

# THE EAGLE

CHIPPEWA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



# SPEAKS

SEPTEMBER 2011

www.chippewacountywihistoricalsociety.org

“OLD ABE”

## Inside this Issue:

Calendar .....	2
Committee Members .....	8
Donations .....	9
Membership Form.....	7
Officers & Directors .....	9
Phoenix Log Hauler .....	5-7
President’s Letter.....	4
The Big Mill .....	1-3
Volunteer Profile.....	8

1906—Steam from the sawdust burning power plant rises next to the Chippewa Lumber & Boom Company Sawmill.



## 100th Anniversary of the Closing of an Era

BY JIM SCHUH

August 2, 2011 marked the 100th Anniversary of the closing of the Chippewa Lumber & Boom Company Sawmill. The Big Mill was 165 feet long, 112 feet wide and cost \$200,000 to build. It operated with 1600 horsepower (water), had steam-fed works, four band saws 12 inches wide and 50 feet long, and this added to one gang with 34 saws and one with 39 saws, “making with round saws 175 running.” Eighty-two horses were kept in the barns and the mill included a boiler house, which burned only sawdust. The smokestack was 152 feet high and 80 inches in diameter. A crew of about 180 men would cut more than 400,000 feet of lumber in 11 hours. During 1888 the mill employed more than 700 men in the mill and their yards. The following Chippewa Herald article documents the end of the 75-year era when lumber was king.



### CCHS Bi-Annual Membership Picnic Potluck

Irvine Park Activities Building  
Monday, September 12  
5:30 p.m.

Mark your Calendar and save this date:

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



## CALENDAR

### August 23, 1 p.m.

Chippewa Falls History Coalition Meeting Canceled

### September 12, 5:30 p.m.

CCHS Bi-Annual Membership Picnic Potluck  
Activities Building, Irvine Park

### September 20, Noon

Area History Center Birthday Lunch

### September 27, 1 p.m.

Chippewa Falls History Coalition Meeting

### October, 18, 9:15 a.m.

CCHS Board Meeting

### October, 18, 10:30 a.m.

Historic Marker Committee Meeting

### October, 18, Noon

Area History Center Birthday Lunch

### October, 18, 1:30 p.m.

The Past Passed Here Planning Meeting

### October, 25, 1 p.m.

Chippewa Falls History Coalition Meeting

**The Eagle Speaks** is published quarterly by the Chippewa County Historical Society, a non-profit organization established to promote and stimulate historical interest in Chippewa County, Wisconsin.

Mail any comments or future articles to 123 Allen St., Chippewa Falls, WI 54729. 715-723-4399.

**Chippewa County Historical Society**  
123 Allen St., Chippewa Falls, WI  
**Open on Tuesdays | 9am-4pm**

*100th Anniversary continued from cover*

### 8-2-1911 Chippewa Falls, WI

*"BIG MILL SAWED LAST LOG TODAY When Big Whistle Blew at 11 o'clock it Settled for All Time Fate of Chippewa's Big Lumber Industry*

Today at eleven o'clock the whistle of the big saw mill of the C. L. & B. Co. blew long and strong, announcing the final closing of this important industry in the history of Chippewa Falls. The mill has run this summer every working day and since July 5th last sawing 1,000,000 feet of pine and hemlock. The last log sawed today marks the close of the lumber industry in this city which has had a mill or mills in operation since 1836 when Jean Brunet, the pioneer Frenchman first started a primitive saw mill.

With the saw mill plant now owned by the C. L. & B. Co., its executive force and skilled men, all fully organized, it is a sincere regret that this big industry must abandon its work for lack of material. The C. L. & B. Co. yet owns a great quantity of hard-wood and hemlock standing timber. But present prices for this timber in the sawed product are so low that it does not warrant logging and manufacturing it. So it is presumed that this hardwood and hemlock will be sold to smaller mill companies. So good by big saw mill which will now be a memory of the past."

The public was invited to attend the ceremony commemorating this centennial anniversary at 10:50 a.m. Tuesday, Aug. 2, in front of Notre Dame Church, 117 Allen Street. (overlooking the site of the Big Mill) About 150 people turned out for the commemoration. The 100th anniversary celebration began with Master of Ceremonies CCHS Vice President, Jim Schuh's welcome. He said that 100 years ago our view would have been much better. The trees were all cut down back then. Schuh recognized volunteers Joe Joas 96 and Lalie Boos 90. They were born within the decade after the mill closed. Jim introduced Dave Dam owner of the steam whistle and thanked his employer Farrell Equipment & Supply of Eau Claire. Mr. Dam told the crowd about his hobby of collecting and making steam whistles. He owns 41 whistles. Schuh recognized other sponsors Gaber Signs and Hometown Variety. The major sponsor is Xcel Energy who paid for the cake and framing the photos. Jim mentioned the importance of the use of waterpower and its impact on the growth of Chippewa Falls and other cities in the county. A song written by Jerry Way and recorded by the Swampers O, Waters of the Chippewa was played.

