

The Curran Story--Rhinelanders' First Family

John Curran's Story, A Century of Area History, Told for First Time

(EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the first in a series of 19 articles on John Curran and his family. Curran was the city's first settler.)

By JOE BOTSFORD

It was on a Saturday afternoon in July that I drove into the spacious grounds of a massive home on Balsam Lake near St. Croix Falls. The car had barely rolled to a stop when an attractive 81-year-old woman walked down the lawn toward me with the grace and ease of a young lady.

For this writer, it was a memorable moment—for here was one who knew first-hand of Rhinelanders' earliest beginnings. The lady was Julia Curran O'Reilly — the first white child in Rhineland and the daughter of John Curran, the first to pioneer here nearly 100 years ago.

Both Julia Curran and myself had awaited this meeting for more than a year. It climaxed many months of correspondence between us and another sister, 78-year-old Muriel Curran Gable, residing in Everett, Wash. More important, it was to provide a picture of the life and times of John Curran despite the lapse of almost a century.

The writing of the Curran story was a challenge from the beginning. For one reason, it never had been done before. All existing accounts of John Curran have been incomplete. For another, there were glaring errors to correct in such accounts.

What Prompted Story.

It all began in the fall of 1951. Coming out of the ranger station on Highway 17 south, I saw a marker near the roadside. It explained that here was the site of the trading post operated by John Curran.

"There may be a good story here," I thought. I knew of Curran St. and the Curran School, of course, and I had seen on plats of the city the words "Curran addition." Beyond these things, I had no knowledge of the man—John Curran.

Upon questioning acquaintances, I discovered that little was known of the city's first settler. Why should this be? Here was a man who had pioneered the settlement that was to be Rhineland. Why had he not become a well-known part of our city's tradition?

This was the easiest of all questions to answer. From the "History of Lincoln, Oneida and Vilas Counties," it was learned that Curran had left Rhineland more than 50 years ago to settle in Washington state where, concluded the report, "he at last accounts was still living."

Now intriguing questions arose. What happened to John Curran? Why did he leave Rhineland? How long did he live? What kind of a man was this adventurer who had opened a wilderness? And how could one find the answers to these questions?

My first thought was to locate his descendants. Perhaps there were some grandchildren about. For weeks I queried old residents. "Yes," said some. "I think so—and so is a descendent," or "That family is related to the Currans."

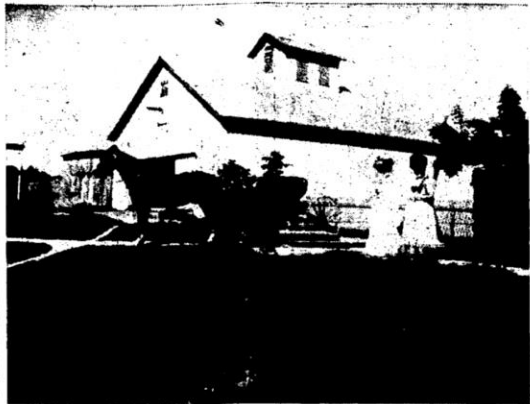
Telephone calls were made, and each time a blank was drawn. The trail was cold.

Mystery of the Marker.

In the meantime, I was plagued by other doubts. Available information indicated that the Curran homestead had been on the south side of the Pelican River at the junction of the Wisconsin. Then why was the marker on the other side of the river in front of the ranger station?

I returned to the marker, then crossed the river and looked over the land. Near the road was a large, upright boulder — unusually prominent as if it had been purposely set in place. Stranger still, the boulder was scarred by an impression, perfectly rectangular, and with holes in each corner. A thought struck me.

The marker in front of the ranger station once had been set in



A CHANGING VIEW—These two views, taken on the Curran homestead, span some 60 years. The above photo shows Mrs. John C. Curran and daughter, Elizabeth Pearl (both deceased), with the family horse, "Old Dan." This family picture was snapped in the 1890's, while the lower photo was taken this summer. In the two, only the barn is the same. But it, too, has changed through the years.

this stone! But why had it been moved to the wrong side of the river?

Back from the roadside stands a great barn falling into ruin. Nearby is a smaller structure not unlike an old stable. A few paces from the barn toward the Pelican River is the foundation of a house, overgrown by weeds and shrubbery.

Were these the remnants of the Curran homestead? Was the barn built by John Curran? If so, it would have some historical value.

In January, 1952, I happened to think of a friend, Lola Beers Deyo, and wondered why I had not called upon her before for help in the quest for the Curran story. She was an authority on the city's history.

The Beginning.

Lola Beers did not disappoint me; in fact, if I remember correctly, she scolded me for groping in the dark so long. She said that many of the real "old timers" like herself, Mrs. S. H. Ashton and others had known the Curran family. She agreed that the whole Curran story never had been told and recalled readily that two of the Curran daughters still were living, although she had heard nothing of them for some time.

On Feb. 28, 1952, a letter was mailed to Balsam Lake, Wis.

"Dear Mrs. Julia Curran O'Reilly:

"Let me introduce myself. I am Joe Botsford, a reporter for the Rhineland Daily News. Your name was given to me by a mutual friend, Mrs. Lola Beers Deyo . . ."

The Curran story was beginning to unfold at last.

(Next: Gathering the story).

Car Owner, Minus Insurance, Fined

Charged with operating a car without filing proof of financial responsibility with the state motor vehicle department during the period when such proof is required, Arthur L. Valoe, Rte. 2, was fined \$50 and costs today in County Court.

Dist. Atty. Albert J. Cirilli explained that Valoe was convicted of drunken driving in September, 1949, in Milwaukee, and had his license suspended for a period of one year. After the suspension period Valoe was required to file proof of financial responsibility—an insurance policy—and did so. Later, however, he let his insurance lapse and continued to drive.

Besides drawing the \$50 fine Valoe was handed another suspension of one year—mandatory under the state law. State Traffic Officer R. E. Lortscher made the arrest.

Another county resident, William Flannery, Pelican Lake, was fined \$5 and costs for operating a non-registered car and \$1 and cost for driving without having an operator's license. He was arrested by Officer Clifford Guilday of the county police.

Mrs. Harold Perry At Brother's Funeral

Mr. and Mrs. Harold Perry, 12 E. Monico St., have returned from Campbellsport, Wis., where they attended funeral services last week for Mrs. Perry's brother, Delbert Balch, who died in St. Agnes Hospital at Fond du Lac.

Other Rhinelanders who attended the funeral were Mr. and

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India to Get



**CURRAN RELICS**—Mrs. Herman Lassig (right) and Miss Marcia Roos are shown with ancient tools and an oxen yoke, all of which were found in the barn on the John Curran homestead. These relics of an earlier day have Curran's mark and offer proof that the barn was built by the area's first settler.—(Daily News' Photo).

## The Curran Story—Rhinelanders' First Family Curran's Memoirs Correct Existing Accounts of Early-Day Events Here

(EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the second in a series of 19 articles on John Curran and his family. Curran was the city's first settler.)

By JOE BOTSFORD

John C. Curran is "generally regarded as the original pioneer settler of Rhineland.

This statement, found in the "History of Lincoln, Oneida and Vilas Counties" indicates that for the past half century the Curran story has become almost a legend. Now—for the first time—a full account of John Curran is available.

Legend became fact just a few days ago when a bulky envelope reached this writer from 73-year-old Muriel Curran Gable of Everett, Wash., one of Curran's two surviving children. It contained a treasure of "facts" historically true—the unpublished memoirs of John Curran, recounting in detail his activities from the time he was 14 years old until he became foreman of a logging camp near Eagle River at the age of 20.

These writings now enable us to look back across nearly 100 years for a first-hand account of the development of the Upper Wisconsin River Valley. They include the story of the first logging drive over the Pelican Rapids at Rhineland and the cutting of the first road from Merrill to Eagle River. The writings also correct some previously-existing accounts of early-day events here.

### The Landing of Curran.

The arrival of the memoirs was

timely. It revealed that John Curran landed at the junction of the Pelican and Wisconsin rivers exactly 96 years ago this month. Two years later he was to build the first home here. Traces of the Curran homestead are visible today on the junction of the two rivers a cross from the ranger station.

The receipt of the memoirs was an exciting climax to 18 months of research and of correspondence with the Curran daughters, Julia and Muriel. Julia Curran O'Reilly, of Balsam Lake, Wis., had replied to my letter of Feb. 28, 1952, by referring me to her sister, Muriel. Mrs. Gable, it seems, had the bulk of Curran family material.

The following month, a letter came from Muriel, along with some family photographs. These were particularly interesting as they showed the Curran home, called "Riverside," as it looked some 60 years ago. Included in the shipment was a sketch of the big key to the house, measuring five inches in length and with a handle one and a half inches wide.

I replied to Mrs. Gable, acknowledging receipt of the material, and awaited more information. In the meantime, further proof of the origin of the barn on the Curran homestead came in the summer of 1952 from the Herman Lassig family, present owner of the property. Mrs. Lassig showed me an oxen yoke and tools that had been found in the barn and which bore John Curran's mark. These historical items were photographed for the Curran story.

A year went by after my first letter to Muriel Curran. Following the arrival of the photographs, I heard nothing and wondered if the Curran story would ever be told. Finally, on Feb. 5, 1953, I wrote again to Julia Curran at Balsam Lake.

### Interview Sought.

The 81-year-old woman and the city's first white child replied on Feb. 6 that her sister, Muriel, had been ill. With the letter came additional information on John Curran. I wrote again, suggesting that I come to Balsam Lake for a visit and to get first-hand some impressions of her father.

The long-awaited meeting came last month. For several hours, Julia and I talked of John Curran and his family. The earliest days of the city's first home and the character of Pioneer John Curran were being recorded as they had never been before.

Never before, too, had the latter portion of John Curran's fabulous career been made available to the community he pioneered and left more than 50 years ago. Cur-

ran was 62 when he pulled up stakes here.

But his life was far from complete. He moved to Everett, Wash., in 1901 and was prominent in the earliest developments of that city. Before he died at the age of 93, Curran left his mark as a pioneer of both Rhineland and Everett—a truly a remarkable achievement.

During these last few weeks, the gathering of Curran material has stepped up. After my visit to Julia Curran, I wrote to Muriel who forwarded the Curran memoirs and other material. She included, too, a letter written to her by her father 52 years ago, describing his first visit to the west coast when he was seeking a new home for himself and his family.

I haven't solved the mystery of the marker in front of the ranger station, however. I know only that the plaque, marking the site of Curran's trading post, was put up in 1935 by the Daughters of the American Revolution and that it is on the wrong side of the river. I know, too, that John Curran built his trading post in 1859 and not in 1854, as the marker reports. Curran was not even in Wisconsin in 1854.

Nor have I solved the mystery of the missing marker on the true site of the trading post, property now owned by the Herman Lassig family. Some say the original marker was stolen. I do know that the size of the impression left on the boulder on the true site is the same size as the marker now in front of the ranger station. I suspect that the marker was not "stolen" but moved—possibly to get it within the city limits.

Having been so wrapped up in the Curran story, I would like to see the marker moved to its rightful place. It would be fitting, too, if the Curran barn were saved from the elements and restored into an early-day trading post as a memorial to the city's first pioneer. Such a museum would be of great educational value and would enhance our city as a tourist center.

The writing of the Curran story has been an interesting assignment and couldn't have been possible without the help of many Julia and Muriel Curran saw fit to place at the disposal of the writer many items treasured by the Curran family, and acknowledgement for this help is extended gratefully. Appreciation, too, goes to the Public Library for the use of its files, the Herman Lassig family, Mrs. S. H. Ashton, the Wisconsin Valley Improvement office in Wausau and—of course—Loia Beers Deyo.

Fortunately, John Curran was recognized by those who knew him as a man of great enterprise and character. Thus, his memoirs, letters, photographs and even personal effects were saved and cherished—some for nearly a century. It is hoped that the forth-coming account of his life and times, complete for the first time, will become a part of the tradition of the city for whose development he led the way—a solitary figure in the midst of a wilderness.

(Next: Curran's Early Years.)

**Ranch**  
USE THEATRE

**AND CANDLE"**  
Veach and James Paul  
Sat.-Sun.—8:40 p. m.  
27—29 and 30  
Office up until playtime. \$1.50 plus tax

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Chicken Dinner at  
p. m. — advance.  
th of Eagle River

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. He is a senior at Marquette law

"New Sun In The Sky" is one of the dazzling Dietz-Schwartz song hits in "THE BAND WAGON", new Technicolor Musical that eclipses them all!

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**The Curran Story--Rhinelanders' First Family**

**John Curran Comes to Wisconsin--And Sees Horse Thief Lynched at Janesville**

(EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the third in a series of 19 articles on John Curran and his family. Curran was the city's first settler.)

By **JOE BOTSFORD**

Born in poverty was John C. Curran, Rhinelanders' first settler. But from his forebearers, he inherited the taste for adventure and the quality of self-reliance that enabled him to carve a home and a future out of a wilderness.

