FOLKLORE OF THE NORTH

Blue Men and River Monsters
Folklore of the North
Edited by John Zimm
Foreword by Michael Edmonds

Blue Men and River Monsters features a fascinating collection of Upper Midwest folklore. Gathered in the 1930s as part of the Federal Writers’ Project and the Federal Art Project, these are stories told by Norwegian and Swiss immigrants, Native American medicine men and storytellers, and pioneers with memories of the earliest days of settlement.

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Michael Edmonds

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The Man Who Painted the Universe
The Story of a Planetarium in the Heart of the North Woods
Ron Legro and Avi Lank

As a young boy Frank Kovac Jr. fell deeply in love with stargazing, painting glow-in-the-dark constellations on his bedroom wall and inviting friends to an observatory he built in his Chicago backyard. As he reached adulthood, Kovac did not let go of his childhood dreams of reaching the stars. He began scheming to bring the universe home. While working at a paper mill as a young man, Kovac tirelessly built a 22-foot rotating globe planetarium in the woods. Despite failures and collapses, the amateur astronomer single-handedly built a North Woods treasure, painting more than 5,000 glowing stars—dot by dot in glowing paints. Today, Kovac and his unique planetarium take visitors to the stars every day.

The Man Who Painted the Universe: The Story of a Planetarium in the Heart of the North Woods introduces readers to the mild-mannered astronomy enthusiast whose creativity, ingenuity, fervor, and endurance realized a dream of galactic proportions. The story of this stargazer from Wisconsin’s North Woods so inspired two newspapermen, authors Ron Legro and Avi Lank, that they sought to document the story of the Kovac Planetarium for a new generation of stargazers and dreamers.

Ron Legro is a freelance writer and former reporter, columnist, and editor for the Milwaukee Sentinel daily newspaper. He was editor in chief of Wisconsin Reports, a weekly public affairs journal covering the state legislature. His freelance articles have appeared in the Milwaukee Journal Sunday magazine, Milwaukee magazine, Corporate Report Wisconsin, and other publications. He was a speechwriter for numerous lawmakers and public officials and served as the City of Milwaukee’s director of telecommunications. A native of Antigo, Wisconsin, he is a graduate of the University of Wisconsin–Madison. He lives in Whitefish Bay, Wisconsin, with his wife, Michele Derus.

Avi Lank is an essayist for Milwaukee Public Radio and panelist on the Interchange public-affairs program on Milwaukee Public Television. For almost 40 years he was an award-winning reporter, columnist, and editor at the Milwaukee Sentinel and later the Journal Sentinel. Born in Penn Yan in the Finger Lakes region of western New York State, he grew up in Rochester, New York, and holds degrees from Antioch College and the Medill School of Journalism of Northwestern University. He lives in Whitefish Bay, Wisconsin, with his wife, Dannette Lank.

June 2015
Hardcover: $22.95
160 pages, 28 b&w photos, 1 b&w map, 3 sketches, 5⅝ x 8½

E-Book Edition Available

800-621-2736 wisconsinhistory.org/whspress
Whispers and Shadows
A Naturalist’s Memoir
Jerry Apps

In these times of technological innovation and fast-paced electronic communication, we often take nature for granted—or even consider it a hindrance to our human endeavors. In *Whispers and Shadows: A Naturalist’s Memoir*, Jerry Apps explores such topics as the human need for wilderness, rediscovering a sense of wonder, and his father’s advice to “listen for the whispers” and “look in the shadows” to learn nature’s deepest lessons.

Combining his signature lively storytelling and careful observations of nature, Apps draws on a lifetime of experiences, from his earliest years growing up on a central Wisconsin farm to his current ventures as gardener, tree farmer, and steward of wetlands, prairies, and endangered Karner blue butterflies. He also takes inspiration from the writings of Aldo Leopold, Annie Dillard, Henry David Thoreau, Sigurd Olson, Ralph Waldo Emerson, John Muir, Barbara Kingsolver, Wendell Berry, Richard Louv, and Rachel Carson. With these eloquent essays, Jerry Apps reminds us to slow down, turn off technology, and allow our senses to reconnect us to the natural world. For it is there, he writes, that “I am able to return to a feeling I had when I was a child, a feeling of having room to stretch my arms without interfering with another person, a feeling of being a small part of something much larger than I was, and I marvel at the idea.”

