



Old Town Hall Museum

Price County Historical Society Newsletter



Greenfield School

Volume 41 No. 1 Spring 2023
www.pricecountyhistoricalsociety.org

President: Etola Foytek, Phillips
Vice-President: Peter Dahlie, Phillips
Secretary/Treasurer: Lorraine Pilch, Phillips
Director: John Berg, Wisconsin Rapids

Director: Eric Tollefson, Phillips
Director: Tom Kaiser, Park Falls
Director: Bonnie Salm, Fifield
Director: Sally McFadyen, Phillips

Director: Steven Eitrem, Fifield
Director: Traci Dunbar, Phillips
Director: Len Schmidt, Park Falls
Newsletter Editor: John Berg

Catching up With Life at PCHS

By: John L. Berg

What has been happening since your last issue of the Newsletter was published? We have come through a long winter, digging out of multiple late spring snowstorms followed by rising waters in the wetlands, streams, rivers and lakes contributing to flooding and massive mosquito infestations. But this is part of the mystique and lore of the North—as we read through past newspapers these weather conditions occurred with some frequency through the past 144 years of the place identified as Price County. The BIG news this year is the construction and opening of the Louis A. Koenig Research Center on the Fifield campus of the Price County Historical Society. This project is the culmination of a long-standing dream of the Board to have a single, secure structure in which to archive and work with the photograph and paper ephemera artifacts in the Society’s possession. Now with the extremely generous financial donations from



Ground Breaking October 31, 2022.

Carol Koenig, our membership and interested individuals and groups, we have the project paid for and under construction. Dennis Huotari of Medford is the contractor who works closely with PCHS Project manager Tom Kaiser. So, with a blessing of good weather and expertise of Dennis and his crews we are planning a grand opening on September 16, 2023! Announcements will follow and an event agenda published. Save the Date!!!



Louis A. Koenig Research Center in progress.



Teresa Mockler French on right, presents a \$1,375 check to Etola Foytek for the Louis A. Koenig Research Center, in memory of her brother Don Mockler, who was a long time life member of the Price County Historical Society.

Our last in-person annual meeting was at the Fred Smith Studio at the Wisconsin Concrete Park south of Phillips. At that time, PCHS member Dale Heikkinen and I teamed up to present a slide show entitled: “North Woods Ingenuity and the Advent of Modern Logging: Inventors and Innovators Heikkinen, Drott and the Transformation of Logging and Earth Moving Methods and Equipment.” [See PCHS Newsletter Volume 37, No. 2, Fall, 2019 for the account of our presentation] Dale has the fascinating Heikkinen story extremely well documented and illustrated. I, meanwhile, just scratched the surface of the Edward A. Drott story for our presentation. Since then I have been researching his story, primarily his early start with the Holt Caterpillar Tractor Company. Research is a great pursuit because once people understand that you are a legitimate student of the topic you are pursuing, then you usually get admitted to all these cool archives, attics, sheds, nooks and crannies that are otherwise off limits. My research back in 2019 started at the Butternut Historical Society and their gracious staff allowed me access to their photograph and document archive. Butternut was where Drott’s family settled around the turn of the last century. During the past year I have been allowed access to the Caterpillar Archives at the Caterpillar campus in Peoria, Illinois, and the collections housing Caterpillar photographs at the University of California—Davis as well. Cat Archives at Peoria have several testimonials from Holt Caterpillar owners regarding the Cat they purchased through Ed Drott’s Dealership in Butternut. The UC Davis Collections house several photographs from northern Wisconsin, including one from Park Falls illustrating the Holt Caterpillar in action. Then the Chippewa Valley Museum in Eau Claire has a set of four original photographs of Ed Benz operating his Holt Caterpillar tractor for the New Dells Lumber Company at Kennedy, Wisconsin which was being filmed by a movie crew!! This research is entitled: “Holt Caterpillar Tractors

and Edward A. Drott, Butternut, Ashland County, Wisconsin 1915-1925.” When I have exhausted all my sources, I will write it into an illustrated monograph. Fun stuff this research!! Hopefully you can see why it is so important for people to consider the fate of their collections of photographs, documents, diaries, recollections, plat books, ledgers, letters and historical paper items. The Louis A. Koenig Research Center is being built as we speak for the secure housing and accessioning of these items for use by historians, genealogists, scholars and students of history and interested individuals. History is FUN!!!



