



Advocate

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 Seth Taft

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

As I write this in mid-December, it doesn't feel very wintery here in Baraboo...48 degrees and sunny, with no snow. The lake hasn't iced over, so no ice fishing yet. Hopefully we get some January snow, the park always feels even more special with a fresh blanket of white snow and snow provides an opportunity for winter sports like snowshoeing and cross-country skiing.

The Friends has had a very busy year, with something like 25 events! Now we are in our slow season, with time to take a deep breath, finish up budgets and financials for our last fiscal year and start planning for next year. We're working on the event list for 2024 (see the start of it later in this newsletter). The board is having a strategic planning session in January to work on questions including "What does it mean for us to be successful?", "What are our goals?", "What does our mission statement mean to us?". I'm looking forward to taking the time to be more reflective of our mission and charting a path forward to do our best to help the park improve.

We've applied for a 2024-2026 DNR Stewardship Grant to improve the East Bluff Trail, providing better access for mobility impaired climbers and hikers. Fingers crossed that we get it! We've also been researching other grant opportunities to expand this project; the East Bluff trail needs significant upgrades including drainage control. If anyone knows of other grant programs that could help with this project, please contact us. As many of you know, the park gets very limited funding for trail repairs and improvements from the state. The DNR park staff has completed some repairs to the Balanced Rock trail this Fall, but there is so much more work that could be done to make the trails better and safer.

Thanks as always for the support of our members and volunteers, we really appreciate it!

Jayne Englebert, President
jenglebert@friendsofdevilslake.org



LOST GRANDEUR

By Sue Johansen-Mayoleth, Park Naturalist

📷 Cliff House photos courtesy of Sue Johansen-Mayoleth

Winter is one of my favorite times in the park. Not only is it much less crowded, but it's a great time to work on projects and spend time cleaning the Nature Center. While going through some files, I came across this article by Pam Prosser called "Lost Grandeur: A Cliff House Revisited" and I thought I'd share it with you since it has some interesting information about one of the grand hotels here in the park. Enjoy!

In the last half of the 19th century and the early years of the present one, elegant resorts sprang up on the shores of lakes and in lush countryside settings across the country. While the middle-class traveler was not unwelcome, these sumptuous society resorts catered to the wealthy, the famous and the sometimes infamous with cosmopolitan grace and style.

Ironically, the escalating costs of maintaining such opulence forced many owners to close their grand resorts permanently. Among the casualties was the Cliff House, a spectacular resort that sheltered visitors to Wisconsin's Devil's Lake State Park for more than three decades.

On the shore of Devil's Lake in south central Wisconsin, there once stood a stately 50-room hotel with verandas and galleries encircling it. During its reign, the

elegant resort served the streams of visitors who came to study and enjoy the unique landforms. It was near the end of the lake's east bluff that real estate developer Edward N. Marsh constructed the Minniwauken House in the 1860's. In the book, *A Lake Where Spirits Live*, by Kenneth I. Lange and Ralph T. Tuttle, they quote a journal entry from February 1866 that applauded the hotel's opening. "The want of a commodious and well-appointed hotel for the entertainment of many visitors . . . has long been felt and is at last to be filled. The Minniwauken House will be opened on the 22nd". The new hotel was an establishment of quality comparable to those in New York's Adirondacks. Among the illustrious visitors it attracted was Abraham Lincoln's wife.

In 1871, Marsh sold it to Samuel Hartley, formerly postmaster of Baraboo, Wisconsin. Two years later, Hartley expanded the hotel to 50 rooms and renamed it the Cliff House. Visitors to this top-notch resort found all the latest in modern conveniences and amenities for about \$2.50 a night. The Cliff House had a large dining room looking out over the lake, a grocery shop, a barber shop, a billiard room and a bowling alley. Its services included a telegraph office, ticket office and a baggage office.

