

Between the Lines of *Guys on Ice*



Now that winter has finally arrived in Iowa City, put on your best Green Bay Packers gear and come celebrate at Riverside Theatre with our production of *Guys on Ice: An Ice-Fishing Musical Comedy*.

Do we have events to help you get in the spirit of the show? You betcha!

Our Talkback Sunday will be January 22, immediately following the performance. You will have a chance to kick back with the actors and find out how they got into the Scennie spirit.

For more updates, check out Riverside's [Facebook fan page](#).

The American Folklore Theatre

The late playwright Fred Alley wrote *Guys on Ice* (with music by James Kaplan) as an original production for the 1998 season of the American Folklore Theatre, a professional theatre in Door County, WI.

The seeds of AFT were planted in 1970 when Dave Peterson, a professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, went on a camping trip to Door County's Peninsula State Park and discovered an outdoor amphitheatre in the woods. The stage had been used mostly for slide shows and demonstrations, but Peterson was inspired by the setting to create a singing and acting group called the Heritage Ensemble. The ensemble's premiere show was described as "One part Peter, Paul and Mary; one part Broadway show tune; one part folksy Wisconsin; and the rest pure cornball spunkiness." For over twenty years, the Heritage Ensemble continued to perform shows inspired by Midwestern stories. During this time, they improved the quality of their performances and improved their outdoor space with a technician booth and dressing rooms. By 1990, the group changed its name to the American Folklore Theatre in order to reflect their commitment to both professionalism and telling populist stories.

Today, the American Folklore Theatre continues to create plays that "will further the knowledge and appreciation of the culture and heritage of the United States." They perform at the amphitheatre in Peninsula State Park during the summer, and venues such as the Ephriam Village Hall in the winter. In addition to *Guys on Ice*, many of their other plays have become Wisconsin favorites, including *Lumberjacks in Love*, *Loose Lips Sink Ships*, and *Cheeseheads: The Musical*. Their folksy brand of humor and song can't be confined to the Badger State--*Guys on Ice* has been performed as far away as Oregon.

To visit the official website of the American Folk Theatre, [CLICK HERE](#).

Door County, Wisconsin

Guys on Ice takes place in a patch of ice off of Sturgeon Bay in scenic Door County, Wisconsin. If you think of Wisconsin as a mitten shape, the county forms much of the thumb, surrounded by Lake Michigan on the right and Green Bay on the left. A favorite vacation spot for Midwesterners, the area is known by the nickname of “Cape Cod of the Midwest.”



Local Native American tribes and early French settlers did not see the area in such a rosy picture. The strait between the Washington Island and the rest of the peninsula was infamous among sailors for being a treacherous patch of coast and causing many shipwrecks. The French referred to the strait as “Porte des Morts Passage.” The English translation, “Death’s Door,” became the inspiration behind the county’s name.

The area was first populated by Native Americans, many of whom were relocated away from the area under the Indian Removal Act of 1830. European settlers arrived in the area in the 18th and 19th Centuries, developing industries in fishing, lumber, and tourism. Peninsula State Park, the summer home of the American Folk Theatre, was the site of a Civilian Conservation Corp camp during the Great Depression, and later a work site for German POWs from a camp in nearby Fish Creek.

The county is home to five different state parks and 12 lighthouses, making it a great place for visitors to engage in outdoor recreation and sightseeing. Favorite outdoor activities include hiking, camping, swimming, and--as seen in *Guys on Ice*--fishing and snowmobiling.

Two favorite foods in the county are fish and cherries, both of which meet in a popular local event known as the fish boil. Locally caught whitefish are boiled with potatoes and onions in a kettle over a fire. At the end of the cooking time, the chef throws oil over the fire, causing the flame to grow larger and the water to boil over. The fish and vegetables are eaten for dinner, with cherry pie for dessert.

To visit Door County’s official website, [CLICK HERE](#).

Ice Fishing 101

Sitting in a shack on a field of ice might seem like a hobby from the age of woolly mammoths, but today ice fishing is a popular sport that requires sophisticated equipment.

Safe ice fishing conditions require the ice to be very thick. The fisher cuts through the ice layer and creates a hole using a hand auger. A saw or chisel can also work. Once the fisher cuts the hole, he uses a skimmer to scoop out new forming ice.



