



THE COLUMNS

Newsletter of the Pepin County Historical Society

Vol. XXXII, No. 1

Affiliate of the Wisconsin Historical Society

March, 2018

GREETINGS! from your PCHS president -

As winter flexes its final muscle, we are busy making plans and preparations at the museum for the coming year. We are again hiring Mike Shoup as a summer intern to help with projects and museum operations. We are fortunate, as he is creative and very passionate about history.

We have acquired another C. H. Gleason painting and have had it cleaned and repaired. This is a very exciting addition to our growing collection of Gleason's works. Read more about it inside this newsletter.

Our spring Membership Meeting will be April 8 at Durand-Arkansaw High School. At this meeting three seats of the board of directors will be up for election. The seats are currently filled by Galen Radle, Jane Jafferi (who served the remainder of the late Roberta Stuart's term) and myself. These are three-year terms and, if you would be interested in a position on the board, please contact any board member or myself. The board meets six or eight times a year and the meetings are productive, educational and fun.

Repairs to the Old Courthouse diorama and sign located near the swimming pool in Durand have been completed as well as work on the signs in front of the courthouse. Repairs to the mortar joints in the museum's stone foundation will begin this spring and should be completed before we open for the summer.

We also want to improve our internet presence and are checking with a local business to get our website updated so it is more compatible with social media and smart phone apps. We also want more pictures and maybe a virtual tour. We have a great museum and want to reach out to more people to share it with.

A big THANKS! to all the volunteers who give their time to keep the museum open and thriving. With the community's support, this LAST wood-frame courthouse in Wisconsin will remain a beautiful gem of Pepin County. You can arrange a visit anytime by calling the museum at 715-672-5423 or during our regular summer hours 11 am to 4 pm Thursday through Sunday Memorial Day to Labor Day.

God Bless...

- Kim Wagenbach, PCHS President

PCHS ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Sunday, April 8 - 2pm

at Durand-Arkansaw Jr-Sr High School Cafeteria

educational event featuring

**"The Chippewa – Biography of
a Wisconsin Waterway"**

presented by

Richard D. Cornell

The Pepin County Historical Society will hold its Annual Membership Meeting and Spring Education Event at 2 pm on Sunday, April 8 in the Durand-Arkansaw Junior-Senior High School cafeteria in Durand, Wis. Richard D. Cornell, author of "The Chippewa – Biography of a Wisconsin Waterway", is the featured guest speaker, who will talk about his canoe travels on the river and writing his book.

Cornell's book takes readers on an epic river journey, stopping off in diners and dives, quaint museums and small-town newspaper offices, to capture stories of the Chippewa River, its valley, and its people—from the Ojibwe and early fur traders and lumbermen to the colorful and robust communities of today.

From his days as a boy growing up on a small farm in southern Wisconsin, Cornell has been interested in streams and rivers. "One day...I followed it [a nearby creek] upstream to its source, where I pushed my face through the watercress and into the bubbling spring. It was the first time I had reached and tasted its source," Cornell states in the Introduction of his book.

In 2006 the "Wisconsin Magazine of History" published his article, *Knights of the Spike-soled Shoe: Lumbering on the Chippewa*, describing the tragedy at Little Falls in 1906. He also co-wrote with Jerry Poling *Greats of the Gridiron*, a news feature about the undefeated 1906 Eau Claire High School football team.

Prior to this presentation, PCHS will hold its Annual Membership Meeting during which the election of three members to its Board of Directors will be held. Board members whose terms expire this year are Kim Wagenbach, Galen Radle and Jane Jafferi, who have all indicated they are willing to serve another term. Nominations will also be taken from the floor.

MUSEUM NEWS

The Old Pepin County Courthouse and 1895 Jail on Washington Square in downtown Durand are the two most important historic artifacts in Pepin County. The Old Courthouse Museum is filled with art work, photographs, artifacts, exhibits and displays which tell the stories of the people and events of Pepin County history. The Museum recently expanded its public outreach by sponsoring a three-session course on Pepin County history. Taught by museum director Terry Mesch, the sessions focused on: 1. Early History of the Land – pre-historic to 1850; 2. The Making of Pepin County – 1850 to 1862; and, 3. History of the Old Pepin County Courthouse and 1895 Jail.