In 1879, Hartley sold his grand hotel to William F. Vilas, a former U.S. senator from Madison, Wisconsin. The hotel's newest owner appointed professional hotel manager, William B. Pearl, to run it. For the next 25 years, the Cliff House was a great Midwest attraction. Advertising for the hotel ran in Madison, Chicago, and St. Louis. Steam trains, which ran on newly completed tracks along the entire east bluff, deposited tourists several times a day. The 400-mile roundtrip fare from Chicago was only \$2 in 1906. The largest recorded train excursion to the resort took place in 1894. Three trains, with a total of 34 coaches, brought so many visitors that passengers leaving the trains were lined up for a mile. Pearl made plans to expand the hotel in 1883 by adding a separate building, called the Annex. When the 30-room addition was completed in 1884, the total capacity of the Cliff House Resort was 400.

In the Cliff House's heyday, there were nightly dances and guest orchestras to entertain the clientele. "Romeo and Juliet" played to a large and enthusiastic audience, local press reports said. Band picnics were held on the sidewheel steamer (boat), called the "Minniwauken". In the evenings, guests would walk to the nearby Shadow Town

Inn to listen to records played on an Edison phonograph, drink pop and eat Cracker Jack.

Unfortunately, the good times were short-lived for the Cliff House. Pearl took great pride in providing the most modern accommodations for his guests. The hotel had indoor toilets, Franklin stoves in the lobby and kerosene heaters that guests could carry to their rooms. The cost of providing such guest comforts, plus the constantly needed repairs, took their toll. At the same time, the hotel was encountering difficulty with the railroad. The Cliff House was lining up more specially priced excursion tours than the railroad could economically handle at the old prices. When fares went up, the number of visitors fell.

In 1903, Pearl and Vilas were forced to put the Cliff House up for sale, but there were no interested buyers. After an unsuccessful attempt to reopen in 1904, Pearl left the state. The following year Vilas ordered his Cliff house to be destroyed. The Annex remained until 1914.

Visitors continue to flock to Devil's Lake each year to be enchanted by the haunting beauty of the bluffs. The geologic wonders remain, but the architectural wonders and grandeur of the Cliff House remain only in memory.





SUPERINTENDENT REPORT

By *Jim Carter*

 Seth Taft

What can visitors expect in the coming season at Devil's Lake State Park? If we start with the weather and its effect on the lake basin, people will see a much lower lake level than in the recent past. This summer's drought in the region combined with warmer fall and winter temperatures has resulted in increased evaporation loss and ground water outflow through the southeast moraine. The downside is it will be harder for some recreational users to launch their boats into the lake. For those that enjoy soaking up the sun on the beach, there will be large swaths of sandy shores. It will take a considerable snowpack and spring rainfall to make up the difference. Without it, the creek along the East Bluff Woods trail won't have the typical babbling of noise. The creek was dry much of this past summer and not even the few rainfalls we received resulted in much flow.

Beach goers will see a new retaining wall on the east side of the Chateau and two new staircases to provide access to the lake. The seating area on top is now level and no longer terminates at an eroded earthen and wooden beam wall. Construction in the spring will bring a newly poured concrete walkway inlaid with three permeable memorial paver sections. If you are walking past the boat rental building towards the Chateau, stop and grab a selfie or family trip photo in

front of the new historic postcard display.

The lack of snowfall so far has allowed staff to continue some other projects we have long desired conditions and time to work on. The burial mounds of both the bear and panther in the northwest picnic area were recently cleared of encroaching brush and smaller diameter trees. A few picnic grills have been identified for removal from the surrounding area and additional overseeding will occur in the spring.

Staff will focus on a few improvements to the group campground sites and users of this campground will see some amenities, such as new fire rings, when the camping season takes off in the spring.

Do you have an interest in one of these areas of the park and want to volunteer? Have you been to another property and enjoyed how they incorporated certain amenities or educational displays into the outdoor experience? If you have and want to share your experience, please reach out directly to me if you want to be involved. Staff are working on various projects and topics and we always look forward to new ideas and perspectives.

Jim Carter
 James.carter@wisconsin.gov
 608-356-8301 ext. 111

2023 YEAR IN REVIEW

For those of you who attended the Annual Members Meeting in September, we outlined the events and happenings that were completed in 2023.