The writing on the back of this photograph reads: “*The Holt tractor hauling 50,000 feet of pine and hardwood on ten sets of sleighs, New Dells Lumber Co. operations.*” Taken near Kennedy in western Price County, Fred Bentz of Butternut Wisconsin operates the Holt Ten-Ton Caterpillar tractor while the operation is filmed by a movie crew sometime between 1923 – 1925. E.A. Drott is shown in another photograph, a set of six including this one all of which were taken on the same day. Since Drott owned the Holt dealership serving most of northern Wisconsin, it is likely that he sold this machine to the New Dells Lumber Company. An exact duplicate of this photograph is also found in the Butternut Historical Society Archives. Photograph Object ID 553310-0003-001 courtesy of the Chippewa Valley Museum Archives, Eau Claire, Wisconsin.

AT THE LOUIS A. KOENIG RESEARCH CENTER

After hibernating for a couple months after the Annual Meeting in October, the PCHS Board arises from its slumber to once again prepare for the upcoming summer season. Actually that's not all true – the past year has been a shared focus of the museum operations AND the work of fundraising and planning for the construction of the Louis A. Koenig Research Center – and as a result the Board maintains communications as needs arise regarding the Koenig Center. Two guys who have been working closely together has been Tom Kaiser and Dennis Huotari. Tom is a PCHS Board member who is our Project Manager for the Koenig building. During the “offseason” Tom maintains a weekly communication with the contractor building the Koenig Center – Dennis Huotari of Medford, Wisconsin. PCHS is extremely fortunate to have employed Dennis for this project – his expert professionalism and commitment to his work guarantees that the Louis A. Koenig Research Center will be a well constructed and handsome structure that will enhance the museum campus at Fifield. In January the Board resumed its monthly meeting, discussing appearance of the interior of the building as well as such things as flooring, trim, paint colors, and furnishings, the details that will add the finishing touches to the structure.

Photos taken by board member and PCHS's Project Manager Tom Kaiser October 31, 2022 to present.



AT THE OLD TOWN HALL AND GREENFIELD SCHOOL MUSEUMS

The winter hibernation of these two flagship structures has ended as our board begins the important work of putting the displays in order and conduct a thorough house cleaning. For buildings that are 129 and 117 years-old that is a big job but when we have many hands working with a common goal – to get these beautiful old structures ready for the public – the work takes on new meaning and gets done right. The cleaning crew of Etola Foytek, Peter Dahlie, Traci Dunbar and Sally McFadyen met on May 15 and 16 to thoroughly clean the building and set-up several new displays. Carol Forward has been busy getting the Greenfield School in order and arranging for hosts for the summer.

Our opening is the first Saturday in June, and we will open on Saturdays and Sundays from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. through Labor Day. Come and see all of the displays and enjoy the fun!



On April 13, 2023, John L. Berg stopped in on the way to his cabin at Round Lake. John was able to capture the serene quiet of the PCHS Campus on that date. The year 2023 will bring many changes to the site, which is now becoming a beehive of activity with the construction of the research center and the start of the summer season for the museums.

This recent photograph of the Greenfield School also showcases the wonderful job Tammy Lanham is doing on the flowerbeds. Thank you Tammy!



FROM THE ARCHIVES: MOMENTS IN PRICE COUNTY HISTORY

By: John L. Berg

A picture is worth a thousand words...but this essay is only going to run 528....

The once ubiquitous movie theater has seen its share of ups and downs during the past half-century especially with the rise of personal media and computers as well as conglomerations such as Netflix. Once upon a time though, having a movie theater in your small town WAS a BIG deal! Such was the case in Phillips in the summer of 1937. The motion pictures "100 Men and a Girl" [released September 5, 1937] is an American musical comedy and "Swing High Swing Low"[released March 12, 1937] is an American romantic comedy, both of which were featured at the newly opened Norwood Theater in Phillips, Price County, Wisconsin. These movies were advertised in the Phillips BEE in the October 30, 1937 issue [Swing High Swing Low] and October 7, 1937 issue [100 Men and a Girl]. The photographer stood near the Price County Courthouse entrance looking at Lake Avenue and Cherry