More than a dozen people signed up for the course, gave it positive reviews and expressed an interest in finding out more. Based on this early success, more offerings in Pepin County history will likely be offered in the future.

To date, the PCHS Board hasn't pursued development of the vacant lot on Main Street in downtown Durand, which the Society purchased several years ago. PCHS intends to develop a historic site devoted to Helen Parkhurst, who was born in the Parkhurst House, a hotel run by her family, which was built on that lot more than a hundred years ago. Though this project fits PCHS's mission to "preserve the history and traditions of Pepin County", our primary focus of the Old Courthouse Museum has kept us distracted. Hopefully, the Parkhurst historic site project will move forward in the near future.

The Old Courthouse Museum is **open anytime by appointment!** Call 715-672-5423 to set up a time.

Top 5 Events in History of Old Pepin County Courthouse

1. Lynching of Ed Maxwell, Nov. 1881
2. Removal of county seat from Durand to Arkansaw, 1881-1886
3. Fire in the attic causes \$4000 in damage, October, 1931
4. Listed on National Register of Historic Places, 1978
5. Becomes Old Courthouse Museum, 1985

"THE COLUMNS" is published three times a year
by the Pepin County Historical Society.
Editor: Terry J. Mesch

Memorials Received:

For:	From:
Pete Adler	Lee Grippen
Lorraine McRoberts	Lee Grippen
Gilles	
Kenneth Burr Holden	Amber Poeschel, Steve/Patsy Moline, Katherine S. Holden
Vera Slabey	Judy Schwellenbach, Bauer Built

Recent Acquisition

Another large C. H. Gleason oil painting has been given to the Museum, bringing to 14 the total number of pieces in our collection. This untitled piece depicts Jesus standing near a rock outcropping looking upward; the setting may have been the Garden at Gethsemane. The painting measures 10 feet wide by nearly 8 feet high and previously hung behind the altar in Little Plum Lutheran Church near Ella, Wis. for most of the 20th Century.

The Little Plum Church recently closed its doors due to a diminishing congregation. The church and adjacent Little Plum Schoolhouse were recently sold by the congregation, but numerous framed photographs and other items including the Gleason painting were donated to PCHS and the Old Courthouse Museum. Gleason's paintings in the museum's permanent collection have been dated as early as 1896 and as late as 1947.

C. H. (Charles Hovey) Gleason (1874-1950) was a prolific visual artist whose legacy has remained largely undiscovered. Dozens of known works can be found throughout the U.S., but his largest body of work remains in western Wisconsin. Born in 1874 in New York state, he came with his family to live in Pepin County when he was a very young boy. He started painting with his father in his youth and by 1900 had already established himself as an artist. It is believed he moved to the state of Washington in the late 1930s, where he continued to paint.

In 1896, when he was 22, Gleason painted a very large oil painting, which he titled "The Finishing Shot", for Durand businessman Frank Boehm for an astonishing \$25. Currently owned by PCHS and displayed in the Old Courthouse Museum, the painting initially hung in the Boehm house parlor. Then for many years it hung in the Boehm Hardware Store, later in the Durand Knights of Columbus Hall.

(continued on next page)

Pepin County Historical Society

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

More on C. H. Gleason

The painting's last home before being donated to the museum was Joe's Conoco Filling Station, owned and operated by Joe Ulwelling.

Gleason was still painting with his father in 1905, as noted in a local news item printed in the *Pepin County Courier* in 1905: "John Gleason and son Chas. have been finishing the interior of the Congregational church in Spring Valley the past two weeks. Mr. Gleason returned home Saturday, Chas. going to Elmwood to finish an Opera Hall."