Jerry Apps has worked as a rural historian and environmental writer for forty-eight years. For ten years he wrote a weekly column on nature appreciation for several central Wisconsin newspapers. He has written many books on nature and environmental topics, including *Old Farm: A History*, *The Quiet Season: Remembering Country Winters*, and *Garden Wisdom: Lessons Learned from 60 Years of Gardening*. In 2012, Wisconsin Public Television produced the hour-long documentary *A Farm Story with Jerry Apps*. He and his wife, Ruth, divide their time between their home in Madison and their farm, Roshara, near Wild Rose.

May 2015
Hardcover: $22.95
128 pages, 5½ x 8

E-Book Edition Available
“By the time I began first grade, I had a solid foundation in many facets of nature. I knew the difference between a white oak and a black oak. I knew the characteristics of white pine and aspen trees and how they grow. I could identify a black bass, a northern pike, a bluegill, and a yellow perch. I recognized the call of a crow, the raucous jeer of a blue jay, and the lonesome, often eerie cry of an owl.

“All these things I learned without realizing I was learning them. When I tagged along with my pa on his long Sunday walks or went fishing with him or simply stood next to him on the hill behind the barn at sunset, he pointed them out to me again and again. Pa had a vast understanding of nature’s creatures and nature’s ways, and he wanted me to learn them as well. But there was more to what he was doing than teaching me how to differentiate one creature from another, one track from another, one creature’s call from another. He wanted me to learn the details of nature, but he also wanted me to know nature. Knowing is deeper. It takes a person to the place where beliefs and values reside. Knowing leads us to action, to caring for those things we know deeply and working to preserve them for future generations.”
The Romance of Wisconsin Place Names
Robert E. Gard
Foreword by Jerry Apps

“"The names of places lie upon the land and tell us where we are or where we have been or where we want to go. And so much more."—From the introduction

Fifty years ago, educator and writer Robert E. Gard traveled across Wisconsin, learning the trivial, controversial, and landmark stories behind how cities, counties, and local places got their names. This volume records the fruits of Gard’s labors in an alphabetical listing of places from every corner of Wisconsin, and the stories behind their often-unusual names. Gard’s work provides an important snapshot of how Wisconsin residents of a bygone era came to understand the names of their towns and home places, many of which can no longer be found on any map.

Celebrated rural historian Jerry Apps introduces this reprint of Gard’s work, saying that in "some ways The Romance of Wisconsin Place Names is a reference book, a place where you can go to learn a little more about your home town. But in many ways it is much more than that, for it includes the stories of places throughout the state, submitted by the people who knew them. It is a book where story, people, and place all come together."

Robert E. Gard was a lifelong educator, writer, and folklorist who came to Wisconsin in 1945 to join the faculty at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. Gard founded the Wisconsin Idea Theatre, the Wisconsin Regional Writers Association, and the Arts Development Program for the University Extension, promoting the arts and culture of Wisconsin’s rural communities. Gard also co-founded the Wisconsin Arts Foundation and Council, considered the first official state arts council in the country. In addition, Gard was a Fulbright Research Scholar in Finland in the late 1950s, received the first-ever large-scale grant from the National Endowment for the Arts for work in small communities in 1967, and lectured all over the nation and world. Gard, who passed away in 1992, was a lifelong proponent of recording and learning from the lives and stories of real people from communities large and small.

September 2015
Paperback: $18.95
320 pages, 10 b&w images, 6 x 9

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Powers Bluff is a large outcrop of quartzite rock that resisted the glaciers that flattened the surrounding countryside. It is an appropriate symbol for the Native people who once lived on its slopes, quietly resisting social forces that would have crushed and eroded their culture. A large band of Potawatomi, many returnees from the Kansas Prairie Band Potawatomi reservation, established the village of Tah-qua-kik or Skunk Hill in 1905 on the 300-foot-high bluff, up against the oddly shaped rocks that topped the hill and protected the community from the cold winter winds.

