



# THE COLUMNS

Newsletter of the Pepin County Historical Society

Vol. XXVII, No. 2

Affiliate of the Wisconsin Historical Society

June, 2013

## President's Message:

Greetings from the President's Desk...and **thank you** to all PCHS members and volunteers; without you and your support we could not keep our museum or organization running.

Our volunteers have been very busy this spring with school children tours, the Spring Fresh Art Tour and Fresh Paint event, FunFest, and their regular Tuesday workdays. You are doing a great job!

We have hired a new summer intern, Bob Bell. Stop in to the museum to say "Hi." We received a grant from the St. Croix Valley Foundation to help cover the cost and are very grateful to the Foundation.

Our summer Potluck and education event will be held Monday, July 15 and will feature Father Bernard McGarty from La Crosse. He will talk about the Upper Mississippi River and Fr. Louis Hennepin, who explored the area in the late 1600s.

The recent wet weather brings back memories when I was a young boy on my parents' farm in Barron County. I remember one wet summer in the 1960s burning hay in windrows because it could not be made into edible food. In later years, we would chop it back onto the ground to be used as mulch. Wet weather is nothing new to farmers, but it remains a challenge.

We survived last year's drought, which was followed by a serious winter kill of hay; and now the wet spring. But it all becomes history from which we learn something, and then we look to the future and point to the positive. We are blessed to live in a wonderful area of this great state of Wisconsin.

Be sure to visit our wonderful museum this summer; you'll be surprised at how much history we have to share. Encourage a friend or relative to join PCHS. We also have volunteer opportunities for those who are interested. Thank you all!

- Kim Wagenbach, PCHS President

## UWEC Grad Student Robert Bell is 2013 Intern

Robert Bell, a graduate student at UW-Eau Claire, has begun a summer internship in museum operations and management at the Old Courthouse Museum. The internship will help Bell meet the requirements for a Master's Degree in Public History.

During the past several years, Bell has received Bachelor's Degrees in both History and American Indian Studies at UW-Eau Claire and is currently completing the final requirements for a Master's Degree in Public History.

## PCHS Summer Potluck

**Monday, July 15 at 5:30 p.m.**

**Durand Junior-Senior High School Cafeteria  
Durand, Wisconsin**

**Featured Presentation:**

***"Hennepin's Travels in the Upper  
Mississippi River Valley"***

**by Msgr. Bernard McGarty**

PCHS members and the public are invited to attend the annual Summer Potluck and Education Event on Monday, July 15. This year's featured presenter is Msgr. Bernard McGarty of La Crosse, Wisconsin, who will talk about the explorations of Fr. Louis Hennepin in the Upper Mississippi River Valley in 1680. Hennepin and his two companions are believed to have traveled up the Chippewa River as far as the mouth of the Red Cedar River.

Rev. McGarty, a retired Catholic priest from the Diocese of La Crosse, is the Visiting Scholar of Ecumenical Studies in the Department of Religious Studies at Viterbo University in La Crosse. He is the former editor of the "Times Review", the La Crosse Diocese newspaper. He has done considerable research into the history of the Catholic Church and in 1997 co-authored "Encyclopedia of American Catholicism".

McGarty served the diocese as Vocations Director, Director of Communications, and Director of Ecumenism. He has also been pastor of several parishes within the diocese including: St. Patrick's Parish in Onalaska, St. Patrick's Parish in Eau Claire, St. Matthew's Parish in Wausau, and Blessed Sacrament in La Crosse.

He received a bachelor's degree in philosophy from Loras College, Dubuque, Iowa in 1945 and a bachelor's degree in theology from Kenrick Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri in 1949. In 1979, he received a licentiate in theology and, in 1989, a doctorate in sacred theology from Angelicum University, Rome, Italy.

**Attendees at the PCHS Summer Potluck are asked to bring a dish to pass and their own beverages, plates, cups and eating utensils.** Coffee and water will be available. The gathering begins at 5:30 p.m. with plans to begin eating by 6:15 and the presentation to follow at 7:00.

**Find us on the Internet!**

[www.oldpepincountycourthouse.org](http://www.oldpepincountycourthouse.org)

## MUSEUM / SOCIETY NEWS & NOTES

Nearly four dozen people attended the PCHS Annual Meeting and Spring Education Event in April which featured Arlyn Colby talking about the Chippewa Valley Line (CVL) railroad that ran from Wabasha, Minn. to Chippewa Falls. Also at this meeting, John Solie, Dick Schlosser, and Lynn Coulson were re-elected to new three year terms on the PCHS Board of Directors.

