



THE COLUMNS

Newsletter of the Pepin County Historical Society

Vol. XXIV, No. 3

Affiliate of the Wisconsin Historical Society

October, 2010

President's Message:

Greetings! Summer has ended and we look forward to the end of another season at the Old Courthouse Museum. Looking back, it was another successful year; highlights of which were the PCHS 25th Anniversary celebration July 10 on Washington Square and followed closely by the Society's Summer Potluck Picnic July 12 at Round Hill. PCHS Board members Dick Schlosser, Rita Conlin and Lynn Coulson spearheaded our 25th Anniversary efforts.

I want to thank our Summer Intern, Ben Clark, for the excellent job he did minding the museum. He picked up on local history quickly and soon became a great tour guide through the museum and jail. He also researched very old County Board minutes to more accurately document the history of the old courthouse building itself. Thank you, Ben.

Progress is being made with new museum friendly lighting to replace the existing fluorescent lights, which put off ultra-violet rays and can harm artifacts. The Main Hall and Room One (the "Durand Room") are already done; and, we're hoping to change out Room Two ("People in Uniform") and the upstairs Courtroom during the next year.

"Thank you!" to all our Saturday Volunteer Hosts, to our regular volunteers who help with the larger tour groups, and to our regular Tuesday volunteers who do all the behind the scenes stuff and keep things running smoothly. PCHS is a great organization because of you!!

- Kim Wagenbach

SUMMER INTERN COMPLETES PHASE ONE OF OLD COURTHOUSE BUILDING RESEARCH PROJECT

Benjamin J. Clark, a recent graduate in history from University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, spent this summer managing the Old Courthouse Museum including greeting guests, improving displays and exhibits, giving guided tours, and more. During some of the occasional "quiet times" Ben poured over the minutes of the Pepin County Board of Supervisors in search of information related to the history of the Old Courthouse building and grounds.

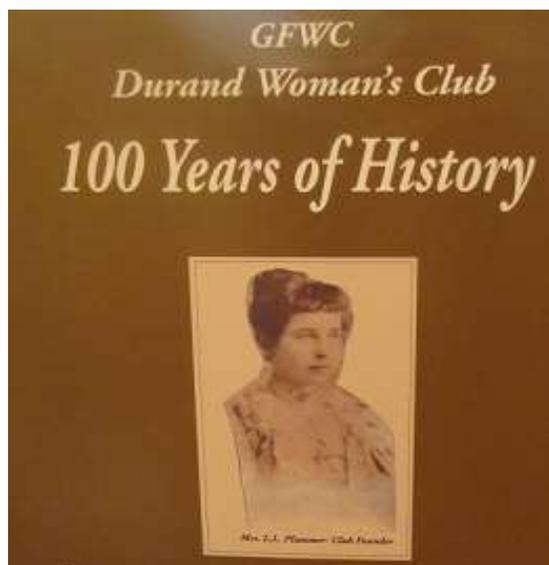
He completed a forty page document presenting hundreds of verbatim transcriptions of County Board actions and discussion about the building and about the early challenges of organizing the county after its creation in February, 1858. Ben also included editorial comments giving historical and contextual meaning to many of the Board's actions.

Ben studied Pepin County Board minutes from 1858 to 1872 and from 1920 to 1959. Records from 1890 to 1920 are only preserved on microfiche and no viewing machine was available this summer. Original "hard copy" minutes from 1890 to 1920 are missing. Moreover, neither microfiche nor original documents can be found for board minutes from 1873 to 1889.

Ben's research will be used to develop a history of the building to eventually be included within a formal "Historic Structure's Report" (HSR). The HSR is one of the first requirements of granting agencies which might fund the eventual restoration/renovation of the Old Courthouse. A copy of Ben's research is available for viewing at the Old Courthouse Museum.

Ben is currently enrolled in the Master's Degree Program in Public History at University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire.

(see page 3 for more about Ben's research)



No Autumn Educational Event

(but an expanded **Columns**)

After a long string of successful spring, summer and autumn educational and social events and following the PCHS 25th Anniversary and Summer Picnic, the PCHS Board decided to give the staff and volunteers a break by foregoing an autumn educational event. However, readers will note this **Columns** has been expanded to six pages. The additional pages are committed to presenting more local history which readers will hopefully find engaging and informative. More than simple facts and dates about people, places and things, Pepin County history is full of humor, poetry, legends, ladies, lumber, and much more.

