley. "If you're on the right track, that's what happens."

To see more of Shelley's work, go to shelleynovotny.com

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by Christy Schneider

Rhinelanders Woman's Club is a longstanding organization with a rich history dating back to January 11, 1898 when it was founded by 20 women in Rhinelander. The club's primary objectives have always revolved around study, fellowship, and improving the city. In 1905, the Rhinelander club joined the General Federation of Women's Clubs (GFWC).

This affiliation connected them to a broader network of women's clubs, all united in the mission of strengthening our community by enhancing the lives of others through volunteer service. The official name of the club became GFWC Rhinelander Woman's Club. The club's mission is rooted in five core areas of support through service, which mirrors the GFWC's general structure: Arts & Culture, Education & Libraries, Environment, Health & Wellness, and Civic Engagement & Outreach. Additionally, the club is dedicated to raising awareness of issues related to sexual abuse and domestic violence.

The GFWC Rhinelander Woman's Club boasts nearly 100 members, and they engage in a variety of ways that benefit the community from scheduled and recurring hands-on service to monetary grants. In recent years there has been a consistent volunteer schedule with Food For The Mind, Northwoods Alliance of Temporary Housing (NATH), Rhinelander Area Food Pantry(RAFP), serving as guest readers at daycares, participating in Adopt-a-Highway cleanup, The Table, youth Library Tea, and support of the annual Harvest Hoedown fundraiser for RAFP. There are two special events for youth sponsored exclusively by Rhinelander Woman's Club annually: The Youth Writing Contest is for K-8th grade students whose

contest which is only for Wisconsin students in 7th & 8th grade in memoriam of Oshkosh born sculptor Helen Farnsworth Mears. Both of these contests are open to all students in the area to showcase their talents.

Rhinelanders Woman's Club is proud of our dedication to the community and in 2023 adopted a logo to celebrate and emphasize our identity as a local club. The design highlights its connection to both GFWC at the international level and its pride in its local Hodag heritage. As an assembly of women, the members align with each other by Living the Volunteer Spirit in an effort to contribute to a more peaceful, diverse, harmonious, and better community.

Rhinelanders Woman's Club is closely tied to the Rhinelander District Library thanks to the efforts of Mary Shelton, a charter member who played a pivotal role in securing funds for the library's construction in the early 1900s. While serving on the Rhinelander Library Board, and as its secretary, Mary wrote the



letters and pleas to Andrew Carnegie on behalf of the Rhinelander Woman's Club.

The promise was a pledge, a 10% down payment of \$1,500. The donation was approved, and the core area of our present library was completed in 1903. Mary served as Rhinelander Woman's Club's second and seventh president. Arthur and Mary Shelton had one daughter, Margaret, who became a teacher and though she left the Northwoods after her parents' passing, she named GFWC Rhinelander Woman's Club as a benefactor of her estate which included a percentage of Rhinelander Telephone Company stock inherited from her parents.

Her support enables the club to budget its investment portfolio wisely and provide financial assistance to numerous community organizations. In 2021 the club granted over \$85,000 to 35 local organizations. In 2022 when the investment portfolio did not align with the financial policy, we were unable to award any grants for the first time in decades. With a nod to our club's history, we rolled up our sleeves and pursued proactive fundraising efforts. Through collaboration with Trig's, Culvers, Papa Murphys, Rhinelander Masonic Lodge 242, Rhinelander Area Food Pantry & Lights of the Northwoods, and Vital Industries we were able to raise money and award grants to some of the organizations of which we had historically given.

The serendipity of being visible in the community helped us gain momentum and be recognized as a positive force in the community. Most recently we were able to award nearly \$25,000 to 17 organizations. -Christy Schneider, President

The GFWC Rhinelander Woman's Club is a dynamic and active organization that meets monthly at The Pines Event Center for the 2023-2024 program year. The club operates as a 501c3 nonprofit organization, allowing it to accept donations from individuals and organizations to further its mission of community improvement through volunteer service.



FOR INFORMATION ABOUT MEMBERSHIP find us on Facebook: GFWC Rhinelander Woman's Club

Cindy Zielinski, Vice President - Membership
czski2@gmail.com



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A BAG OF BLACK DIAMONDS

There is a story from the Great Depression that men operating the Soo Line 1003 would slow down on the outskirts of Rhinelander and throw coal to the children waiting in the snow. They would gather it up and bring it back home to keep warm in the cold winter. Sometimes the only difference between freezing and a warm night's sleep was a bag of "black diamonds" scrounged from the railroad bed.

The men that ran the great fire breathing beasts of commerce saw firsthand the misery these hard times had wrought in the towns through which they passed.

The poignant and powerful print on the facing page shows the power of the Soo Line 1003 and the compassion of the men operating it. At the risk of their jobs, these men would help the children of the Great Depression keep warm at night by throwing coal from

the engine as they passed by. This was very risky and would be equivalent of siphoning off airline fuel today. Anyone caught would be immediately fired.

The story told by the print is true. The painter's relatives are the two children depicted in the painting. During the hard times, their father was laid off from the railroad. The other men liked him and told him to send his children to the outside of Rhinelander by the tracks. The children scrounged the thrown coal from the side of the tracks. It kept them warm at night. "They had to hike a mile and a half west of town so management of the railroad couldn't see them," says the artist, Pat Klunder.

The painting is extremely detailed and accurate as to how the 1003 appeared during its working days. 550 signed and numbered prints were created, and approximately 20 are available at Tom's Drawing Board.



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A Painting by Artist, Pat Klunder



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NORTHWOODS

JULY 4TH PARADE AND HODAG PARK CONCERT

Parade attendees enjoyed a glorious sunny day in downtown Rhinelander to celebrate the Fourth of July. Afterward, a free concert was sponsored by the Rhinelander Community Foundation.



Kerry Bloedorn entertained the kids with magical bubbles.



Free concert in Hodag Park compliments of the Rhinelander Community Foundation

ONEIDA COUNTY FAIR

Family friendly Oneida County Fair was held July 27-30th and featured a humane petting zoo, musical acts, and exciting entertainment.



Havens Petting Farm



Jeff Santy



Milwaukee Flyers

HAPPENINGS

THE (INTUITION) COLLECTIVE ART RECEPTION

Andrew Egan, Curator & Founder



Nicolet College welcomed The (Intuition) Collective artists to display their eclectic works August 17- September 23. An opening night reception included musical performances and a great turn out of community art lovers.



Brett Albertson



Norma Dycus Pennycuff & Sarah Thompson

ROTARY CLUB GALA

The Rotary Club of Rhinelander held it's annual gala on October 20 at Holiday Acres



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Gina Scheuer



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Stillness

I had fallen asleep in the light of the sun's rays
For weeks and months and days
Caught in a warm haze

And now, it's time to awaken to the shift
To the feeling of the crisp, autumn breeze
And the undressing of the now-naked trees

It's time to prepare for the bitter cold
For the quiet and the peace
Of the soon-frozen world

For the darkness and the snow
And the fireplace's warm glow
For ease and rest and no place to go

Autumn days of preparation
For winter's hibernation
And it in all, a longing for more stillness