

Pepin County Historical Society
 OLD COURTHOUSE MUSEUM & 1895 JAIL
 Washington Square
 315 W. Madison St.
 Durand, WI 54736



THE COLUMNS

Newsletter of the Pepin County Historical Society

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Affiliate of the Wisconsin Historical Society

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Find us on the Internet!
www.oldpepincountycourthouse.org

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 him/her to join PCHS!**

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- ___ \$8 Individual
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And, here's my extra donation of \$ _____



We **celebrate the life** and mourn the passing of a great PCHS volunteer and tireless community servant, Bernard J. Brantner. See inside.

COVID-19 Still Making Its Own History

PCHS Postpones Upcoming Events - Museum Is Open with Safe Distancing

The Old Courthouse Museum's annual "Night at the Museum" will not be held this summer due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. Also, at present, no plans are being made for an Autumn Education Event, which would normally be held in October.

"Night at the Museum" this year would have commemorated the 100th anniversary of ratification of the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution granting women the right to vote, which occurred August 18, 1920 when Kentucky became the 36th state to approve the amendment. Wisconsin was the first state to ratify the 19th Amendment more than a year earlier.

Considerable effort had gone into planning and development of a 45-minute readers' theater presentation depicting events surrounding Susan B. Anthony's delivery of her famous speech "Women Want Bread, Not the Ballot" in the upstairs courtroom of the Pepin County Courthouse on February 5, 1878.

The Museum and 1895 Jail are open to the public for regular summer season hours; 11am-4pm Thursday through Sunday until Labor Day. Attendance has been down so far this year, so safe distancing has been easy for the most part. Some exhibit rooms are small and keeping six-feet apart can be difficult.

We advise visitors to bring their own masks, but we do have a limited supply available. Museum staff and volunteers generally try to mask and keep safe distance when leading tours or welcoming visitors.

GREETINGS! from your PCHS president

As I write this message and think about all the events planned and cancelled in our lives lately, I pause to reflect on what is important to us. To me faith, family and friends are very important. As a country and human race, we have been moving at light speed for way to long. The pandemic has made us slow down and take a look at ourselves. I believe our health and well-being as a nation and world are very important; and I believe we need to start living as one world and try to protect and preserve it.

Volunteers along with summer manager Mike Shoup have been busy cleaning and straightening the office and other parts of the building. We are looking through our artifacts, furniture, display materials, etc. and discovering some items which have little or no value to the museum or to preserving the history of Pepin County. We have very limited space in the building and want to make room for more history exhibits.

After many, many years of dedicated service, PCHS Treasurer Galen Radle has handed-off his calculator and ledger. We all thank Galen for his service and commitment to our society and museum. And then, we would like to welcome Tom Garnevicus, who is stepping forward and assuming the office of Treasurer.

We were planning our "Night at the Museum" for Aug. 20th. We had Debra Fisher lined up to give a rendition of Susan B. Anthony's speech in the upstairs courtroom in February 1878. It was being planned as an outdoor event, but with the recent increase in Covid cases in Pepin County, we have decided to postpone the event.

We have accumulated 29 new memorial bricks, which along with the 80 we already had, will hopefully be placed in the ground this year near the Black School bell tower which we moved to Washington Square last year.

God Bless you and my thanks to all the board members, the volunteers, the director, and our summer manager without whom the museum would not be possible.

Kim Wagenbach, PCHS President

Museum Notes

Museum staff has busied itself reorganizing the office this summer; with a long-range goal of using the room for a new exhibit dedicated to commerce in Pepin County. Numerous industries in addition to agriculture have been important to the county's economy throughout history; including timber, food processing, manufacturing, communications, banking, fishing, construction, retailing, etc. Staff and volunteers are brainstorming ideas, exploring artifacts, and finding stories to include in the planning and development of a large new exhibit. The project is in its very early stages and will likely take a couple years to realize.

Society News

After three decades of service to PCHS, Galen Radle has stepped away from the office of Treasurer and the Board of Directors. Galen became involved in the historical society soon after its organization in 1985. His long-time service to PCHS is just one on a long list of projects, events, institutions, governing boards and organizations to which he gave of his time and energy. Galen's ever-cheerful voice and calm, accepting demeanor helped make PCHS board meetings productive and enjoyable. Though words cannot adequately express the debt of gratitude owed Galen for his many years of service to PCHS and the greater Pepin County community, we say: THANK YOU, GALEN!!