Three of his other known works still hang today in the upstairs auditorium of the village hall in Elmwood, Wis., including a 12'x20' stage backdrop and two large landscapes painted in oil. Another 12'x24' stage backdrop by Gleason hangs in the Opera House in Theilman, Minn. Several Gleason murals painted on the walls of local residences in and around Durand a century ago still exist as well. In 1910, a short news clip in the paper said: "One of Chas. Gleason's realistic masterpieces is a painting from his brush depicting a lion in his den behind bars. It is new on exhibition at the fair grounds."

Gleason's talents also extended to the performing arts; he managed The Durand Merrymakers and the Gleason Stock Company, which produced plays and musicals in the early 1900s. Gleason directed and performed, along with his wife Fanette and their children, in productions with titles like "The Country Girl" and "Hickory Farm".

This newest Gleason acquisition was cleaned and remounted on a wall in the upstairs jury room and will be the centerpiece for two new exhibits: 1. the Little Plum Lutheran Church (a country church typical of those found throughout the Midwest during the 19th and 20th centuries); and, 2. a new Gleason Gallery located along the back walls of the upstairs courtroom.

2018 MUSEUM VOLUNTEER HOST LIST

May 26 - Rita Conlin and Pat Rosenberg
June 2 - Paul and Lou Simpson
June 9 - Judy Schwellenbach and Joyce Haigh
June 16 - Terry Mesch
June 23 - Sarah Schutta and Terry Mesch
June 30 - Kim and Lynette Wagenbach
July 7 - Sarah Schutta
July 14 - Diane Bauer and Carol F. Bauer
July 21 - Bonnie Bock and Linda Knapp
July 28 - Terry Mesch
Aug. 4 - Gerald and Deanne Rippley
Aug. 11 - Dick and Judy Schlosser
Aug. 18 - Jane Jafferi and Lee Grippen
Aug. 25 - Carl Morsbach and Pat Setterlund
Sept. 1 - Don and Jean Kannel
Sept. 8 - Tom Garnevicus
Sept. 15 - Sharon Gingras
Sept. 22 - Don and Jean Kannel
Sept. 29 - Sharon Gingras
Oct. 6 - Julie Rinholen

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.



Gleason signed his painting in the lower left corner.



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

Find us on the Internet!
www.oldpepincountycourthouse.org

IF YOU CAN
READ THIS
YOU HAVE
PAID.
THANK YOU

**COLORED DOT HERE IS
A REMINDER TO RENEW
YOUR 2018 MEMBERSHIP**

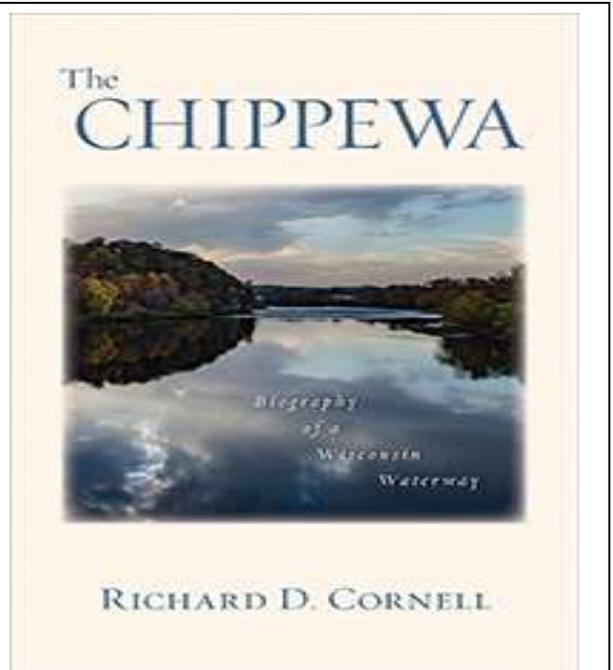
*Pass this newsletter on
to a friend & encourage
him/her to join PCHS!*

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 \$ _____



Richard D. Cornell, author of the book shown above, will be the featured speaker at the PCHS Annual Membership Meeting/Spring Education Event scheduled for 2 pm on Sunday, April 8. The City of Durand and the Old Courthouse Museum figure into one of the chapters of his book.