



# THE COLUMNS

Newsletter of the Pepin County Historical Society

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Affiliate of the Wisconsin Historical Society

Nov., 2018

GREETINGS! from your PCHS President

Hope you all have been enjoying these sunny fall days. The sunshine makes life seem better and everyone much happier and healthier. It is true that if you have your health, you have everything. It sure would be nice to keep this weather for the next six months or so, but we know that won't happen.

The volunteers at the museum have had a busy summer with many visitors, new displays and a lot of repairs to the building and property. Moisture in the basement had to be corrected; a small area of the front porch floor degraded and collapsed and still has to be fixed; a small basement window was blocked up and the window well filled in; and, a ten-foot-wide asphalt wedge was installed along the entire southeast side of the building to better drain away water running off the roof.

Our 144-year-old building needs ongoing maintenance, but it is a privilege and honor to keep this historic building in good shape. We are fortunate to have the support of the Pepin County Board of Supervisors and the county taxpayers, who still own the building and grounds, to share upkeep and utilities. A big **thank you** to the citizens of Pepin County and to all the volunteers and folks who make our wonderful museum possible.

Some new ideas for the days ahead at the museum include adding fans to improve ventilation in the display rooms and the courtroom, and, making "selfie stations" throughout the building to encourage visitors to take selfie photos. So, make a point to come for a visit or set up an appointment to bring your family, friends or group for a free tour. Remember to support our local businesses while you're here, too.

God Bless you all ...

- Kim Wagenbach, PCHS  
President

## HOLIDAY

### OPEN HOUSE at the MUSEUM

11 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Saturday, November 24

Old Courthouse Museum & 1895 Jail  
on Washington Square  
downtown Durand, Wisconsin

The Old Courthouse Museum and 1895 Jail in downtown Durand will celebrate "Durand Dazzle Day" on Saturday, November 24 with a Holiday Open House from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. The public is invited to enjoy vintage ornaments and traditional holiday decorations, to view vintage toys, and to take on the challenge of a special holiday version of our Historic Treasures Scavenger Hunt.

Unique among our vintage holiday decorations are a wax figurine choir and a manger scene hand-carved from soap by Eula (Plummer) Johnson. Also, dozens of vintage toys and keepsakes from the private collections of PCHS member, Jean Kannel, will be on display.

The museum has installed three new permanent displays this year, including a dramatic new agricultural exhibit, a gallery of art, and a country church display. The all new farm exhibit honors the courage, hard work and cooperation of early settlers in building the foundations of the most important segment of Pepin County's economy.

Nearly all the century-old C.H. Gleason paintings were brought together in a single location in the upstairs courtroom. The largest painting in the new Gleason Gallery is also the centerpiece of a new exhibit featuring the Little Plum Lutheran Church. A great example of the small country churches found throughout Pepin County, the Little Plum Church display is in the upstairs jury room.

Tours will be available all day and the museum will be open until the start of the Dazzle Day Parade.



Julia Black of Arkansaw (center) presents a Panther Drive-In gift certificate for redemption to drive-in owners Pam and Scott Stori. Julia won the prize after participating in the Old Courthouse Museum Historical Treasures Scavenger Hunt this past summer. The Storis donated numerous gift certificates as prizes to attract more young people to the museum and to get them looking around the building to see all the artifacts, displays and exhibits. Thank you, Scott and Pam!

## BLUES ON THE CHIPPEWA

A note of gratitude, also, to the organizers of Durand's popular summer music festival for including PCHS and the Old Courthouse Museum among the local organizations to receive a share of the profits. PCHS received a \$500 donation again this year. Thanks, BOTC!

### Pepin County Historical Society, Inc.

#### Officers:

President: Kim Wagenbach

Vice-Pres: Dick Schlosser

Secretary: Lois Laehn

Treasurer: Galen Radle

Directors: Rita Conlin, John Solie, Jean Kannel, Tom Garnevicus, Jane Jafferri

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Editor: Terry J. Mesch

## Memorials Received

For  
Lyle Richardson

From  
Lee Grippen

## Historical Coincidences in the Lives of Wilder, Parkhurst and Hardy

Pepin County's three leading ladies of history, Laura Ingalls Wilder, Helen Parkhurst and Elizabeth Clarke Hardy, share some interesting life experiences. Though these women were contemporaries and came to be famous during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, they were born two decades apart from one another. Hardy was born in 1849; Wilder in 1867; and, Parkhurst in 1887.

