Winona State University
OpenRiver

Volume 5 – 1997

Winter 1-1-1997

Big River

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Oneota: What's in a Name?

By Reggie McLeod

This is the story of how an Oneida Indian mistaken for a Winnebago Indian probably helped name a river. Then an ancient culture was named for the river, after the river was renamed for one of the tribes that was part of that ancient culture.

Archaeologists on the River

What we now call the Upper Iowa River winds between steep rocky bluffs before it empties into the Mississippi River near New Albin, at the northeast corner of Iowa. However, in 1891 a government surveyor, W. J. McGee, pointed to a the rocky bluff near the river’s mouth and asked an Indian nearby, “What do you call that?”

The amused Indian probably replied, “That’s a rock.”

McGee wrote in his report that the Winnebago name for the river and the rocky limestone bluff north of the river’s mouth was “Oneota.” That particular layer of limestone is still known as oneota dolomite and the river was called the Oneota River for some time.

McGee thought he was talking to a Winnebago Indian, but he was probably talking to an Oneida instead, because their word for “rock” is “oneota,” and many people doubt that the word comes from the Winnebago language.

Tracing the word “Oneida,” you find it means “people who sprang from a rock,” in reference to a large rock on a hill in their homelands in upstate New York. Most of the Oneida tribe left there and moved to Green Bay in the 1830s. The Green Bay area was home to the Winnebago, too. So, by an odd chance, an Oneida Indian from New York, who was traveling with a group of Winnebago, probably helped name a culture that was indigenous to the Midwest — a culture that included the ancestors of the Winnebago.

(Oneota continued on page 2)

Algae in the River: Part Two

By Pamela Eyden

The summer of 1988 was exceptionally hot and dry in the Upper Midwest. Water levels in the Mississippi dropped so low that the river seemed to stand still. Green muck hung like limp garlands off the water plants. Swimmers got rashes. Boaters held their noses against the smell in the sloughs. Finally, tens of thousands of dead, rotting fish washed up on the shores of Lake Pepin, near Lake City, Minn.

At first, people were alarmed and ready to be outraged, suspecting

(Algae continued on page 4)
Confused yet?

Pity the poor, frustrated archeologists. They not only have to keep all this straight, but they have to repeatedly explain the difference between the Oneida tribe and the Oneota Culture. The river was renamed the Upper Iowa, after the Iowa tribe, whose ancestors were probably also part of the Oneota Culture. A few businesses in Decorah, Iowa, are still named Oneota. (Decorah was named after a Winnebago chief.)

In the 1930s Ellison Orr, the retired manager of the telephone office in Waukon, Iowa, and Dr. Charles Ruben Keyes, Iowa's first state archaeologist, directed field work at seven archaeological sites on low terraces near the Upper Iowa River. Orr, who began the project when he was in his late 70s, grew up and spent most of his life in the area. He was an active amateur archaeologist, ornithologist and geologist, who had published archaeological papers since 1913. He was a colorful character and you can't help but run into him, or his name, if you look into Oneota matters.

Orr and Keyes, with help from laborers paid by a federal W.P.A. grant, examined several village sites and numerous burial mounds built by people of the Woodland Culture. In some of these mounds they found more recent burials. They also found globular pots tempered with crushed mussel shells, triangular arrowheads, stone pipes and other artifacts. Glass beads helped date two sites to the period when European trade items were making their way into the interior of the continent.

They named this culture Oneota, after the older name of the Upper Iowa River. These and similar sites are marked by distinctive pottery. The Oneota added crushed mussel shells to the clay they used for pots, making them stronger and better able to hold up to cooking.

The most common type of Oneota pot is a somewhat flattened sphere with a heavy collared rim that flairs slightly and has two small handles curving from the rim to the vessel’s shoulders. The upper surface of pots were often decorated with designs. Details of the designs and the shapes of the pots mark different periods and subdivisions of the culture.

Orr, who worked as a surveyor as a young man, excavated sites carefully and kept detailed field notes. He later typed up his notes and essays, and bound them together with mounted photographs and beautiful colored-pencil sketches of excavations, to create a twelve-volume collection.

To compound the layers of names, today the term “Orr focus” is often applied to the Upper Iowa and other late Oneota sites that yielded similar pottery and other artifacts. Many other Orr focus sites have been studied in the La Crosse area and in southeastern Minnesota.