Other Notes

If you haven't visited the Museum in a few years, you are in for a pleasant surprise during your next visit. New exhibits and displays can be found in every room; some are very impressive and informative. Meanwhile, for just a small taste of what you will find in the Museum, visit our redesigned and redeveloped website at www.oldpepincountycourthouse.org. We have added new photos of the display rooms and have added pages for county history, an index of the museum's historical files, and more.

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Editor: Terry J. Mesch

Memorials Received:

For: Ethel Bauer From: Gerald/Vivian Levenske

Bernard Brantner's Legacy to PCHS

Long time volunteer, friend and patron of PCHS, Bernard Brantner died this past spring. The Covid pandemic prevented a traditional memorial and celebration of life service which Bernard richly deserved. For several decades, Bernard gave freely of his time, labor and materials to provide the Old Courthouse Museum with some of its most important historical displays. Many of his creations are viewed and appreciated by visitors daily; while other pieces of his handiwork cannot be seen but are integral to the structure and/or design of displays in every room of the museum.

The most visible of his contributions, the Black School bell tower, now stands on the front lawn of Washington Square. More than a decade ago, the bell tower was removed from the roof of the school where it had stood in the Town of Waterville for more than a century. The tower was transported to Bernard's workshop at his home in Durand, where board-by-board he dismantled, renovated and rebuilt the entire structure. Bernard worked on it for over two weeks, including several 10-hour-plus days, to complete the restoration of the tower. It was then installed on a concrete base in front of the Arkansaw Elementary School in Arkansaw, Wis. until the school closed a couple years ago. It was moved to Washington Square last year and received minor repairs and a new coat of paint.

Even before the bell tower project, Bernard built and donated to the museum a beautiful scale model of the old Durand railroad depot. He painstakingly cut each tiny cedar shingle for the roof. The depot is the centerpiece of the Museum's Railroad Room display.

more →

Pepin County Historical Society

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

Bernard's Legacy – cont'd.



Russ Haigh, left, and Bernard pose with the restored Black School bell tower just after it was installed in front of Arkansaw Elementary School in 2004.

Bernard's unseen handiwork that plays a vital supporting role are the heavy-duty, wheeled dollies which support at least a half-dozen of the Museum's glass display cases. These dollies made the display cases easier to move and raised them up to a better viewing height. And, some other easily overlooked creations include the guest-registry-book podium with built-in donation box and small music stands which are part of the Elizabeth Clark Hardy exhibit.

His most recent contribution was the donation of a scale model dairy barn that was based on one located on a farm where he worked during the 1940s. This true-to-life barn is the centerpiece of the Museum's new Agriculture Room completed last year. The barn was featured in the Smithsonian Institute's 2003 travelling exhibit, *Barn Again! Celebrating an American Icon*, and was shown in numerous cities around the state of Wisconsin. The barn has remarkable detail including working wooden stanchions, pine siding, timber-framed oak posts and beams that are mortised and pegged.

"Women Want Bread, not the Ballot"

Excerpts from Susan B. Anthony's Feb. 5, 1878 speech in the Pepin County Courthouse in Durand:

"My purpose tonight is to demonstrate the great historical fact that disfranchisement is not only political degradation, but also moral, social, educational and industrial degradation; and that it does not matter whether the disfranchised class live under a monarchial or a republican form of government, or whether it be white working men of England, negroes on our southern plantations, serfs of Russia, Chinamen on our Pacific coast, or native born, tax-paying women of this republic. ...

"...notwithstanding the declaration of our Revolutionary fathers, 'all men created equal,' 'governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed,' 'taxation and representation inseparable' — notwithstanding all these grand enunciations, our government was founded upon the blood and bones of half a million beings bought and sold as chattels in the market. Nearly all the original thirteen states had property qualifications, which disfranchised poor white men as well as women and negroes. ...

"The law of capital is to extort the greatest amount of work for the least amount of money; the rule of labor is to do the smallest amount of work for the largest amount of money. Hence there is...antagonism between the two classes; therefore, neither should be left wholly at the mercy of the other. ...

"I say all men combined in government are not good enough to govern all women without their consent."



Bernard with the scale-model, timber-framed dairy barn he built for the 2003 *Barn Again! Celebrating an American Icon* exhibit that visited more than a dozen Wisconsin communities. The barn is now the centerpiece of the Museum's Agriculture Room.