



THE COLUMNS

Newsletter of the Pepin County Historical Society

Affiliate of the Wisconsin Historical Society

June 2005

HIGHLIGHTS OF SPRING MEETING & SOCIETY NEWS

The PCHS Spring Meeting was held Sunday, April 10, at Durand High School. During a short business meeting, PCHS members elected Rita Conlin, Lois Laehn and Jean Kannel to three-year terms on the Board of Directors. The documentary film, "Tony Wolf - The Story and Life of a Stonecutter," was the featured presentation.

At age 16, Tony picked up a hickory mallet to carve his first piece of Dunnville sandstone. Today, at age 91, he is mentoring the new owners of the Dunnville Quarry, Aaron Koepple and Craig Thibado, who plan to reopen the quarry. When asked the secret to stonecutting, Tony replied, "An accurate and hard blow." The film showed the visible influence this fine sandstone has had on local, regional and national architecture. More than 40 people attended.

The original bell from the Black School has been restored and installed in the bell tower at Arkansaw Middle School. Bernard Brantner built a new bracket for the bell, since it was larger than the one previously mounted inside the tower. The "new" bell barely fit through the tower's window. The Ray Bauer Family donated the bell to PCHS, which will ensure preservation of this piece of Pepin County history.

Museum exhibits and displays have been changing. Volunteer and board member efforts and ideas are making for a new look. An interesting, new tour guide has been written to help volunteer hosts and visitors.

The PCHS Board is grateful to everyone for their contributions and their commitment to historical preservation.

- Russell Haigh

TOURS, RESEARCH, QUERIES

Persons interested in making arrangements for museum tours, doing research, asking questions about the collection, etc., should leave a message on the museum phone (715-672-5423) or call the Pepin County Development Office (715-672-5709).

PCHS SUMMER POTLUCK PICNIC

Monday, July 11, 2005

At the Round Hill Pavilion

Round Hill Road - 3 mi. SE of Arkansaw, Wis.

5:30 p.m. (6:00 p.m. to eat)

Featured presentation:

"Round Hill...Past, Present, Future"

Bring a dish to pass, your own eating utensils and beverages, and a lawn chair...then sit and enjoy the good food, the pleasant company, and the inspiring natural setting of historic Round Hill on the banks of the Chippewa River.

The new pavilion is screened...**no mosquitoes!!** Also, a shuttle bus will be available to transport folks from the parking lot to the pavilion.

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Round Hill is located in the heart of the recently created Lower Chippewa River Natural Area, which contains one of Wisconsin's largest, last remaining native prairie remnants and the largest contiguous stand of bottomland hardwood forests in the Midwest.

The Catholic Diocese of La Crosse, the State of Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and local communities are cooperating to preserve the unspoiled natural area surrounding Round Hill. Located along the west bank of the Chippewa River three miles south of Durand, Round Hill figures prominently in the region's history.

The hill served as a navigational landmark for Native Americans and the earliest European explorers, among whom was French Franciscan priest Louis Hennepin in 1680. Two hundred years later, Albert Gillmore operated a sheer boom for organizing log rafts for lumber baron Frederick Weyerhauser. Gillmore also ran a lodging house for raftsmen and loggers, who worked the spring log drives, and other river travelers.

During the first half of the 20th century, Round Hill served as a Catholic religious retreat center, first by the Oblate Order and later the Society of Mary. The last half of the century it was privately owned, once again, by the Gillmore family.

Finally, in the year 2000, the La Crosse Diocese purchased Round Hill to honor its historical importance to the Church and the community and to preserve its natural beauty.

SOCIETY NEWS

"HONOR AN EDUCATOR" - Buy-a-Brick project has finally reached the magical threshold of 50 bricks purchased, and we are sending in the order for the first batch of engraved paving bricks, which should be ready about a month after the order is placed. If all goes well, the bricks will be laid along the walkway of the Helen Parkhurst / Black School Bell Tower Memorial in front of the Arkansaw Middle School before the end of summer. If you are one of the many who have been procrastinating about getting a brick, now is the time to order so it can be included with our first order.