The Oneota

From about 1000 to 1650 A.D. in much of the Upper Mississippi watershed, people of the Oneota Culture tended extensive gardens, hunted buffalo, built stockaded villages and fired large pots strengthened with crushed mussel shells. They didn’t leave behind brooding cliff dwellings, massive temple mounds or sprawling effigy mounds, so they haven’t attracted the romantic curiosity that the Anasazi, Mississippian and Effigy Mound cultures have.

By the time white missionaries and soldiers started moving into the Midwest, the people archaeologists call the Oneota had been battered by European diseases and wave after wave of tribes fleeing from the cataclysm in the east. It is impossible to imagine the horrors that raged through the Midwest during the last half of the 17th century. Smallpox, measles and other diseases devastated tribes. European armies fought for control of lands they knew little about. Indians armed by the French, British and Dutch fought as allies and mercenaries of the European nations, sometimes helping to exterminate entire tribes. Survivors fled west, often with their enemies in hot pursuit.

Shortly after Jean Nicolet traveled from Quebec to Green Bay in 1634, to make the first recorded contact between the French and Winnebago, the Illini Confederacy, a group of Algonquin tribes to the south, nearly wiped out the Winnebago.

Archaeologists think that the descendants of the Oneota are probably the Winnebago (who prefer being called the Ho-Chunk), Iowa, Oto and Missouri tribes, because early European explorers found Indians living on sites where archaeologists eventually found a mixture of Oneota and European artifacts.

These four tribes were decimated and shoved west. The Winnebago moved from the Green Bay area to southwest Wisconsin. The Iowa, Oto and Missouri often lived and moved together as they were buffeted around Iowa and the Missouri River watershed. The Iowa may have started out in the La Crosse area, then moved to southeastern Minnesota and northeastern Iowa until the Dakota, who were defeated and pushed southward by the Ojibwa, in turn defeated and pushed the Iowa to the south and west. Eventually, the Missouri were all but annihilated in a series of conflicts with the Osage. The Oto, Iowa and remnants of the Missouri banded together more or less permanently.

Of course, rivers and states were named after the Missouri and Iowa.

By the 1800s, settlers of European descent were planting corn and beans in some of the same fields Oneota farmers had worked decades earlier. These new residents used Indian medicines, hunted deer and buffalo, smoked tobacco, fished and gathered berries. In many cases, they built settlements on sites where Oneota houses had stood not long before.

The Iowa, Oto and Missouri now have reservations in Oklahoma and Kansas. Many Winnebago people kept returning to Wisconsin despite repeated attempts by the United
States government to remove them westward during the 1800s. About half stayed in Wisconsin and about half settled in the Winnebago reservation in eastern Nebraska, on the Missouri River.

Neighbors

Before it was dubbed "Oneota," archaeologists labeled the culture "Upper Mississippian" because it appeared to be a northern branch of the Middle Mississippian Culture, named after the river.

Middle Mississippian built the huge walled city of Cahokia -- across the Mississippi River from what is now St. Louis -- during the 11th through 13th centuries. In its day Cahokia was one of the largest cities in the world and probably served as the seat of an empire that reached north nearly to Lake Superior, south to the Gulf of Mexico, east far up the Ohio River and northwest up the Missouri River.

Although the Oneota shared many traits with the Mississippian, theirs was a distinct culture. Some speculate that the Oneota started when an indigenous Woodland group learned agriculture and other skills from people at early Middle Mississippian outposts. The argument often boils down to dates; some dating suggests that the Oneota preceded the Middle Mississippian, some suggest they arose simultaneously. Whichever came first, the Oneota learned from and traded with the Mississippians, and vice versa. It's also clear that they were sometimes at war.

Oneota sites have been found in the southern halves of Minnesota and Wisconsin; nearly all parts of Iowa; and the northern halves of Missouri and Illinois. A few sites have been discovered in Michigan, Indiana, Kansas, Nebraska and South Dakota. Middle Mississippian settlements have been studied at Red Wing, Minnesota; Trempealeau and Lake Mills, Wisconsin, and at other points deep inside agricultural plots studied by archaeologists and soil scientists show that Oneota farmers struggled with some of the same problems as modern farmers. For example, Oneota villagers grew large fields of corn, beans and squash in Sand Lake Coulee, near Onalaska, Wisconsin, at about the time Columbus was sailing to the West Indies. They prepared these fields by heaping the soil into long parallel ridges about six inches high and two or three feet apart. They probably grew plants along the tops of the ridges to protect them from late frosts.