The first Curran in the New World was Patrick Curran, an Irish Catholic, who emigrated from his native land to the province of Quebec in 1798. There he married Julia Finnegan, who had come to Canada as a child.

The couple settled in the parish of St. Anicet, Huntington County, and there on Aug. 22, 1838, John C. Curran was born. He was one of 13 children.

Poor was the Curran family, and the children received only a limited education. As was more or less the custom in those days, the sons left home as soon as they could fend for themselves. This lack of educational opportunity was never forgotten by Curran. In later years he was to devote much of his efforts to school matters, building the first school here on the Wisconsin River and serving on the school boards of the Town of Pelican and Everett, Wash.

**Leaves Home at 14.**

In 1852, it was John Curran's turn to leave home, and he tells of it in his memoirs, made public for the first time.

"At the age of 14, I went out with my older brother, Martin, into the state of New York to work in the woods. We worked that winter on what was known as the headwaters of the North River.

"The following summer Martin and I returned to the woods, clearing and improving the river. That next winter we worked out on the Racket River until spring when we went down the river to a place called Pierpont. There we worked in a sawmill."

Curran remained at Pierpont until the summer of 1855 when he returned home. By now he was 17 years old. Behind him were three years of making his own way

in the world. He was both independent and restless and could not stay long under the family roof.

"On Sept. 1, 1855," he writes, "I started for Wisconsin with an older man by the name of Jack Higgins, who owned a team of horses and a wagon."

The moment for severing family ties had come, and it is believed that young John never saw his parents again. But he was heard to say in later years that one or both of them lived to be 100 years old.

**Arrives in Chicago.**

Higgins and Curran headed the team and wagon toward Fort Covington, New York, and on to Ogdensburg. There they loaded their wagon and horses onto a boat which took them through Lake Ontario as far as Niagara. Here the wagon and team were driven ashore and placed aboard an immigrant train bound for Chicago. The entire trip took about two weeks.

"Chicago," writes Curran, "was a small city at the time with not a single paved street in the entire settlement. Neither was there any railroad north into Wisconsin. We stayed a few days to outfit ourselves and then headed north on an old road that led through Big Foot Prairie and on to Shapier, Wis. We arrived in Shapier about Sept. 25, 1855.

"Higgins and I decided to go on. Outside of Janesville, we were halted by an angry mob that had just lynched a man. He was hanging from an oak tree nearby.

"We asked a bystander why the man had been strung up. We were told he was a horse thief and had been caught red-handed with the property in his possession.

"By then the people began to cut down the tree. In a very short time, the pieces were all taken away for souvenirs, and the mob cleared the road to allow us to continue our journey into Janesville. We remained here one day with some acquaintances of Mr. Higgins. They had come here a year or two before."

Curran tells us that Janesville was "a very tiny village, with the only industry being a small grist



**WHY SO GLUM?** — You'd never know it, but Herbert J. Idle, 55, just won \$307,500 for winning first place in the Unicorn Press puzzle quiz contest in New York. The Bureau of Internal Revenue told Idle he'll be allowed to keep about \$71,000 of the total, which accounts for his dour look.

mill." Seeing little here to interest them, he and Higgins continued north to Madison, "another small city."

A few days were spent in Madison. Sometime during the last week of September, 98 years ago, "we left Madison and made our way to Portage City, where we first got a glimpse of the Wisconsin River."

And John Curran adds:

"On the banks of this river, I was to live for so many years afterwards at the junction of the Pelican and Wisconsin."

(Next: Up the Wisconsin.)

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## The Curran Story--Rhinelanders' First Family

# Curran Reaches Merrill, A 'Hamlet'— And Sees Only Five White Women There

(EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the fourth in a series of 19 articles on John Curran and his family. Curran was the city's first settler.)

By JOE BOTSFORD

John C. Curran, Rhinelanders pioneer, was 17 years old when he arrived in Portage in September, 1855, and saw the Wisconsin River for the first time.

We can only guess what he thought of the river, flowing majestically from the heart of the great pine forests. But we do know that he and his companion, Jack Higgins, spent one night in "Portage City." Perhaps they talked that evening to loggers and trappers, who told of the opportunities for work "up in the Wisconsin pinery." In any event, the two wasted no time. Early the next morning, they hitched up the team to their wagon and headed north.

By afternoon the two men reached the village of Briggsville, 12 miles away. They drove on through and when darkness fell, they put up for the night at a "country tavern."

"The tavern," Curran writes in his memoirs, "was owned by a man named Oliver. He was looking for someone to cut and haul in his winter wood. So we struck up a trade with him for our room and board as our funds were running short."

Curran and Higgins labored all the next day over the wood, returning to the tavern after dark.

"There we met a man by the name of George W. Strobridge, who had driven in with his teamster with two horse teams loaded with supplies for the winter."

### Headed for Jenny.

Curran learned that the newcomer was going to Jenny, afterwards called Merrill. Strobridge spoke of the bustling activities going on "in the pinery." Then in its infancy, logging was confined to the shores of the Wisconsin River between Wausau and Merrill.

Higgins and Curran were sold at once on "Jenny."

"We hired out to Mr. Strobridge for the winter. The next morning, we bade Mr. Oliver goodbye and continued our journey northward, with Mr. Strobridge as our guide. We arrived in Stevens Point on Saturday, Oct. 1, 1855."

The party arrived late and retired at once to get an early start the next day. When Curran awoke the following morning, he was astonished by the busy scene.

"Stevens Point was a very small place, but logging camps were going in about the settlement. Although it was Sunday, many teams were being loaded up and were starting for these camps."

Curran, Higgins and Strobridge pulled out of Stevens Point and

## Mystery of Curran Marker Cleared Up

Why is the tablet marking the site of the John Curran trading post on the wrong side of the Pelican River?

The answer was supplied today by William Mewhorter, superintendent of public works, who confirmed the opinion that the original marker was moved and not stolen.

"When Highway 17 south was widened and the present bridge constructed," explained Mewhorter, "the boulder bearing the tablet was pushed aside and the marker removed."

Mewhorter said the marker was kept by the city for some years. "Then it was decided the ranger station site would be a safe place for it. I set the marker in place about 1941."

The state highway office added that the bridge was "accepted" on July 7, 1937. This was two years after the marker had been put up by the Daughters of the American Revolution.

by nightfall the wagons had reached Knowlton, a distance of 15 miles. There the men stayed the night. The next day they made better time and covered the 20-mile distance to Wausau by nightfall.

The one night in Wausau was spent in the "Forest House, which was only partly completed." In the morning the party got another early start for Jenny (Merrill), expecting to cover the 20-mile distance before dark. But trouble was afoot.

### They Lose Their Way.

"As usual, Mr. Strobridge and his two wagons started off. My companion and I, of course, did not know the road, so we left it all to Mr. Strobridge's teamster.

"But it seemed he did not know much about the road either. After driving several hours, we found that we were on the wrong road and more than two miles out of our way. We had to retrace our steps.

"When we got to Pine River (six miles southwest of Merrill on the Wisconsin River), we broke an evener on one of the teams. With only an axe, the job was difficult, but we got it mended up.

"Now it was getting along toward night, and we had not crossed the river yet. When we got to the bridge, it was quite dark, and we concluded that we should remain for the night."

Curran relates that nearby was an "old logging camp." The men found a "shelter" for their horses,

then located a building for themselves and built a fire. But I reports:

"We did not have any blanket or anything to eat since car morning. You can easily imagine we did not spend a very pleasant night."

The party arose at dawn and crossed the bridge. Although the distance to Jenny was only six miles, Curran tells us that the men did not reach the community until 2 o'clock in the afternoon due to the "poor road."

The city now known as Merrill was only a "small hamlet" when Curran first saw it in that October of 1855.

### No Frame Houses.

"It had only one sawmill which was built two years previous to Andrew Warren, Jr., common called the Red Rusher. There was not a single frame house, only board shanties or log cabins. There were at that time but five white women in the place."

The day after his arrival in Merrill, Curran went to work in the sawmill until about Dec. 10 when he started to log for Strobridge. A typical day in the life of a logger is recorded faithfully by Curran and provides us with a rare glimpse of that rugged era.

"We had to walk about three miles to our work both morning and evening. So that we could begin cutting at daylight, we started out in the dark and worked until was dark.

"We always carried our noon lunch with us. This was tied in a handkerchief and each man had to care for his own. When the weather was very cold, we would bury our lunch in the snow to keep it from freezing. During the noon we generally ate our lunch while walking up and down the road in an effort to keep warm."

(Next: The Lumber Drive.)

Deep  
Digger  
Even

WEEK

A crew

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Island in

the Gulf of Mexico.

Having

drilled the world's deepest

producing oil well, they are now

work on one they hope will

even deeper.

It takes world champions

performance to cause a stir here

because eight of the world's

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## The Curran Story--Rhinelanders' First Family

# Curran Risks His Life 'Running' Logs Over Little Bull Falls in Year 1856

(EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the fifth in a series of 19 articles on John Curran and his family. Curran was the city's first settler.)

By JOE BOTSFORD

The winter of 1855-56 was the first in northern Wisconsin for 17-year-old John Curran. And he worked from daylight till dark near Merrill for his employer, George Strobridge, cutting logs and hauling them to a sawmill where the "lumber was cut and piled up to be rafted in the spring."

In his memoirs, Curran reports that the ice went out in the spring of 1856 about May 1. His job then was to help raft the lumber down the Wisconsin and Mississippi rivers to market at Quincy, Ill.

"But the water in the Wisconsin River that spring was very high, and we were detained for several days at Big Bull Falls (Wausau). Then the water fell enough to allow us to run the lumber over the falls. But when we got to Little Bull Falls (Mosinee), the water again was high."

Curran tells us that the "pilot" was impatient over the delay and decided to chance running the rafts of logs over the falls through a slough called Bull Calf. The pilot called for "volunteers," and young Curran responded. It was the first of many times that he risked his life on the Wisconsin River.

### Lumber Goes Under.

"I volunteered to man the oars on the first piece to go over the falls, and all went well until we struck the water that came in from the main river.

"This water caught our piece of timber, and it sucked the piece down so deep in the water that the crews on both oars had to grab hold of what we called the 'sucker line.' This was a line strung from land to the end of the piece.

"But it was only for a moment that we remained under the water. Then the current caught us and brought us to the surface. People on shore told me afterwards that all they could see of us was our feet sticking above the water."

Due to the high water, the lumber drive struck more delays. Instead of making the trip in 30 days to Quincy, Ill., as was planned, the drive took 60 days.

After the lumber was sold and the men were paid off, Curran struck out on his own, taking the Illinois Central Railroad to Chicago. From there he boarded the North Western which had started a line northward and had reached Janesville.

At Janesville, Curran spent the summer of 1856. He first worked

## 'Old Dan' Knew His Way Home

Oliver Rogers, a city resident for some 60 years, called attention to the picture of "Old Dan" in the first article of "The Curran Story" and believes that this was the horse who "knew his way home."

Rogers recalled that members of the Curran family used to drive to town, get out of the buggy and let the horse take the buggy home. At first people would stop the horse, thinking he was a run-away. But all in town soon learned that the horse knew what he was doing.

A check with Lola Beers Deyo revealed that Rogers was correct in his observations. "Old Dan" was the horse who knew the way home.

for a farmer named Fellows, who operated a place about 10 miles east of the village. After haying and harvesting, he got a job in Janesville, driving a team and hauling lumber from the railway depot to a lumberyard. While employed as a team driver, he observed his 18th birthday.

### Hunted Deer.

But the call of the "pinery" was too strong for young Curran to resist. On Sept. 1, 1856, he headed north again.

"I got as far as Stevens Point where I hired out to a man by the name of Racker and worked in a brickyard. (Curran obviously had run short of funds.) After a month, I concluded my job to hunt deer as they were very plentiful in these parts. About the middle of October, I decided to return to Jenny (Merrill)."

At Jenny Curran looked up his former employer, George Strobridge, and easily got the job of cutting timber. He relates:

"Mr. Strobridge had moved from his log place above the mill pond and had built a frame house about a mile below the pond.

"We had a small crew in the woods that winter, so we lived in the house with Mr. Strobridge and his family.

"This was the first or second frame house built in Jenny. A man by the name of Space had built another frame house up near

the mill. It may have been put up before the Strobridge house." **Helps to Build Hotel.**

Curran reports that much snow fell during the winter of 1856-57. In February there was a rain storm which crusted the snow so that it was impossible to use teams in the woods.

"We had to stop logging, and Mr. Strobridge put us to work getting out shingle timber. We built a camp first, shaved the shingles from the timber, then built a road to get the shingles out of camp. This required much snow shoveling.

"After this job, Mr. Strobridge put me to work making timbers for a large frame barn. I helped to put up the barn, then hired out to Cy Strobridge, a brother of George, who wanted to put up a hotel in Jenny.

"I made all the timbers for this first hotel. Then I helped to put up the building and finish it off for occupancy. This kept me busy until August, 1857."

(Next: Curran Meets Dutch Pete).

