

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

Vol. XXX, No. 1

Affiliate of the Wisconsin Historical Society

March, 2016

Find us on the Internet!  
[www.oldpepincountycourthouse.org](http://www.oldpepincountycourthouse.org)

IF YOU CAN  
 READ THIS  
 YOU HAVE  
 PAID.  
 THANK YOU

**COLORED DOT HERE IS  
 A REMINDER TO RENEW  
 YOUR 2016 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



This 1878 map shows the confluence of Bear Creek with the Chippewa River; site of a village known as "Chippewa" (arrow). Chippewa grew very rapidly and had dozens of buildings and homes. However, several years of flooding caused removal of buildings from the site to Durand just a mile away. It is one of many "Places That Time Forgot" - PCHS Spring Education Event on April 17.

GREETINGS! to all our Friends of History and the Old Courthouse Museum. Thank you all for your support, we wouldn't be here without you.

The other day I was channel-surfing on TV and came across "Discover Wisconsin". I had watched this show in the past and always enjoyed it, but hadn't seen it in a while. In this episode they featured Wade House and Old World Wisconsin, two of the dozen historic sites and museums operated by the Wisconsin Historical Society. Both sites sound like must see travel stops in the eastern part of the state.

Meanwhile, here in the western part of Wisconsin, we are fortunate to have so many local museums and historic sites within a fifty mile radius of Durand. I encourage all of you to take a youngster (or an oldster) to a museum or historical place this summer. Anywhere in Wisconsin, history is full of great people who worked hard to help make our country what it is. Their stories are waiting to be heard.

PCHS board members and volunteers are getting busy planning another season at the Museum. We will once again hire an intern for the summer and have a few projects in the works.

PCHS has purchased a vacant lot on Main Street in Durand just across the street from the Old Courthouse. It's the site of the former Parkhurst House, a hotel operated by James Parkhurst believed to be the birth site of world renowned educator Helen Parkhurst. We're planning to develop the site into a public use green space with historical displays and a state historical marker. (see story on page 3)

Plan to attend our Annual Membership Meeting on April 17. We'll have elections to the board and some great local history presented by Brian Gabriel. Also, we've set our summer potluck picnic for July 11 and Autumn Education Event for October 9. Mark your calendars now; more information about presenters will be forthcoming. Hope to see you there.

Stop in and bring a friend or relative to the Old Courthouse Museum. Consider a donation or a bequest to PCHS to help us with our mission.

Thank you and God Bless.

- Kim Wagenbach, PCHS President

## PCHS ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Sunday, April 17 - 2pm  
 at Durand Jr-Sr High School Cafeteria

Educational event featuring  
**"Places That Time Forgot"**  
 with Brian Gabriel

Regional historian Brian Gabriel of Menomonie will be the featured presenter at the Pepin County Historical Society's annual membership meeting to be held at 2pm on Sunday, April 17 in the Durand Junior-Senior High School cafeteria. Brian and his son Evan have been exploring the lower Chippewa River valley for years and have discovered the remnants of many communities that have disappeared into the mist of history.

Brian has researched many of the settlements and river stops along the banks of the Chippewa from Eau Claire to the Mississippi River. His presentation features *then-&now* photos of these historic places, which include sites in Pepin County like Waubeek, Red Cedar, Tarrant, Dorwin's Mill, Ella, Porcupine, and Chippewa, a now disappeared village near the confluence of Bear Creek and the Chippewa River.

Brian and Evan have created numerous video documentaries about these nearly forgotten places. Brian said, "I want to make sure that these places are remembered by future generations."

Much of the Gabriels' exploration has been done by canoe which has given them close up views of places like Porterville, Sevastopol, Rumsey's Landing, and Tyrone. They have created a website on Facebook called "The Chippewa Bottoms Journey" and have produced DVD documentaries, which journal their research and findings.

Prior to Brian'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 Dick Schlosser, Lynn Coulson and John Solie; Dick and John have indicated they are willing to serve another term. Nominations will be taken from the floor.

## SOCIETY NEWS

PCHS had expenditures of \$15,750 during 2015, 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 upgraded ventilating system for the basement, a new permanent sump pump and piping, and the purchase of a 50'x80' lot in downtown Durand. Revenues from memberships, bequests/memorials, donations, sales of books and cards, and interest totaled \$8,209 plus a transfer from savings to cover the remainder of expenses. At year's end, the society's checking and savings accounts and Certificates of Deposit totaled \$23,996. 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 700 visitors to the museum, a decrease from the year before.

The board has agreed to cooperative advertising with the Laura Ingalls Wilder Society (LIWS) in Pepin. The Laura Museum will provide a spot to hang a new 4'x8' outdoor sign promoting the Old Courthouse and PCHS will find a place to hang a sign for LIWS in Durand. A similar agreement will likely be sought with the village of Stockholm.