Street in downtown Phillips in Price County, Wisconsin and gave us this view looking southeast. The Norwood was purchased by A.N. Donnellan in early 1937; the building was originally constructed as an automobile repair shop. Extensive remodeling repurposed it into a modern theater with the latest amenities. Opening for the first time on Tuesday evening August 17, 1937 for a showing of the Singing Marine with Dick Powell, the Phillips BEE reported two days later the "Opening of Norwood Draws a Fine Crowd." A week later in the August 26, 1937 issue THE BEE ran a full page featuring the well-wishing of the business community of Phillips. Just to the south of the Norwood is A.O. Johnson's Plumbing Shop. This structure was built for Jacob Rasmussen by F.C. and G. A. Stanly of Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin, starting in October, 1894 and finished in January 1895. It replaced the building he lost in the July 27, 1894 fire that destroyed Phillips. The building is 75 feet by 26 feet constructed out of Menomonie brick and trimmed with light granite, Rasmussen used the basement for a warehouse; the first floor was his general merchandise store, and the upper floor was set up for sleeping rooms. (See next page)



1930 photograph of the Norwood Theater and Brady Johnson's store, PCHS Collection.

In 1909 the John R. Davis Lumber Company purchased the building and converted it into their corporate offices and headquarters. When they sold the company to the Kneeland-McLurg Lumber Company in August, 1912 it continued as corporate headquarters. Kneeland-McLurg ended sawing operations in March, 1932 and liquidated assets in 1934; in that year Art O. Johnson purchased the building and moved his plumbing business into it, eventually expanding his business to include a full hardware store. Since that time the building continues in the twenty-first century to serve as both a plumbing and hardware store, known today as Johnson's Hardware Store now owned and operated by Johnson's great grandson Brady Johnson. As we look further to the right [south] of Johnson's plumbing shop, there are several smaller business structures and a restaurant. At the extreme right of this photograph are the Masonic Lodge and the large, white Opera House. From an undated postcard photograph in the collection of the Price County Historical Society, Inc. Archives. Caption researched and written by John L. Berg.



Ever wonder what used to be in a certain place? Well here's what used to stand on the site of the under-construction Louis A. Koenig Research Center! In her book *Fifield, 1876-1976*, Elva Lessard wrote [page 35] about the site where the Koenig Research Center is being built: *"The old Ernest Liebelt, Sr. store and Boarding House two doors east of the present old Town Hall [PCHS Museum] was built by W.W. Hatley brother-in-law of Helen Thompson, one-time assemblywoman from this district. After Ernest's death in 1917 the store was operated by his wife Clara and children until 1925 when the grocery stock was sold to Lud Miller. The Fred Liebelts were the parents of present Fifield residents, Clara Ehmke and Carl Liebelt."* This photo, printed on page 41 along with an interior shot, was dated between 1913-1915; others of the Liebelt store appear on pages 40, 43 and 83.

PRESIDENT'S PERSPECTIVE [or, when she speaks we listen] a Word from Price County Historical Society President Etola Foytek

On Monday, May 15 members of the PCHS Board gathered at the Old Town Hall to do the annual deep cleaning. Vacuum cleaners, brooms and dustpans were kept busy until it was time to take a break and enjoy lunch at the Kountry Kafe. After lunch we finished cleaning at the Old Town Hall and moved on to cleaning the Greenfield School.

Tuesday our time was spent setting up new displays. We started by taking down the military exhibit from the stage of the Old Town Hall and replacing it with a ballroom theme. Incorporating items from Rays Orchestra, clothing from our collection, including an attractive sparkly dress that belonged to Bette Black, which made the display complete. A Dance Bill of the Six Fat Dutchman and an article about Frankie Yankovic, was added and should be of interest to the polka crowd. Other new exhibits include a canning display using some of the old blue canning jars donated by Carol Koenig, scales received from Roger Stremer (Etola's brother-in-law) were added to the General Store (take particular note of how Peter Dahlie crafted a very unique way to attach the hanging scale to the counter), a beautiful train set compliments of Dr. Steve Janak was set up for train enthusiasts to enjoy and lastly a Stenograph machine donated by Jeanne Larson was added to our Price County Courthouse display.