GENEALOGISTS & RESEARCHERS are encouraged to use the PCHS archives and library any time by appointment. PCHS has a large collection of obituaries and an ever-expanding collection of family histories and genealogies available. The library also features photographs, personal scrapbooks, and historical documents.

HIS HONOR TO BE HONORED - The PCHS Board of Directors has invited the soon-to-be-retired Pepin-Buffalo County Circuit Court Judge, the Honorable Dane F. Morey, to attend the Society's Fall Membership Meeting. The Board will honor Judge Morey for his many years of service to Pepin County and has asked him to share his memories and anecdotes. The Fall Meeting is scheduled for Sunday, October 9 at 2 p.m..

HISTORICAL ORGANIZATIONS ACTIVE IN VILLAGE OF PEPIN

The Pepin Historical Museum, on Highway 35 in the village of Pepin, is open seven days a week from May 15 – October 15. Owned and operated by the Laura Ingalls Wilder Memorial Society (LIWMS) of Pepin, the displays at the museum highlight the pioneer experiences described by Wilder in her first book, Little House in the Big Woods, which was set in the Pepin area. One room in the museum is furnished as a bedroom, with a trundle bed and other furnishings of the 1870s frontier. Another room is furnished as a kitchen. Several showcases display artifacts from Pepin's early days. The museum recently opened the building next door, which features a pioneer classroom and a large model steamboat on which children can climb. The museum is a popular destination for school field trips. Schools and other large tour groups are asked to make advance arrangements by calling Jackie Norvell at (715)442-2149.

An affiliate of the Wisconsin State Historical Society, LIWMS has been active since 1975. Besides the museum, LIWMS owns and maintains the Laura Ingalls Wilder Wayside, a reconstruction of the "Little House in the Big Woods," at the birth site of the famous author on Highway CC in Pepin Township. The wayside is open year round. The "Little House" is unfurnished and unstaffed.

The Laura Ingalls Wilder Days committee organizes the popular two-day event which will be held this year on September 10 and 11. The committee is separate from LIWMS, but the two groups work in close and friendly cooperation. For more information about this event, visit the Pepin website at: www.pepinwisconsin.com or call Pepin visitor information at (715) 442-3011

Another museum in the village of Pepin is the Pepin Depot Museum. The old railroad station was saved in 1985 and moved to the Laura Ingalls Wilder Park on Highway 35 in the village. The museum is open daily, from 9-4 Monday through Friday and from 9-5 on Saturday and Sunday, from May to October.

- by Kitty Latane

SYMPATHY TO THE FAMILY OF:

Floyd Rhiel - PCHS member

MEMORIALS RECEIVED -

For:	From:
Lyman Bryan	Mary Buchholtz
Mary Endl	Mary Buchholtz
Robert F. Goodrich	Tri-County Telephone Coop Audrey Hoeser Madeleine Lieftring Gerald & Karen Sundstrom
Harland Hartung	George Baier
Miles W. Hoffman	Tri-County Telephone Coop
Dale Johnson	Tri-County Telephone Coop
Edward J. Komro	Arlan & Annette Swartwood
Verena E. Komro	Mary Buchholtz
Midge Lieftring	Judith Schwellenbach
Bernard A. Pittman	Mary Buchholtz
Helen Plumer	Lee Grippen Mary Buchholtz
Floyd Rhiel	Richard & Denise Polzer Rita & Fred Conlin Judith Schwellenbach Richard & Vera Slabey
Floyd & Margaret Rhiel	Mary Buchholtz
Russell Walters	Audrey Hoeser Madeleine Lieftring
Almeda Wekkin	Mary Buchholtz

A gift membership to the Pepin County Historical Society is a great way to show your thoughtfulness and care for someone special.

RS

Pepin County Historical Society

Officers:

President: Russell Haigh
Vice-Pres.: Don Rahman
Secretary: Roberta Stuart
Treasurer: Galen Radle

Directors:

Rita Conlin, Kim Wagenbach,
John Solie, Lois Laehn, Jean Kannel

"THE COLUMNS" is published three times a year by the Pepin County Historical Society.