However, the fields kept getting buried under soil eroded from nearby hillsides. The farmers kept rebuilding their ridge-and-ditch fields over the buried ones. Each successive layer of new soil was a little lighter, sandier and probably less productive than the previous layer, so that archaeologists digging trenches found clear silhouettes of the successive Oneota gardens. These ancient fields were preserved beneath soil eroded from the same hillsides during the last 130 years of modern farming.

Oneota territory. The Effigy Mound culture apparently coexisted with the Oneota in the eastern part of its range. Some of the western-most Oneota village sites were within easy walking distance of villages where people of the Plains Culture lived at about the same time. To the north and west the Oneota territory met that of the Blackduck Culture, who may have been the predecessors of the Chippewa.

Field Work

One of the few well preserved Oneota sites has been found in the valley of the Big River, north of La Crosse, Wisconsin. Here a large village site, one of the largest in the Oneota range, was occupied during the late 11th through late 12th centuries. The site was occupied by several groups, each with its own mound group and burial mounds. The largest mound, a 30-foot-high earthen conical mound, is the focus of the site. It stands on a platform of sandstone and is surrounded by a shallow moat.


e [Oneota archaeological sites.]

Reggie McLeod is editor of Big River
industrial pollution or an unreported chemical spill. When they found that the fish died because of an overgrowth of algae, which depleted the oxygen and smothered the fish, they were relieved. After all, isn’t death by algae death by natural causes?

What Feeds the Blooms?

But blooms are not a necessary, natural part of the algae life cycle. A bloom occurs when the algae population grows explosively. Blooms require four factors: quiet air, warm water, a neutral or alkaline pH, and lots of nutrients — specifically, phosphorus and nitrogen. In the summer of 1988, blue-green algae had everything they needed to bloom profusely.

Over the last 100 to 150 years, the amount of phosphorus and nitrogen in the Upper Mississippi River has increased enormously. The primary sources of nitrogen and phosphates are chemical fertilizers and human and animal waste.

According to the U.S. Geological Survey’s report, Contaminants in the Mississippi River 1987 - 1992:

- Concentrations of nitrate in the Upper Mississippi River ranged from 0.2 to 0.4 of a milligram per liter before 1940. Since 1940, they have ranged from 1.0 to 1.2 milligrams per liter.
- From April 1991 to April 1992 about 900,000 metric tons of nitrate and 35,000 metric tons of phosphate were carried to the Gulf of Mexico. The Upper Mississippi contributes over half of the total.
- About 75 percent of this nutrient load came from agricultural sources that were not part of the picture 150 years ago.

What Happens Downstream?

The growth of blue-green algae (a type commonly found in freshwater) rises and falls with the level of phosphorus, while the growth of marine algae, as in the Gulf of Mexico, rises and falls with the level of nitrogen.

Stretching from the birdfoot delta of the Mississippi River west to the north Texas coast is an area that researchers call the “hypoxic zone” and fishermen call the “dead zone.” There is so little oxygen in the water that few forms of life will tolerate it. Fish and shrimp either die or move elsewhere.

Hypoxic zones are present wherever rivers flush nutrients to the sea. Their size and shape is influenced by water temperature, ocean currents, seasons and many other factors. In the Gulf, the largest zones occur in the summer, after the spring runoff ushers the combined chemicals of farms, forests, factories and bathtubs down the river to the sea. These nutrients stimulate the growth of many types of algae all at once. When they die all at once, the process of decomposition uses up all the oxygen, just as it did in the Upper Mississippi during the summer of 1988.

During the summer of 1995, the hypoxic zone in the Gulf grew to 18,000 square kilometers, or about the size of the state of Connecticut. It now rivals the largest on earth — in the Baltic Sea and the northwestern shelf of the Black Sea. Needless to say, fishing and shrimping off the coast of Louisiana isn’t what it used to be.

Toxic Algae

The dead zone isn’t the only problem. The amount of phosphorus and nitrogen has increased in the last 50 years, but the relative amount of another element, silica, has decreased. Silica favors the growth of diatoms. Nitrogen favors another type of algae, the dinoflagellates. Some of the most toxic algae in the world are dinoflagellates.

Dinoflagellates are microscopic, single-celled creatures that propel themselves with flagella, little whips that twirl out and twine back around their center lines, like the string on a yo-yo.

