

PICKET FENCES

FALL 2011

VOLUME EIGHT NO. TWO

“CELEBRATING
AMERICA’S
TREASURES”
NATIONAL TRUST FOR
HISTORIC PRESERVATION
2011 THEME

Original homeowners found not far from home

Portage Historic Cemeteries offer a connection to the people behind the properties

MANY ORIGINAL OWNERS OF HISTORIC DISTRICT PROPERTIES FOUND WITHIN DISTRICT CEMETERIES

MATTESON FAMILY

Among the Portage residents buried at Portage South Cemetery are Julius and Eleanor Matteson. Their Italianate home is located on South Westnedge. They have a family monument at the cemetery and other family members there.

9426 South Westnedge

BROOKS FAMILY

Isaac Brooks is assumed to be buried at Dry Prairie Cemetery, marked with a very tall gravestone labeled I.A. Brooks. Isaac was granted a large parcel of land in the Northwest corner of the then-township from the US government in 1838. He later deeded the Southwest 80 acres to his son Henry and Henry’s wife Harriet (Howard) in 1864. He built the farmhouse located at the corner of West Milham and Angling for his family in the 1850’s.

3221 West Milham



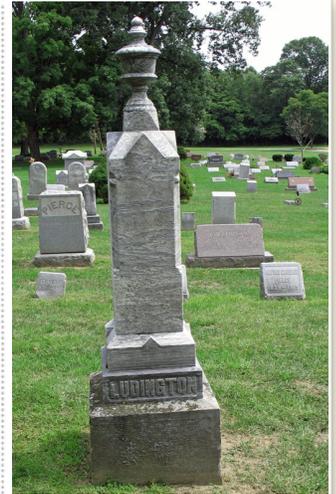
The Matteson’s Italianate home is located at 9426 South Westnedge.



The Matteson’s headstones at the Portage South Cemetery.

Celebrate the Fall season by exploring our historic city cemeteries.





The Ludington Family Farm House today and the family monument at the Portage South Cemetery.

LUDINGTON FAMILY

The Ludington family monument is one of the many located in the Portage South Cemetery. The Ludington's homestead on Bacon was part of their original family sheep farm. The earliest house on the property is believed to date to the 1850's, although the current house was built around 1870. Their family has several members in the Portage South Cemetery, including original home owner Archibald's sister Maribah, who was the first person buried there in 1858.

704 Bacon

MILHAM FAMILY

Both William and Cora Milham are buried at Indian Fields Cemetery, along with several members of their family, accompanied by a large family monument. Cora passed away in 1939, followed by William in 1951, at 94 years old. Their family graves include Libby, born 1876, and Frank, born 1874, which appear to be children of William and Cora, although their parents would be quite young at Frank's birth, at 15 and 17 years old! William and Cora's home on East Milham is one of the few Queen Anne style buildings in the district.

4415 East Milham

HOWARD FAMILY

Stephen and Catherine Howard and much of their family found their final resting places in the Dry Prairie Cemetery. They purchased the property where they built their Greek Revival home when they moved to Portage from New York State in 1836. Their house was the first brick home built in the city. Catherine passed away on Christmas in 1890, followed by Stephen in 1893.

3821 West Milham

CUTLER FAMILY

The Cutler family came from New York State in 1839 and built their Greek Revival home in the early 1850's. Their family monument and graves are located within the Dry Prairie Cemetery. Charles and Nancy share a stately and detailed headstone, along with their son Charles, who passed away at age 16 in 1862.

5134 Oakland Drive

Please call the Portage City Hall at (269) 329-4400 to apply for a Certificate of Appropriateness before starting any projects to your historic home.



The Cutler's Greek Revival home is located at 5134 Oakland Drive. They built the house in 1852 and 1853.



The Cutler family monument and graves of Charles and Nancy are located at the Dry Prairie cemetery on Milham.

DISCOVERING YOUR HOME'S PAST

Historic homeowners often speculate to the past life of their homestead. Thoughts of the families that lived there and how the buildings were used are common ideas for historic homeowners. There are many resources now available to assist in finding information about the history of old buildings. The stories and facts found can enhance the experience and connection for current homeowners.

Through searches of historic homes and yards often allow homeowners to uncover facts otherwise unavailable. Attics, outbuildings, and other rarely touched areas of homes are likely areas to discover new information.

The Portage District Library's Heritage Room features historical materials about the city's history including maps and information about residents. Additional materials and the expertise of a local

historian are available with an appointment. Please contact the Library at 329-4542.

Where the Trails Crossed, the official photographic tour book of the Portage Historic District contains information about each property included in the district. Information such as builders and owners of the home, details about the style, and previous uses are included. Copies are available at the Treasury office at City Hall for \$7 and a copy for reference is located in the Heritage Room at the Library.

Searching deeds, title abstracts, and other property information will provide names and dates for previous owners. The Kalamazoo County Registrar of Deeds is a good place to start.

The internet has allowed homeowners to find a wealth of information without ever leaving the house. Online searches for census information and city directories is a fantastic place to start. Family history websites like ancestry.com are a great resource.

Do you have a story about discovering more about your home's history? Please share it with us!

eklove@portagemi.gov

If you have ideas for Picket Fences or feedback for the commission, please contact Mark Reile, Chairperson, at (269) 327-5699.

Winter Season Weatherization Checklist

- Check your windows for air leaks and gaps. Original windows are an important component of a historic home, and their energy efficiency can be enhanced by sealing air leaks and utilizing storm windows.
- Upgrading insulation can considerably lower your utility costs. Many older structures were designed without insulation and were built to maximize beneficial air flow, so finding the right fit for your home is key.
- Check your roof to make sure it is weather tight. Water leaks are a major cause of damage to historic properties, and 30% of a home's heat loss is through the roof and walls.

For more information, visit the National Trust for Historic Preservation at preservationnation.org which includes the National Park Service's "Preservation Briefs" for correct "how-to" information.

Please apply for a Certificate of Appropriateness before starting any projects on your historic home.

If you are interested in obtaining a Portage Historic District plaque customized for your historic home, please contact Mark Reile at (269) 327-5699 for more information. It is our goal to display a plaque on every historic home in the district.

Mark your calendars! We are planning our annual gathering for May 2012.

PICKET FENCES

FROM:

PORTAGE HISTORIC DISTRICT
COMMISSION
Portage City Hall
7900 South Westnedge Avenue
Portage, MI 49002
(269) 329-4400

Fall 2011

Building History

Find out more about the Portage Historic District Commission by visiting portagemi.gov, and selecting the Boards and Commissions tab.

HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

MAIL TO:

Mark Reile	Chairperson
Katie vanLonkhuyzen	Commissioner
Michelle Carter	Commissioner
Dorie Erhig	Commissioner
Philip Ellison	Commissioner
Rose Mary Higginbottom	Commissioner
Tiffany Raynes	Commissioner
Christine Broberg	Commissioner
Erica Eklov	City Liaison