Jim Schuh asked people to join him in the count down for the whistle. At 11:00 a.m. the gong type steam whistle, similar to the one that had been at the sawmill blew for about 10 seconds. Mr. Dam blew a second whistle that was louder.

Schuh introduced CCHS President, Dave Gordon. Dave gave the following speech: "Thank you for joining us today! It has been said we are the sum of what has gone before us. That is certainly true of today's commemoration. At times it is good for us to take a minute to reflect on history that brought us to today. I find it very interesting that the lumbering industry, which ended 100 years ago still has influence in Chippewa Falls. Many buildings and places remain from that era: The Rutledge Home, Rutledge



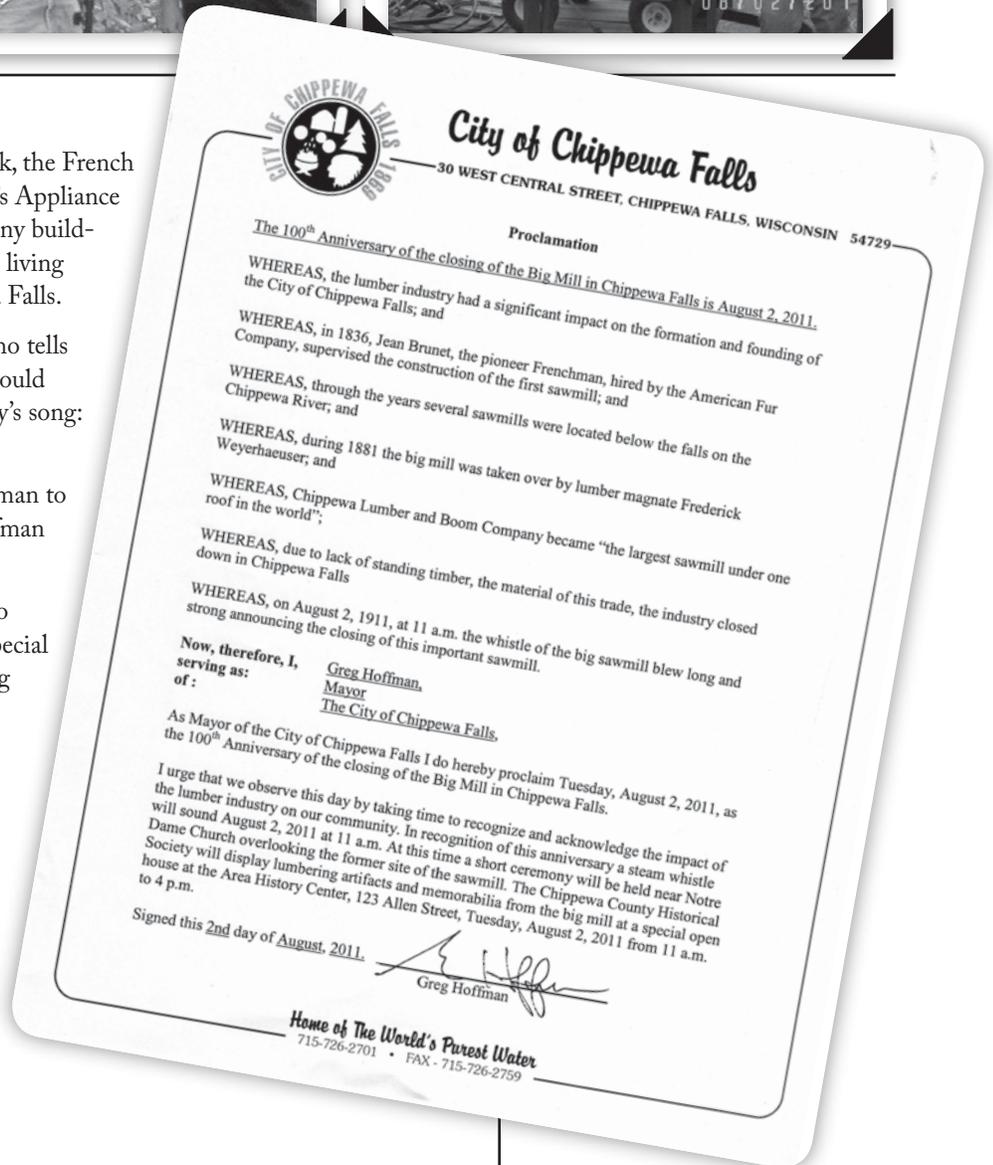
Charities, Cook Rutledge Mansion, Irvine Park, the French Lumber Company building—now Amundson's Appliance and the Chippewa Lumber and Boom Company building—now the Sovereign Grace Church, are all living proof of the impact of lumbering in Chippewa Falls.