Here's our recap:

- Four torchlit hikes between November 2022 and March 2023
- Four Music in the Park events in Summer/Fall
- Yoga in the Park sessions every Saturday from Memorial Day weekend to Labor Day weekend
- Two members only events
 - Naturalist guided sunset hike up the East Bluff
 - Naturalist guided Super Moon kayak lake tour
- Interpretive Center Campaign informational event with kid's activities on Memorial Day weekend
- Scheduled monthly volunteer days every second Saturday from April through October
 - Adopt A Highway trash pickup
 - Tree watering (watering the new trees planted this year due to the drought)
 - Brush clearing along the trails
- Merchandise and firewood sales at the Visitor Center to raise money to support the above!
- Dedication paver sales – new paver area to come in 2024!
- Unscheduled volunteer events (several with organizations who wanted to do a team building event with their employees)
 - Picnic table and memorial bench painting
- Marketing Events – informational booths at:
 - Baraboo Fair on the Square
 - Baraboo Circus Parade
 - Baraboo Ice Age Trail Community Celebration
 - Devil's Challenge Triathlon
- Application for and administration of three grants totaling - \$95,851.09 – which paid for:
 - New interpretive signage at the park
 - Informational kiosk by the Chateau (to be installed Spring 2024)
 - Nature Center programming
 - Nature Center equipment
 - Friends' operational expenses
 - Event programming costs – bands, supplies

• And so much more. It was a very busy year!

MARGERY I. STAUDENMAYER TRAIL FUND

By Kevin Olson, Friends Board Secretary

Margery I. Staudenmayer, age 84, of Portage, passed away in 2010. She spent her youth in New York City and appeared in several movies as an extra. Margery was an extraordinary, independent, and free-spirited person throughout her life.

She moved back to her hometown of Portage in the 1970s and was a long-time member and supporter of the Friends of Devil's Lake State Park. That support continued after her death with a generous bequest to the Friends designated for trail maintenance and upgrades.

In response to Margery's generous gift, the Friends of Devil's Lake State Park created the Margery I. Staudenmayer Trail Fund to be used for trail maintenance and upgrades. Several trail projects are in the works for 2024 and beyond, and the Friends hope to use this fund for the required match if successful in some grant applications for these projects.

Additional donations to the Margery I. Staudenmayer Trail Fund are always welcome and are especially important over the next year or two as the Friends tackle several long-overdue trail projects.



2024 TRAIL PROJECTS

By Kevin Olson, Friends Board Secretary

The Friends are hoping to complete several exciting trail upgrades starting in 2024. The plans include a 500 ft section of trail between the Service Road (at Rescue Road #5B) and the East Bluff Trail that would be widened and paved to accommodate wheelchair access.

This project was initially proposed by the adaptive climbing community in Wisconsin to improve access to a popular climbing area (Leaning Tower / Tombstone) that's used for organized events for disabled climbers. The improved access could also accommodate all park visitors with mobility challenges. The improvements would include parking for two vehicles at the trailhead for Rescue Road #5B and a paved path that accesses three overlooks along the East Bluff.

The Friends are also hoping to tackle improvements to Tumbled Rocks Trail, including filling potholes and resurfacing the south half of the trail. Additional trail upgrades on the East Bluff are planned for 2024 and beyond, depending on funding.

Several grant applications have been or will be

submitted to fund a portion of the trail projects, including a 2024-2026 Stewardship Grant (WDNR), Big Dig Grant (Mathy Construction, ALM Charities, Gasser Construction, Milestone Minerals), and American Trails Capacity Grant (American Trails). Additional funding for these projects will be provided by the Friends' Margery I. Staudenmayer Trail Fund and donations from the Wisconsin Climbers Association members and Friends of Devil's Lake State Park members.

If funding is approved, the Friends will be relying on donated labor to complete a portion of the work on all these projects. Donated labor will not only be key to completing the work, but it would also count toward the required match for some of the grants.

Please call or send an email to Kevin Olson (kolson@friendsofdevilslake.org or 608-963-2678) if you are interested in volunteering on these projects. No experience is necessary, and you can volunteer for an hour or two, a day or two, or regularly over the course of the season as your schedule permits. At this time, we're compiling an email list of interested parties.



