



THE COLUMNS

Newsletter of the Pepin County Historical Society

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Affiliate of the Wisconsin Historical Society

July, 2019

GREETINGS! from your PCHS President -

We have had a busy spring repairing the front porch floor and moving the Black School [aka: Big Arkansaw School] bell tower to Washington Square in Durand near the Old Courthouse Museum. We are working on placing the engraved bricks honoring teachers, mentors and educators from the area. These bricks were purchased by dozens of friends of the museum as part of a fundraising project to save the tower several years ago. We intend to lay them in a place of honor at the foot of the bell tower, but won't have that done before our dedication ceremony on July 25.

We have many projects planned for this year; some have been completed and some are near ready to go. (see inside) A special thanks to volunteers Gary Sweeny and Arnie Bauer and board members Dick Schlosser and Tom Garnevicus for all their work.

We are pleased Mike Shoup has returned as summer manager again this year and he is busy with many projects. (see inside) We are very fortunate to have such a dedicated friend of the museum working with us. Please stop by and say hello to Mike.

We have delivered our Pepin County brochures/pamphlets to Pioneer Village in Barron County. In return, we have some of theirs to share at our museum. Partnerships like this help us get the message out that we have a quality museum here in Durand. Please bring someone you know, a relative or a friend who can no longer drive, to visit your Old Courthouse Museum; it is amazing and always improving.

Thanks to all you readers of this newsletter! You receive "The Columns" because you are a member of PCHS and your membership fees help support all the things we are doing.

This summer get out and visit a museum near you.

God Bless...

- KimWagenbach, PCHS President

"Night at the Museum"

Thursday, July 25

Open House: 6 – 9 p.m.

Bell Tower Dedication: 6:30 p.m.
on the courthouse lawn

Featured Presentation: 7:15 p.m.
in the upstairs courtroom

"Poets and Poetry of Pepin County" presented by Terry Mesch

The Old Courthouse Museum and 1895 Jail will once again hold a "Night at the Museum" on Thursday, July 25. The museum will dedicate the Big Arkansaw School bell tower, which was recently moved to its new home on Washington Square, and will feature a presentation by museum director Terry Mesch entitled "Poets and Poetry of Pepin County."

The bell tower and bell from the former Big Arkansaw Valley schoolhouse have been installed on a new foundation on the courthouse lawn. The Pepin County Historical Society will conduct a small dedication ceremony to celebrate the tower's new home and to honor the memory of world-famous educator, Helen Parkhurst, a native of Durand who taught at Big Arkansaw School in 1904-05.

Later in the evening, Terry Mesch will talk about numerous poets with connections to Pepin County and will be performing many of their works. Mesch used two criteria to determine what pieces to perform: 1. the poet must have a Pepin County connection, and/or 2. the poem is about the county. Past and present poets from Pepin County are featured including, Elizabeth Clark Hardy, Maude Gue Goodrich, Nancy Place, James Brunner, Arnie Humphrey, John Graber and Mary Logue.

The evening will also include scavenger hunts for historical treasures, selfie photo stations, and a few surprises. Refreshments will be served at the Back Door Bistro. This event is free of charge and is open to the public.

SOCIETY NEWS

Repairs and improvements continue at the old courthouse and on Washington Square. The small area of the front porch concrete floor that had sunk was repaired. PCHS contracted with Durand Builders Service (DBS) to remove the broken concrete and patch the hole. Another improvement to the front porch will be new handrails for the steps. Durand Welding is preparing a design and estimate of costs.

DBS was also hired to prepare a new site at the southwest end of the courthouse square and pour a new concrete pad for the bell tower, which then stood in front of the former Arkansaw Elementary School in Arkansaw. The DBS crew then removed the tower from the school property, transported it to Durand and installed it at its new location. A few exterior trim boards will be repaired and the entire tower will be repainted.

Volunteers Gary Sweeney and Arnie Bauer, along with PCHS board members Dick Schlosser and Tom Garnevicus, labored many hours to remove and replace the badly worn storm cellar doors, which cover the exterior basement steps at the southeast end of the building. The crew also power-washed and painted the handicap ramp and rear stoop banister.

The board is also getting estimates for installation of ceiling fans in the display rooms and the upstairs courtroom.

The Old Courthouse Museum is **open anytime by appointment!** Call 715-672-5423 to set up a time.