As you can see, our small group accomplished much, but does need some help in many various ways to keep the Society functioning and the museums open. Besides volunteers that help with hosting and doing our flowerbeds, we could use help at our special events, someone with spreadsheet skills and later this summer moving into the Louis A. Koenig Research Center. If you would like to volunteer for any of these activities, please call me at 715-339-2415.

I hope you will be able to visit our museums sometime this summer and hopefully you can come and enjoy some of our special events!

THE BUSINESS OF RUNNING THE SOCIETY Laurie Pilch, PCHS Secretary/Treasurer brings us up to speed on the Society's Business

This past year through the efforts of many and in collaboration with Dale Houdek, Chairman of the Town of Emery, past members of the Emery Centennial Committee, Jeanne Kirchmeyer and Violet Dunbar, along with the entire Town Board of Emery the logistics to transfer the copyright of the book *Town of Emery Centennial 1889-1989* to the Society was accomplished. This was a very critical step that then allowed the Society to bring this valuable historical book back into publication. I am pleased to report that the book has now been republished and is available at our gift shop at the Old Town Hall Museum, Johnson's Hardware in Phillips and through our website by accessing our online gift shop. A similar effort was recently completed with the City of Phillips, and the Society now has the paperwork in place to begin the work it takes to republish the Phillips Centennial Book. These types of historical accounts of Price County are a legacy for us and future generations. The Society is diligently working to ensure their continuation. Check out our book list on the next page!

Price County Historical Society Book and Price List

100 Years on the Flambeau	\$35.00
A Pictorial History of Park Falls, Fifield and Butternut	\$15.00
A Special View (The story of Maybelle Hardy 1911-2003)	\$3.00
Caring for the Land atop a Fire Tower	\$0.50
Country School Recollections Volume I (\$10 each or both for \$15)	\$10.00
County School Recollections Volume II (\$10 each or both for \$15)	\$10.00
Echoes from the Woodland (Joint School Dist. No. 6 Town of Ogema/Catawba)	\$0.50
Fifield 1876-1976	\$10.00
Fifield Post Office 125 Years of Dedicated Service 1877-2002	\$6.00
Fifield Wisconsin 125 Years 1876-2001	\$10.00
Finding Dairyland	\$21.99
From Babi's Kitchen (Cookbook)	\$20.00
Hicks' Landing Cookbook	\$30.00
Lines From Upstream Vol I	\$20.00
Lines From Upstream Vol II	\$20.00
Lugerville Town of Flambeau 1904-1954	\$6.00
Metropolis of the North (Fifield-Her People and Their History)	\$1.00
More Price County Stories	\$10.00
Phillips Czechoslovakian Community Volume I	\$8.00
Phillips Czechoslovakian Community Volume II	\$8.00
Phillips Czechoslovakian Festival 25 Years of Ethnic Pride 1984-2008	\$8.00
Phillips Fire Centennial 1894-1994	\$12.50
Prentice Fire Department-100 Years of "Dedicated" Service 1905-2005	\$12.00
Price County Stories	\$10.00
Stories From the Lou (The Lives of Two Hungarian American Brothers)	\$10.00
The Art of Fred Smith	\$10.00
The Lake Shore and Eastern A Logging Railroad in North Central Wisconsin	\$30.00
The Northwoods Journal of Charles C. Hamilton	\$10.00
The Park Falls Line History of the Omaha Railway Line from Tuscobia to PF	\$35.00
The Past In A Brush Stroke (The story of Edith Atwood Fleming 1909-1966)	\$3.00
The Pike Lake Chain (includes map)	\$10.00
The Pleasure of the Sorrow	\$1.00
The Round Lake Dam	\$1.00
The Storm-July 4, 1977 Phillips, Wisconsin	\$10.00
The Story of Ruth (The Story of Ruth Jerusha Stolle 1897-1985)	\$3.00
The Way We Worked	\$10.00
Town of Emery Centennial 1889-1989	\$20.00
Wintergreen Reflections-A History of Wintergreen Lake in Wisconsin	\$15.00

Books ordered online include a slight increase in cost to cover shipping and handling.

PRESERVING PRICE COUNTY'S HISTORY— NETWORKING, ARTIFACTS, ARCHIVES AND BOOKS!