## Hot Weather Perils

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The low  
at Lone R

The top temperature Thursday was 98 degrees at Kenosha and there was not a cool one in the lot. Madison was next with 95. Then came Milwaukee, Lone Rock and La Crosse with 94. The Milwaukee reading was the highest on record for the date. Eau Claire and Green Bay reported 93; Grantsburg and Two Rivers, 92.

The continued dry weather, the state generally has not had rain since Aug. 4th, is creating a forest fire threat in the woodlands. Foresters at Tomahawk said the situation will be perilous if there is no rain during the weekend. The south central area is extremely dry as is the region around Friendship and Black River Falls. Fires which have burned over 8,364 acres, have taken eight times the toll last year at the same time.



## SCHOOL SUPPLIES

### DERY'S HOBBYLAND

North of State Theatre Building



**PELICAN RAPIDS**—This is the earliest known picture of the Pelican Rapids at Rhinelander, photographed some 60 years ago. The rapids looked about the same as when John Curran saw them for the first time about 30 years before the picture was taken.

**The Curran Story—Rhinelander's First Family**

**19-Year-Old Curran Canoes Up River, Lands at Pelican Rapids 96 Years Ago**

(EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the sixth in a series of 19 articles on John Curran and his family. Curran was the city's first settler.)

By **JOE BOTSFORD**

It was in August, 1857, that John Curran saw for the first time that portion of the Wisconsin River between Merrill and Eagle River. That same month, too, he first stepped ashore on what was to be the site of Rhinelander.

Curran had completed his work on Merrill's first hotel earlier in the month. As always, he was ready to take on another job, so he hired out to Pete Cramer, commonly called Dutch Pete, who already had settled on the banks of Eagle River. Young John was now 19 years old.

"Dutch Pete wanted me to help take a canoe load of supplies up to the Eagle River," Curran writes in his memoirs; published for the first time.

"The first lap of the journey was up to Grandfather Bull Falls (half way between Merrill and Tomahawk). There we had to unload the canoe and pack supplies on our backs over the portage to the head of the falls, a distance of about one and a half miles over a rough rocky trail.

"There Dutch Pete had another canoe, a log one, and we got as far as Grandmother Bull Falls (below Tomahawk). We had to portage everything again and cordel the canoe over these falls. Comes to "Nigger Islands."

"We had good canoeing until we reached what Dutch Pete called 'Nigger Islands,' about eight miles above the Tomahawk River. There we struck rapid water and riffles; what we called the "Ten-Mile Rapids." This also took in Whirlpool Rapids and required another portage.

"Again we had to unload the canoe farther up the river when we reached Hut Rapids. In due time, we arrived at the mouth of the Pelican River."

John Curran and Dutch Pete took time out to rest from their strenuous journey at the junction of the two rivers. They probably landed on the site of the present-day ranger station for Curran reports that he was impressed by "a nice, large grove of pine," now Riverside Park.

Indeed the beauty of the loca-

tion, 96 years ago this month, so struck young Curran that he relates:

"Dutch Pete and I walked through this grove for a short distance, and I liked the looks of the whole location very much. It was on the junction of these two rivers that I was later to live for so many years."

After this now-historic breathing spell, the two men continued their journey. They had to portage over the "Little Pelican Rapids," the "main Pelican Rapids" and the "Rainbow Rapids."

Curran continues: "In time we reached Big St. Germain Creek, then Otter Rapids. These we managed to pole over without taking out any of our load. Finally we entered the Eagle River and proceeded up to the outlet of Yellow Birch Lake.

"Here Dutch Pete had a nice log cabin built. The year before he had cleared two acres and planted it the previous spring with garden truck and potatoes."

**Meets First Settlers.** Curran had now reached the

northernmost settlement on the Wisconsin River in that summer of 1857. Besides Dutch Pete, there lived here "Hi-Polar" (Hiram B. Polar) and another man called "Kentuck" (Charles L. Perry).

Says Curran in his memoirs: "These two men came up in the spring of 1856, the first white settlers north of Jenny (Merrill). Polar, who had a Chippewa squaw for a wife, was trading with the Indians for their furs.

"After a few days rest from the rigors of the river trip, I went with Dutch Pete to make hay over on the Wisconsin River above the mouth of Eagle River. Up to this time, no logging had been done at all in this region."

(Next: Logging at Eagle River.)

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## The Curran Story--Rhinelander's First Family

# Curran Tells Perils of Winter Trek From Eagle River to Grandfather Falls

(EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the seventh in a series of 19 articles on John Curran and his family. Curran was the city's first settler.)

By JOE BOTSFORD

The summer of 1857 waned, and 19-year-old John Curran finished haying for Dutch Pete on the Wisconsin River above the Eagle River. Once more the youth sought a job, for he could never remain idle for long. This time his employer was a fellow named Bonneville.

Bonneville had just landed at the Eagle River and had decided to locate himself "at the mouth of Deerskin Creek a little ways above where it empties into the Lake." Curran helped Bonneville build a log house and then was entrusted with the task of bringing up Bonneville's wife and children from Merrill. This was indeed a high responsibility for one so young, in light of the hazards of travel by canoe on the Wisconsin River in those days. But this was only the first of many times that Curran was to be given important assignments.

Autumn passed, and in the fall of 1857 John Curran played a role in another historic venture—the first logging around the Eagle River. Here again his memoirs are invaluable, for these writings correct the errors in existing accounts of the area's earliest days.

The "History of Lincoln, Oneida and Vilas Counties," for example, notes:

"The first logging in Vilas County was done on the Eagle chain of lakes in the spring of 1856 by the firm of Fox and Helms, of whom Fox was the practical woodsman and Helms, the business manager and financier. John Curran, then of Rhinelander, was their foreman."

This account is erroneous. Curran already has told us that he spent the spring of 1856 driving logs down the Wisconsin River from Merrill to Quincy, Ill., and that he worked the summer at Jamesville. We know, too, that he did not reach Eagle River until 1857 where no logging had been done at all.

**Curran a Foreman?**

"John Curran, then of Rhinelander, was their foreman," reports the three-county history. Yet there was no Rhinelander in 1856 and not even a settlement on the Pelican Rapids (later Rhinelander). Actually Curran did become a foreman for Fox and Helms, but not until January, 1859.

Here is the story of the first Eagle River logging in Curran's own words:

"In the fall of 1857 I went to work for Helms and Co. of Stevens Point. They were going to log that winter around the Eagle River and had crews on the Wisconsin making hay. Joe Fox, their superintendent, came over for the purpose of building camps for the winter. I helped to build these camps."

"Our next task was to cut a road from Eagle River south toward Jenny (Merrill). At that time an old tote road extended from Jenny only as far up the river to Grandmother Bull Falls (below Tomahawk). From there north to the Eagle River lay only an unbroken forest."

"We worked on the road at the Eagle River end until the snow had piled up to 10 inches. Then the foreman thought it best for me to go below to Stevens Point and bring up some wagons of supplies. (Note again that Curran gets a responsible assignment.)"

**Old Man Joins Trip**

"Dutch Pete decided to go with me as well as the father of George Strobbridge, my former employer. The old man was about 75. He had come up early in the fall and was determined now to go out with us to see his people in Jenny. I tried my level best to have him stay until he could go back by team when the road was through, as it was tough going in winter to travel through a wilderness."

"But I failed to convince him. We started off before daylight. The old man would not wear moccasins like us, but boots, and with the snow on the ground, he started to slip and slide. It became very difficult for him to travel and by nightfall we were only 10 miles south of the Eagle River."

"That night I forced him to give me a large, heavy woolen vest he wore. As I packed a needle and thread, I cut the vest up and made moccasins. He also packed some woolen shirts. One I cut up and

## Tote Road Followed Ontonagon Trail

When John Curran describes the cutting of the first road north of Merrill by Fox and Helms, he neglects to mention the famous Ontonagon Trail—a trail through the woods scarcely larger than a footpath that was blazed by Indians in some forgotten time.

This trail ran along the east bank of the Wisconsin River up to Pelican Rapids, the site of Rhinelander. It crossed the Pelican River just about where the Highway 17 South bridge now stands. From here it went overland through the Indian and Sugar Camp lakes region, up the Eagle River to Eagle Lake, around the north side of Big Twin Lake, along the west shore of Lac Vieux Desert and on up through the upper peninsula to the Ontonagon River and Lake Superior.

Fox and Helms followed the Ontonagon Trail closely in cutting out the tote road, although their road was only wide enough to accommodate an ox-drawn wagon. The Marathon county board authorized construction of the road in 1855.

made 'nips' for him to wear over two pairs of woolen socks.

"The next day the old man got along much better, but he was determined to pack his boots. Dutch Pete and I divided his pack between us, so that all he had to carry was those boots."

"Still our progress was slow, and the old man was getting tired. In time we had to support him along, one on each side."

**Down to Last Biscuit.**

"Then our stock of provisions was getting low. Dutch Pete and I ate less, so that the old man could have all he wanted. Finally there came a day when Dutch Pete and I had only one biscuit each. Fortunately, on that day, we met the crew that was cutting the road north from Jenny."

Getting food from the road crew, Curran and his party continued on until reaching Grandfather Bull Falls (between Tomahawk and Merrill). There Curran and Dutch Pete left old Strobbridge at a logging camp as he was very weak.

Upon reaching Jenny, Dutch Pete remained, while Curran went on alone. He completed the trip from Merrill to Stevens Point on snowshoes in two days.

Three days later, on Dec. 5, 1857, Curran was ready to leave Stevens Point at the head of a group of men and two sleds of supplies hauled by oxen. His trip down from the Eagle River had been hazardous, but the return journey was to prove even more so—and was to take 25 days. He was not to reach the camp on the Eagle River until New Year's Day, 1858.

(Next: The fight at Sugar Camp.)

## Three Lakes Opens Schools Sept. 8

THREE LAKES—(By News Correspondent)—The opening date of the Three Lakes district public schools will be on Tuesday, Sept. 8.

School will be in session the entire day, 9 a. m. to 4 p. m., and lunch will be served.

All of the high school classrooms and the hallway have been redecorated during the summer months. New teachers in the Three Lakes elementary staff are as follows: Mrs. William Hughes, grades 7-8; Mrs. Clyde Burkhart, grades 4-5; Mrs. Olga Dohlstran, grade 1.

Mrs. Amy Hall of Eagle River will be the new high school commercial teacher.

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## Substitute Posts Open

A civil service examination of probational appointments of substitute electrician carrier at the postoffice at \$1.61½ per month announced today by J. J. O'Connell, director of the seventh service region. Additional information is provided for and for authorized over.

Competition in this is restricted to resident lander and persons not in the Rhinelander postoffice between the ages 50. These age limits for veterans. Persons temporary or indefinite appointments should file for nation if they wish to be accepted until the business Oct. 8.

Full information and cards may be obtained from the secretary of the board of civil service examiners office here.

## Board of Review In Session Today

Rhinelander's board of review began its session this morning at the City Hall with only property owners appearing to object to assessments.

Only Alderman Fraley, Seventh ward, from the morning session were Aldermen Henry Ward, chairman; J. J. O'Connell, Fourth ward; Clarence, Seventh ward, and Clarence, Eighth ward.

Others sitting in on the session were Mayor Harris Lechner, Albert C. Jones, John E. Kruschke and Jean Gilbertson.

## Teen-Agers Protest Movie Price Hike

STEVENSONS POINT—A hundred teen-agers at Stevens Point protested a price hike in movie tickets. A five-piece band played music and the night of picketing.

The operator of the movie theater is seeking an injunction against the alleged leaders of the demonstration to halt the demonstration.



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The Curran Story--Rhinelanders' First Family

Curran's Supply Party Hit by Severe Weather; Fight Results in Stabbing

(EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the eighth in a series of 19 articles on John Curran and his family. Curran was the city's first settler.)

By JOE BOTSFORD

On Dec. 5, 1857, 19-year-old John Curran left Stevens Point leading a group of men and two big sleds pulled by four oxen.

The sleds contained supplies for the Helms logging camp on the Eagle River, which was beginning its first winter of operation. At the time the road north was being slashed out of a wilderness and had reached a point three miles north of the present site of Rhinelanders. From there the party would have to cut its own way through the forests until it met the road crew working southward from the logging camps.

In his memoirs, Curran reports that the party made 12 miles the first day out of Stevens Point, reaching "Willys' stopping place." The second night the supply party pulled into Wausau.

Curran continues: "The road up to this point was good, with a foot of snow on the ground. We left Wausau the next day and expected to cover the 20 miles to Jenny (Merrill) by night. But our progress was slow, and we had to camp out that night. We had plenty of blankets for ourselves and corn for the oxen, so no one suffered."

Bad Luck Starts.

The party reached Merrill the next day and stayed overnight. The following night was spent at Grandfather Bull Falls, midway between Merrill and the present site of Tomahawk. Then hard luck cropped up, Curran reports.

"We pulled out early, but only got three miles above the falls when a heavy, cold rain fell. Fortunately, we had stumbled across a set of camps used the winter before, so we decided to stay until the rain ceased.