We have a historian in our town, Jerry Way, who tells about our history in song. He wished that he could have been here today in person. Let's hear Jerry's song: "When Lumber was King"

Gordon said "I'd like to ask Mayor Greg Hoffman to read his proclamation about today." Greg Hoffman read his Mayoral Proclamation.

Dave Gordon welcomed those in attendance to the Open House saying, "We put together a special exhibit on lumbering in Chippewa and The Big Mill. We are also showing for the first time the new scale model of the mill built by Don Bichner (along with 3 of his friends), and some new photos of the interior of the Mill that we have just received. While you are in the museum take a tour and have a piece of cake.

Major Sponsors: Don Bichner and Xcel Energy. Contributing Sponsors: Steam whistle collector Dave Dam, Farrell Equipment & Supply, Gaber Signs and Hometown Variety.



TOP OF PAGE 2: A crowd gathers on the hill top at Allen St. to commemorate the 100th Anniversary of the closing of the Chippewa Lumber & Boom Company Sawmill

TOP OF THIS PAGE LEFT: Speakers at the commemoration from left were Mayor Greg Hoffman, CCHS President Dave Gordon, steam whistle collector Dave Dam and Master of Ceremonies Jim Schuh

TOP OF THIS PAGE RIGHT: Owner of The Dam Whistle Works, Dave Dam, poses with a gong style steam whistle that is similar to the one that had been used at the Big Mill.





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## A Message From Your President

Thanks to Jim Schuh's suggestion we had some excitement at 123 Allen Street. Jim pointed out in June that August 2, 2011 was the 100th anniversary of the closing of the Chippewa Lumber & Boom Saw Mill. Thanks to all who helped a celebration was planned. This issue of "The Eagle Speaks" tells all about it. It was very exciting to have about 150 people attended the ceremony. Many of them took the time to visit the Museum and the special exhibit about the "Big Mill".

A lot of work went into the special exhibit for the event. With all this new information the Lumber exhibit will be relocated and redesigned to feature the information about the CL&B Mill. Hopefully this can be done by the end of the year.

A Membership Meeting is scheduled for September 19, 2011. An important agenda item will be the election of Officers and Directors. If you have an interest in serving the Society in an administrative capacity let me know.

Look for information in the November newsletter on how to nominate people to be considered for the Hall of Fame.

This is a short message to assure there is plenty of room for all the details of our successful celebration of the "Big Mill". Stop by the History Center any Tuesday, we look forward to seeing you. *Dave*

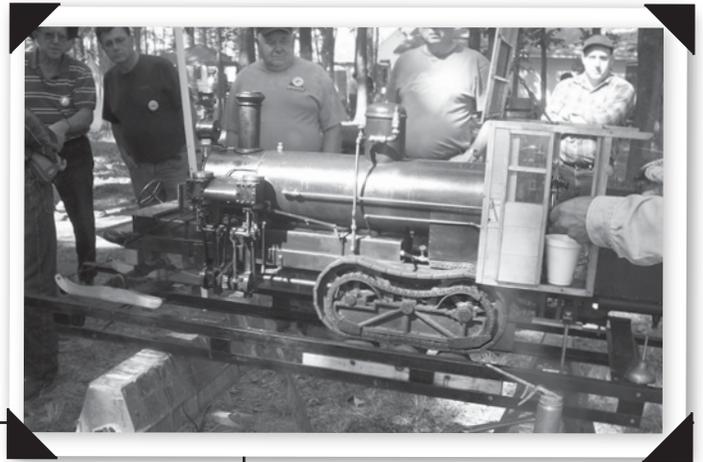


TOP: From left Byron Bobb and Don Bichner are pictured behind the scale model of the Big Mill. Don built the Mill with assistance from Byron, Joel Berg and Dave Enerson. The replica was created with help from architects at Short, Elliot & Hendrickson (SEH) who drafted plans to scale based on old photos of the mill's interior and exterior.

