



# THE COLUMNS

Newsletter of the Pepin County Historical Society

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Affiliate of the Wisconsin Historical Society

Sept., 2011

## President's Message

Greetings! As I write this message I think about all the history lost every day with the passing of loved ones. During this past year I lost my father and then recently my mother. I now think of all those questions I should have asked them. Only they could answer questions about their lives and what life was like for them when they were young. My point here is to advise you to talk to your parents, grandparents, uncles and aunts to hear first hand their personal histories.

We had a very nice time at our Summer Potluck Picnic at Ella, which was very well attended. We got distracted from the heat and humidity with a great spread of food and a very interesting presentation by Marlyss Pittman about the Country Schools of Pepin County.

The PCHS Board recently decided to help with repairs to the Little Plum School. We agreed to a matching grant as a show of support for the past efforts made by this small group of folks. They have done a wonderful job preserving the school, probably one of the best preserved in the county.

Of course, we were busy this summer season at the Museum and had another successful year with our intern Ben Clark, who has been a very positive asset. We changed out all the old fluorescent lights with track lighting, which makes for a completely different "feel" at the Museum.

I encourage all of you to stop in to see what's new and to maybe purchase some of the books and cards we have on hand.

In closing, thank you to all our members who help make the Old Courthouse Museum the rich treasure it is. Stop in and visit your museum.

- Kim F. Wagenbach

## Museum Open Anytime by Appointment!

Another summer season has ended at the Old Courthouse Museum, however, the Museum will still be open on Saturdays from 1-4pm through October 8. Also, we have a crew of volunteers who will be happy to open the Museum to fit your schedule. No group is too small or too large; but, we do need to schedule in advance so we can be there when you need us. Call 715-672-5423 or 715-672-5709 to set up an appointment.

## PCHS Autumn Educational Event CIVIL WAR SESQUICENTENNIAL Durand High School Cafeteria 2pm - Sunday, October 9

**Presenter: Mike Barth**

Civil War expert Mike Barth of Neenah, Wis. will be guest presenter at the PCHS Autumn Educational Event. Mike will talk about the experiences in 1861 of the first few regiments that Wisconsin sent to war 150 years ago. Those regiments included Mike's great-great grandfather's along with the 8<sup>th</sup> Wisconsin, which included a company from Eau Claire and a famous eagle named Old Abe.

Mike's great-great grandfather fought for three years in the civil war with the 11<sup>th</sup> Wisconsin volunteers. The 11<sup>th</sup> Wisconsin participated in the Vicksburg Campaign in 1863 under General Grant.

Mike is a resident of Neenah, WI and has a MBA degree from the University of Wisconsin, Oshkosh and a Bachelor of Science in Education from the University of Wisconsin, Eau Claire. He is an American Civil War buff and has visited numerous civil war national military parks including Gettysburg, Fredericksburg, Antietam, Manassas, Appomattox, Shiloh, and Vicksburg. He has been a spectator at several civil war anniversary re-enactments including Gettysburg and Antietam. He enjoys reading books about the personal experiences of participants in the civil war and has over 125 books about the civil war in his library.

Civil War artifacts, letters from soldiers and other personal items will be on display at the event. Brock Richardson of Durand, a descendent of Civil War veteran and Pepin County settler Charles Richardson, will have Charles' gun and copies of letters from the period. Several artifacts, including the drum carried by John Ganoe during the Civil War, currently on display at the Old Courthouse Museum, will also be featured.

This year marks the 150th anniversary of the start of the Civil War.

**Find us on the Internet!**

[www.oldpepincountycourthouse.org](http://www.oldpepincountycourthouse.org)

## MUSEUM / SOCIETY NEWS & NOTES

The Old Courthouse Museum and Jail is winding down the 2011 season. The Museum is still open Saturdays 1-4pm through October 8.