"We were thankful in having a place to put our supplies under cover. We also found room for all hands in the camp, but not for all the oxen. Some had to remain outdoors.

"I remembered that we had passed a stack of hay out on an island a short distance below. So we built a raft, poled to the island and confiscated the whole stack of hay. I never learned who the hay belonged to.

"The next morning it was still raining, and the snow was disappearing. Now we had to change our plans, for we could not haul the loads we had on iron shod sleds. So we put on wooden shoes; two long jumpers out of crooks that we cut in the woods. We loaded our own sleds heavier and split the oxen into four teams. This change from steel to wooden shoes took all one day."

Cross Pelican on Ice.

A week passed. Curran and his men finally reached the bank of the Pelican River at the junction of the Wisconsin, where they camped overnight. The slow progress, despite the fact that there was a "road of sorts," was due to the then bitter cold and snow. At several creek crossings, bridges put up by the road crew ahead, had washed out, and Curran's men had to rebuild these bridges.

Another delay resulted when the party ran out of hay for the oxen. Then the men stopped to cut birch and soft maple "and let the oxen browse on these tree tops."

Apparently the bridge over the Pelican River had been washed out or one was not even constructed, for Curran explains:

"Fortunately, we found the ice strong enough to bear us up, and

we got across the river without any difficulty. The oxen got along fairly well that day, and we passed the Pelican Rapids without incident. By afternoon we got to the second crossing of Lake Creek, about three miles north of the present city of Rhinelanders. Here we caught up to the crew that was cutting out the road we had been following."

Burdened by the oxen and supplies, Curran and his men decided to follow the road crew as it hacked a path northward. The next day the group reached Pine Lake where "the ice was strong enough to support the oxen and therefore saved us the trouble of cutting a road around the lake. The following day, Rat Lake was reached, and it, too, was crossed on the ice.

Fight Over Fire.

Curran held up the party a day at Rat Lake, giving time for the road crew to cut through the lower, middle and upper Sugar Camp Lake area. Three days later the supply party walked across "Upper Sugar Camp Lake" and rested.

Continues Curran: "Here we stayed all the next day and that night two of our men got to quarreling over the building of a fire.

"A fight started, and one of the men, the foreman of the road crew, drew a knife and stabbed the other fellow in the arm. We had considerable trouble in stopping the flow of blood, and there was talk of lynching the foreman. Had he remained in camp, there might have been a hanging. But he pulled out before dawn for the lower country, and we never saw him again."

A few days later the party met up with the road crew that was cutting the tote road south from Eagle River. Much of this road cut 95 years ago was in time to become Highway 17 between Eagle River and Rhinelanders.

"When we met the other road crew," Curran adds, "we had fair going on to Eagle River Lake and the headquarters camp. Our journey ended on New Year's Day, 1858."

That was 27 days after John Curran and the supply sleds had pulled out of Stevens Point!

(Next: First Eagle River drive.)



BEAUTY AND B/ screen star Elizabeth Michael, in her first arrival at a Lond airport. She was by husband Michi

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Little Danger To State For

MADISON (AP) — Wisconsin burns and prolonged hot and central and northern state enjoy near normal with no increased floods or water level those areas.

The Conservation said today near normal has resulted in safe the 10 forest protection fieldmen reported 3 week ending Aug. 3 partment pointed out ing over of 8,373 acres cured principally of the districts' reception last week and i continue to fall the further danger until

The Public Service said the water storage the three major water development areas were better than normal.

All of the firms, developments which streams affecting operations, in their la the commission, savor supplies were some instances the with charts showing 1952 and so far in the 10-year average

Waters involved i facilities include t Chippewa, Flambeau inee Rivers.

The Southern Wisconsin situation is reflected the commission getting levels of lakes a

Emergency Aid for Iran Is Planned

WASHINGTON (AP) — The United States was reported today to be drafting an emergency financial aid program for Iran to assist the government led by Premier Zahedi.

No specific amount has yet been fixed but a sum of more than 30 million dollars in grants is being considered by top State Department and foreign aid officials.

President Eisenhower is reported nearly ready to announce formally the American government's willingness to give quick financial help to Zahedi's 16-day-old regime.

The president, now vacationing in Denver, is expected to make public within the next few days a secret exchange of messages with General Zahedi who overthrew Premier Mohammed Mossadegh's government in a bloody revolt.

It has been no secret that this government would rather deal with Zahedi than with Mossadegh, whose conflict with Britain over nationalization of Iranian oil holdings has brought Iran to the verge of bankruptcy. Officials here take the view that Mossadegh proved unreasonable in settlement negotiations with the British and that recently he had created a new danger by giving too free rein to the Communist Tudeh party.

The United States at present is extending only "Point Four" technical aid funds to Iran.

News Parag

Radio stations over lander residents meeting of the Air Scouts who visited the summer, including Rangers who were in

Ranch Theatre logo and text: Regular 1953 Season RBARIANS" ul Romantic Comedy

**The Curran Story--Rhinelanders' First Family**

**First Eagle River Log Drive Hit by Discontent, Tragedy and a Walkout**

(EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the ninth in a series of 13 articles on John Curran and his family. Curran was the city's first settler.)

By JOE BOTSFORD

The memoirs of John Curran, now available for public record, show that the first logging drive north of the Merrill area began on the Eagle River chain of lakes in the winter of 1857-58.

Although logging had been underway in Wisconsin for some 30 years prior to this time, it had been confined along the Wisconsin River below Grandfather Bull Falls. Lying some 16 miles north of Merrill, the falls was a formidable barrier to the loggers. Lumbermen, therefore, spread their activities along the tributaries of the big river rather than risk the hazards of the falls.

The flood of immigrants into the Middle West, however, created a demand for lumber that could not be ignored. Fox and Helms was the first firm to establish a logging camp north of Grandfather Bull Falls.

The Stevens Point company selected the Eagle River region because of the vast stands of white and Norway pines then existing there. The trees stood proudly on high banks along the shores of the lakes, and they could be easily cut and skidded down to the ice. The Pelican Rapids (Rhinelanders) area was by-passed for two reasons. First, swamps prevented loggers from felling trees near the river. And second, unwanted hardwoods were mixed in with the pines.

According to Curran, the first logging drive from Eagle River to Mosinee was not exactly successful. The cut was not considered large (estimated at 20,000 logs by later sources), and the drive itself was hit by labor trouble and tragedy. Once it halted completely, with the logs hung up on the Pelican Rapids and abandoned.

"Very poor work" was done in that first logging, explains Curran, because the oxen brought up from Stevens Point had been weakened by the strenuous 27-day trip. In April, 1858, cutting stopped, and the majority of the loggers returned to Stevens Point. Some 15 men remained for the drive. While waiting for the ice to go out, these men made drive-tools or cleared land to facilitate the movement of logs into the water.

Continues Curran:

"Half of these men were French-

**Peavies Are Seen In Logging Museum**

From the standpoint of logging history, it is noteworthy that John Curran mentions the use of the peavie for the first time on the Eagle River log drive in the spring of 1858, the "greatest single invention in the technology of logging."

The peavie had just been designed earlier in the year by Joseph Peavie of Stillwater, Maine. The tool was quickly copied and brought to Wisconsin by the Maine loggers, working on the Eagle River drive. Peavies can be seen today in the Logging Museum. A peavie is a spiked shaft about five feet in length, with a barbed iron hook hinged near the spiked end. A handy tool, it could be used for handling logs in the water and for top-loading logs.

Canadians. They were hard laborers and had worked on square timber up on the saws. Although they never had driven logs before, they soon learned how.

"Fortunately, we had some Maine men stay on. They not only knew how to drive, but how to make the tools to drive with. We had cant hooks and hand spikes, but no such thing as peavies made by the Maine men, who did their own blacksmithing. These peavies were the first to be used generally in the state."

**Boom Sweeps Lake.**

The drive began about May 1 on "Muskegon Lake," where the uppermost logs of the drive had been cut; then into Eagle Lake which, reports Curran, was one and one-quarter miles long and one mile wide. Here a boom was made from

shore to shore to sweep across the entire lake.

At each end of the boom was a float on which the men stood to pole around the shore, moving the boom through the water. Other men worked on shore ahead of the boom, skidding logs into the water to be swept together into the trap.

Curran explains that sometimes the wind blew strong enough to part the boom. "The logs would scatter, and we would have to gather them together by sweeping the lake with a new boom."

The drive moved along, going into Yellow Birch Lake and the Eagle River and down to Otter Rapids. Then came the labor dispute.

In Curran's own words:

"When we drove onto the head of Otter Rapids, the crew proposed to Superintendent James Fox that we get four meals a day instead of three. We said how we had our breakfast in the morning as soon as we could see anything and then would work until we could not see our logs. For such a day, we thought we should have four meals. But Mr. Fox rebelled against this and told us we would soon eat up the price of the logs."

Looking back on this commentary, it is easy to understand why Fox "rebelled" against the idea. The lumber business had not yet recovered from the panic of 1857, and difficult years lay ahead. **Costly Venture.**

Furthermore, logging was a costly venture in the winter of 1857-58. Supplies were hauled over 200 miles of railroad from Berlin to Stevens Point. The cost of keeping men and equipment deep in the woods was expensive. Since the logs were cut in winter and driven, cut and marketed the following year, there was a long wait for financial return on the investment.

"But the crew persisted in the demand," says Curran, "so that

Mr. Fox left the drive and went back to farming on Eagle River. We saw no more of him on the drive."

Certainly this was an unusual occurrence—the loss of the boss. More unusual is that the men continued the drive over Otter Rapids, although Curran does not tell if the men got their four meals a day. Between Ox Bow and Big St. Germain Creek, the water was low and several jams developed. On a Sunday morning, tragedy struck.

Curran relates: "On this Sunday morning, I remember, we were breaking down jams. I passed a Frenchman named Ramuel Delardine, stationed on one of the points where the logs were jammed. I spoke to him a moment, then went down river a piece.

"Shortly one of the French-Canadian boys run down and told me Ramuel was missing. I went to the point where I saw him last and noted where some logs were snagged around a maple tree off shore. I suspected he had fallen in there, trying to clear those logs. Thrusting my hand spike into the water, I found his spike.

"That satisfied me he was in the water. I gathered small logs, made a raft and poled across to where I guess the current had taken the body. I made a hook and tied it to a pole. Before I had made a half dozen drags, I hooked the body."

**Curran Gets the Job.**

Curran said the body was taken

ashore. After a solemn, hushed discussion, the French Canadians decided that the body should be taken to Wausau for burial. Curran was elected, and he appointed three of the Frenchmen to accompany him.

"I had a boat loaded with provisions and blankets," writes Curran. "We dragged the boat across the logs and cut a path for it until we got it ahead of the logs. Then we packed the body over the logs, placed it in the boat and proceeded on our long journey."

Curran explains that when the party reached the junction of the Pelican and Wisconsin rivers, he tried to persuade the French-Canadians to bury the body "beside the tote road which touched the river at this point." Apparently the body had begun to decompose. He was unsuccessful, however, and the party continued on to Merrill. There Curran placed the body in

a canoe for the down-river trip to Wausau.

It was some days later that Curran headed north again. Upon reaching Pelican Rapids, he met the logging crew "coming out, disgusted and discouraged. We, therefore, all returned to Stevens Point."

Curran adds that "two days later it began to rain, and the river started to rise. With a new crew, we hustled upstream to bring the logs down."

Thus ended the first Eagle River drive over the Pelican Rapids at Rhinelanders.

(Next: Curran Becomes Foreman.)

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## The Curran Story--Rhinelanders' First Family

# Curran Runs Race with Death from Eagle River to Stevens Point on Foot

(EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the tenth in a series of 19 articles on John Curran and his family. Curran was the city's first settler).

By JOE BOTSFORD

For John Curran, Rhineland pioneer, the first Eagle River log drive ended early in the summer of 1858 at Stevens Point. It is believed that the logs later were floated on down the Wisconsin River to Mosinee.

In the last days of June, Curran left Stevens Point and made his solitary way up the river in a canoe to join the ever-growing settlement at the mouth of the Eagle River. James Fox, superintendent for the Helms Lumber Company, had remained at Eagle River, and he put Curran to work "cutting a fine variety of blue joint hay growing in great abundance along the river bottoms."

The hay, of course, was to feed the oxen to be used in the logging operations of the following winter. On Aug. 22, while engaged in this work, young Curran observed his 20th birthday.

In the fall of 1858, Curran again helped to build camps for the winter logging. In his hitherto unpublished memoirs, he reports that Fox and Helms "had four camps in the vicinity that winter."

Continues Curran:

"I was kept in the headquarters camp on Eagle Lake, working in the blacksmith shop with Jim Luce, afterwards known to be one of the best blacksmiths in northern Wisconsin. We made and repaired axes and all other tools used in the woods, except saws."

### Race With Death.

In December, Curran once more was called upon to make an emergency trip down the Wisconsin River to Stevens Point. This time his mission was to summon a doctor for the ailing wife of James Fox.