Price County Historical Society recently joined a newly formed organization of the Northern Wisconsin Heritage Council. Spearheaded by Jim Bokern at the Manitowish Waters Historical Society, the Council seeks the active participation of historical societies in Price, Oneida, Vilas, Ashland, Sawyer, Rusk counties, the George W. Brown, Jr. Ojibwe Museum and Cultural Center at Lac du Flambeau and other interested historical societies to coordinate and share research as well as promote our mutual interests in preserving the history of North Central Wisconsin. The Council's end product is the construction of a website made of an interactive map highlighting the historical societies through these counties, as well as pertinent cultural sites and a list of hotel and restaurant accommodations. The idea is to put our organizations on the map so to speak and provide a comprehensive body of information for those seeking to learn more as well as assist in planning a visit to see these fascinating sites. PCHS has a presence at the meetings and is organizing the abstracts for the Price County entries of historical sites.

A CALL FOR THE CAMPAIGN TO PRESERVE PRICE COUNTY'S HISTORY!!!

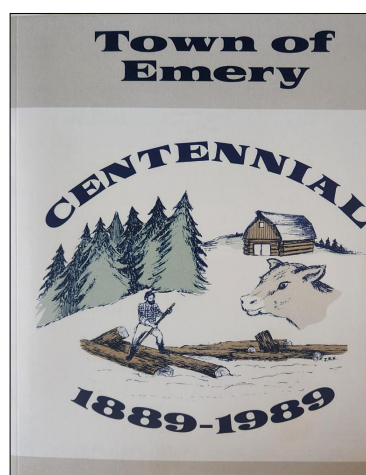
During the past year we have received several artifacts, documents, and photographs by personal delivery or via mail. If you are cleaning out your collections, closets, attics or garages, PLEASE CONSIDER DONATING ANY PHOTOGRAPHS, PLAT BOOKS, MAPS, FAMILY HISTORIES, DOCUMENTS, LEDGERS, DIARIES, TO THE PRICE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.!!! We at the Society understand if you have historic photographs, documents, and plat books and the like, and you want to keep

them. Please consider allowing the PCHS staff to digitally scan the item(s), and then accession the scanned copy to the PCHS archives with permission to publish. We will accession the item in your name (or designated name) as part of the collection of the PCHS archives. By so doing, an image of your item is preserved and becomes available for research and use by PCHS staff as well as other historians or people conducting historical research. The Louis A. Koenig Research Center is the secure housing and accessioning of these items for use by historians, genealogists, scholars and students of history and interested individuals.

PRESERVING THE PAST FOR THE FUTURE, HISTORICAL BOOK BACK IN PUBLICATION!

The Town of Emery is the history of the people who left their homes and families in Europe to settle in eastern Price County. In addition to the historical information, the book contains photographs and individual family narratives of the determined pioneers who passed on their spirit, heritage and culture to future generations, while enriching the community they built.

Local historical books are a plethora of information, and some contain very compelling first persons accounts. This book certainly checks all of those boxes. We hope you enjoy learning about the Town of Emery!



WE WANT YOU!!!

Consider joining us as members of the Price County Historical Society and help preserve the past of this fascinating place and its people!

MEMBERSHIP MATTERS
PRICE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL AND NEW MEMBER FORM

NAME: _____
NEW _____ RENEWAL _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP: _____

PHONE: _____

E-MAIL: _____

MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES: PLEASE CHECK YOUR SELECTION:

INDIVIDUAL MEMBER.....\$10.00 _____
BRONZE MEMBER.....\$25.00 _____
SILVER MEMBER.....\$50.00 _____
GOLD MEMBER.....\$100.00 _____
LIFE MEMBER.....\$500.00 _____

Please write check to **PRICE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY** (designate MEMBERSHIP YEAR or YEARS as you may pay for multiple years if you choose on your check and on this form.) I am paying for the year(s) of _____. A membership term runs from January 1 through December 31.

Mail it with this form to: Price County Historical Society, Membership
P. O. Box 156
Fifield, WI 54524

CREDIT CARD PAYMENT: You may also pay by credit card online at our website:
www.pricecountyhistoricalsociety.org Click on the Membership section and follow the instructions.