MIDDLE: Following the commemoration ceremony, the special Big Mill display in the Joe Joas room, was full of interested visitors.

BOTTOM: A sheet cake showing an old advertisement of the mill was enjoyed by all.

RIGHT: Visitors at the 3rd Annual Summer Solstice Art Faire at the Cook Rutledge Mansion had an opportunity to learn about the CCHS and view an exhibit focusing on the Big Sawmill in recognition of the closing of the C.L. & B. Co, 100 years ago this year.



# The Phoenix Log Hauler

BY ARLEY ENGEL

Early in the morning (6:50) on Saturday June 25, I picked up Norm Ford and Roger Reese. We headed to the Main Street Café in Bloomer for breakfast, and then on to the Hungry Hollow Engine and Tractor Show. The grounds are north of Barron on Highway 25. We were awed by all the small engines and old milking equipment on display along with neatly restored old cars and tractors plus many other antique items. One item that caught our interest was a Maytag washing machine engine that used a Ball mason fruit jar as a gas tank. It had a zinc cover with a Ball Brand Rubber as a seal. A small hole was poked in the center to allow the fuel to drip into the carburetor as the jar was placed upside down onto the special base plate. Quite a unique gas tank.

We came across a one-of-a-kind scale model of the famous Phoenix Log Hauler. It was a powerful steam operated machine built in Eau Claire early in 1900. This unit is normally on display at The Chippewa Valley Museum at Carson Park in Eau Claire WI. The model was built by Dan Kiekhafer, a carpenter from Colfax, WI. Don Bichner, a former member of our board at the Chippewa County Historical Society, worked with Mr. Kiekhafer at the UW Eau Claire. He remembers Mr. Kiekhafer taking photos and measurements from the last operating machine in our state at Wabeno, WI to build a scale model. He made the gears from wood, then sand cast them and poured his own castings, not a simple under taking. In 1983 Mr. Kiekhafer decided he could not afford a full size steam engine so he built this model.

The model was put on loan to the Chippewa Valley Museum by Kiekhafer's family after his death in 1994. The Phoenix Log Hauler resembles a steam locomotive, but it runs on caterpillar type tracks, with ski's in the front for steering. They were used to tow sleigh loads of logs out of the wood's in Wisconsin, Minnesota, Michigan and later on the western states and Canada.

Looking back for more information, I found the obituary of Charles L. Tolles. It proclaims that in 1861 his father Robert Tolles and H.P. Graham started a machinery manufacturing company which later became the Phoenix Manufacturing Company. It was in 1876 that Charles became involved in the business. It was Charles Tolles who designed, at the Phoenix Manufacturing Company in Eau Claire, the first steam caterpillar type logging tractor. This revolutionized logging operations in the Big Woods. It also marked the start of caterpillar type traction. Charles was not the inventor of the caterpillar style drive train. It was originally invented in Waterville, ME by Alvin Orland Lombard. Mr Tolles heard of Lombard's experiment's and went east to see him. Lombard's ideas were not fully developed, so Tolles came back to the plant in Eau Claire and worked out and developed Lombard's original idea.

According to the obituary, one of the first machines was sold to Northwestern Lumber Company and was used successfully in the company's logging operations. Close to 200 of the log haulers were manufactured at the Phoenix plant before logging operations were finished



PHOTOS AT TOP OF PAGE: Scale model of the famous Phoenix Log Hauler built by Dan Kiekhafer.

TOP RIGHT: Phoenix Log Hauler shown at the North Central Wisconsin Antique Steam and Gas Engine Show 2009 in Edgar, WI.

BOTTOM: A later model Lombard Log Hauler gasoline powered with tire option for summer use.

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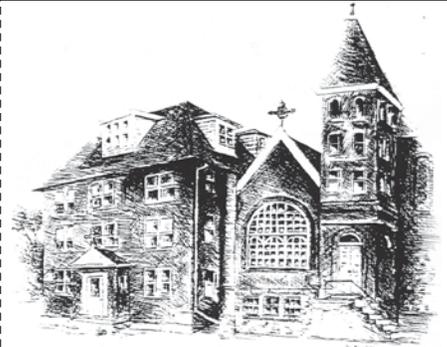
An early Phoenix Log Hauler, steam powered, no headlight. Light was provided by a kerosene lantern at the drivers feet.

