

Pepin County Historical Society  
 OLD COURTHOUSE MUSEUM  
 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](http://www.oldpepincountycourthouse.org)



**COLORED DOT HERE IS  
 A REMINDER TO RENEW  
 YOUR 2015 MEMBERSHIP**

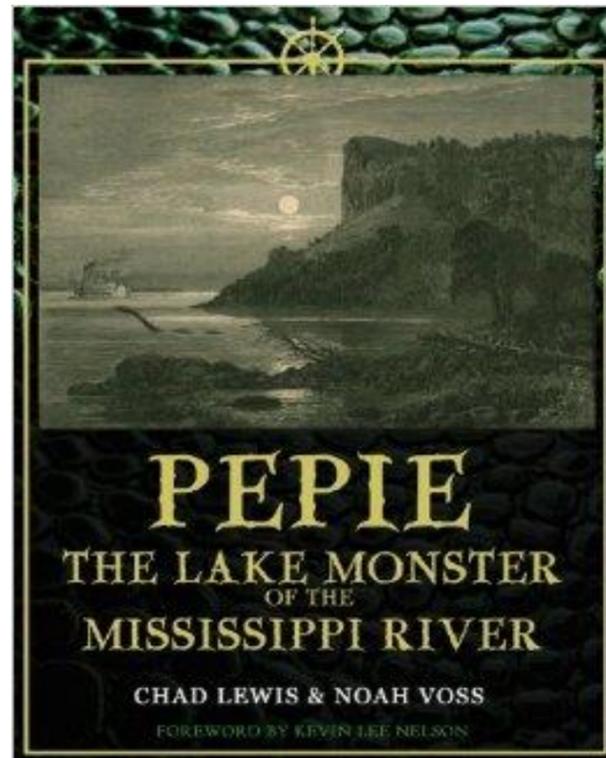
**Pass this newsletter on  
 to a friend & encourage  
 him/her to join PCHS!**

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 \$ \_\_\_\_\_



Does "Pepie" really exist? Find out more at the PCHS Annual Meeting April 12 when paranormal researcher and author Chad Lewis of Eau Claire will explain the unexplainable.

GREETINGS! from the president's desk! It seems like we just went through a very long winter, but there's still just as many days between December 21 and March 21 as in the past. Now as the weather improves, PCHS is once again making plans for the busy spring and summer seasons at the museum. We are again planning to hire a summer intern, who will allow us to be open Thursday through Sunday from Memorial Day to Labor Day. We have set dates for our regular educational events: Annual Membership Meeting and Spring Education Event is Sunday, April 12 at 2pm; the Summer Potluck Picnic will be July 13; and, the Autumn Education Event will be Sunday, October 11. We will also once again be hosting "Go Paint" the outdoor painting festival in May. Our Spring Education Event presenter Chad Lewis will give a unique and interesting look into some of the more curious (should I say freaky?) stuff in Pepin County history.

The PCHS Board has approved creation of a large outdoor sign promoting the Old Courthouse and PCHS. This new 4 ft.-by-8ft. billboard type sign will be displayed temporarily in the windows of the former Skogmo Store on Main Street in Durand. Watch for it!

Next I want to thank all our loyal volunteers for the great jobs they are doing by helping to keep our museum open and inviting and free to the public. We are lucky to have such a valuable historical resource in our community. But I also want to make an appeal to anyone who loves history and wants to get in on the fun by volunteering your services. We are in need of someone with office experience to help organize our archives and files. It's mostly a sit-down activity with lots of opportunity for advancement to other volunteer positions; best of all, it's fun and rewarding. Call the museum at 715-672-5423 and leave a message.

Finally, I must repeat my enthusiasm about being involved with a great gem of a museum and a supportive and positive board of directors. Just like history itself, our museum is always changing. Stop in to see what's new!

Thank you and God Bless.

- Kim Wagenbach, PCHS President

## PCHS ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Sunday, April 12 - 2pm

at Durand Jr-Sr High School Cafeteria

Educational event featuring  
**"Paranormal Pepin County"**

Presented by author and historian  
**Chad Lewis**

The Pepin County Historical Society will hold its Annual Membership Meeting and Spring Educational Event at 2pm on Sunday, April 12 at the Durand Junior-Senior High School Cafeteria. Featured presenter will be Chad Lewis, who has been researching and writing about the unusual, i.e. UFOs, ghosts, monsters and other things that go bump-in-the-night, for more than two decades.

This presentation will take the audience on a ghostly journey to some of the most paranormal places in Pepin County and the region; from deadly spirits haunting the back roads to a \$50,000 sea serpent inhabiting a lake (*the Lake Pepin monster?*). Filled with strange photos, case histories, eyewitness accounts, folklore, and directions, this presentation will encourage you to get out to visit these places for your own supernatural experience.