The choice of young Curran is an interesting one on two counts. First, it is apparent that Fox held no grudge against Curran for his participation in the loggers' request for four meals a day on the first Eagle River drive the year before. Remember, Fox had left the drive rather than bow to the loggers' demand.

Second, the selection of Curran for this errand of mercy is significant in that he always was called upon to perform in times of emergencies.

It was Curran who brought up the first supplies by oxen from Stevens Point. It was he who had been elected to take the body of the dead Frenchman down river in a canoe. And it was he who had brought up the wife and chil-



**EARLY-DAY LOGGING**—This photo shows lumberjacks wrestling with a log in the Pelican Rapids about 60 years ago. The scene is little changed from the time 30 years before when John Curran came down with logs over the same rapids.

dren of Bonneville, an early settler, from Merrill to Eagle River.

It is apparent that all who knew Curran intimately held great trust in him and believed him capable in any crisis. Such things speak well of the youth, scarcely out of his teens.

### Trip Took 52 Hours.

Curran reports that he made the trip to Stevens Point on foot in 52 hours, following the narrow tote road recently cut out on the Ontanagon Trail. For the more than 100-mile trip, he carried only a hatchet and a few cooked provisions. He jogged along at a steady

pace, with the trail buried under 14 inches of snow.

"I did not see a living soul until I reached Grandfather (falls), where I got a meal from a camp. After eating, I started off for Jenny (Merrill) and Wausau. At these places, I stopped only long enough for a bite of food.

"At Stevens Point, I reported my errand to Helms and Company, and they sent out Dr. Road with another man, a pair of horses and a jumper. It took them about 76 hours to reach Eagle River.

"The doctor found Mrs. Fox very low, but saved her life. The camp had about given up hope, thinking

something might have happened to me or to the doctor and his party."

### Becomes Foreman.

Curran remained at Stevens Point a few days, resting from his race against death. Then he returned to Eagle River in the company of some supply wagons. The party reached the camp on Jan. 1, 1859. On this day the year before, Curran had arrived at Eagle River with the first supply train for the camp.

"About this time," Curran continues, "Mr. Fox discharged his foreman in one of the camps, and he put me in his place."

Curran does not elaborate on this turn of events, making him a foreman at 20. He had charge of 38 men and undoubtedly some of the men were older and far more experienced. But Fox had been testing Curran's ability for the past two years. He knew what the youth could do. It is likely, too, that Fox was indebted to Curran for helping to save his wife's life.

Concludes Curran in his memoirs:

"It was a good winter. We put in a large amount of logs into the lakes."

(Next: Curran's Trading Post).

## Federal Payrolls Cut by 88,000

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Civil Service Commission says federal payrolls have been trimmed since January by a net of about 88,000 persons.

As of July 31, the commission reported Wednesday, there were 2,447,200 federal employees, compared with the June 1945 high of 3,769,646 and the postwar low of 1,699,444 in June 1950.

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Citation for this article:

Curran Runs Race with Death from Eagle River to Stevens Point on Foot, "The Rhineland Daily News," Rhineland, WI; Thursday 3 September 1953, page 8, cols 1-4, Newspapers.com, accessed 16 March 2024



The Curran Story—Rhinelanders' First Family

Curran Builds 'Half Way House' on Pelican River Junction 94 Years Ago

(EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the eleventh in a series of 19 articles on John Curran and his family. Curran was the city's first settler.)

By JOE BOTSFORD

It is unfortunate that John Curran, Rhineland pioneer, did not complete his memoirs.

Through these writings, we have followed his life in Wisconsin from September, 1855, to January, 1859. They have enabled us to look back across a century for a first-hand account of the earliest developments along the Wisconsin River Valley.

It is regrettable, too, that Curran did not continue his memoirs for just a few months longer. Had he done so, we would now know the exact circumstances surrounding the beginning of a settlement at Rhineland—for it was in 1859 that John Curran erected the first dwelling here at the junction of the Pelican and Wisconsin rivers.

Fortunately, we know from his memoirs why he selected this particular site below the Pelican Rapids. He had landed here in August, 1857, and was impressed by the beauty of the location. Even today Highway 17 south, sliced out of a wilderness 96 years ago, is the city's most attractive entrance.

Value of Location.

We also know that John Curran was an enterprising young man, and it is easy to understand why he thought the site valuable. At the time there was no "station" between Merrill and Superior, and the river was becoming a busy thoroughfare for trappers and loggers, who would welcome an opportunity to purchase food and other supplies in the Pelican Rapids area. Then again the "tote road," the area's only route of land travel, passed by the junction of the two rivers. In a few years this road was to be streaming with settlers moving into the mushrooming village of Pelican Rapids, later to be called Rhineland.

From historical records, the progress of Rhineland's earliest settler must now be followed. Added to these somewhat meager accounts for the first time, however, are the recollections of Mrs. Julia Curran O'Reilly, residing in Balsam Lake, Wis. Julia, the eldest daughter of John Curran and now 81 years of age, was the first white child in Pelican Rapids.

Beginning with January, 1859, we know that Curran had been promoted to a foreman of one of the logging camps operated on the Eagle River chain of lakes by Helms and Co. of Stevens Point. This job kept him busy until the cutting was completed in the spring. About that time Curran decided to give up logging.

Curran was not alone in this decision. The lumber business was still jittery from the panic of 1857-58, and the lumberjacks could not find work easily. Many, like Curran, decided to trap, trade, or farm, settling down along the river bank to await better days.

John Curran turned 21 years of age in August, 1859, and it was at this important age in life that he began a new phase in his career, opening a trading post on the junction of the Pelican and Wisconsin rivers.

Indians Were Neighbors.

Curran was the first white man to settle here. The site he had chosen was an Indian camping ground, and his only neighbors were Chippewa Indians residing around the junction of the two rivers. With these Indians, he traded food and clothing for furs. He quickly earned a reputation for fair-dealing and experienced little trouble with them.

Called the "Half Way House," Curran's trading post also became a popular stopping place for the hardy trappers and loggers making their way up and down the Wisconsin River. Because of his previous contacts with these men, he knew how to get along with them. From his own experiences in the woods, he knew what their needs were, and he hired drivers to haul his goods from the nearest railroad station at New Berlin, some 150 miles away.

In the late 1860's, Curran engaged in another business venture—the buying and selling of land and logging. The government had completed its survey in 1864 and was selling rich stands of timber at \$1.25 an acre. Curran got in early on this boom which, in 30 years' time, leveled 130 billion feet of timber.

In 1870 John Curran was 32 years old. We catch another personal glimpse of him at this time through the eyes of Eugene (Gene) Shep-



**JOHN CURRAN—BRIDEGROOM**—Here is the earliest known photograph of John Curran, Rhineland pioneer, published for the first time through the courtesy of the Curran family. The picture was taken when Curran went to Wausau to be married. At the top is written "Dad's wedding outfit — 1870." Despite the popular chin growth of the day, we see here a handsome, serious-faced young man of 32. By this time, Curran was a prosperous trader and real estate man, firmly established on the junction of the Pelican and Wisconsin rivers.—(Recopied by Ehke Studio.)

ard, creator of the Hodag. Shepard first met Curran then. He wrote a description of this event in 1912 which was printed in a December issue of "The New North."

"Away back in 1870, A. A. Weber of New London rescued this writer from a job on a fargo and made cruiser, cook, compass man, beast of burden and canoe man of him. At 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.

**Sees Curran's Place.**  
"John C. Curran had settled at the mouth of the Pelican River some 16 years before (actually 11

years) and had a clearing where the city park now stands. He was engaged in buying furs of the Indians and, in a small way, logging in company with L. S. Coon of Wausau or Berlin.

"About a dozen yoke of oxen were grazing around the clearing and about a dozen families of Indians living in tipis around his place and working as Indians usually do—at intervals.

"Martin Lynch lived down the river a mile or two. He and Mr. Curran were the only white men living on the river between Eagle River and Grandfather Falls at that time."

Such was the Curran place as Gene Shepard saw it in the year 1870. Two years later another white man landed at the trading post from a birch bark canoe. He was Anderson Brown, "the father of Rhineland."

(Next: John Curran Marries.)

Citation for this article:

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Citation for this article:

John Curran Canoes Young Bride Up  
The Wisconsin River to Trading Post,  
"The Rhinelander Daily News,"  
Rhinelander, WI; Saturday 5 September  
1953, page 2, cols 3-6,  
Newspapers.com, accessed 16 March  
2024



**RHINELANDER'S FIRST FAMILY**—Here is the Curran family as it was known to Rhinelander in the 1890's. A few of the city's old-timers may recall the picture of John Curran for it was printed in the "New North" nearly 60 years ago. But the other pictures have never been available to the public before and are reproduced here as they appear in the Curran family album. From left are John, Elizabeth Sloan Curran, Julia Curran O'Reilly, Dr. Thomas B. Curran, Pearl Curran Betts, Muriel Curran Gable and Frances Curran. Only Julia and Muriel survive today.—(Recopied by Ehkko Studio).

**The Curran Story—Rhinelander's First Family**  
**John Curran Canoes Young Bride Up**  
**The Wisconsin River to Trading Post**

(EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the twelfth in a series of 19 articles on John Curran and his family Curran was the city's first settler.)

By JOE BOTSFORD

If the year 1870 was important to Eugene Shepard because he saw the site of Rhinelander for the first time, it was no less important to the city's first settler, John C. Curran. That was the year he was married.

Curran was 32 years old in August. The following month he went down the Wisconsin River in a birchbark canoe to Wausau, where he married 20-year-old Lizzie Sloan, an Irish Catholic like himself.

A plain, yet attractive girl, Lizzie Sloan had been reared in Canada. She had known Curran for some years for he had made several business trips into the dominion. Their courtship was lengthy, but their meetings infrequent.

We have seen the groom, photographed in his wedding suit by O. R. Perkins of Wausau. Although his expression is serious, his youthful face betrays the experience of his years. Already he had spent more than a decade in northern Wisconsin, enduring the hardships of those pioneer days. For his young bride, he had security to offer. His trading post now had grown into a general store, and he had acquired a small fortune in land and timber.

**The Wedding Trip.** The marriage took place in the home of a relative, Mrs. Lavid Sullivan. After the festivities, the bride exchanged her wedding dress for simple clothes. Then her husband placed her in his birchbark

**Wedding of Curran, Sloan Duplicated**

The John Curran-Lizzie Sloan marriage was duplicated by a brother and sister of the couple, it was reported today by William Curran of Antigo. William Curran explained that his father, Patrick Curran of Wausau, was a brother of John Curran. Patrick married a sister of Lizzie Sloan.

canoe, grasped the paddle and headed up the Wisconsin River toward the Pelican Rapids.

One can only guess the thoughts of the 20-year-old bride on this wedding trip into a wilderness. She had left behind at least the simple comforts of civilization. Ahead of her was the crude life of an un- developed country, with not a single white woman for a neighbor.

With John Curran's previous experiences on the Wisconsin River fresh in mind, we can visualize that wedding trip 83 years ago. At Grandfather Falls and along portions of the Ten-Mile Rapids, the couple had to disembark and carry the canoe and their belongings around the wild stretches of water.

What sight greeted the young bride when the canoe reached the junction of the Pelican and Wisconsin three or four days later? She could see the log trading post that was to be her home, and undoubtedly there was on shore a small group of Indians and trappers to greet the newly-weds.

During the first few years of their marriage, John and Lizzie Curran maintained two homes — here and in Wausau—for Curran did not want his wife to spend the winters in Pelican Rapids until he had built a regular house for her.

**First Child Is Born**

Two years after the wedding trip up the Wisconsin, Curran was in Wausau for another important event—the birth of his first child on July 4, 1872. It was a girl, and she was named Julia after his mother. When the family returned

home, the infant was the first white child in the Pelican Rapids area. Today at 81, Mrs. Julia Curran O'Reilly resides in Balsam Lake, Wis.

Four more children were born to the Currans in the decade that followed. They were Thomas, Lizzie Pearl, Muriel and Frances. Besides Julia, Mrs. Muriel Curran Gable survives today. She is 78 and lives in Everett, Wash.

From the years 1870 to 1880, the Curran family had the Pelican Rapids much to themselves. Only trappers, loggers and Indians were about, and a few farms had been cleared in isolated areas in the surrounding forests.

But Curran proceeded to make a home for his ever-growing family. During that period he erected a frame house and a barn with the first saw timber seen here. The barn still stands today on the Curran homestead and is perhaps the area's oldest building.

To educate his children, Curran put up a one-room log school a few hundred yards down river from the house. The school was not only for his own children, but for those of the Indian families living nearby. It seems Curran had not forgotten his own lack of educational opportunities as a child.

**The First Teacher?**

The late Mrs. Alexander McRae, who died only a few weeks ago, was said to be the first teacher in Rhinelander. This is technically correct. The Town of Pelican, which included the settlement re-named Rhinelander, was set off in April, 1883, and the town opened a school on June 18. The teacher for this school was Mrs. McRae.

But Curran had built his own school about five years before and had summoned from Canada a relative of his wife to teach the Curran and Indian children attending the school. This lady, whose name is no longer remembered, was actually the first school teacher in this area.