Wilder and Hardy became writers who took slow paths to fame, which came later in their lives. Both wrote poetry and prose and both, over the years, had their work published regularly in their respective hometown newspapers; Hardy in Durand, Wis. and Wilder in De Smet, S.D. and Mansfield, Mo. Both came to the attention of statewide agricultural journals and eventually became editors of home, household and women columns in their respective states; Hardy for the *Wisconsin Agriculturist* and Wilder for the *Missouri Ruralist*. They rose to these positions at the same time in history, 1900-1920. Wilder made her big jump to stardom in the mid-1930s with her *Little House* books. Hardy's poetry brought her national attention; one of her most famous poems was read at the national memorial services of both Presidents, Woodrow Wilson and Warren Harding.

Parkhurst's rise to fame was more rapid. In her mid-20s, she went to Italy to study under the world-famous Maria Montessori and soon became her teacher's star pupil. Parkhurst would become the director of all Montessori schools in the U.S., but first, in 1915, Montessori appointed Parkhurst lead teacher in the Glass Classroom, a major attraction in the Palace of Education pavilion of the Panama Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco, Cal. As coincidence would have it, Wilder traveled from Mansfield to San Francisco in 1915 to visit her daughter, Rose, and to see the Exposition. Wilder spent considerable time at the Exposition and probably in the Palace of Education, where she likely would have seen Parkhurst inside the glass walls of the model Montessori classroom. What might their conversation have been if they had met and discovered they shared Pepin County as birthplace? It is likely these two women became aware of one another two decades later as Wilder's books for young people became popular and Parkhurst was nearing the pinnacle of her career. No record of them meeting has been found.

The work of these three women from Pepin County has had profound impact on the lives of children in their classrooms, in their homes and in their young imaginations.



## “Adolph Ericson and the Lime Stone”

By Edwin Doughty

“Adolph was a farmer whose farm adjoined ours in Little Plum valley at Pepin, Wis. Everyone should have an Adolph to live next to. There were many times as we started to operate our farm that I would go and ask Adolph’s advice about something. He was very good about helping. He was also a good blacksmith and helped me fix machinery many times. One time we were discussing raising alfalfa hay and decided the reason it didn’t do too well for us was because the soil was too sour. ...we decided we should get some ground lime stone and spread on the land. Adolph found where this could be secured so we ordered a box car load between us. It was about forty tons. About four miles from our farm was the little town of Ella. Across the Chippewa River from Ella were the railroad tracks. There was a short spur there where the car could be spotted. It was getting near spring when we were notified the car of lime stone would be there the next day. We took our teams and sleighs and hauled a load home in the forenoon and another in the afternoon. The next day we hauled another two

two loads and on the third day we finished cleaning out the [box] car and came back across the river on the ice. Would you believe it: At one o’clock the ice went out of the river. We had hauled five loads apiece of about four tons to the load across that ice. The river was about 600 feet wide at that place. I shudder or should I say shiver to think about breaking through that ice.”

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From *Hoo Ray For Our Side – a group of short stories*, by Edwin Doughty, publ. circa 1995. Edwin was born in Pepin County to Edwin H. and Elmira A. Doughty in 1905. He married Ruth Byington on May 12, 1925. Ed and Ruth farmed in Pepin County early in their marriage and operated numerous roller-skating rinks in western Wisconsin. They operated a gas station in Arkansaw, Wis. for a few years, and then stations in Minnesota and Michigan before moving to the state of Washington. Ed started writing his stories in 1991. Both Ed and Ruth died in 1999 after 74 years of marriage and are buried in the Arkansaw Memorial Cemetery.



Another of C.H. Gleason’s formidable paintings is this 12’-high-by-24’-wide stage backdrop that hangs on the stage of the Opera House in Theilman, Minn., located 26 miles southwest of Durand in Wabasha County. The Opera House was built in 1913 when Gleason was about 30 years old. Gleason was a prolific visual artist and left a huge legacy of his work in western Wisconsin and eastern Minnesota. He was a performance artist as well; he and his wife, Fanette, organized a song-and-dance theater troupe and presented numerous shows in Durand and surrounding area during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

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

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

### **2019 MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL NOTICE**

Please take time *right now* to fill out the box below and return with your check to:

Pepin County Historical Society  
315 W. Madison St.  
Durand, WI 54736

### **2019 MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL NOTICE**

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

This is the only **NOTICE** you will receive before New Year's reminding you to renew your PCHS membership for 2019! This newsletter is later than usual this year and, to save money, we have combined it with our annual membership renewal notice. Please **TAKE TIME RIGHT NOW** to fill out the form at left and send it in today. Your continued interest and support helps make our mission of "preserving the history and traditions of Pepin County" possible. Our challenge is to make history exciting and available to everyone. We are doing it because of **you!** See inside for just some of our achievements.