Editor: Terry J. Mesch

OLD COURTHOUSE MUSEUM NEWS

THE MUSEUM HOSTED more than 200 visitors during the month of May, most of them third graders and fifth graders from area schools. Volunteers hosted two Law Days this year. On May 2, fifth graders from Pepin, St. Mary's and Arkansaw held mock trials and toured the Old Courthouse and Jail. On May 6, Mondovi fifth graders had their Law Day. Meanwhile, students from Otter Creek Christian School toured the museum the morning of May 5, and students of the Seventh Day Adventist Grade School in Milwaukee (taught by former Pepin County resident Jane Grippen Jaffrey) toured during late afternoon the same day. Finally, third graders from Caddie Woodlawn Elementary School in Durand enjoyed their tours on May 20.

ANNUAL CLEANING DAY on May 11 rallied more than a half dozen energetic volunteers to dust, sweep, mop, vacuum, wash, wipe, and polish the Old Courthouse from top to bottom. Amazing what a few good-natured, hardworking, determined individuals can accomplish in a few hours.

REGULAR TUESDAY VOLUNTEERS are focusing on photographs, trying to identify, organize, and catalogue as many photos as possible to make future research easier. The task can be overwhelming because of the sheer number of photographs PCHS has.

LIKE THE LITTLE ELVES who helped the shoemaker, Bernard Brantner and Russ Haigh show up when no one else is around and leave surprises...like three new risers on casters for the display cases in the central corridor on the main floor. Other volunteers will soon be making pleated skirting to dress up the base of the display cases. Thank you, Bernard & Russ!

TWO NEW OIL PAINTINGS by Charles Hovey Gleason have been acquired (donated by Carl Morsbach of Freeport, Ill.) and are now on display in the museum, along with four other Gleason pieces already held by PCHS. C. H. Gleason was born in Durand in 1874, the same year the Old Courthouse was built. These impressive landscape paintings (five large oils and one watercolor) are likely a hundred or more years old. The two largest (one is nine feet wide by four feet high) are believed to depict scenes around Durand. Gleason's 1895 marriage certificate (to Fannie Atkins) lists his occupation as "photographer." The 1898 birth certificate of his son Erwin lists Charles' occupation as "artist." And, the 1900 birth certificate of son Harvey shows his father's occupation as "fresco painter." Gleason is said to have painted murals on the walls and ceilings of numerous Durand homes. These extraordinary paintings alone are worth a special trip to the museum for anyone who hasn't been there in a while.



Nine ft. high replica of the Old Courthouse Museum featured in the "Portrait of Pepin County" diorama at Tarrant Park, Durand, Wis. Designed by Wm. D. Hoesser of Durand and constructed by Gary Sweeney of Durand and numerous volunteers.

Join us!

2005 PCHS Membership Form

*I would like to join the Pepin County Historical Society
and the Old Courthouse Museum*

(please print)

MEMBERSHIPS:

- \$5 Individual
- \$8 Family
- \$25 Friends of
Museum
- \$25
Business/Professional
- \$50 Contributing
- \$100 Sponsor
- \$1000 Lifetime

Name _____

Address _____ Phone _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Mail to: PCHS Treasurer, P.O. Box 74, Durand, WI 54736

Pepin County Historical Society
OLD COURTHOUSE MUSEUM
Washington Square
P.O. Box 74
Durand, WI 54736

PRST STD
Non-Profit
Organization
U.S. postage
PAID
Durand, WI
Permit No. 5



PCHS Summer Potluck Picnic
Monday, July 11
5:30 p.m. (6:00 to eat)
Round Hill Pavilion
(see inside for details)

DATES TO REMEMBER

- Jul 6 - PCHS Board @ Museum 5:00 pm
- Jul 11 - Summer Picnic 5:30 p.m. @ Round Hill
- Aug 3 - PCHS Board @ Museum 5:00 pm
- Aug 20 - West Central Council of Local History Regional Conference @ Alma
- Sep 7 - PCHS Board @ Museum 5:00 pm
- Oct 5 - PCHS Board @ Museum 5:00 pm
- Oct 9 - Fall Meeting
- Oct 15 - Last Day Open for '05 season

MUSEUM WISH LIST*:
- new track-lighting systems in display areas

RED MARK on your mailing label indicates you've not paid membership dues