The “red tides” off the coast of southeast U.S. and the Gulf of Mexico are a bloom of the dinoflagellate alga Gymnodinium aureolum. Red tides release a powerful toxin, called breve-

Toxin, that paralyzes and poisons wild fish, farm fish, shellfish, humans, mammals, sea birds and other creatures. All shrimp and fishing businesses in Matamoros, Mexico, closed down in October 1996 because of red tides on the Mexican side of the Gulf.

Red tides caused the death of hundreds of manatees off the coast of Florida last year, after the manatees moved into an area of warm water where the algae were blooming.

Toxic algae blooms are nothing new, but the number has apparently accelerated over the last decades. In recent years, outbreaks have occurred in Tasmania, Australia, British Columbia, England, Maine, Maryland and the Chesapeake Bay.

Fish Killer

The most bizarre and notorious dinoflagellate to make headlines in recent years was just discovered in the Neuse River of North Carolina, called Pfisteria piscicida.

Pfisteria piscicida has been described as “a predatory plant, like grass feeding on sheep.” It spends part of its life encysted in the bottom sediments of the river, ignored and inert. When it senses a large population of fish or other prey nearby, it metamorphoses rapidly through 19 different amoeba- and blob-like stages, to emerge finally as a two-tailed dinoflagellate. It then releases a toxin that stuns the fish and bores into them with a tongue-like organ that comes out from the front of the cell. As the fish die, ravaged by quarter-sized sores, Pfisteria piscicida reproduces and changes shape once again, hiding out as a colorless amoeba that continues to feast on the dead fish. Finally, it sinks to the bottom of the river, where it can lie dormant, waiting for years.

Dr. Joanne Burkholder, who discovered this algae, had a firsthand experience with the toxin, when “neurotoxic aerosols” got into the lab ventilation system. She and her assistant suffered many ailments, including fevers, cramps, nausea, blurred vision, temporary memory loss and
cognitive impairment. The lab was closed for six months and reopened after inspection by biological warfare experts.

In the summer and fall of 1995, an outbreak of *Pfiesteria piscicida* killed 20 to 30 million fish in the Neuse River, according to a story in *Natural History* magazine (March 1996). North Carolina state authorities issued official warnings, telling people not to swim in, fish in or even touch water from a 35-square-mile section of the river.

The story of *Pfiesteria piscicida* might be just another case where truth is stranger than the X-Files, if it weren’t for certain contributing environmental circumstances: the Neuse River basin has seen a 74 percent increase in human population in the last 25 years, and an even greater increase in the number of hogs and chickens. North Carolina is now the second largest hog producing state in the nation, just behind Iowa, with enormous industrial hog farms spreading out on the coastal plain. Tests of bottom sediments downriver from hog waste spills have turned up not just unsafe levels of fecal coliform, but dormant *Pfiesteria* as well.

In recent years, more than 50 kinds of dinoflagellate algae that were previously considered harmless have been found to have toxic blooms. Microcystis, Aphanizomenon, *Anabena*, *Oscillatoria* and other blue-green algae that live in the Mississippi River can and do produce chemical toxins. For reasons not well understood, they don’t always do so, but deer, cows, dogs and other creatures that ignore a thick green scum on the water and take a big drink can end up dying of convulsions and respiratory paralysis, or liver failure. Toxic algae blooms have been known to cause skin rashes, eye irritation, vomiting, diarrhea, fever, and muscle and joint pain in humans. But people don’t routinely draw their water directly from the Mississippi and even if they did, they probably wouldn’t drink water covered by algae.

Ironically and strangely, *Anabena flos-aquae*, a blue-green algae that can produce a potent toxin, is being marketed these days as an energy-boosting food supplement. The World Wide Web is full of pages offering to sell *Anaibaena*. Look a little further, though, and you find warnings from scientists who are alarmed about this practice, because the industry is unregulated and little research has been done. Public health funds are limited, and freshwater algae does not rank high on anyone’s list. Yet.

Water quality degradation has been implicated in the increase of toxic algal blooms around the world in recent years. The causes are complex, shaped by dozens of factors including temperature, water chemistry and weather. But, the cause is also simple: we are allowing too much nitrogen, phosphorus and other elements to pass into the rivers, bays and oceans. And we’re ignoring all the warning signs.

