

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

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Affiliate of the Wisconsin Historical Society

September, 2015

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

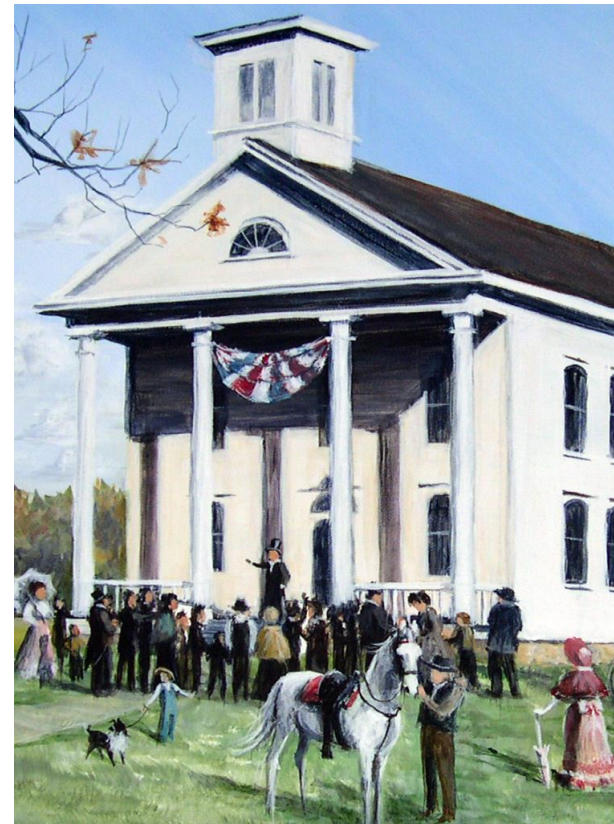
**Pass this newsletter on  
 to a friend & encourage  
 him/her to join PCHS!**

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



The long time center of political and cultural activities in Pepin County, the old Pepin County Courthouse is the subject of the PCHS Autumn Education Event on October 11 at DHS cafeteria in Durand.

GREETINGS! from the president's desk! As we prepare for another winter here at the Museum I think back to what a good year we have had. We had visitors from all over the country and some even from other countries! Thanks to our summer intern Sean Syzdel, our volunteers, Board of Directors and, of course, the members and visitors for whom we maintain the museum. Without you this museum would not be possible.

As my wife, Lynette, and I traveled across some of this great country of ours a few weeks ago, we stopped at museums and other points of interest, I was amazed at all the stories being told by local history museums and all we had to do was stop and listen. I encourage you take the time to stop and listen at a local museum starting with the Old Pepin County Courthouse Museum and Jail. I must also mention that the Pepin Laura Ingalls Wilder Museum is very informative and hands on for young and old alike; another gem of the county.

We are planning our Autumn Education Event and will be featuring none other than our own Terry Mesch as our speaker. Terry will be talking about the history of the old courthouse and jail. Please plan on attending.

A big "thank you" goes out to Terry and to all the staff for the special things they do for the museum. Have a wonderful and safe Autumn.

God bless you all as He has blest me. Kim F. Wagenbach, PCHS Pres.

Autumn Education Event features  
**"History of the Old Pepin County Courthouse  
 and Jail on Washington Square"**

Sunday, October 11 – 2pm  
 Durand High School Cafeteria

The 141 year history of Washington Square in downtown Durand will be presented by Terry Mesch, Director of the Old Courthouse Museum, on Sunday October 11 in the Durand High School cafeteria. The old Pepin County Courthouse figures prominently in numerous historical events, including the removal of the county seat from Durand to Arkansaw and the infamous lynching of the notorious outlaw Ed Maxwell, both of which occurred in 1881.

One hundred years later, the old courthouse and jail were both listed on the National Register of Historic Places. In 1984, county government offices vacated the buildings on Washington Square and moved to the new government center in the remodeled and renovated hospital building in Durand. During the past 30 years, the Pepin County Historical Society has been steward of the building and has developed it into a museum containing hundreds of fascinating stories about the people, places and events from Pepin County history.

During the past eight years, Terry has been compiling the history of the old courthouse and jail. Research for the book, drawn from the minutes of the Pepin County Board of Supervisors and from local newspapers, was conducted by summer interns and volunteers. This history is nearly complete and is expected to be published soon.

Terry's presentation, which will include numerous old pictures and photos, will highlight the major stories about Washington Square. He will also settle, once-&-for-all, the question about the location of the "Hangin' Tree".

## SOCIETY & MUSEUM NEWS

The PCHS Board of Directors has once again appointed Kim Wagenbach to be President for another year. Also appointed were: Lynn Coulson, Vice-President; Roberta Stuart, Secretary; and Galen Radle, Treasurer.

PCHS has purchased a large new sign advertising the Old Courthouse Museum & Jail. The Board hopes to find a suitable location in the village of Stockholm or Pepin to install the 4'x8' sign in an attempt to attract more visitors to Durand. It is currently on display in the Museum.

The Museum is in the process of replacing the floodlight in the front yard with a state-of-the-art LED fixture to illuminate the building. Also, new energy efficient exhaust fans will be installed in the basement in an effort to reduce humidity. Moisture has been an ongoing headache for preservation of fragile artifacts like textiles and paper.