Officers of the PCHS Board (see below) were unanimously re-elected to one-year terms during the Board's first meeting after the April Annual Membership meeting.

More than 150 people visited the Museum during the "Fresh Paint" outdoor painting event during May. Nearly 20 artists from Minnesota and Wisconsin created more than 60 paintings during the successful five day event, which was co-sponsored by PCHS and Imagination Nation, an arts group from Durand.

The City of Durand has new banners adorning the light poles in downtown, and once again the Old Courthouse is prominently featured. This time, it is a reproduction of the Rozan Henning painting, "Campaign Speeches", which was commissioned by PCHS for Pepin County's 2008 Sesquicentennial and now hangs in the Main Hallway in the Museum.

### From PCHS Gift Shop

25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary T-Shirts - sizes s-m-l-xl - cheap!

Dime Novel Desperadoes - The Notorious Maxwell Brothers, by John Hallwas, 2008, published by University of Illinois Press; winner - "Best Biography from the Midwest" by the Society of Midland Authors, \$30.00-hardcopy, \$25-paperback

Brothers in Blood, by Les Kruger, 2008 - \$20.00

Durand 1881, compiled by Vera Slabey, published by PCHS, 1987 - \$3.00

Steamboat Navigation on the Chippewa River, by Peter A. Adler, published by PCHS, 2004 - \$10.00

Mary Plummer Clemenceau - Sweetheart of Pepin County, by Vern Pinkowski, published by PCHS, 1997 - \$10.00

Helen Parkhurst - Educator, by Vern Pinkowski, published by PCHS, 1999 - \$10.00

Elizabeth Clarke Hardy - Wife, Writer, Farmer, Poet and Editor, by Vern Pinkowski, published by PCHS, 2001 - \$10.00

A Pathway to Pepin County's Stone Age People, by Vern Pinkowski, published by PCHS, 2003 - \$10.00

A Vanished Community - The Waubeek Saw Mill Settlement, by Vern Pinkowski, published by PCHS, 2004 - \$10.00

Phil Scheckel - The Man & The River He Loved, by Don Rahman, published by PCHS, 2006 - \$10.00

A Twisted Pig's Tale, by Vern Pinkowski, 2008 - \$10.00

Your purchase will help support the PCHS mission of "preserving the history and traditions of Pepin County." The Old Courthouse Museum is **open anytime by appointment!** Call 715-672-5423 to set up a time for you and/or your group to visit / tour the museum.

## Memorials Received

For	From
Irene Amelia Bradswaw	Ruth E. Hofland
Gordon Hintermeyer	Lee E. Grippen
Reve Brown Szymanski	Sue Christensen



PCHS / Old Courthouse Museum Summer Intern Robert Bell is continuing to research the meeting minutes of the Pepin County Board of Supervisors. This research to find details about the courthouse, jail and Washington Square will be used to produce a complete written history of the building. It is just one part in the development of a Historic Structure Report, which is a pre-requisite to seeking funding for any future renovation or restoration projects.

### Pepin County Historical Society

#### Officers:

President: Kim Wagenbach

Vice-Pres.: Lynn Coulson

Secretary: Roberta Stuart

Treasurer: Galen Radle

#### Directors:

Rita Conlin, John Solie, Lois Laehn,

Jean Kannel, Dick Schlosser

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

Editor: Terry J. Mesch

## GRANT & GIFTS TO PCHS

The St. Croix Valley Foundation (SCVF) has granted PCHS \$3500 to assist with funding the Summer Internship Program. Organized in 1995, SCVF supports an array of initiatives, programs and nonprofits involved in health, spiritual, environmental, artistic, civic, educational and human service causes.

PCHS works in cooperation with the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire History Department's Master's Degree Program in Public History (directed by Professor John Mann), which offers university credits for the summer internship to qualified students.

PCHS received an unrestricted gift of \$500 from Durand residents, Art and Mary Fedie. The Fedies have been strong supporters of the Museum for the past several years. Their first donations were religious statues carved by Michael Anibas (Art's ancestor) in 1886 for Holy Rosary Catholic Church at Lima. These artifacts have historical and artistic significance and are on permanent display in the Museum.

PCHS also received a new laptop computer, an ASUS Notebook PC worth an estimated \$400, from William D. Hoesser of Durand. This will replace our "ancient" used desktop computer.

The PCHS Board expresses its deepest appreciation to Art and Mary, Bill and the St. Croix Valley Foundation for their important contributions.



The Tuesday volunteers have developed a new temporary exhibit honoring the 50th anniversary of Durand Funfest. The display features the formal dress worn by Marcia Kannel, "Miss Durand-1990" and the Jack-in-the-Box clown costumes worn by the children of Richard and Vera Slabey as they rode on a float sponsored by Slabey's Ben Franklin Store in the 1964 Funfest Parade.