### Unique Gift Ideas from PCHS

- The Chippewa Valley Line, by Arlyn Colby, 2015 - \$30.00
- 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:                    |
| Lynette(Brantner)Juergens | Mark Juergens            |
| Elgene S. Mesch           | Rita Conlin, Galen Radle |

### Remembrances

PCHS is saddened by the deaths of two of our members who helped our organization from the very beginning. Evelyn Holmstadt of Durand was a charter member of PCHS back in 1984 and served as a regular volunteer host since then. Evelyn passed away January 23, 2016.

Roberta Stuart ("Bertie") was a member of PCHS since 1989 and served on the PCHS Board of Directors for many years. Most of that time, she served as the Secretary, keeping minutes of board meetings and tending to correspondence. She was a regular Volunteer Host and assisted with group tours, education events, and any other chores that needed doing. Bertie's commitment to history can also be found in her work with the West Side Old Settlers Association, whose records, scrapbooks and other documents are presently archived in the Museum. Bertie died March 10, 2016.

### Museum Notes

On May 15, the Museum will host the opening event of GoPaint!, Pepin County's premier outdoor painting event. The Old Courthouse Museum and Washington Square will host the two hour Quick Paint, during which artists create a painting within visual range of the Old Courthouse.

Arrangements are being made to once again host the county's fifth graders for Law Day at the Museum. The Tri-County Bar Association will conduct a mock trial for fifth graders from Arkansaw, Assumption and Pepin in the upstairs courtroom. The kids will also tour the historical exhibits and jail.

The Museum will 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, improved 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

## PCHS to Develop Historic Parkhurst Site In Downtown Durand

Last Fall, the PCHS Board of Directors approved the purchase of two empty lots on Main Street with the intent to develop a public use green space and historic site. One of the lots was once the site of the Parkhurst House, a small two story hotel owned by the James Parkhurst family during the late 1800s. James's daughter, world renowned educator Helen Parkhurst, is believed to have been born in the hotel.

The building was destroyed in a fire in January 2010 along with two adjacent buildings. Cottage Hill Floral occupied the structure at the time of the fire. The second lot had been the site of Main Street Café. The two lots combined measure 50'x80'.

Board members for years had been aware the building was Helen's birth site and some members thought a historical marker or something might be appropriate, but no action was ever taken. Once the building was destroyed, little more thought was given to the site until the Durand School District announced it would be closing and selling the Arkansaw Elementary School.

About ten years ago, PCHS removed and restored the bell tower from the Big Arkansaw School, a one room country school a few miles northwest of Arkansaw where Helen first taught school in 1904-05. The restored tower and a walkway of inscribed paving bricks honoring teachers were installed in front of the Arkansaw Elementary School.

Concern about the bell tower now possibly having to be moved prompted the PCHS board to consider a future site it. Washington Square in Durand was one option, but the board soon began to look at the former Parkhurst House vacant lot as a logical location for the bell tower.

Following conversations with City of Durand officials about possible zoning conflicts with placing the tower downtown, the PCHS board made formal offers to purchase the Parkhurst House lot and small adjacent Main Street Café lot. By January 2016, purchase of both lots was completed.

No formal plans have been made for development of the lot. The PCHS board has informally agreed to develop a public use green space featuring the Big Arkansaw School bell tower, historical displays and a state historical site marker. The board will be seeking input from the community about development and future use of the site. Recent uses of the lot like the holiday tree display and other activities will be encouraged to continue.

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

## 2016 Saturday Volunteer Host Schedule

- May 28 - Rita Conlin and Pat Rosenberg
- June 4 - Paul and Lou Simpson
- June 11 - Judy Schwellenbach and Joyce Haigh
- June 18 - Tom Garnevicus
- June 25 - Phyllis Komro and Terry Mesch
- July 2 - Chuck and Lois Laehn
- July 9 - Keith and Mary Primeau
- July 16 - Diane Bauer and Carol F. Bauer
- July 23 - John and Linda Solie
- July 30 - Galen Radle and Evelyn Pichler
- Aug 6 - Gerald and Deanne Rippley
- Aug 13 - Dick and Judy Schlosser
- Aug 20 - Jane Jafferi and Lee Grippen
- Aug 27 - Carol F. Bauer and Galen Radle
- Sep 3 - Jean Kannel
- Sep 10 - Evelyn Pichler and Linda DeLong
- Sep 17 - Rosemary Achenbach and Galen Radle
- Sep 24 - Don and Jean Kannel
- Oct 1 - Terry Mesch and Lori Miller
- Oct 8 - Julie Reinholen and daughter

If a conflict arises for the Saturday you are scheduled as a Volunteer Host, please try 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 Parkhurst House, circa 1890, located between the Gilmore Brothers mercantile building (most recently Toni's Interiors) on the left and unknown business (Main Street Café) on the right.