Find us on the Internet!

www.oldpepincountycourthouse.org

MUSEUM / SOCIETY NEWS & NOTES

The Old Courthouse Museum and Jail is now closed except for "Open by Appointment" anytime. Time to step back and look at our displays and exhibits with an eye for continued improvements for next year. Little changes often make a remarkable difference in telling a better story.

A barely noticed but beautiful difference was made in the front yard last spring when the trees were pruned and one removed. Additional pruning and removal will open the yard even wider to Main Street, Riverview Park and the Chippewa River bridge beyond. The stately Old Courthouse draws people for its history; a well tended yard can make it a beautiful visual attraction as well.

The rainy summer was evident in the basement of the building. While water never covered the floor, the sump pump and the dehumidifiers got a real workout.

PCHS was honored to be part of the 100th anniversary celebration of the Durand Woman's Club. Club members prepared a display citing their many achievements and awards, which has been in the "Durand Room" this season.

Former members of the Silver Sabres Drum and Bugle Corps celebrated their brief-but-exciting history of 50 years ago. Corps members developed an exhibit to compliment the growing musical display in the "People in Uniform Room".

From PCHS Gift Shop

25th Anniversary T-Shirts - sizes s-m-l-xl, \$10.00

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, \$32.00

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.

Memorials received:

For:	From:
Carl E. Silberhorn	Galen/Bernadine Radle
Gwen Rockwell	Marjorie G. Greeley
Donald Wekkin	Lee E. Grippen



Old Courthouse Museum crew of "regular" volunteers include, from left to right, Irma Bauer, Terry Mesch, Julie Rinholen, Pat Ulwelling, Judy Schwellenbach. These folks work most Tuesdays doing routine cleaning, filing, cataloguing, display development and upkeep, etc., but also are the core hosts for large group tours, especially students from local schools.



Watch for your 2011 membership renewal in December!

A PCHS membership makes a great gift to a family member or friend.

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

Excerpts from Benjamin Clark's Research

By Benjamin Clark, compiled summer of 2010

Objective: To determine changes, improvements, or modifications to the court house and jail/sheriff's residence undertaken by the Pepin County Board of Supervisors by looking at the Board Minutes for the years 1858-1872, & 1920-1959 (Volumes 1, 4 and 5, *Proceedings of the Board of Supervisors*). The first volume deals with a period before the courthouse had been built, and, only once does it mention a working court house (then only when the county seat was in Pepin). Any information gathered in this first volume of minutes is simply historical background as to the founding of the County and its early beginnings.

Findings: Volume I, (1858-1872): As noted above, the first volume ends the year before construction of the court house began. In only one place does the clerk note anything about any of the places used as courthouse(s) before construction of the building in Durand. The topic is also mentioned in a footnote in the fiscal record for reimbursement for the purchase of chairs and a platform for the Pepin courthouse. However, this study uses Volume I to trace the formation of the County and the gradual shift in political power and of the county seat from Pepin to Durand during these years. Records are not clear on the actual date of the moving of the County Seat, which was sometime between 1865 and 1867. The County Board did not acknowledge this event in the official minutes. Actually the Board, which traditionally met in the office of the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors, had been meeting in Durand since 1862 when U.B. Shaver of Pepin (the first County Clerk) was succeeded by John Halverson (who lived in the Village of Durand). The County Board would continue to meet there until the courthouse was completed.

Two dates, 1865 and 1867, have been given for when the village of Durand became the county seat for Pepin County, but it is unclear which is correct. The change of county seat from Pepin to Durand was decided by a County-wide vote, but it took a ruling by the 7th Wisconsin Circuit Court in La Crosse to stick. It is possible the first date refers to the year the vote was taken, and the second date to the year the court decision was made.



This hangin' noose is part of the Museum's exhibit about the shooting and hanging of 1881. No, it is not the actual one used to lynch Ed Maxwell. It's new hemp rope purchased from a local hardware store. The coils in the knot above the loop are supposed to number 13 (unlucky for the victim for sure). It took staff numerous tries to get it right. According to an eye-witness account printed in John Halverson's book, "Dime Novel Desperadoes", the actual noose was at the end of a 300 ft. rope stretching from the front door of the Pepin County Courthouse across the porch, down the steps, across the yard 150 ft., up and over a branch of an oak tree located to the northwest of the building. "The end of the rope, which dangled from the bough, was in the hands of a knot of men waiting and listening under the tree....and the other end, with a running noose, was in the hands of another knot of men who were waiting to do their part."

The man pictured at the lower left is Charles Coleman, who died in the shoot-out at Durand on July 10, 1881.