The year 1882 was marked by swift developments at Pelican Rapids. Abner Conroy put up the

first portable saw mill. The first train came in on Nov. 9. The plat of the town was recorded on Nov. 27. At the same time, the name Pelican Rapids was changed to Rhinelander in honor of F. W. Rhinelander, president of the Milwaukee, Lake Shore and Western, which had brought in the train.

When Alex McRae reached Pelican Rapids in October, 1882, he is said to have found only two log buildings up within the limits of the town. One had been built by Thomas McDermott, Sr., the other by Frank Jepson. In November, several others were completed or were under construction. These included the Brown Bros. boarding house, J. L. DeVoin's store, William Webb's hotel, James McCrossen's store, Coon and Chafe's barn, the Allan House and the Rapids House. The latter was the first frame building in the town.

In a clearing now occupied by the county court house, there was a potato field. As Eugene Shepard put it, the town "grew like magic."

**Curran's Civic Activities.**

The years 1882-83 were eventful years for John Curran, too. Although his place was somewhat isolated from the center of activity, he readily played a part in the town's development.

Curran had sold out his business in 1882 to devote his efforts to land and timber. Now he gave much of his time to the organization of the growing settlement.

When the Town of Pelican was formed in 1882 as a part of Lincoln County, Curran became its first chairman on the Democratic ticket. One year later the Pelican school board was organized, and Curran was elected its first chairman on April 21, 1883. The town's first school was put up on the site of the present high school.

In 1885 Curran helped to establish Oneida County. In 1890 he placed the Curran addition to Rhinelander. And throughout the 1890's, he continued to serve his neighbors, holding important posts in town and school affairs.

What kind of a man was John Curran during these historic years? How did the "first family" live and grow with the community? His daughter, Julia Curran O'Reilly, can tell us in her own words.

(Next: Julia's Recollections.)

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THE CURRAN HOME—"Where the Pelican and Wisconsin Rivers Meet," says this old postcard showing the Curran homestead. The house on the right was called "Riversides" and burned down in later years after the Curran family left Rhinelander. Note the old wagon bridge across the Pelican River. — (Recopied by Ehkhe Studio).

## The Curran Story--Rhinelander's First Family

# Julia Curran Recalls Days When Dead Men Floated Down Wisconsin

(EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the thirteenth in a series of 19 articles on John Curran and his family. Curran was the city's first settler.)

By JOE BOTSFORD

Julia Curran O'Reilly, the first white child at Rhinelander, is known to only a few of the city's old-timers. Yet we speak or hear her name almost daily. That's with the mention of Lake Julia, which was named in her honor.

Today at 81, Julia resides at Balsam Lake, Wis. Upon a recent visit, the writer found her to be a vivacious and gracious lady, with eyes merry and a memory keen. He also learned that she can cook a scrumptious chicken dinner in less time that it takes some women far younger.

Julia left Rhinelander more than a half century ago. It is unfortunate that the city lost such a grand lady. But for the writing of the Curran story, the circumstances are ideal — for Julia remembers Rhinelander only as a "little, squatly" pioneer settlement. The development of the city since the 1890's has had no chance to distort her recollections of the early days here.

What does Julia Curran remember most vividly of her home on the junction of the Pelican and Wisconsin rivers?

"The dead men floating down the river past our house," she replied quickly. "I can see them yet."

A strange recollection? Not when one considers that such sights were common and would leave a lasting impression upon a little girl playing along the river banks.

**Some Loggers Drowned.**

When Julia was a child, logging

### Curran Horse Was Sold to President

John Curran, Rhinelander pioneer, had an eye for fine horses.

His daughter, Julia, has reported that her father owned the first Kentucky bred horses here. Now DeWitt Rogers, a city-old-timer, reports another story about the horses that were sold to a president.

When Rogers was about 15, his father, Arthur Rogers, was an agent for the Dave Hammel Co., dealer in horses. DeWitt recalls that his father had a fine mare which he wanted to match with another splendid mare owned by John Curran.

Curran's mare was acquired, and the two horses were displayed at an international horse show in Chicago. There the mares were spotted by President William McKinley. The president immediately purchased the animals.

was at its peak on the Wisconsin river, and the men riding the logs downriver were not always so sure-footed. Drownings were all too common, and often the weekly newspapers here published such accounts as the following which appeared in the New North more than 60 years ago.

"John Carroll, a woodsman, met death by drowning in the Wisconsin River last Sunday afternoon. He fell from a log he was riding above the dam and was carried through the sluiceway and the rapids below. His body lodged in some brush a quarter of a mile down below the road bridge. He was about 25 years of age."

Julia Curran was born in 1872, Rhinelander, or Pelican Rapids, was not settled until 1882. During most of the years between, the Curran home was the sole family residence here, and Julia's only playmates were her brother and sisters and the Indian youngsters, who lived around the junction of the Pelican and Wisconsin.

"I was quite a tomboy," Julia laughed, "and I remember that we kids had a lot of fun climbing trees or exploring the woods."

"When we were old enough to learn to read and write, Father put up a log school a short distance from the house for us and the Indian children. I think we sat on boards and used slates. A relative of my mother — I've forgotten her name — was our teacher. Father had brought her down from Canada. He was a stickler for education."

**The House "Riversides".**

During Julia Curran's earliest years, the family resided in a log house that was one of the original buildings put up by John Curran

after he settled on the river junction in 1859.

"Then about 1880," Julia explained, "the frame house and barn were built. They were the first put up with saw timbers in the area. We named our lovely home 'Riversides' and were very happy there."

"Father was quite well off by then, and our house was considered fashionable for the times. I shall never forget the double parlor; one was the sitting room, the other for the piano and guests."

Julia continued: "We had the first grand piano in Rhinelander. I remember the day it arrived. Father had it hauled up the river by boat, and it was landed on shore in back of the house."

"Music and singing were our entertainment in those days. The house was always full of guests, and people often stayed overnight because they came great distances to visit us. I think we had 11 bedrooms."

Julia also recalled that the Curran family had the first Kentucky bred horses and the first Russian sleigh here.

"Having a good sleigh and carriage and splendid horses was important then," said Julia. "But, as young ladies, we were always driven into town and brought back. We couldn't go in by ourselves, and we certainly could not walk the streets as the young girls do today. Father was very strict about manners."

Julia's eyes crinkled with pleasant memories. "Yes, those were exciting times," she continued.

"I remember when the first train came in. That was in 1882 when I was 10 years old. How excited everyone was. The whole settlement was down to see it."

"Then I remember talking over the first telephone. The line was strung from downtown to our house, and I shouted so into the receiver for fear that the family at the house could not hear me. I'm not sure, but it seems that Harry Ashton arranged that for me."

"What do you remember of your father?" the writer asked.

(Next: John Curran — the man.)

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**The Curran Story--Rhinelanders' First Family**

**John Curran Was a Stern, Quiet Man, But He Was Willing to Risk a Gamble**

(EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the fourteenth in a series of 19 articles on John Curran and his family. Curran was the city's first settler.)

B JOE BOTSFORD

What sort of a man was John Curran, Rhinelanders' first pioneer?

We can read of his achievements in the early records of both Rhineland and Everett, Wash. To this, we can now add the personality of John Curran through the recollections of his eldest daughter, Mrs. Julia Curran O'Reilly of Balsam Lake, Wis. Together, they form a portrait of a man who cut the first home out of the wilderness that was Rhineland nearly 100 years ago.

A tall man by the standard of the times and toughened by work since he first logged in the state of New York at the age of 14, Curran presented a somewhat stern appearance with his heavy beard. He was a quiet man and a steady man, but not overly cautious. He had the foresight to see ahead of the moment and the courage to risk a gamble. Upon these qualities was he able to conduct his business wisely and to invest his money to prosper by it.

It was often said of John Curran that he "was too honest to be rich." He dealt fairly with every man, white or colored. For those who did not reciprocate in kind, there was "the devil to pay."

**A Good Living.**

Honesty paid off for Rhinelanders' first settler. He amassed no great fortune in his lifetime, yet he earned enough to live well, to provide a better-than-average home for his family and to give his children an education.

Julia remembers John Curran as a "stern, strict and exacting father."



**HORSE AND BUGGY DAYS**—It was back in the "horse and buggy" days when this photograph was taken nearly 60 years ago, but this time the team is pulling a cutter. The driver is Muriel Curran Gable, and the scene is on the old wagon bridge across the Pelican River. Mrs. Gable, now 78, resides in Everett, Wash.—(Recopied by Ehlike Studio).

er." But he was not unkind nor did his children lack for anything within reason.

If Curran held any regrets, it was his lack of an education. On his own since he was 14, he acquir-

ed only limited grade school instruction, and he spent the balance of his life making up for his lack of academic knowledge.

Julia Curran describes her father as a "studious man." He read

voraciously and kept a large library. In one of his last formal portraits (to appear later in this series), he is seen in a typical pose—reading a book.

Haunted by his own lack of formal education, Curran was determined that the same fate should not befall his children. We see this most vividly when he did not wait for civilization to provide the benefits of schooling for his children. Instead he built his own school. Later he sent his children away to colleges. Julia, for example, attended school in Canada and became a teacher. His only son, Tom, went to West Point and later became a distinguished physician and surgeon. Muriel Curran is remembered here for her ability to play the harp—a talent she developed when her father sent her to a Chicago conservatory of music.

**He Served Others.**

Neither was Curran niggardly. He saw to it that the children of the Chippewa Indian families living around his home attended classes with his own children. He helped to organize the Town of Pelican school district, became its first chairman and served in that time-consuming position for many years.

When Curran moved to Everett, Wash., in 1901, he continued his intense interest in education. He served as president of the Everett school board. Today his name is listed on a plaque in the Everett High School.

A desire to serve his community was another attribute of John Curran. In addition to his work on the Pelican school board, he was the first chairman of the Town of Pelican and was re-elected to that position several times.

Curran was a conservationist. Even in those times, there were

men concerned about the illegal catching and trapping of fish and game, and a committee was formed to discourage these practices. Curran was a member of this committee.

John Curran was a Catholic. An item in the Jan. 7, 1893 issue of the Oneida County Herald lists more than 100 contributors to the building of the "Catholic parochial residence." Four men contributed \$50, the largest amount. They were J. M. Keenan, Casper Faust, E. D. Brown and John C. Curran. The news item not only reflects Curran's support of his church, but indicates his position in the society of Rhineland as it existed 60 years ago.

Perhaps Curran's outstanding characteristic was his willingness to seek new horizons; to be forever an adventurer. He was ready to tackle anything provided he could judge the venture sound. When he left Rhineland to pioneer a new life in the west, he was already 63. Despite his advanced years, he founded another career for himself and gained new respect from friends out in Everett, Wash.

Deep within him, John Curran had the desire to live a century. He almost made it, too.

(Next: Julia Curran Today.)

**"Really  
Something  
To Crow  
About . . ."**

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FOOD AT**

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**GULDAN'S PHARMACY**

Citation for this article:  
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**The Curran Story--Rhinelanders' First Family**

**Julia Curran, City's First White Child, Has Lived Adventurous Life**

(EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the fifteenth in a series of 19 articles on John Curran and his family. Curran was the city's first settler.)

By JOE BOTSFORD

If Rhinelanders' first white child inherited anything from her father, Pioneer John Curran, it was his knack for living a full life, spiced with adventure.

Julia Curran O'Reilly has done just that, although she insists that she is not "so speedy anymore." The writer disagrees, chalking up the comment to maiden modesty. Today at 81, Julia Curran moves about with the ease of one many years younger. She is not content to let the world pass her by, but commutes often between her home at Balsam Lake, Wis., and those of relatives all the way from the east to the west coast.

Looking at Julia Curran and knowing her past, it is difficult to picture this graceful, trim-figured lady as the "tomboy" who once played with Indian children along the banks of the Pelican and Wisconsin rivers nearly four score years ago. But she still possesses something of the energy which she used up by climbing trees as a child.

**Eyes Are Young**

Perhaps the most remarkable feature about Julia Curran is her eyes. Set off by high cheek bones and arched brows, they hold a personal magnetism not often found in one her age. They show not only humor, but an intense interest in life. In brief, they are young eyes.

After her early years in the log school house built by her father, Julia Curran went on to the newly-built high school in Rhinelanders. Upon her graduation she received further training at a convent in Canada. Then for four years, she taught school on the Lac du Flambeau Indian reservation.

Julia had been 18 years old in 1890. She admits that during the next five years, she was a flight-hearted young miss. When she rattles off her list of old beaux, one recognizes among those eligible bachelors of the day some of Rhinelanders' most distinguished names.

Then in 1895 she made her choice in M. J. O'Reilly, a prominent young man-about-town, who sold timber around the area for Brown Bros. "M. J. was for Malachi Joseph," Julia laughs.

The couple was married on Sept. 19, 1895, in St. Mary's Church by the Rev. W. F. Van Rossmalen. It was one of the social highlights of the year.