*Pamela Eyden is assistant editor of Big River.*
Cancer Alley or Tobacco Road

New Orleans, La. — For more than a decade conventional wisdom blamed the high cancer rate of Louisiana residents living in the seven parishes between Baton Rouge and New Orleans on the huge petrochemical plants lining that stretch of the Mississippi.

However, a study published in the April edition of the *Journal of the Louisiana State Medical Society* paints a different picture. When you isolate cancers of the lung and larynx and factor in smoking statistics, it looks like the cancer deaths are largely due to heavy cigarette smoking among white males, according to an Associated Press story.

Dr. Charles Brown, a cancer specialist on the board of the Louisiana Tumor Registry, summed up the source of the cancer problem: "Tobacco, tobacco, tobacco. And, particularly in this state, tobacco."

Environmentalists caution that cancers caused by exposure to chemicals may take decades to develop. Chemical production on Cancer Alley started to hit its stride in the 1960s and 70s, so cancers resulting from it may be just beginning to show up.

Shipping News

The last towboat out of St. Paul this season was the Phyllis, a 4,200 hp twin screw, which left November 24 with eight barges.

Locked Up

Three locks on the Upper Mississippi are closed for repairs until March 10, 1997.

The Army Corps of Engineers will replace anchor bars on miter gates at Lock and Dam 2, Hastings, Minn., and repair miter gates at Lock and Dam 8, Genoa, Wis. New lock operating machinery is being installed at Lock and Dam 10 at Guttenberg, Iowa.

Eagle Attack

Onalaska, Wis. — Veteran hunter Mark Prokes, Onalaska, Wis., was watching a doe and two fawns in some corn stubble for about two hours, when an adult eagle swooped down onto the back of one of the fawns, knocking it down. The fawn got up, apparently unhurt, and bolted into the woods with the other fawn and the doe. The eagle flew away and the three deer eventually returned to the field, according to an Associated Press story (12-1-96).

"It's a sight I will never forget, that's for sure," said Prokes, 62.

Resources

Questions about what to do this winter in Minnesota's great outdoors? Call the folks at the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) at their toll-free number, 1-888-MINNDNR (646-6367). They'll answer your wildlife, fishing and skiing questions.

The Wisconsin DNR and University Extension have numerous resources about urban runoff and stormwater management. Learn about booklets, school programs, and videos by calling 1-800-362-7253 or (608) 266-6790.

The Minnesota Office of Environmental Assistance offers a wealth of resource packets for environmental educators. Call 1-800-657-3843.


Fish Tag

Kellogg, Minn. — Turning in tag numbers of fish caught in the Finger Lakes below Lock and Dam 4 this winter could be worth $100. One of the tags from this winter's catch will be randomly selected for the 1997 reward.

The fish tagging is part of a program to measure the results of introducing freshwater with dissolved oxygen into the lakes from culverts. The flow from the Mississippi was reduced by the construction of the lock and dam.

Kickapoo Trout

The national office of Trout Unlimited has picked the Kickapoo River, in southwestern Wisconsin, for a $400,000 restoration effort. The only other project undertaken by its "Home Rivers" initiative was the Beaverkill River in New York, according to an article in the *Wisconsin State Journal* (11-15-96).

Trout Unlimited will fund programs to link local efforts with those of county and state agencies. It will also promote "adopt-a-stream" programs with local schools to allow students to participate in river research. Reduced pressure from agriculture in its watershed has improved trout habitat in the river, but development and increased fishing pressure threaten its future improvement.

River Loving Farmers

The River-Friendly Farmer award program recognizes Minnesota farmers who reduce non-point pollution sources and help control erosion. To qualify they must meet several criteria, including following state guidelines for prudent use of fertilizers, and proper application of manure and pesticides, especially near water sources.
Applications, which can be picked up at county Extension offices, must be returned by February 1, 1997.

Field of Nightmares

New Orleans, La. — On December 14 a 763-foot freighter heading downstream with 56,000 tons of corn bound for Japan, lost power and rammed into a New Orleans riverside shopping mall, narrowly missing two cruise ships and a crowded gambling boat.

The Liberian-registered freighter Bright Field was about to make a sharp right turn through the heart of the Crescent City. The riverbend there is full of eddies and turbulence. About once a week a ship loses steering, but most manage to drop anchor and avert disaster. Lesser accidents are more common than people realize in New Orleans — sometimes people snug in their beds feel the gentle bump of freighters hitting a wharf blocks away, according to the New York Times News Service (12-15-96).