[Learning to tie a noose was simply a matter of going to an Internet Search Engine on the computer and entering the question: "How to tie a noose?" Knowing that hundreds of sites had information about tying a hangman's noose was not so surprising, nor frightening. But then consider how many hundreds of helpful sites might have come up in answer to: "How to build a nuclear bomb?" Asking this question on the Internet might get your name on the Homeland Security Persons-to-be-Watched List.]



Telegraph key and other railroad artifacts from the old Durand Railroad Depot displayed in the "Railroad Room" at the Museum.

**Old Copies of *The Wisconsin Agriculturalist* Showcase
Elizabeth C. Hardy's Editing/Writing Skills**

The Museum recently came into possession of more than a dozen old copies of *The Wisconsin Agriculturalist* from the early 1900s when Elizabeth Clark Hardy was editor of the Household column. Hardy was a highly regarded writer and editor and the column showcased her skills well. Not only did she impart tidbits of useful family and home-making information to her readers, she regularly selected poems of known and unknown writers. Occasionally, she would include her own poetry in the column. The following poem appeared in the August 26, 1909 "Household" column of *The Wisconsin Agriculturalist*:

Rurual Logic

By Elizabeth Clarke-Hardy

Publ: *The Wisconsin Agriculturalist*, Aug. 26, 1909

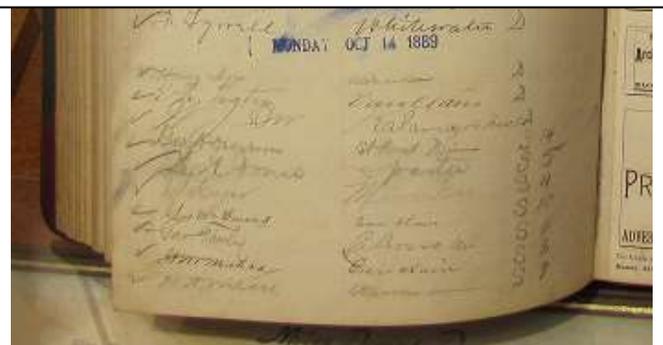
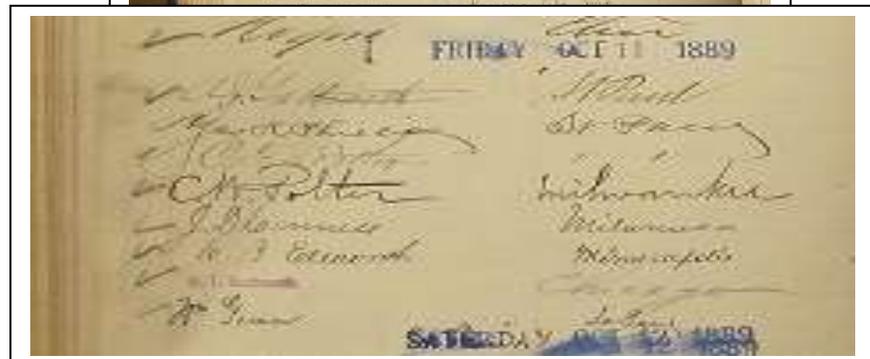
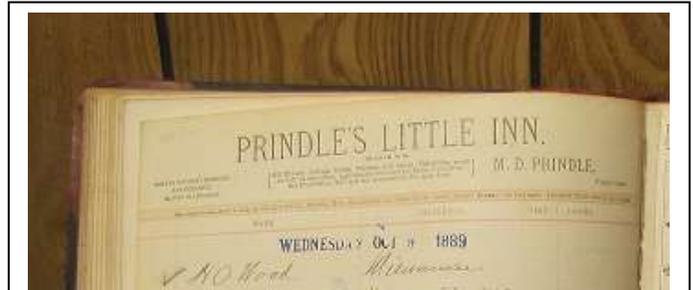
It's a mighty sight more pleasanter
A-fishin' at your ease
Down beside the flowin' river
Underneath the shady trees,
Than it is out in the blazin' sun
A-hoein' of the corn;
But you have to hoe to get a crop,
Ez sure ez you are born.

An' in the race of honor
Ye kin allers tell a drone;
He's the feller that jest gits there
Ez the rest are comin' home;
But the chap that carries off the belt -
The champion of the track -
When drones are bringin' up the rear
They meet him comin' back.

There's a premium fer industry
A-top of labor's hill;
Ye can hump yerself an' get it
Er the other feller will.
But the chap that likes his leisure
Finds it doesn't pay to stop,
Fer ye hev to keep a-climbin'
Ef ye ever reach the top.

