

# Discovering Wisconsin's Delights

"There is so much to discover in Wisconsin that we divided the state into nine areas, each with its own distinct flavor. You can plan an infinite variety of tours and vacations, depending on where you live and how much time you have. Wisconsin can be discovered and re-discovered over and over again and, like a beautiful woman, never lose its magical power to enchant."

—Polly Brody

This is not a book that belongs on everybody's bookshelf. This is a book that belongs in everybody's glove compartment.

It is a guide book, a catalog of some of the interesting nooks and crannies in our state and it's probably the most practical thing published in Madison since the Soglin bumper stickers.

Some of the material you've seen in other places, other publications, i.e., the county-by-county listing of Public Hunting, Fishing, Campsites, Snowmobile and Ski Facilities; terse bare-bones stuff about as vibrant as a phone directory ("... on Big Bearskin Lake, phone 715-362-5392. Has 18 sites, for tent and trailer, drinking water, swimming, firewood, picnic table . . .") But as a friend of mine puts it, "Who the hell needs poetry when you're parking your car or looking to find the bathroom?"

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To the author's credit, she has pulled a massive amount of factual material together and made it all eminently readable by lacing in a nice anecdotal style.

In the section on Rock County, she tells us that Henry Janes, a veteran of the Blackhawk War, reached the Rock River in 1836, started a ferry service and built a tavern which became a famous stopover place. The tavern posted such regulations as:

**"Four pence a night for a bed,  
No more than five to sleep in one bed,  
Organ grinders to sleep in Wash House,  
No beer allowed in the Kitchen."**

When the post office was built, Janes became the first postmaster and the town was named after him.

As stated in its preface, the book divides the state into nine sections: Southern Gateway, Eastern Shorelands, Bay Country, Winnebago Land, Yellow Thunder Country, Coulee Country, Hartland, Indianhead Country and Northwoods. (The names cover geographical groupings of counties and in this age of boosterism are modest indeed.) The format is easy to follow. For example, the South Gateway section includes eight counties in the following groupings: Kenosha and Racine; Walworth, Waukesha and Jefferson; Rock, Green and Dane.

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A sample entry for Kenosha:

"In 1935 'Caddie Woodlawn' received the coveted Newberry Award Medal as 'The most distinguished children's book of the year.' It has since become a classic, read by thousands of children throughout the nation, and translated into more than ten foreign languages.

"Somewhere within the present park area, Mary, one of the



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By GEORGE VUKELICH

## Discovering Wisconsin by Polly Brody

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eight children of the John V. Woodhouse family, is buried in an unmarked grave.

"Nearby stands the Woodhouse home which was moved in 1970 from the original site about 300 yards to the east.

"In January, 1940, 'Caddie' died in Idaho at the age of 86."

This book could start a whole new thing in tourism. There are a lot of us who wouldn't cross the street for Wisconsin Dells. But we'd cross the whole blamed country for Caddie Woodlawn.

Just leafing through the book leaves you with the feeling that Wisconsin is a lot bigger place than you'd thought. And a lot better, too.

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Polly Brody Temkin grew up in Milwaukee and has lived in Madison since 1942. A UW graduate, she is the mother of Joan, Francie and Ruth. Her articles have appeared in publications as diverse as 'The Progressive' and 'Woman's Day.' Her only previous book is "Theatre in America," a collaboration with Robert Gard and Marston Balch.

"Harmony Hall, 6315 Third Avenue, is open Mon. through Fri. from 8 to 5 and there is no admission charge. This is the international headquarters for the SPEBSQSA (Society for the Preservation and Encouragement of Barbershop Quartet Singing in America). Harmony Hall is an imposing English Manor house of Tudor design which was originally constructed as a private home by the late Walter H. Alford, an executive of Nash and General Motors . . . It was completed in 1933 at a reputed cost of half a million dollars. SPEBSQSA was able to buy the property in 1957 for \$75,000."

Now, granted, not everybody is into barbershopping or their

leaded-glassed home base, but eventually in some paragraph or some page you'll find your thing.

You'll also find things that seem pretty unbelievable at first blush.

For instance: "Waukesha, grown to a prosperous, industrial city from a tiny sawmill village called Prairieville in 1834, first gained fame in 1842 as 'that abolition hole' when Waukesha farmers and tradesmen hid runaway slaves in their homes and then drove long days and nights with their human cargo hidden under wagon loads of wheat until they reached the Canadian border." Waukesha! In 1834! Can you dig it? I don't know if it boggles the mind or just plain blows it.

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The book bulges with the big name attractions:

- Baraboo's Circus World Museum;
- Racine's Johnson Wax Building and Wingspread designed by Frank Lloyd Wright;
- Milwaukee County's world famous Zoological Park;
- Elkhart Lake's Road America;
- Prairie du Chien's Villa Louis;
- Iowa County's Shake Rag Street;
- The Apostle Islands;
- Door County.

But tucked-in with the biggies like treats in the toe of your Christmas stocking are pure delights that passeth all understanding.

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Exhibit A: In the section on Eau Claire, Chippewa and Dunn Counties, on page 244, there is a gem of singular beauty:

"South of Menomonie, see Caddie Woodlawn Historical Park on Highway 25, four miles south of Downsview, six miles north of Durand;

"On this site during the Civil War Caroline Augusta Woodhouse, known throughout the world as 'Caddie Woodlawn,' experienced the excitement of growing up in pioneer Wisconsin. Her tomboy adventures with her two red-headed brothers, and her fearless trust in the Indians who lived nearby, were faithfully recorded by her granddaughter, Carol Ryrice Brink, in her book, 'Caddie Woodlawn,' and in its sequel, 'Magical Melons.'"