### REMINDER

*Annual Memberships expire and need to be renewed in October. Please use the insert in this newsletter or the form below to support the CCHS.*



## MEMBERSHIP FORM



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CITY

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Types of Memberships:

- Individual (1 Year) ..... \$20
- Family (1 Year) ..... \$25
- Contributing Member (1 Year)..... \$50
- Life Member (Individual)..... \$125
- Life (Couple) ..... \$175
- Extra Donation ..... \_\_\_\_\_

MAIL TO:

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123 Allen Street  
Chippewa Falls, WI 54729

in Wisconsin. Some were shipped to Alaska, Canada, Finland and Russia. I have a photo of one of the two that were shipped to Finland and was surprised to see the steering on these units was reversed, similar to cars sold to the foreign market.

When I was a younger lad and employed at Griffin Doege Auto Parts at 9 North Bridge street in Chippewa Falls, we would take a 2-week vacation some time in July or August. June and I and our kids Kevin and Terri would load up our pickup camper, hook on the boat and trailer and head out for a trip around Wisconsin, some times sneaking into Minnesota or Illinois. One year we spent a whole week in Michigan. We usually made 70 to 120 miles per day. At this pace the kids got to see a lot of our state and each night as we set up camp they seemed to drag new friends back to our site.

I had heard about a Phoenix Log Hauler from Lloyd Hainstock of Colfax and this log hauler was at Wabeno, so I made sure we would travel through Wabeno as we toured in the eastern part of the state. The log hauler was on display mode only and not going to be running for at least 3 weeks, too late for our schedule. The next time I saw it was at Pioneer Park at Eau Claire. Brother Bert and I were attending the local tractor show, sitting at a picnic table enjoying lunch while watching the tractor parade of the day. When here comes The Phoenix Log Hauler, all the way from Wabeno. It was a mysterious site with hardly any sound other than the hiss of steam, of course running empty on flat ground it was requiring very little power to move along the graded path. What a fabulous sight to see something from the early 1900s still in operating condition.

If you have never seen one, it reminds one of a railroad steam locomotive only with skis under the front and driven by caterpillar style tracks under the rear. For any one with mechanical interest, the boiler on the Phoenix develops 100 horse power from 200 pounds of steam pressure. It has four engines, two on each side. The cylinders are 6 ½ inches with an 8 inch stroke. The water tank holds 315 gallons of water which is only enough for a five mile run while pulling a load of logs, with speeds of six to eight miles per hour. The weight of the Phoenix when filled with water and the fire box filled with wood or coal (if available, wood made more sense in the forest) was close to 18 tons. It was no wonder they had enough traction to pull 25 sleighs loaded with logs. The boiler on the Wabeno Phoenix has been cold water tested to 240 pounds of pressure and the safety valve set at 125 pounds. In 1901 Alvin Lombard was granted a patent on the track, Phoenix paid a \$1000 royalty on each machine for the patent rights.

These units have faded from the logging scene now along with steam locomotives and steam tractors. The main drive unit is still used in modern timber harvesters, and of course the caterpillar type tractors. One of Lombard's steam haulers was sent to England at the beginning of World War I, and from the design of the tracks, the British developed the tanks that were used in that war. The average load of logs pulled by horses was from five to seven thousand board feet. These log haulers pulled one hundred and twenty five thousand board feet, yes by only one hauler. This was more than most locomotives could handle by rail. For more information on these rigs come and see us at the history center at 123 Allen Street or stop by the library at the Chippewa Valley Museum at Carson Park in Eau Claire. *That's all for now from Engel's Little House on the Wheaton Prairie.*

Committees in sync!



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Nancy Schuh, author & proofreader  
Column Authors: Arley Engel, Kathy Forsgren, Dave Gordon and Mary McKenna

\* Chairperson



Mary & Dennis Brown

**A VOLUNTEER PROFILE**  
MARY MCKENNA

# Mary & Dennis

This “team” profile begins with a bit of history about themselves. Mary was born October 30, 1945 to Mary and Ronald VanNatta, the younger of two girls. Dennis was born April 10, 1945 to Christina and John Brown, the middle son of three boys and a baby sister.