The Bright Field was staffed by a Chinese crew and piloted by a 20-year river veteran, who had boarded the ship three hours earlier for the treacherous stretch of the river. The ship is owned by the Chinese company Cosco, a large international shipper.

At least 116 people were injured, none fatally.

Barge Funds Drying Up

St. Louis, Mo. — The annual budget for operating and maintaining the inland waterway system is scheduled to shrink from $4 billion to $2.6 billion, according to Martin Lancaster, the new head of the Army Corps of Engineers. He was addressing the annual Midwest Area Rivers Coalition 2000 (MARC 2000) in late November. MARC 2000 is a lobbying organization for the tow industry.

Harry Cook, president of the National Waterways Conference, told the meeting about a new group, the National Waterway Alliance, which will campaign to maintain funding at the 1994 level, according to an article in The Waterways Journal (12-2-96).

The group will work to convince farmers, miners, factory workers and others that waterborne shipping is important to their livelihoods. It will also document the economic value of the commercial navigation system.

Sprawl Strategy

Twin Cities, Minn. — The tendrils of urban sprawl from the Twin Cities are slithering eastward to the St. Croix River and into western Wisconsin. A solid majority of metro area citizens favor deliberate planning to protect their environment and quality of life, but getting a handle on the situation is likely to prove challenging.

Studies predict that the metro area's population will grow by 650,000 within the next 25 years. The Metropolitan Council hopes to provide for gradual growth, improve St. Paul and Minneapolis and encourage denser development in some areas to leave more undeveloped, open spaces elsewhere. However, the details of how this will be done are sketchy.

Some groups advocate better mass transit, to reduce auto traffic and highway building. Land trusts are working to preserve undeveloped areas.

The Minnesota-Wisconsin Boundary Area Commission (BAC), which is based in Hudson, Wis., on the St. Croix River, it is well positioned to facilitate the planning process by bringing together local and state government officials, and concerned citizens.

As a result of a November 21 conference and consultations on the issue the commission has issued the BAC Urban Growth Management Policy Statement, which you can get by writing to the Minnesota-Wisconsin Boundary Area Commission, 619 Second St., Hudson, WI 54016, or calling (715) 386-9444.

Citizens for a Better Environment will sponsor a free workshop on development along the Mississippi River in Minneapolis on January 25. See the River Calendar for more information.

Mount VONCO or VONCO Hill

Sherburne County, Minn. — The owners of the VONCO Demolition Debris Landfill wanted to build its pile of bricks, broken concrete and other nonhazardous material more than 100 feet higher than the level of the Mississippi River, which is about 900 feet away (see Big River, February 1996). The landfill is in Sherburne County's Big Lake Township, about 35 miles northwest of Minneapolis.

Neighbors objected to the noise and dust they believed would be generated at the landfill. Many were concerned that the mountain would be an eyesore for river users.

In October VONCO agreed to reduce the maximum size of the pile by 24 feet and to seek another landfill site.

Unporked

Hudson, Wis. — A Midwestern supermarket chain has stopped buying pork products from a company accused of polluting more than 12 miles of Missouri waterways and suing a township of a few hundred people for $7.9 million.

At the request of the Land Stewardship Project and the Missouri Rural Crisis Center, Hudson-based Erickson's Diversified Corporation stopped carrying Premium Standard products on October 6. The company operates Erickson's, More 4, Econofoods and Food Bonanza.

Documented manure spills at Premium Standard's factory farm killed more than 180,000 fish and polluted 12 miles of waterways. When officials of Lincoln Township, Mo., tried to enforce local zoning rules, the company, which operates a 100,000-hog operation there, sued for $7.9 million in damages, claiming its property rights would be illegally taken by the zoning rules, according to The Land Stewardship Letter (Oct./Nov. 1996).

Premium Standard, the nation's fifth largest pork producer, filed for Chapter 11 financial reorganization in July.
Special Events & Festivals

January
10-12 Winterfest, Allamakee County, Iowa, 1-800-824-1424.
12 Cross-country Ski Hike, 1 p.m., Effigy Mounds National Park, Marion, Iowa, (319) 873-3491.
17-19 Icefest, Brainerd, Minn.
25 Candlelight Ski, 5:30 p.m. - 8 p.m., Effigy Mounds National Park, Marion, Iowa, (319) 873-4096.
25 Candlelight Ski, 5:30 p.m. - 8 p.m., Perrot State Park, Trempealeau, Wis., (608) 534-6409.
25 Candlelight Ski, 5:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m., Harmony-Preston Valley (Minn.) State Trail, (507) 765-2100.
25-26 Winter Fest, Lake City, Minn., 1-800-369-4123.
25-Feb. 2 Cabin Fever Days, Cannon Falls, Minn.