And its easier for a feller
To lean up agin the fence,
An' argy with his neighbor,
Ef he can't talk common sense
'Bout the tarriff an' 'bout politicks -
But to argyfy and shirk
Won't accumulate the sheckles
Like a little honest work.

An' ye'll allers find the feller
Thet is down upon his luck,
Is the feller that is lackin'
In enterprise an' pluck;
But the chap that keeps a-diggin'
In the sunshine an' the rain -
He takes no stock in luck an' chance,
But he gets there just the same.



Guest Registry from Prindle's Little Inn which was built and operated by Miles Durand Prindle and his wife Ada. The Registry is opened to dates Wednesday, October 9 to Monday, October 14, 1889. Enlarged is Friday, October 11, 1889 and the guests include: A.J. Galbraith, St. Paul; Geo. R. Philips, St. Paul; C.F. Potter, St. Paul; C.W. Potter, Milwaukee; J. D. Connell, Milwaukee; E.B. Ellsworth, Minneapolis; O.T. Southworth, Chicago; Wm. Gerson, St. Paul. Though eight guests may seem a lot, some pages show as many as twenty guests registered on a single day.

History Bits: Another author from Pepin County who gained wealth and notoriety during his lifetime: Thomas Drier (1884-1976), born near Durand, Wis. News articles published when he died refer to him as a writer, editor, philosopher, and philanthropist; he liked to refer to himself as a vagabond.



This Mehring Milker exhibit was significantly improved and “taken on the road” this past summer to two venues, “Farm Technology Days” in Pierce County July 19-22 and the Pepin County Fair in the Livestock Building July 23-25. PCHS member Carl Morsbach (whose family donated the milker to the Old Courthouse Museum) was instrumental in developing and installing the display at Farm Technology Days. The milker and this enhanced exhibit are now back in the “Tool Room” at the Museum.

The Mehring Milker was “state-of-the-art” in 1908. William Marshall Mehring of York Road, Carroll County, Maryland, received U. S. Patent No: 488,282 for a hand-powered “Cow Milker” on December 20, 1892. This milker, however, required two people to work effectively. Several years later, he developed and patented a foot-powered version of his milker, which allowed one person to milk two cows at the same time. Advertising literature promised the machine would: **Cut down your expenses by saving time and labor.**

From the *Purple and White*, the Durand High School paper - October 30, 1905

Basket Ball Trouble

There has been considerable discussion and trouble of late, over the ownership of the official basketball. The girls claim that the ball belongs to the D.H.S.A.A. and the boys claim that it belongs to them. On Thursday Mr. Parkinson had meetings of both boys and girls to get views of different pupils on the matter. The boys claim the ball on the ground that they originally purchased the ball and that the ball was paid for out of the class play money and according to the president of last year's graduation class it was given to the boys. Other members of the class of '05 claim that they know nothing of such arrangements. The girls base their claims on the fact that the money earned by the class of '05 was given by them to Mr. Pease to pay some expenses against the school, among them being the athletic expenses, (such as the basketball expense, track team expense etc) and that therefore the ball was H. S. property. Three years ago the H. S. girls bought and paid for a ball and two baskets for their own use, this they do not claim as their own but say it is H. S. property. In their meeting they proposed that the boys pay half the basketball expenses incurred this year and each team have the ball a certain time--the boys, half the school week and all of Saturday and the girls, the other half of the school week. When this proposition was put before the boys it was rejected by a majority of those present. The matter is now before a board of arbitrators composed of three girls and three boys. We hope the storm will soon pass over.

The *Purple and White* editorial staff included: Edward Dreier—Editor in Chief; Beulah Schur—Senior Editor; Hazel Schur—Junior Editor; Hallie Eldridge—Sophomore Editor; Robert Morsbach—Freshman Editor; Jennie Eldridge and Clarissa Dreier—Grammar School Editors.

A bound copy of the 1905-06 *Purple and White* Durand High School paper originally owned by Ed. D. Gillmore is in the PCHS Archives.

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



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

Name _____
Address _____

MEMBERSHIPS:

- ___ \$5 Individual
- ___ \$8 Family
- ___ \$25 Friends of Museum
- ___ \$25 Business/Professional
- ___ \$50 Contributing
- ___ \$100 Sponsor
- ___ \$1000 Lifetime



One of the newest additions in the museum's "People in Uniform" Room is the Wheeler's Fire King Fire Flyer asbestos fire suit donated by the Durand Volunteer Fire Department. The suit dates to the mid-20th Century and doesn't appear to ever have been worn in an emergency. The suit was designed to fit over a man wearing a breathing apparatus backpack. Estimated weight: 40 lbs.