For more than 20 years Chad Lewis has traveled the back roads of the world in search of the strange and bizarre. Chad has scoured the earth tracking vampires in Transylvania, looking for the monster in Loch Ness, trailing the dangerous Tata Duende through remote villages of Belize and searching for ghosts in Ireland's castles.

Chad has been featured on the Discovery Channel's *A Haunting*, *William Shatner's Weird or What*, ABC's *Scariest Places on Earth*, *Monsters and Mysteries in America*, and *Beyond Belief*, along with being a frequent contributor to Ripley's *Believe it or Not* Radio. Chad has a Master's Degree in Psychology, has authored over 18 books on the supernatural, and lectures regularly about his fascinating findings. The more bizarre the legend, the more likely Chad will be there.

As always, this event is free and open to the public.

Prior to Chad's presentation, PCHS will hold its Annual Membership Meeting to elect three members to its Board of Directors. Board members whose terms expire this year are Galen Radle, Kim Wagenbach and Roberta Stuart; all of whom have indicated they are willing to serve another term. Nominations will also be taken from the floor.

## SOCIETY NEWS

PCHS had another successful financial year during 2014. Expenditures totaled \$15,400, of which more than 25% was for the museum's summer intern's wages, income taxes, social security, unemployment insurance, etc. Other major expenditures included light replacement in the courtroom, the new Helen Parkhurst exhibit, and purchases of several books for the gift shop. Revenues from memberships, bequests/memorials, donations, sales of books and cards, interest, and a transfer from savings totaled \$15,700. At the year's end, the society's checking and savings accounts and Certificates of Deposit totaled \$36,330. Anyone interested in seeing budget details can contact PCHS Treasurer Galen Radle.

Volunteers and guest hosts logged more than 500 hours working in the museum last year. Their hard work is greatly appreciated. We had approximately 850 visitors to the museum, an increase of 50 over the year before.

### New Books Added to Gift Shop

Several new books have been added to the shelves of the gift shop; *The Sea Wing Disaster; Tragedy on Lake Pepin* by Frederick Johnson, and both *Missy Sippy River Saloon* and *Only in Eau Galle* by Audrey Biesterld.

### Unique Gift Ideas from PCHS

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, \$25.00

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

Durand 1881, compiled by Vera Slabey, published by PCHS, 1987 - \$3.00 or FREE with any other purchase

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

The Sea Wing Disaster; Tragedy on Lake Pepin, by Frederick Johnson, published by Goodhue Co. Hist. Soc., 2014 - \$25.00

Missy Sippy River Saloon, by Audrey Biesterveld, 2005- \$10.00

Only in Eau Galle, by Audrey Biesterveld, 2014 - \$10.00

A Twisted Pig's Tale, by Vern Pinkowski, 2008 - \$5.00

25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary T-Shirts - sizes s-m-l-xl, \$5.00

Your purchase will help support the PCHS mission of "preserving the history and traditions of Pepin County."

## Memorials Received:

For:	From:
Roger Kallstrom	Virginia Kallstrom, Karen Sundstrom, Kenneth/Katherine Holden
Garry Blomberg	Lee Grippen
Dean Abbott	Lee Grippen
Esther Heike Smith	Lee Grippen
Leonard/Wilma Brion	Lee Grippen
Bernadine Radle	Joyce Haigh
Patricia Ulwelling	Mary Ellen/Donald Brue
Warren Walters	Mary Ellen/Donald Brue

A special memorial was received from the family and friends of Adah Hooker. Adah's obituary stated she "...was a member of the Pepin County Historical Society in Durand. Over the years she enjoyed taking out of town relatives to visit there [the Museum] ...." PCHS is grateful to Adah and her family and friends for their thoughtfulness and generosity.

### In Appreciation

PCHS expresses its sincere appreciation for unexpected donations from Art and Mary Fedie of Durand and from Carl Morsbach of Ella. Thank you all.

### Museum Notes

The Museum will once again host "Go Paint", an outdoor painting event May 20-24. The Old Courthouse Museum and Washington Square will host the participating artists, who will be in Durand and the surrounding area painting and drawing that entire week. The resulting works of art will be displayed in the Museum and will be for sale to the public.

Arrangements are being made to once again hire a summer intern. This internship in "Museum Operations" provides university students valuable experience making history accessible to the public. The internship allows us to be open to the public four days per week during the summer season and has developed new displays and exhibits, improved the telling of stories in existing exhibits, produced excellent research into the history of Washington Square, increased our Internet presence, etc.