**Account of Wedding.**

Two days later the New North carried the following:

"At St. Mary's Church in this city Tuesday morning at 6:30 o'clock, Rev. Fr. Rossmalen united in marriage M. J. O'Reilly and Miss Julia Curran.

"The ceremony was witnessed by a large gathering of friends of the contracting parties. Following the ceremony, a breakfast was served at the home of the bride's parents.

Mr. and Mrs. O'Reilly left on the noon train Thursday for a brief wedding tour after which they will return to Rhinelanders to reside, occupying the elegant residence on Oneida avenue, recently vacated by Dr. F. L. Hinman."

In October, 1896, the New North reprinted a news item from the Mississippi Valley Lumberman:

"M. J. O'Reilly, who looks after the sale of lumber for Brown Bros. Lumber Company and who was so badly injured four years ago in the excursion of the Northwestern Lumbermen Association to Chicago, is "papa" of a bright girl some five weeks old."

A year following their marriage, the O'Reillys moved to Osceola to engage in the lumber business there, then to St. Paul in 1916. There, M. J. died in 1941.

**Julia's Travels.**

During the years with her husband, Julia had the opportunity to travel a great deal and saw many portions of the world. The two visited Alaska in 1926 and were on their way to the Hawaiian Islands when Hitler invaded Austria. They also visited such places as Puerto Rico and Mexico.

For six years after M. J.'s death, Julia kept her home in St. Paul. Then in 1947, she moved to Balsam Lake.

It was at Balsam Lake that the



**JULIA CURRAN O'REILLY**—Meet Rhinelanders' first white child and the daughter of John Curran, city pioneer. Eighty-one years old, Julia stands before the mammoth fireplace in her Balsam Lake home.—(Daily News Photo)

**Curran Home Was Blown into River**

Walter Fenska, 703 Messer St., pointed out today that the Curran home seen in Tuesday's edition was not the house that burned down on the homestead.

Fenska said the original house was blown into the Pelican River by the cyclone of 1910. Later another house was put up on the site, and this dwelling burned a few years later.

Son of the late Mr. and Mrs. Carl Fenska, who settled here 63 years ago, Fenska said that Curran offered to sell the house to his parents. But the home was purchased instead by the Blackmer family. Nothing was salvaged when it was blown into the river.

writer visited Julia Curran this summer to gather material for "The Curran Story." If he expected to find an aged lady sitting in a rocking chair, he was greatly surprised.

First, Julia Curran is a lady of unusual charm and vitality, managing a sumptuous three-story lake home designed for the best in modern living. Second, her home is a treasure house of art-objects and curios gathered from all corners of the earth.

Julia takes pride in showing visitors through her somewhat fabulous home. One can admire such varied items as her collection of shells from exotic lands, hand-made native curiosities from Africa to the South Seas, rare and unusual pieces of chinaware and fine paintings of scenes here and abroad. Julia also is an amateur geologist and has a collection of rocks and stones picked up from various parts of the world.

Some of these treasures Julia collected during her own travels. Others were sent to her by her globe-trotting daughters.

**Julia's Children.**

Julia Curran O'Reilly has three

children. A son resides in his own home on the O'Reilly lake property. A daughter, Mary Elizabeth, worked for 20 years as a juvenile police officer on the Los Angeles police force and is now on a five-year world tour. A second daughter, Muriel Margaret, is married to a Navy captain and has lived in many stations abroad.

Julia keeps up with the adventures of her two daughters with keen interest, aided by large wall maps of the world's countries. The girls in turn write her comprehensive details on their travels and send their mother unusual souvenirs. Thus at 81, Julia Curran has a wide knowledge of other lands and their peoples.

The Curran family ties are strong, and this accounts for Julia's absence from Balsam Lake for months at a time to visit relatives. She is determined apparently not to let age deter her from enjoying an active and full life.

Besides her children, Julia's closest relative is her sister, Muriel Curran Gable, 78, of Everett, Wash. And Mrs. Gable's hobby is her grandchildren of which she had some 14. Tom Curran, John's only son, who became a surgeon, died in the west in 1950.

(Next: Curran Looks West.)

**Happy Is The Day When Backache Goes Away . . . .**

Nagging backache, loss of pep and energy, headaches and dizziness may be due to slow-down of kidney function. Doctors say good kidney function is very important to good health. When some everyday condition, such as stress and strain, causes this important function to slow down, many folks suffering nagging backache—feel miserable. Minor bladder irritations due to cold or wrong diet may cause getting up nights or frequent passages. Don't neglect your kidneys if these conditions bother you. Try Duan's Pills—a mild diuretic. Used successfully by millions for over 50 years, it's amazing how many times Duan's give happy relief from these discomforts—help the 10 million kidney tubes and filters flush out waste. Get Duan's Pills today!

**MUSIC BY . . .**

**The Dakota Kid's Trio**  
Friday Night

**FISH & FRY**

**Friday Night—BONELESS PIR**

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5 Miles West on County Trunk K — Phone 273-J

Citation for this article:

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**The Curran Story--Rhinelanders' First Family**

**Pelican Rapids Grows Up in 1890's, But John Curran Becomes Restless**

(EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the sixteenth in a series of 19 articles on John Curran and his family. Curran was the city's first settler.)

By JOE BOTSFORD

In the year 1892 Rhinelanders marked its tenth birthday, and newspaper accounts of the day proudly praised the "thriving metropolis" of more than 4,000 people.

The accounts were written in glowing words. They vividly described the growth of the city, which had achieved its population in 10 short years and had become a logging and sawmill center of northern Wisconsin. The past was glorious. The future was promising.

John C. Curran, the first white man to settle near the Pelican Rapids, was now 54 and had lived here 33 years. He had prospered with the development of the area and was devoting his business activity to land and timber. His days as a logger, Indian trader and storekeeper were past, closing a colorful first chapter in the city's history.

Curran conducted his affairs quietly and without fanfare. Only occasionally does one see his name in contemporary newspaper accounts.

On May 28, 1892, the Oneida County Herald reported that "J. C. Curran was at Tomahawk Thursday on business," and later in December, 1892, the Herald tells us that Curran had "business in Bayfield."

**His Civic Work.**

Despite his private enterprises, Curran still was giving much of his time to community activities during the 1890's. In July, 1893, we note that he was re-elected chairman of the Pelican school board along with Paul Browne, W. E. Brown and E. L. Dimick. First chairman of the Town of Pelican a decade before, he was returned to that post in March, 1894.

In April, 1896, the New North reported that Curran was re-elected town chairman by a scant one vote majority over "Mr. Olsson." Again the following year, he was re-elected—this time by an 11-vote majority over S. G. Tuttle.

Recalling that he had hunted deer as a youth, we see that he was still a sportsman and a conservationist in the 1890's. On July 16, 1892, the Herald listed him as a member of the Fish and Game Protective Association of Northern Wisconsin.

In that issue, the association offered a \$25 reward for information leading to the conviction of a person caught fishing or killing game out of season.

**Thinks of Selling Out.**

As the 1890's faded into history, John Curran became restless. By 1899 he was giving serious consid-



**TIES WITH CURRAN FAMILY** — Some of the city's old-timers had contacts with the John Curran family. Miss Margaret Sheip, retired school teacher, shows a 58-year-old book given to her as a Christmas gift by Frances Curran when the two were friends back in the Third grade in Old Central School. The book is the story of the "Three Little Kittens." The old photograph shows Pearl Curran (standing left) and Jane Kyle (now Mrs. S. H. Ashton, standing on right) drinking water at the Curran well some 35 years ago. Mrs. Ashton, then a school teacher, spent many Sundays at the "hospitable" Curran home. Perhaps other old-timers can identify the remaining members of this gay group.

eration to the idea of selling out everything and starting all over again in another place.

What prompted such thoughts in a man who had lived 40 years in the same location and was now more than 60 years old? Julia Curran O'Reilly, his eldest daughter, has supplied the answers.

For one reason, the Curran children had grown up. Julia and Pearl had married. Tom was about to become a doctor. Only Francis, the youngest daughter, was still at home.

A rare glimpse of Pearl Curran before her marriage was noted in the Jan. 18, 1896 issue of the New North:

"The firm of Dunn and Curran, doing a business of copying and typewriting in the corner of the bank block, has decided that Rhinelanders is hardly large enough to successfully support such a business. The members of the firm were the Misses Ella Dunn and Pearl Curran."

Perhaps the biggest cause for

John Curran's restlessness in 1899, however, was due to the fact that he was, at heart, a pioneer—and there was no frontier left in Wisconsin.

By now Rhinelanders was "too settled." Opportunities for new ventures seemed limited. Old "Pelican Rapids" was growing up, and this made John Curran feel old, too.

Curran's mood was contagious. Son Tom, about to embark on a career in medicine, wanted to begin his life's work in a new country. What about the west coast, he suggested. There, things were just beginning to develop.

The thought of new country—new land and new people—gripped John Curran like the fever for gold. A few days after the dawn of a new century, father and son left on an exploratory visit to the Pacific Ocean.

(Next: The Trip West.)

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**The Curran Story—Rhinelanders' First Family**

**John Curran, at 61, Looks to Far West As Possible Location for New Home**

(EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the seventeenth in a series of 19 articles on John Curran and his family. Curran was the city's first settler.)

By JOE BOTSFORD

In January, 1900, Muriel Curran, daughter of John Curran, Rhineland pioneer, was studying harp and piano at a music conservatory in Chicago. One morning she received a letter from her father. It had been mailed Jan. 20, not from Rhineland, but from Spokane, Wash.

Thus at 61, John Curran could not resist the call of a new frontier. Throughout the year 1899, he had

**Another Report On Curran House**

Louis Pautz, 409 Thayer St., reports that it is his recollection that only a portion of the Curran home was blown into the river in the 1910 storm. The high wind swept the kitchen section off its foundation and into the stream, leaving the balance of the structure undisturbed. The kitchen wing was reconstructed subsequently.

Pautz's father came to Rhineland in 1885 and for a time "roomed" with the Currans, Louis recalls.

Preserved for more than 50 years and reprinted by permission of Muriel Curran Gable of Everett, Wash., this letter reads in part: "My dear Muriel: I presume that you have heard by this time that T. B. (this son, Tom) and myself left home for a trip out west. We left Wednesday and got to St. Paul Thursday morning.

"We didn't stay there five minutes when we took the Great Northern for Spokane, where we are now. This is a city of about 50,000 people, and it looks as though there was lots of business done here. It is a great mining center, and there is a great waterfall here that the city is named after.

"We will leave here tomorrow for Seattle where we may remain two or three days, looking over that city, then go on to Everett and Tacoma. We may go up into the timber country, or we may change our minds and go straight on to Portland, Ore. You might write to us there to the General Delivery.

"I don't know where we will go from there...perhaps to California. Or I may return alone by way of Salt Lake City while T. B. finds a place to locate and settles down to practice in one of these cities on the coast. We will have to decide that point later on, but I don't think he will go home with me.

"I like the looks of this city very well, but I expect to find Seattle or Portland much ahead of this place. I will try and write to you again before long—I remain as ever, Your Father."

**Trip Lasts Three Months.** Curran remained nearly three months on the west coast, seeking a location that held the promise of future and prosperous development. Then on March 22, 1900, the New North told of John Curran's return to Rhineland.

The news item is incorrect in saying that the city pioneer went west to see his son, as the letter shows that Thomas Curran accompanied his father. But the report is worth recording here as it indicates that Curran had decided on Everett, Wash., as his future home and that Tom had settled in Tacoma. It also hints that Curran no longer cared for Wisconsin winters.

"John C. Curran returned late Friday morning after an absence of a couple of months spent in the state of Washington. He went there for the purpose of calling his son, Dr. T. B. Curran, who is a practicing physician in a hospital at Tacoma.

"He also had another object in view and that was to look the country over and if favorably impressed, to locate. Mr. Curran visited in many of the important points in the state and as a result is very enthusiastic over the prospects in that far away western state. He has decided to locate permanently and will return next Saturday or Sunday to make final arrangements, remaining about a month.

"During his absence, Mr. Curran invested about \$3,000 in town lots at Everett, a promising berg about 30 miles north of Seattle.

"Mr. Curran is very much pleased with the climate, which he considers a great improvement over that of northern Wisconsin, especially for a man his age. He says there is a great influx of immi-



**A VICTORIAN SCENE**—The late Pearl Curran Betts is shown on the front porch of the Curran home on a winter day nearly 60 years ago. The "Victorianism" of this scene is clearly indicated in the elaborate hat and long dress of the period and in the scrollwork of the porch.

grants, but the opportunities are numerous, the resources unlimited and there is room for all.

"One thing he said to the New North man should caution those who contemplate a change of location to think twice before they make a move. He informs us that wages are not as good as they are in northern Wisconsin, because of the large number of Japanese laborers engaged.

"While away, Mr. Curran has grown a full beard, which changed his looks and many could only recognize him by his voice. His health has improved considerably and he declares he feels 10 years younger than he did when he left."

A few months later, the newspaper reported that Curran was investing "extensively in pine lands" in the state of Washington. It seems that the city's first settler was about to pull up all roots here at last.