In Skunk Hill, archeologist Robert A. Birmingham traces the largely unknown story of this community, detailing the role it played in preserving Native culture through a harsh period of US Indian policy from the 1880s to 1930s. The story’s central focus is the Drum Dance, also known as the Dream Dance or Big Drum, a pan-tribal cultural revitalization movement that swept the Upper Midwest during the Great Suppression, emphasizing Native values and rejecting the vices of the white world. Though the community disbanded by the 1930s, the site, now on the National Register of Historic Places with two dance circles still visible on the grounds, stands as testimony to the efforts of its members to resist cultural assimilation.

Robert A. Birmingham served as Wisconsin State Archaeologist at the Wisconsin Historical Society and teaches at the University of Wisconsin–Waukesha. He is the author of Life, Death, and Archaeology at Fort Blue Mounds and coauthor of Indian Mounds of Wisconsin and Aztalan: Mysteries of an Ancient Indian Town, which received a merit award for history from the Midwest Independent Publishers Association. He has been researching Drum Dance communities for over 30 years and has worked with descendants of Skunk Hill, the Kansas Potawatomi, and many others to document its history.
Experience the adventures and tough life of a lumberjack in this newest addition to the Badger Biographies Series. Author John Zimm leads young readers on a journey through the lumbering heyday of Wisconsin’s North Woods as witnessed by lumberman John Nelligan, whose writings were the basis for *John Nelligan: Wisconsin Lumberjack*.

Born in 1852, Nelligan rose through the lumberjack ranks, starting out as a humble laborer and working his way up to foreman. He worked and lived in Maine, Pennsylvania, and even Canada before coming to Wisconsin in 1871. Learn what surviving and sawing wood for a living was like many years ago—from the story of one Wisconsin man who lived it!

John Zimm is a historian and author based in southern Wisconsin. Zimm is the editor of *Blue Men and River Monsters: Folklore of the North* and of *This Wicked Rebellion: Wisconsin Civil War Soldiers Write Home*. He has written many articles for the *Wisconsin Magazine of History*. He works as an editor at the Wisconsin Historical Society Press and lives in Waunakee, Wisconsin.

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August 2015
Paperback: $12.95
80 pages, 50 b&w images, 1 map, 7 x 9
ISBN: 978-0-87020-698-6

E-Book Edition Available
In 1830, a young woman named Juliette Magill Kinzie moved from her fancy home in Connecticut to a rustic log cabin in what would later be called Wisconsin. Juliette lived there with her husband, John, who worked as an Indian agent at Fort Winnebago, one of Wisconsin’s earliest settlements. While living at the fort, Juliette came to know the Indian communities that called the land home, as well as the non-Indian settlers who were moving in. She later wrote a best-selling book about her experiences, *Wau-Bun: The ‘Early Day’ in the Northwest*, an important first-person account of life on the frontier.

This new biography in the Badger Biographies Series turns the lens on the writer herself, detailing her life as she detailed the lives of those she encountered in the 1830s and 1840s. *Juliette Kinzie: Frontier Storyteller* details war, hunger, and the rapidly changing times Juliette witnessed on the Midwestern frontier, following the pioneering woman through her own changes from socialite to pioneer to famous writer and even to the work of her granddaughter, Juliette Gordon Low, who founded the Girl Scouts of America in 1912.

*Kathe Crowley Conn* has worked in education, public programming, institutional management, and philanthropy for thirty years. Her interest in the history and ecology of the Midwest began during a childhood spent roaming the lakeshore and open fields near Chicago and became a hallmark of her term as president and executive director of the Aldo Leopold Nature Center in Madison. She founded Nature Net: the environmental learning network to foster a love of the land and the thrill of discovery in children throughout the state. She resides in rural Rock County with her family.

February 2015
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**Flavor of Wisconsin for Kids**, p. 18  
**Jerry Apps’ newest Whispers and Shadows**, p. 4
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Foreword by Winona LaDuke

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Also see *Skunk Hill*, p. 7
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Mike Hoeft

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The Bingo Queens of Oneida: How Two Moms Started Tribal Gaming in Wisconsin tells the story through the eyes of Sandra Ninham and Alma Webster, the Oneida women who had the idea for a bingo operation run by the tribe. Bingo became the tribe’s first moneymaker on a reservation where about half the population was living in poverty.

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Also see
Seventh Generation Earth Ethics, p. 14

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