### 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."

**The Old Courthouse Museum and Jail is open by appointment year-round for tours and research. Call 715-672-5423.**

### Memorials Received:

For:	From:
Donald Golden	Lee Grippen
Rosemary Carlisle	Jean/Don Kannel

### High School Memories – 1930s

[The following is an excerpt from "Growin' Up with Men and Machines" by Henry E. Beck, 2006, published by Vantage Press, New York. Henry attended school in Durand during the 1930s.]

Disaster befell in the form of a trombone. Dad decided I should play a musical instrument. He took me to a music store in Eau Claire where the instrument salesman looked at my lips and mouth and thus decided I could play a trombone. Durand had a good band. Mr. Schmidt was the director and a patient, kindly fellow. ...

To please my parents, I did my best with the trombone although my heart wasn't in it. I never aspired to more than third chair in high school. In this chair, I listened while the lead trombonist played the melody as I and second chair kept time, and at proper intervals came in with an "oomph-pa-pa". It didn't really matter, it seemed to me, whether I played or not. One thing was certain, letting out an "oomph" at the wrong time brought down the wrath of the director and the whole darn band. Junior band, where everyone started, was full of strange uncoordinated sounds coupled with miscounts due to improper attention or error. Marching and playing took lots of practice. In our band, trombones led the way. I supposed it was due to safety requirements which kept inept kids from poking players in the back with their slide.

When visiting Uncle Earl Smiths on their farm near Elk Mound, I had to play in the Elk Mound Band with Cousin Bob. The director knew of my inexperience. ... I faked the songs I didn't know. ... I made darn sure not to "oomph" at the wrong time. I knew he [the director] appreciated this.

### 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



This telegraph key from the old Durand railroad depot is on display in the Old Courthouse Museum. Below is an article which appeared in the *Pepin County Courier* in 1882:

### Communication with the Outside

The railroad telegraph line was completed to this village Monday afternoon and an office established in the court house. The operator, Mrs. Ferris, arrived Tuesday evening and commenced business next morning. The following dispatches were the first sent over the new line:

DURAND, May 17, 1882.

Mayor, City of Eau Claire:

Accept congratulations of Village of Durand. Please unite with us in offering up thanks for our emancipation from the confines of obscurity. In the language of the ancients, "Whoop 'er up!"

A. R. DORWIN

President Durand Village

MAYOR'S OFFICE, EAU CLAIRE

May 17th, 1882

A. R. Dorwin, President Durand Village:

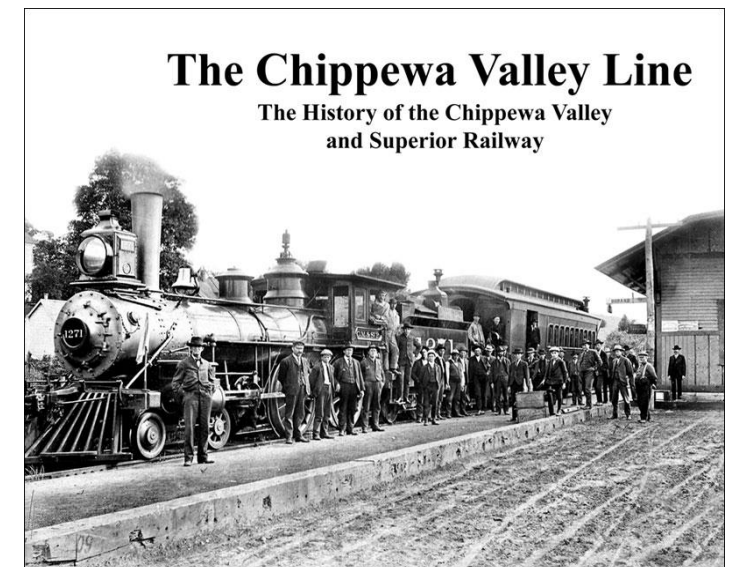
The City of Eau Claire cordially returns hearty congratulations upon your emancipation from the obscure confines mentioned in your touching message, and rejoices with you that you are now so near our city that all hope of salvation is not lost to you. May you all live long and prosper.

FRANK McDONOUGH,  
Acting Mayor.

### "The Chippewa Valley Line" by Arlyn Colby Available through Museum Gift Shop

Arlyn Colby's new book "The Chippewa Valley Line" is now available for purchase through the Old Courthouse Museum's Gift Shop. The Milwaukee Road's Chippewa Valley Line was built in 1882. The southern terminus was Wabasha, MN and the railroad crossed the Mississippi on a unique pontoon bridge. Towns served on the line included Durand, Red Cedar, Meridean, Caryville, Lufkin, Shawtown, Eau Claire, Chippewa Falls, Dunnville, Downs ville, Irvington, Menomonie, and Cedar Falls.

This long awaited book was released this year and contains 484 black-and-white pictures, 42 color photos, 65 maps and 144 charts, records, timetables, correspondences, and more. Arlyn spent many hours in the Old Courthouse Museum doing research on his book and took more than five years to complete the project.



He has published two other books about regional railroads: "The Mondovi Line", the story of the Omaha Railroad that ran from Fairchild to Mondovi, which was abandoned in 1975 and is now an all-purpose trail; and, "The Blueberry Line", a Soo Line Railroad that ran through northwest Wisconsin from Ridgeland to Reserve serving Barron, Washburn, and Sawyer Counties.

Arlyn grew up in Trempealeau County, Wisconsin. After graduating from Eleva-Strum Central High School and UW-Eau Claire, he pursued a career in teaching high school mathematics and coaching.

"The Chippewa Valley Line" is available from the Old courthouse Museum for \$30, plus shipping and handling.