(Next: Curran Moves Away.)

**District Boy Scout Meeting Scheduled**

The first fall meeting of the Oneida-Vilas Boy Scout district will be held Tuesday, it was announced today by County Judge George Richards, chairman of the district.

The meeting will be held at 7:30 p. m. in the New Central School. Organization and scheduling of fall and winter scouting activities will be the evening's program.

Judge Richards urged all Oneida and Vilas scout leaders to attend Tuesday's meeting.

"We are meeting earlier this fall, so that district scouting can be placed on solid footing to carry it through in good shape until next summer," said Judge Richards.

**News Paragraphs**

In connection with a story on accidents published Friday, it was pointed out today that Edward Kubesh, 449 Lake St., whose car hit an automobile backing out of a parking space on Brown St. late Thursday night, was attempting to avoid being hit by a third vehicle backing out of another parking space on his side of the street. The third car was driven by George Hansen, it was reported.

Firemen were called to the home of Mrs. John Graham, 532 Thayer St., at 9:05 a. m. today when an oil burner became flooded and flared up. There was no damage.

**Egypt Plans to Sue Aga Khan**

CAIRO, Egypt (AP)—The Egyptian government is planning to sue the fabulously wealthy Aga Khan for 500,000 pounds (\$1,444,250) charging the Moslem religious leader failed to build promised apartment houses on a 40-acre plot he bought in Cairo in 1946.

**Outboard Motors Taken in Breakins**

Apparently the work of one group, two breakins in Rhineland and Tomahawk during the night netted six new outboard motors of the same make, city police reported here today.

Three of the motors were taken from the Decker Service Station, 139 W. Davenport St., where entry was gained by breaking a window in a rear door. The loot included one Mark 15 and two Mark 5 Mercury motors, without gasoline tanks.

At Tomahawk, police were informed, three Mercury motors were taken from a dealer's place after a similar breakin. There, too, the thieves did not obtain the separate gasoline tanks which go with the motors.

Authorities have a line on a suspect, it was indicated. Descriptions of the stolen motors were broadcast on the state police radio network.

**Gross School Thief Gets Milk Money**

A persistent thief got about \$20 in cash from the Crosby School, located in the town of Crescent, after breaking into the building in the night and apparently spending some time in a search for money or valuables, Officer Clifford Guilday of the Oneida County police reported today. The theft occurred some time Thursday night or Friday morning.

Entry was gained by breaking a window in a door. Then the thief obtained a stove poker and forced open a steel cabinet, which was ransacked. The money, collected for milk for lunch periods, was in the cabinet. A desk in the building also was searched thoroughly by the intruder.

**None Hurt in Crash Early This Morning**

Two cars were damaged but no one was hurt in a collision on Highway 8-47 two miles east of Rhineland at 12:15 a. m. today, Officer Clifford Guilday of the Oneida County police reported.

The mishap occurred when Kenneth C. Kichefski, Rte. 2, made a left turn off the highway into a private driveway and his car was hit from behind by an automobile operated by Oliver Larson, 1451 Eagle St. Both cars were going west at the time.

The Larson car first hit the left rear fender of the Kichefski car and then struck the left front fender, pushing it off the roadway. The Larson car went off the road on the right side and ran into a deep ditch.

World's most efficient pump is the heart. It pumps about five ounces of blood at every beat, or about 1,500 pints every hour, in the normal adult.

Citation for this article:

*John Curran, at 61, Looks to Far West As possible Location for New Home, "The Rhineland Daily News," Rhineland, WI; Saturday 12 September 1953, page 2, cols 3-5, Newspapers.com, accessed 16 March 2024*

The Curran Story--Rhinelanders' First Family

John Curran Was Pioneer of Two Communities, 2,000 Miles Apart

(EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the eighteenth in a series of 19 articles on John Curran and his family. Curran was the city's first settler.)

By JOE BOTSFORD

John C. Curran had settled on the junction of the Pelican and Wisconsin rivers in 1859. When he decided to move his home to the west coast, it took him a year to pull up the roots of his life in Rhinelanders—roots that had grown and developed for more than 40 years.

On Jan. 17, 1901, the New North carried the following story under the heading, "The Passing of a Pioneer:"

"The departure from Rhinelanders of J. C. Curran and family brings to mind a thousand things connected with the Wisconsin River valley and its development.

"Forty-seven years ago, he came from Canada to this then unbroken forest. At the junction of the Pelican River with the Wisconsin, he built a home which has been his through all the years from '54 (actually 1859).

"He was the pioneer trader with the Indians when this whole section was their hunting paradise. He helped to blaze the first wagon road ever built in this section of the state—from Merrill to Eagle River, along the 'Wisconsin.'

"He has seen the trees fall and cities grow. He has watched the plowshare supplant the glistening axe. He has seen the railroads come with burdens which he used to pole up river, way from Stevens Point.

"He was the pioneer of all and his going now to seek in some new place a home and happiness and fortune seems almost like an exile or escape. But it is neither.

"The splendid family he has reared and John himself take with them the best wishes of every citizen of the city and the valley. That they may make their fortune ample and return to live among those who know them best and like them most is the hope of all."

Looking back on this touching tribute to John Curran, it is noteworthy in two respects.

First, it was the last extensive report on Curran to appear in Rhinelanders. As the years slipped by, his name became almost legendary. When he died 30 years later, only a brief mention of the event was recorded here. The city had all but forgotten its first settler.

Second, a similar news item was published in Everett, Wash., when Curran succumbed at 93. Amazingly, it carried the same heading, "The Passing of a Pioneer."

Thus, John C. Curran went down in history as a pioneer of two communities some 2,000 miles apart. Surely few men have duplicated such an achievement.

(Next: The Last Years.)



**THE CURRAN HOME** — The upper photograph shows the home that John Curran left behind in 1901 on the junction of the Pelican and Wisconsin rivers. The house is gone, damaged in part by a wind storm and later destroyed by fire. The lower photo shows only the barn and the carriage shed remaining today, with the barn having undergone some changes in the past 60 years.

58 to Take Part In Logging Show Thursday Night

Fifty-eight Rhinelanders will take part in the big entertainment program which will feature the opening day's program for the eighth annual Lake States Logging Congress here this week, it was reported today by Matt Kofler, who will preside over the program as master of ceremonies. The affair is open to the public without charge.

The fast-moving show, expected to run about one hour and 45 minutes, will be presented Thursday

10 couples from the Hodag Clam diggers (square dancing club) — Mr. and Mrs. ... and Mrs. De ... Mrs. Charles Ed Emmons, Liam Herrick, Soule, Mr. and Mrs. ... Mr. and Mrs. ... Mr. and Mrs. ...

Eighteen Rhinelanders Male Director Law ... ist Madeline ... pear. They Blaine Haney Ralph McQuire, Rudy Carlson, Luther Burkett, Jim Carlson, Elton Maloney, Art Forth, Carl Lindwall, Jesse Holderby, Jim Willis, John Hyatt, Leonard Parkinson, Erling Skagen and Frank Theis. Others taking part will be the Elbo-Room Sweet Adelines (Mrs. ...

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John Curran Was Pioneer of Two Communities, 2,000 Miles Apart "The Rhinelanders Daily News," Rhinelanders, WI; Monday 13 September 1953, page 2, cols 3-5, Newspapers.com, accessed 16 March 2024

Meeting Tonight

**The Curran Story--Rhinelanders' First Family**

**John Curran Dies at 93, Failing His Life's Goal to Live a Century**

(EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the last in a series of 19 articles on John Curran and his family. Appreciation again is expressed to the surviving members of the family for their help in making this series possible.)

BY JOE BOTSPOED

Tragedy dealt Pioneer John C. Curran a double blow within a year after he left Rhineland and settled in Everett, Wash.

Preparing lunch for a party were Lizzie Pearl, Curran's third child, and Frances M., his youngest daughter. Suddenly a kerosene lamp exploded. The clothing of the two young ladies caught afire, and both died of their burns.

In Everett, then a small settlement near Seattle, Curran started life anew at the age of 64 in much the same business that he had conducted in Rhineland. He bought and sold timber and had extensive timber holdings in Mason, Lewis and Pierce counties in the state of Washington. He also turned storekeeper again. For many years he operated the Curran Hardware Store at the corner of Broadway and Hewitt in Everett.

In 1913, at the ripe age of 75, Curran took his first extensive vacation and visited the Orient. He was accompanied by his wife, who was then 63. In 1924 Lizzie Sloan Curran, Rhineland's first housewife, died at the age of 74.

**School Board President.**

But John Curran seemed invincible. He not only continued in business, but he was taking an active part in school affairs as he had done so many years before in the Town of Pelican. He served several terms as president of the Everett school board, and today's Everett High School was built under his guidance.

In 1930 John Curran retired. He was 92. Despite his advanced age, he was in excellent health. He had his first tooth pulled in that year. The only impairment to his physical well-being was the loss of sight in one eye due to a cataract.

During his last days, Curran still conducted his daily routine of reading, writing or resting — and all on a strict and unvarying schedule. He took his daily walks at the same hours. It was said that one could set a watch by the appearance of Curran on the streets of Everett. For his own use, Curran carried a railroad watch.

During the early morning hours of Thursday, Sept. 18, 1931, John Curran died in his sleep. He was seven years shy of the century mark he had hoped to reach.

**Buried in Everett.**

Curran was buried beside his wife in Evergreen Cemetery in Everett. At the time, he was survived by his two daughters, Julia Curran O'Reilly and Muriel Curran Gable; his son, Dr. Thomas B. Curran, and a brother, Tom, of Berlin, Wis. Julia and Muriel are the remaining members of Rhineland's first family today.

When the writer visited Julia J. Curran in her Balsam Lake home a few weeks ago, he was shown a pair of snowshoes that had belonged to John Curran. On these, Curran had moved swiftly over the snow-covered Indian and logging trails of the Wisconsin River valley wilderness. They are at least a century old and still in useable condition.

To the writer, the snowshoes appeared to be a fitting symbol of the man — John Curran. As he was, they are tough and durable. Like him, they seemed almost indestructible.

(The End)

I'm both surprised and happy to hear that he's alive. But I don't love him. Not the way I love James.—Mrs. Ava Cogburn Herr, who remarked thinking her husband, Sgt. Cogburn, had been killed in Korea.



**JOHN C. CURRAN**—This is the last formal portrait of John C. Curran, Rhineland pioneer, which was taken during his final years in Everett, Wash. The beard is gone now, revealing the strong contours of his face. An almost self-educated man, he is shown at his favorite pastime—reading a book.—(Recopied by Ehlike Studio.)

**Three Lakes Man Admits, Refutes Bad Check Charges**

Charles Zoeh, Jr., 29, of Three Lakes, first pleaded guilty and then had a change of mind in County Court today when he learned that the three bad check charges against him constituted felonies rather than misdemeanors.

Zoeh, arrested Sunday by Officer Merrill Hibbard of the Oneida County police, was held under \$500 bail for a preliminary hearing at 3 p. m., Friday before Judge George A. Richards.

The complaint against Zoeh, signed by Undersheriff Donald Krouze, charged the Three Lakes man with issuing two worthless checks cashed by Walter Holewinski Sept. 4 and Sept. 7 and one bad check cashed by James Stafford Aug. 14. The amounts on the checks were \$28.00, \$18.40 and \$38.84.

Prior to Zoeh's change of mind about his plea, Dist. Atty. Albert J. Cirilli had given Judge Richards a background of the cashing of the three bad checks, explaining the Three Lakes man posed as a doctor when he cashed the two checks with Holewinski and gave a fictitious name when he cashed the check with Stafford.

**Four Youths Fined.**

Four Rhineland youths, including a couple of boys who starred in football a year ago, were fined \$10 and costs each on a charge of disorderly conduct growing out of an incident near Pelican Lake Sunday night.

They were Donald Lindwall, Richard Rolain and Johnny Nehls,

reached toward a glove compartment.

A Milwaukee woman, Mrs. Emily Witt, was fined \$10 and costs on a charge of fishing with more than two lines. Warden Arthur N. Knudson of Woodruff reported she was arrested Sept. 5 on Gilmore Lake with three lines in the water.

**School Bus Checkup Dates Scheduled**

A schedule for school bus inspections in Oneida County has been announced by J. M. Reed, county superintendent of schools, and Roland E. Lortscher, state traffic patrol officer for this area.

Inspections will be held on the following schedule:

Wednesday, Sept. 16 — Three Lakes high school, 1:30 p. m.

Thursday, Sept. 22—Rhineland, rear of Court House, 9 a. m.; Woodruff high school, 1:30 p. m.

All school bus drivers are being notified of the dates for the inspections.

**News Service Was Cut Monday**

Telephone, teletype and telegraph service in northeastern Wisconsin was restored to normal early Monday evening when workmen repaired a cable severed Monday morning by a bulldozer, the Wisconsin Telephone Co. announced here.

The Appleton-Milwaukee toll lead was severed, causing a news service blackout from Oshkosh northward. The break shut down the Daily News AP wire for several hours Monday.

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