February
1 Candlelight Ski, 5:30 p.m. - 10 p.m., Wildcat Mountain State Park, Ontonagon, Wis., (606) 337-4775.
1-2 Winter Festival, Winona, Minn.
8 Candlelight Ski, 5:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m., Root River State Trail, Lanesboro, Minn., (507) 467-2552.
12 Snowshoe Hike, 1 p.m., Effigy Mounds National Monument, Marquette, Iowa, (319) 873-3491.
15 Sweetheart Ski Stroll, 6 p.m., Wyalusing State Park, Bagley, Wis., (608) 996-2261.
22 Grumpy Old Men Festival, Wabasha, Minn.
25-Feb. 2 Greater Northwest Vacation Show, Minneapolis, 1-800-451-8360.

Exhibitions

January
22-26 Midwest Farm Show, La Crosse, Wis.
22-26 Boat Show, Minneapolis, (612) 827-5833.
29-Feb. 2 Greater Northwest Vacation Show, Minneapolis, 1-800-451-8360.

February
6-9 La Crosse Sport, Boat & Travel show.
19-23 St. Cloud Camp & Travel Expo, (320) 255-7222.
21-23 Tri-State Boat Show, Dubuque, (319) 589-4258.
25-27 Farm Show, St. Cloud, Minn.

Meetings & Hearings

January
9 Lower Wisconsin Riverway Board, Muscoda, 5 p.m., 1-800-221-3792.
13 St. Croix Valley Sierra Club, Stillwater, Minn., 6:30 p.m., Methodist Church, Greeley at Myrtle Street.
21 Friends of the Upper Mississippi Refuge, organizational meeting, 7 p.m., Winona, Minn., Exchange Building. Public invited (507) 452-9271.

Workshops & Conferences

January
8-9 Our River, Our Economy — Your Stake in the Future of the Mississippi River, Davenport, Iowa, Midwest Area River Coalition (MARC 2000), (314) 436-7303.
16-17 Maritime seminar, New Orleans, (504) 865-5900.
25 OUR RIVER!, Citizens for a Better Environment workshop on land use planning along the Mississippi, 8:30 a.m. - 1:45 p.m., Minneapolis, free, register by Jan. 17, call Judith Lake, (612) 824-8637, ext. 222, or cbelake@igc.apc.org.

February
6-7 Farmer-Led Watershed Initiatives Conference, Mankato, Minn. (612) 379-5980.

Bald Eagle Watches

January
4 Lock and Dam 13, 8 a.m. - 4 p.m., Fulton, Ill.; 8 a.m. - noon, Albany (Ill.) Boat Landing. Programs and exhibits, 9 a.m. - 3:30 p.m., Clinton (Iowa) Community College, (815) 259-3628.
4 & 5 Lock & Dam 14, Le Claire, Iowa, (319) 289-3009.
4, 11, 18 Sauk City and Prairie du Sac, Wis., bus trips, exhibits, live raptor shows, 1-800-68-EAGLE.
11 Lock & Dam 11, 8 a.m. - 4 p.m., Dubuque. Programs & exhibits, 9 a.m. - 3 p.m., Marshall School, 1-800-798-8844.

January Almanac

By Kenny Salwey

Silence, sweet silence, seems to be the decree of the big river in January. Its waters have become heavily laden with layer upon layer of ice, growing thicker with each passing moment.

The critters that aren’t dormant move around just enough to survive. They don’t want to pass a point of diminishing returns — spending too much energy, for too little food. They hunt just enough to live, the rest of the time waiting stoically, silently, for spring.

Small ice fishing cities have sprung up in the backwaters above time-honored fish wintering grounds. Each angler seems intent upon reading the big river, as they stare mesmerized down holes in the ice. Now and then, one might hear the whine of a car as a car passes by.

These’re times we just gotta let it do what it wants. I guess that’s why we river folks get along so well with it.

I feel kind of sleepy, too. How about you, my friends?