If you would like to contribute financially to this effort, please send your contribution to 'Friends of Devil's Lake' with a note designating your donation to the Margery I. Staudenmayer Trail Fund.

NEW & RENEWED FRIENDS MEMBERS

Thank you to these members who have joined or renewed their membership September 26, 2023 through December 11, 2023.

Brunner, Laurie
 Dahlke, Brian
 Gordon, Marcia
 Gruenke, Tamara
 Kirmse, Valene
 Klapperich, Shirley

Lobaugh, Mark and Debbie
 Martinek, Mollie
 Menard, Stephen and Judy
 Murry, Michael
 Thompson, Hunter
 Winkler, Wendy
 Zana, Betty



2023 DONORS

Sep. 26, 2023 - Dec. 11, 2023

General Support

Alliant Energy
 Anonymous
 Anonymous
 Barger, Benjamin and Catherine
 Benson, Jeanne
 Bostwick, Mr. and Mrs. Carl
 Bozarth, Daniel

Bushman, Sarah
 Campbell, Mary and Dave
 Cash donations at counter in Visitor Center
 Cash donations from Halloween Event
 Curro, Anthony and Joanne
 Esser, Jared
 Gableman, Kathryn
 Gerdman, Gilbert and Lynn
 Horrell, Grace
 Klapperich, Shirley
 Palese, Anthony
 Paquette, Peter and Carole
 Schultz, Mrs. Marcia
 Sowle, Colleen and Terry
 Thompson, Barbara
 Wells, Maryse
 Wilhelm, Joseph and Debra
 Wood, Tom and Cathy

Donate online at
friendsofdevillake.org/donate

Dedication Pavers

Brunner, Laurie
 Cutshall, Mary Ellen
 Gordon, Marcia
 Gruenke, Tamara
 Kieselhorst, Karl
 Kirmse, Valene
 Lobaugh, Mark and Debbie
 Strop, William
 Thompson, Hunter
 Winkler, Wendy

Educational Interpretive Center

Caterpillar Foundation
 Drummer, Dalibor and Jackie
 Hamner, Polly Benesch
 Hart, Matt & Joan
 Hickson, Megan
 Knoll, Danielle
 Leyland, Marilyn J.
 Race Day Events
 Russell, Faith
 Schultz, Richard
 White, Don

Several nice donations have come in over the past months for the Interpretive Center project. The project is once again the selected charity for donations during registration for the Devil's Challenge Triathlon in September 2024. Stay tuned for future project updates!

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Saturday, January 27th

5:00-7:30pm
 Torch-lit Hike (North Shore)

Saturday, March 9th

10:00am
 International Women's Day Hike

Saturday, April 20th

9:00am - 12:00pm
 Work Play Earth Day

Saturdays, Memorial Day thru Labor Day

9:00am
 Yoga in the Park

Tuesday, June 18th

6:00pm - 8:00pm
 2024 Summer Concert Series: Swing Crew

Tuesday, July 16th

6:00pm - 8:00pm
 2024 Summer Concert Series: Gin Mill Hollow



Friends of Devil's Lake State Park
P.O. Box 209
Baraboo, WI 53913

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Membership paid through year shown on label.



SPREAD THE WORD... *About the Friends!*

Our members are special advocates for our unique, beautiful wonder we call Devil's Lake State Park. Will you also be an advocate to help build our membership?

Tell a friend the value of a Friends' Membership:

1. Membership fees go directly toward supporting Devil's Lake State Park.
2. Members receive a quarterly newsletter, the "Advocate" by mail and/or email.

3. Members are updated first when we have news to share or for volunteer opportunities.
4. Know that members' fees also go toward funding Devil's Lake State Park community events such as the Halloween Hike and Candlelight Snowshoe.
5. Friends are invited to member-only events and meetings.
6. Receive 10% discount on food and merchandise at Devil's Lake State Park concessions (*some exclusions may apply*).



FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA!



@friendsofdevillake @devillakefriends @devillakewi

WANT TO JOIN US?

Visit our website at friendsofdevillake.org or scan the QR code below to become a member.