### 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

## Main Street Durand 100 Years Ago

In 1915 the *Entering Wedge* (then one of two weekly newspapers in Durand) published a lengthy article, "*Durand Years Ago and as It Is Today*", in which the author takes the reader on a walking tour of downtown Durand. Starting somewhere northeast of the former fire hall (located today at 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue East and Main Street), the tour goes from door-to-door down River Street (now Main Street) naming the then current businesses and sometimes providing historical background on previous businesses and buildings that occupied the premises.

The author of the article is not clearly identified, but is believed to have been the editor, A. W. Crippin. Crippin and his partner, B. E. Barton, had just purchased the newspaper the previous November from August Ender. Barton, who ran the mechanical end of the business, had been associated with the paper since 1904 as part-owner and/or employee.

The article today is an important historical document which provides not only the locations of various businesses and buildings but also gossips about people, relating tales and anecdotes dating back to Durand's early settlement. It has also provided a bit more information about the "Great Fire", which occurred Christmas Day in 1881 and wiped out most of the wood-framed buildings in downtown Durand. The fire started in the Ecklor House Hotel; probably a chimney fire in the attic that went undetected until it had burned through the roof and begun to spread to adjacent structures. This article in the *Entering Wedge* provides us the location as follows:

Now across the side street to the old Ecklor Hotel site, which corner lingers with many incidents of early days. This was a noted hostelry. We have been told there was a drug store, also the post office was located here at one time. It was in this building the large fire got its start, burning most of our business blocks at the time. On the corner is now located the state bank in the building erected by A. R. Dorwin and where he carried on a general store for a number of years. The building has been remodeled and put in a modern shape for the banking business.

This building at the corner of River Street and Broadway (Main Street and 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue West today) now houses Riverview Chiropractic. Following the fire, the *Pepin County Courier* reported \$90,000 in property loss and stated:

...the alarm of fire was given and the Ecklor House was discovered to be on fire in the roof. ... A strong wind was blowing toward the river and in a very few minutes several buildings on the opposite side of the street were in flames. ... A clean sweep of both sides of the street was made from the Ecklor House corner to the post office, in all thirty-four buildings burned.

Editor Crippin in his 1915 article described the setting for his tour of downtown Durand like this:

## 2015 Saturday Volunteer Host Schedule

May 23	- Rita Conlin and Pat Rosenberg
May 30	- Paul and Lou Simpson
June 6	- Judy Schwellenbach and Joyce Haigh
June 13	- Tom Garnevicus and Terry Mesch
June 20	- Alice and Roger Bauer
June 27	- Carl Morsbach and Pat Setterlin
July 4	- Kim and Lynette Wagenbach
July 11	- Diane Bauer and Carol F. Bauer
July 18	- John and Linda Solie
July 25	- Evelyn Holmstad and Evelyn Pichler
Aug 1	- Gerald and Deanne Ripley
Aug 8	- Dick and Judy Schlosser
Aug 15	- Jane Jafferi and Lee Grippen
Aug 22	- Lorraine and Bun Brenner
Aug 29	- Roberta Stuart and Jean Kannel
Sept 5	- Evelyn Pichler and Linda DeLong
Sept 12	- Rosemary Achenbach and Galen Radle
Sept 19	- Julie Reinholen and daughter
Sept 26	- Don and Irma Bauer
Oct 3	- Terry Mesch and Lori Miller
Oct 10	- Jean and Don Kannel

If a conflict arises for the Saturday you are scheduled as a Volunteer Host, please try to make arrangements to trade with another host or contact Lois Laehn at 715-672-4883 or Terry Mesch at 715-285-5659. Your help is very important to the success of the Museum. Other volunteer hosts may be needed for special events, if you are interested contact Lois or Terry. Orientation sessions for Volunteer Hosts can be arranged by contacting Terry at 715-285-5659.

The location and general landscape of our beautiful little city has not changed except in the removal of timber from beautiful and picturesque spots caused by the necessity of more room, desire for more land and the other transformations.... In some of the latter instances we will have to admit is a decided improvement but in others far from it. Thus is the cause of growth and progress. ... The grand old Chippewa does not seem like the old familiar stream, though it is still a magnificent river. ...

In the business portion and dwellings there has been a marked transformation, yet there are some of the old familiar structures to be picked out here and there. The old Court House and Public Square have an old time look...the old stately oaks are still there in their grandeur.

The rest of this tour of downtown Durand in 1915 can be found on microfilm at the Durand Community Library. The Old Courthouse Museum has an old battered copy which will be transcribed and made available to the public later this year. Meanwhile, Museum Director Terry Mesch will be reading excerpts from the article and providing historical context during his regular 9 a.m. Thursday morning visits to WRDN 1430AM radio station in Durand.

The Museum and Jail can be **open anytime** by appointment. Call the Museum at 715-672-5423.