### PEPIN COUNTY FAIR & "THE PRINCE OF CRANKS"

The Pepin County Agricultural Society was organized at Durand in March, 1878. Shortly after its formation the citizens of Durand purchased land for a fairgrounds with funds raised by subscription. According to History of Buffalo and Pepin Counties (published: 1919), the fairgrounds included a fine half-mile track, a good grandstand, and other buildings covering an area of 40 acres. The first fair was held in September of 1878 and then held annually early in the fall. The fairs were well conducted, well supported and well patronized by the local public.

An excerpt from an article in the August 17, 1891 "*The Daily Journal, Milwaukee*" stated: "The annual fair of the Pepin County Agricultural Society comes off Sept. 9, 10 and 11, at Durand. Among the features of the occasion will be an address, on the second day, by Ignatius Donnelly, the great Baconian crank."

Donnelly, a former U.S. Congressman from Minnesota, was held by some to be one of the greatest crackpots who ever lived. Born in Philadelphia in 1831, he attended public schools, studied law, was admitted to the bar in 1852 and practiced in Philadelphia.

Amidst a small scandal, he moved to Minnesota in 1857 and settled at Nininger near Hastings in Dakota County, where he engaged in literary pursuits and politics. He was elected Lieutenant Governor of Minnesota 1859-1863 and was elected as a Republican to the Thirty-eighth, Thirty-ninth, and Fortieth U. S. Congresses (1863-1869).

In 1882, Donnelly published [Atlantis: The Antediluvian World](#), detailing his theories about the mythical [lost continent](#). In 1888, he

published [The Great Cryptogram](#) in which he proposed that [Shakespeare's](#) plays had been [written by Francis Bacon](#), an idea that was popular during the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

In addition to writing, Donnelly made several other campaigns for public office during the 1880s. He ran a losing campaign for Congress (this time as a [Democrat](#)) in 1884. During this period, he was also an organizer of the [Minnesota Farmers' Alliance](#).

In 1892, Donnelly wrote the preamble of the [People's Party](#) Platform for the presidential campaign of that year. He was nominated for Vice President of the United States in 1900 by the People's Party, also known as the Populist Party.



Donnelly, a bestselling writer & reform-minded congress- man from Minnesota, was ambitious, but failed in his dreams to build a city, reform American politics, reveal the facts about Atlantis, discover a secret code in Shakespeare, and prove that the world's gravel deposits were the result of a collision with a comet. His dire political prophecies of the imminent collapse of civilization also failed to come true. His critics dubbed him the "Prince of Cranks."

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



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Durand Jr-Sr High School Cafeteria  
Durand, Wisconsin

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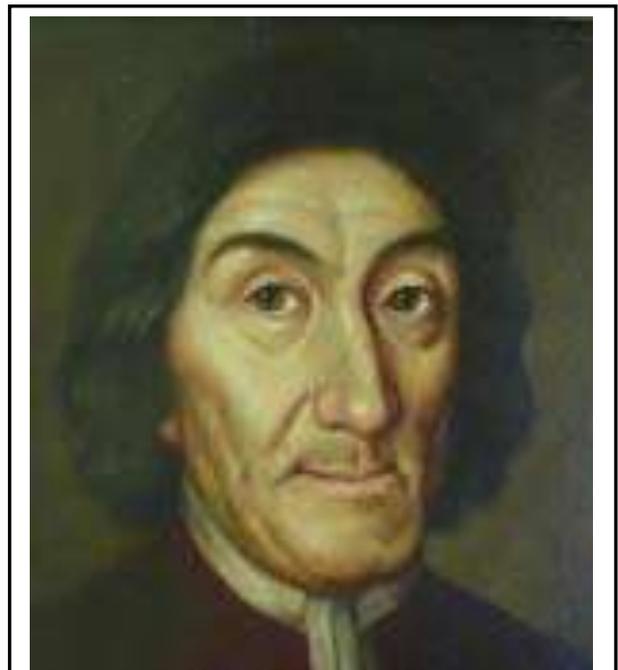
The Old Courthouse Museum and Jail are open  
from 11am to 4pm Thursday through Sunday now  
through Labor Day weekend.

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

Name _____
Address _____
_____

**MEMBERSHIPS:**

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



**Louis Hennepin**, a Franciscan Recollect friar, was one of the first Europeans to explore the Upper Mississippi River. He is believed to have passed by Round Hill and the future site of the City of Durand. His travels are the subject of the PCHS Summer Education Event.