Historic Sites in Pepin County

1885 Circus Poster – City of Durand
Old Courthouse Museum and 1895 Jail – Durand
Murals on Madison - Durand
Arkansaw Creek Park – Village of Arkansaw
Little Plum School House – Town of Frankfort
Little House Wayside - Town of Pepin
Laura Ingalls Wilder Museum – Village of Pepin
Pepin Depot Museum – Village of Pepin
Stockholm Museum – Village of Stockholm

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Editor: Terry J. Mesch

Memorials Received:

For: Verta Smith
From: Lee Grippen



The PCHS community was saddened this spring with the passing of long-time society member and museum volunteer, Linda Solie. Linda was an upbeat and dedicated worker, who was there to help when needed. We miss you, Linda. - Linda's husband, John, shares her interest in history having served on the PCHS Board of Directors for many years. We are blessed with their service.

Museum Notes

Mike Shoup has returned as Summer Manager at the museum and has resumed his project from last summer of organizing, condensing, cataloguing and indexing the museum's historical files and photographs. This work will make future research much easier.

Another summer project will be building a new website for the museum. Our current site, found at www.oldpepincountycourthouse.org, was designed several years ago and has suffered from lack of attention since then. The goal is to develop the site into a more useful research tool for Pepin County history and will include digitizing our photo collection and more of the county's written history. Another goal is better integration with social media (Facebook, etc.), to make the site more accessible to smart phone users.

Museum staff has been playing with the idea of designing "selfie stations" at different locations throughout the museum and the jail. The stations will invite visitors to take a unique selfie photo on their smart phones and share them with the world. Currently, visitors can snuggle up under the arm of our asbestos fire-fighter's suit; and, we hope to have a life-size figure of Ed Maxwell (our notorious 1881 lynching victim) to stand next to for a photo-op.

Pepin County Historical Society

Officers: President: Kim Wagenbach
Vice-Pres: Dick Schlosser
Secretary: Lois Laehn
Treasurer: Galen Radle
Directors: Rita Conlin, John Solie, Jean Kannel,
Tom Garnevicus, Jane Jafferri

Moving the Bell Tower



Durand Builders Service crew and crane lifting the bell tower from its concrete pad at the former Arkansas Elementary School.



Loaded for transport to its new home in Durand.



Lowered into place at Washington Square.

The Making of Pepin County

(The following is an excerpt from "The Making of Pepin County" by Terry Mesch. From 1854 to 1858, the village of North Pepin (now Pepin) was located within Dunn County. The village was growing rapidly as indicated in the following essay written by U. B. Shaver, editor of the North Pepin Independent. The article was printed in several editions of the Independent between January and August of 1857.)

"North Pepin, in Dunn County, is beautifully located on the north bank of Lake Pepin, about two miles above the mouth of the Chippewa River, and the foot of the Lake. It is but a little more than one year since the plot of this village was surveyed and recorded. It now contains a population of nearly six hundred, and is rapidly increasing in population, wealth, and commercial importance.

The Village has doubled in population during the last six months, and bids fair to increase in the same ratio for many years to come. It is easily accessible by any of the steamboats running on the upper Mississippi. Choice farms can be obtained in the immediate neighborhood of the village at government price.

The country around North Pepin is rich in its agricultural resources; and from its proximity to the great pineries on the Chippewa, Menomonee or Red Cedar, Eau Claire, and Eau Galle Rivers, will ever afford a good home market. At present, the home demand far exceeds the supply. The wants of this market offer great inducements for stock raising. The best locations for stock farms can be had within fifteen miles of town at government prices.

North Pepin will eventually become the shipping mart for the entire Chippewa Valley; and already commands the trade of a larger region of country than any other village on the Wisconsin side of the Mississippi, between La Crosse and Prescott.

Village property, though fast rising in value, is not yet held at an exorbitant rate. The location of the village, near the foot of Lake Pepin, and commanding a view of its southern shore for many miles, which shore is rife with the most imposing and beautiful scenery on the western waters and surrounded by a country rich in its varied resources, is such as to make sure of its finally becoming a wealthy, commercial city. It is now the largest and most important commercial town in Dunn County, and the same on Lake Pepin. The Village of North Pepin and country around offer superior inducements to men of all classes, who desire to secure a home and paying business in the western country."

Pepin County Historical Society
OLD COURTHOUSE MUSEUM & 1895 JAIL
Washington Square
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Durand, WI 54736

Find us on the Internet!
www.oldpepincountycourthouse.org

*Pass this newsletter on
to a friend & encourage
him/her to join PCHS!*

NAME _____
STREET _____
CITY _____
STATE/ZIP _____

MEMBERSHIPS:

- \$8 Individual
- \$12 Family
- \$25 Friends of Museum
- \$25 Business/Professional
- \$50 Contributing
- \$100 Sponsor
- \$1000 Lifetime

And, here's my extra donation of \$ _____



The bell and tower from the Big Arkansaw Valley country school now at its new home on Washington Square. A dedication is planned for Thurs., July 25; see inside for details.