- Check box if you want newsletter sent to the address on the membership form.
- Check box if we may send you your newsletter by e-mail to help save paper and postage.
- Check box if you would like an e-mail reminder of special events.
- Check box if you would like to volunteer. We will contact you.

All membership money automatically goes into our regular fund for general upkeep of our three soon to be four buildings, utilities, insurance, and printing and sending our newsletters.

Your yearly membership entitles you to receive newsletters and a voice at the annual meeting.

Donations in addition to membership are always urgently needed and greatly appreciated.

The Price County Historical Society invites you to spend a part of your Saturday afternoon on July 8 learning about a native son of Fifield.



Robert "Ash" Aschenbrener was born to George and Marietta Aschenbrener on November 22, 1920. He was one of eleven children and spent his early days in Fifield work-

ing at his parents' general store and his early teen years as the mail carrier. That job entailed meeting two trains daily in the winter and four in the summer to collect the mail and deliver it to the Fifield post office. In the 1930's Robert re-located to Lac du Flambeau to work at the general store built by his father.

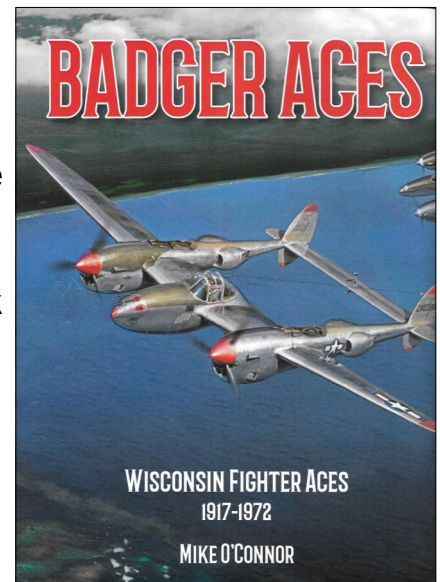
When World War II broke out, Robert enlisted in the Army Air Force and achieved great success, becoming a 10-victory fighter ace.

Aschenbrener's combat exploits are contained in the new book **BADGER ACES, WISCONSIN FIGHTER ACES 1917-1972** by author Mike O'Connor. The book covers over 40 Wisconsin-born fighter pilots officially credited with shooting down five enemy aircraft. And, as the preface of **BADGER ACES** states; *The ultimate dream of every fighter pilot is to shoot down five enemy aircraft and join the exclusive ranks of the ace pilot. During the 20th Century, more than 60,000 American fighter pilots saw air combat but only 1,447 earned the title of "ace." Of that total, over 40 were born or grew up in Wisconsin, therein becoming "Badger Aces." This is their story.*

To hear the rest of the story of Robert Aschenbrener and other Wisconsin "Aces" from WWI, WWII, the Korean War and the Vietnam War make sure you mark your calendar and plan to attend. The presentation coincides with "Fifield Day" and is taking place on **Saturday, July 8 at 1:00 p.m. at the Greenfield School Museum.**



Mike will have copies of his book for sale at the event. If you cannot make the event you can still purchase a copy of this book and others by emailing Mike. **BADGER ACES** is his third book on fighter aces and fighter combats.



Contact Mike at: moconnor@dwave.net

THE OLD TOWN HALL AND GREENFIELD SCHOOL MUSEUMS WILL BE OPEN SATURDAY AND SUNDAY THIS SUMMER FROM 11:00 A.M.TO 3:00 P.M. STARTING WITH THE FIRST FULL WEEKEND IN JUNE THROUGH LABOR DAY

WHAT EVENTS CAN YOU ATTEND THIS SEASON AT THE MUSEUM CAMPUS?

June 24 Pie Social 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

July 8 Book signing at the Greenfield School Museum 1:00 p.m. BADGER ACES, Wisconsin Fighter Aces 1917—1972. Come and hear the presentation by Author Mike O’Conner and also learn about an Ace included in his book by the name of Robert Aschenbrener who was born in the Town of Fifield, Price County, Wisconsin.

August 12 Strawberry Shortcake 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

September 16 Ribbon Cutting, Dedication and Grand Opening of the Louis A. Koenig Research Center 1:00 p.m.

Price County Historical Society
Old Town Hall Museum
W7213 Pine Street, P.O. Box 156
Fifield, Wisconsin 54524-0156