Lots of people turned out for the PCHS Summer Potluck Picnic in July and got a good look at the research about Pepin County's country schools. Marlyss Pittman and Jean Kannel have put together over the last five years. An estimated 70 people participated in the potluck dinner and presentation at the Free Lutheran Church in Ella. Carl Morsbach and Pat Setterlin were wonderful hosts and many people shared their memories of country schools.

Summer Intern Ben Clark modified the Museum's filing system making it more user friendly. He created an index to the files and an index for obituaries. These indices make previously lengthy file searches shorter or unnecessary. Ben easily learned Pepin County history and received numerous compliments for leading tours and his story-telling skills.



### From PCHS Gift Shop

25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary T-Shirts - sizes s-m-l-xl

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 for you and/or your group to visit / tour the museum.

## Memorials received:

For:

Modesta Johnson  
Modesta Johnson  
Joseph Brenner

From:

Lee E. Grippen  
Thalice Nicklas  
Vaughn/Muriel hoffman



Original watercolor of Little Plum School by Jean Accola

One of the best preserved country schools in Pepin County is the Little Plum (formally called Little Plum School District #2, Pepin County). Built in 1899 for \$800, it was the center of learning for children in southern Frankfort Township and northern Pepin Township until 1954. Located along County Road N 8 miles north of Pepin, the school was purchased by the congregation of the Little Plum Lutheran Church next door and was used for vacation Bible school and the Chippewa 4-H Club for many years.

The Little Plum Church members have been maintaining the school for the past several years and have preserved it as the one room school it was a century ago. As the Little Plum Lutheran Church congregation has dwindled to just a few families (much the same as many country churches in the county), maintaining the school has become a greater challenge.

Now facing the replacement of the roof and other repairs, church representatives approached the PCHS Board to ask for help. The PCHS Board has offered a \$2,500 matching grant as incentive to other fund-raising efforts.

This classic country school is a priceless artifact and PCHS is proud to be part of its preservation.

### 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

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by the Pepin County Historical Society.  
Editor: Terry J. Mesch

## "THE ENTERING WEDGE"

DURAND, WIS. THURSDAY JULY 26, 1917

The top story of the day with the largest headline above-the-fold of this edition was:

### TWO AUTOS CRASH TOGETHER

- Wreck on Prospect Street Came Near Resulting Fatally -

At 8:35 o'clock Saturday evening two autos crashed together at the junction of Prospect street and Second avenue east...resulting in one of the autos being completely wrecked and all the occupants more or less injured. The other auto sustained damages of a lesser nature and the occupants drove away hastily without stopping to learn the extent of the damage inflicted on the other car and injuries to its occupants.

The car which was wrecked came down Prospect street from the east at a moderate rate of speed ... This car was a Ford. The other car was of heavier make and came from the south at a slow rate of speed before the collision.

As a result of the collision the front wheel of...the car on the left side was torn to pieces. The car was swung around and tipped over on its side. The cries of the occupants soon brought others to the scene and the car was soon placed in an erect position. When this was done Mrs. [name withheld] fell to the ground and it was discovered that she was very seriously injured. ...

The members of the [name withheld] family all sustained injuries more or less serious. ...

Though this accident very likely resulted more from carelessness than fast driving, it is a wonder that there have not been more accidents when one considers the fast driving which has been done not only on Prospect street but other places as well, Then too, there are too many who drive across the bridge too rapidly and also too fast when descending the approach from the bridge to Main street. There also are too many autos traversing the streets without light. Let us hope that Saturday evening's accident may have the effect of causing all drivers of automobiles to be careful.

Other news in the same edition of The Entering Wedge reported the local impact of the Presidential Order drafting young men into the military service. The United States had entered World War One. The headline on the third page read:

### 687,000 MEN IN FIRST DRAFT CALL

- War Department Announces the Quotas to Be Furnished by Each State - Credit Given for Men Now in Service -

The article went on to report Wisconsin's quota was 28,199 men, less the 15,274 state residents already serving in the Army or National Guard. Another 12,876 were to be drafted into service.