Hand auger



Sonar Flasher

Light fishing poles with bait or lures are used to catch the fish through the hole, like in regular fishing. An ice sonar is a device that helps the fisher find large groups of fish underneath the ice. With it, the fisher can figure out how deep the fish are and adjust the line on the fishing pole accordingly. Without a sonar, the fisher has to rely on the power of observation--noticing where large groups of people are fishing and finding evidence that someone has been fishing in the area recently.

Ice fishing enthusiasts can often be spotted by the presence of shelters, also known as ice shanties or shacks. These shelters can be temporary or permanent, and provide some relief from the cold. Having a portable heater in the shelter provides not only comfort, but also a way to keep new ice from forming over the hole.



Why has ice fishing become so popular? Ice fishing does not require a boat or other expensive water equipment. Though ice fishing is considered a solitary, meditative activity in Scandinavia, in North America it has become a very social past time. After all, unlike a boat, there is no limit to the number of people you can have with you out on the thick ice. So when the ice starts to thicken, consider going on an ice fishing trip with your friends or family. You might find that the low temperatures outside are no match for the warmth in your heart.

For more beginning ice fishing tips, [CLICK HERE](#).

The Green Bay Packers

As Lloyd and Marvin sing in *Guys on Ice*, a man with Packers tickets can do anything. The Green Bay Packers are the third-oldest franchise in the NFL. The Packers grew out of several semi-professional football teams in the Green Bay area starting in 1896. In 1919, the team was formally founded by Earl “Curly” Lambeau and George Whitney Calhoun. They got the name from the company that Lambeau worked for, the Indian Packing Company, which sponsored the original team uniforms. Their original colors were navy blue and gold, taken from Lambeau’s alma mater of Notre Dame, but were changed to the more familiar green and gold in the 1950’s. The team joined the American Professional Football Association, the precursor to the NFL, in 1921.

The Packers have a tradition of excellence, including 13 league championships--the most out of any NFL team. (It looks like this football season will not bring a 14th championship.) They have also maintained connections with their working class roots. The Packers are the only non-profit, community-owned major league professional sports team in the United States. This type of ownership is actually against current NFL rules, but the team’s system was grandfathered in after the current ownership policy was established in the 1980’s. As a result of this setup, the team feels a strong connection to the state of Wisconsin and its people. During the 2011 pro-union protests in Madison, WI, the team sent a letter stating that they supported the protests.

In return, the Packers have a devoted fanbase. Even though Green Bay is one of the smallest cities to have an NFL team, the Packers continually rank high in lists of teams with the largest fanbases, and every home game has been sold out since 1960. Legend has it that the wait time to get season tickets is over 30 years. Devoted “Cheeseheads” have been known to place their newborn children on the waiting list and bequeath their own tickets in their final wills.

Upper Midwest Accents

Do the *Guys on Ice* sound like they stepped out of *Prairie Home Companion*, or *Fargo*? That’s because Door County falls within the region that speaks a particular brand of American English.

North-Central American English is a dialect that is used by residents of Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Minnesota, parts of Wisconsin, the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, and even parts of Iowa. Because of the region, it is also known as an Upper Midwest, Great Lakes, or Minnesota accent.

The dialect includes the following features:

- The letter “r” is almost always pronounced.
- Long vowels have no glide at the end. (OK is pronounced /oh-keh/ instead of /owe-kay/)
- Consonants “b”, “d”, and “g” are changed to “p”, “t”, and “k” at the ends of words. (Stab becomes /stap/, bed becomes /bet/, stag becomes /stak/)

The dialect has had several main influences. Historically, the region had a large German and Scandinavian immigrant population. The German influence lead to the “r” being pronounced, while Scandinavians contributed vocabulary, such as using “yah” instead of “yes.” The region’s close proximity to Canada also has a strong influence on accents, such as adding “eh” to the ends of sentences. Canadian Rising, in which some vowels are “raised” before voiceless consonants, is also found in some areas in the Upper Midwest (out is pronounced /uh-oot/ instead of /ah-oot/).

For an article on the study of the dialect by the Center for the Study of Upper Midwestern Cultures, [CLICK HERE](#).

For information on unique words in Upper Midwest vocabulary, [CLICK HERE](#).