Back on page one below-the-fold was the headline:

### "LIST OF REGISTRANTS DRAFTED"

This list of Pepin County draftees consisted of 41 names, many with surnames which can still be heard in Pepin County today; names like Bauer, Pomasl, Krawleski, Westberg, Wallen, Seifert, Bien, Seyffer, Poeschl, Hoyt, Stewart, Metcalf, and Rageth. The article went on to state: "Much interest was taken in the draft which was made last Friday. The number 258 was the first one drawn [Elvin Barby of Arkansas]. Unofficial information has it that there will be 16 soldiers taken from Pepin County as a result of this draft so that probably something like twice that number will be summoned before the exemption board."



Free Thinker and co-founder of the Liberal University of Oregon - John E. Hosmer was a native of Durand. He was praised for his high moral character, superior intelligence, high aspirations, & courage of his convictions. The information below was paraphrased and quoted from articles in the "Free Thought Magazine", 1898 and

**Professor J. E. Hosmer** was born in Durand February 17, 1862, son of Albert M. and Cynthia (Earl) Hosmer. He attended public school in Durand. At age 18, he joined the Independent Order of Good Templars (IOGT) and became a zealous advocate of temperance. He was a teetotaler and non-smoker and discovered many IOGT members would "drink behind the door." This hypocrisy by Christians and sons of Christians apparently shook his faith in religion and he became skeptical of orthodox theology.

Hosmer married Minnie M. Page, daughter of Hiram and Mary Page of Durand, on Sept. 1, 1885. The union was a happy one and Hosmer had "...great admiration for the marriage and could not be persuaded to say anything against it." He joined his wife's church, the Congregational Church, but could not smother his doubts and take whatever the minister said as a matter of fact. He eventually withdrew from the church to "...become a free man."

About this time he was appointed principal at the Public school in Stockholm, Wis. and served for some time, after which he and Minnie went to the new state of Oregon and both taught school for two years at Tillamook City, Ore. They then both attended the Oregon State Normal School from which they graduated in 1893 with "deserved honors and high-grade standing."

They returned to Durand for a short while after their graduations, but returned to Oregon in 1895. He helped form and became the first pastor of the First Secular Church of Oregon where he preached until June of 1896. He left to become the editor of "The Torch of Reason" with a special purpose of developing the first Free Thought University. "The Torch of Reason" was published weekly at Silverton, Ore., and became an informal journal of the Free Thought movement.

He and Minnie were among the founders of the Liberal University at Silverton, where they taught until 1901, when they resigned following a serious difference of opinion among the friends of the University. They began to get ready to go to California, where they might build a school of pure Science, Morality and Humanity. Unfortunately, Minnie became ill and they decided to hold off on their California plans. Instead they immediately bought the Silverton Appeal newspaper, at which they both went to work. Minnie's health deteriorated rapidly until her death on February 1, 1901.

Hosmer later operated the Silverton Journal and in 1913 got caught up in a scandal after sending a spy into the nearby Benedictine Convent of Mount Angel, hoping to get a steamy exposé. There was no story, but Hosmer, in his zealotry to find fault with the dangers of Catholicism, made up a story he published as a pamphlet, "The Escaped Nun from Mount Angel Convent." He was eventually convicted of libel and served 100 days in jail. Only on his deathbed did he finally recant the story and apologize.

John Hosmer died August 15, 1946 and is buried in Silverton Cemetery.

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



**CIVIL WAR SESQUICENTENNIAL  
PCHS Autumn Educational Event  
Durand High School Cafeteria  
Sunday, Oct. 9, 2011**

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Saturdays 1pm-4pm through Oct 8  
Open anytime by appointment  
Call 715-672-5423 for more information**



1863 Norwich cap-fired muzzle loader

Charles Richardson, a Pepin County pioneer/settler, carried his 1863 Norwich similar to the one above during the Civil War. Charles' gun and transcriptions of letters written during the Civil War, which are still owned by his descendents, will be on display at the Oct. 9 PCHS Autumn Education Event.

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

**MEMBERSHIPS:**

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

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