Mary attended schools in Elgin, Illinois and Elgin Community College. Dennis attended schools in the Chicago area and graduated from Lakeland College. Mary’s first job was at S.S.Kresge as a cashier while in high school. However her first full-time position was as a bookkeeper/cashier at Pierce Pontiac in Elgin. Dennis worked at an apothecary while in school and then was employed with Uncle Sam in the Army until 1969. After that he worked for General Finance where he met Mary. They worked in different offices at the same company but talked on the telephone many times before they actually saw each other. Once Dennis actually went to Mary’s office, a first luncheon date was arranged at a Burger King restaurant. They later married June 22, 1973 in Elgin.

The first of several moves from Elgin took them to Eagan, Minnesota where Dennis was employed by Control Data; to Apple Valley, MN. in 1974 and finally to Chippewa Falls when Cray Research transferred him. Their welcome to Chippewa Falls was during the snowstorms of January 1982. They packed their belongings in Minnesota on a stormy Tuesday and arrived in Chippewa on a Thursday waking up to a 19” snowstorm that closed schools that Friday.

This couple has two grown daughters, Peggy, who is married to Jon Mattison and are parents to Mary & Dennis’ granddaughters, Marina, 16 yrs. and Jana who is 12. Their second daughter, Susie, lives in Michigan and works full-time and attends college full-time and has her own business, E-Liz Designs.

For over ten years, Mary worked for Chippewa Falls Main Street and retired in 2009. It was about this time that the Main St. Assoc. decided to drop the project, “The Past Passed Here”. Enter Dennis and Mary! They approached the Historical Society with the idea of the center adopting the event. Taking on this project was quite a challenge for a small group of volunteers, but our board of directors felt that as an organization with a policy to educate, it was a worthwhile venture.

To make a smooth transition, we needed someone to sponsor and direct this major event for our community. Indeed, Mary and Dennis were willing and able to do just that. “The Past Passed Here” was in reliable hands. They not only donated a sizeable contribution as a ‘start-up’ fund but immediately channeled their energy, experience and talents to

CHIPPEWA COUNTY  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

2010-2012

OFFICERS & DIRECTORS

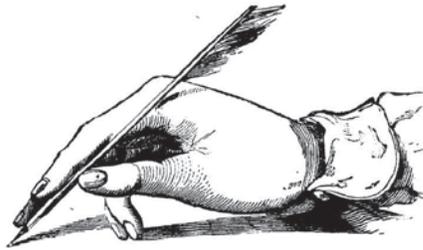
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Mary & Dennis continued

co-ordinate all the planning and implementation of five days of hands-on activities. As in previous years, all the fourth graders along with their teachers were invited to spend the whole day in Allen Park participating in various hands-on activities. The re-enactors dressed in period costumes and used authentic materials to demonstrate the life and times of the earliest days of our history in an authentic historic site.

“The Past Passed Here” has become a wonderful success for the Chippewa County Historical Society. In such capable hands, the “team” of Dennis and Mary has brought renewed hope for the future of the educational and family oriented event held each spring. Future generations will learn and acknowledge the trials and tribulations of the hard-working fur traders and lumbering ancestors that built the rich history of the area we call home. While Dennis and Mary join others involved with the History Center with a dream of some day having our own permanent building, we are grateful for their coming forward to preserve an important part of history. Many thanks to them. ♣

# Chippewa County Historical Society

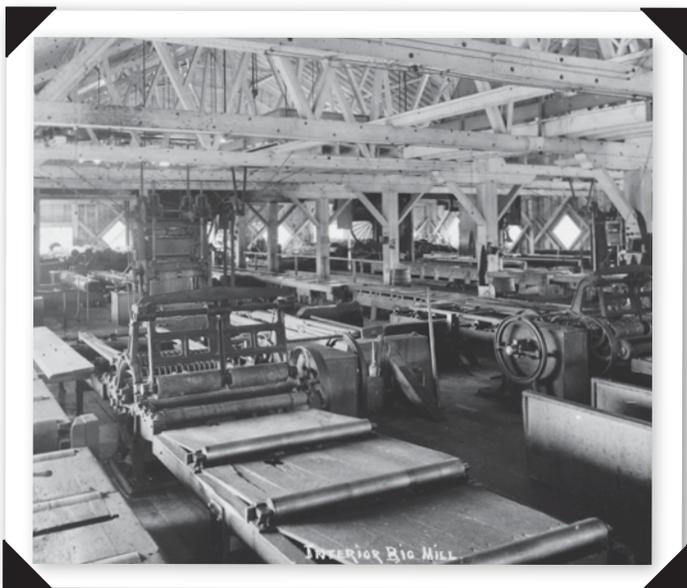
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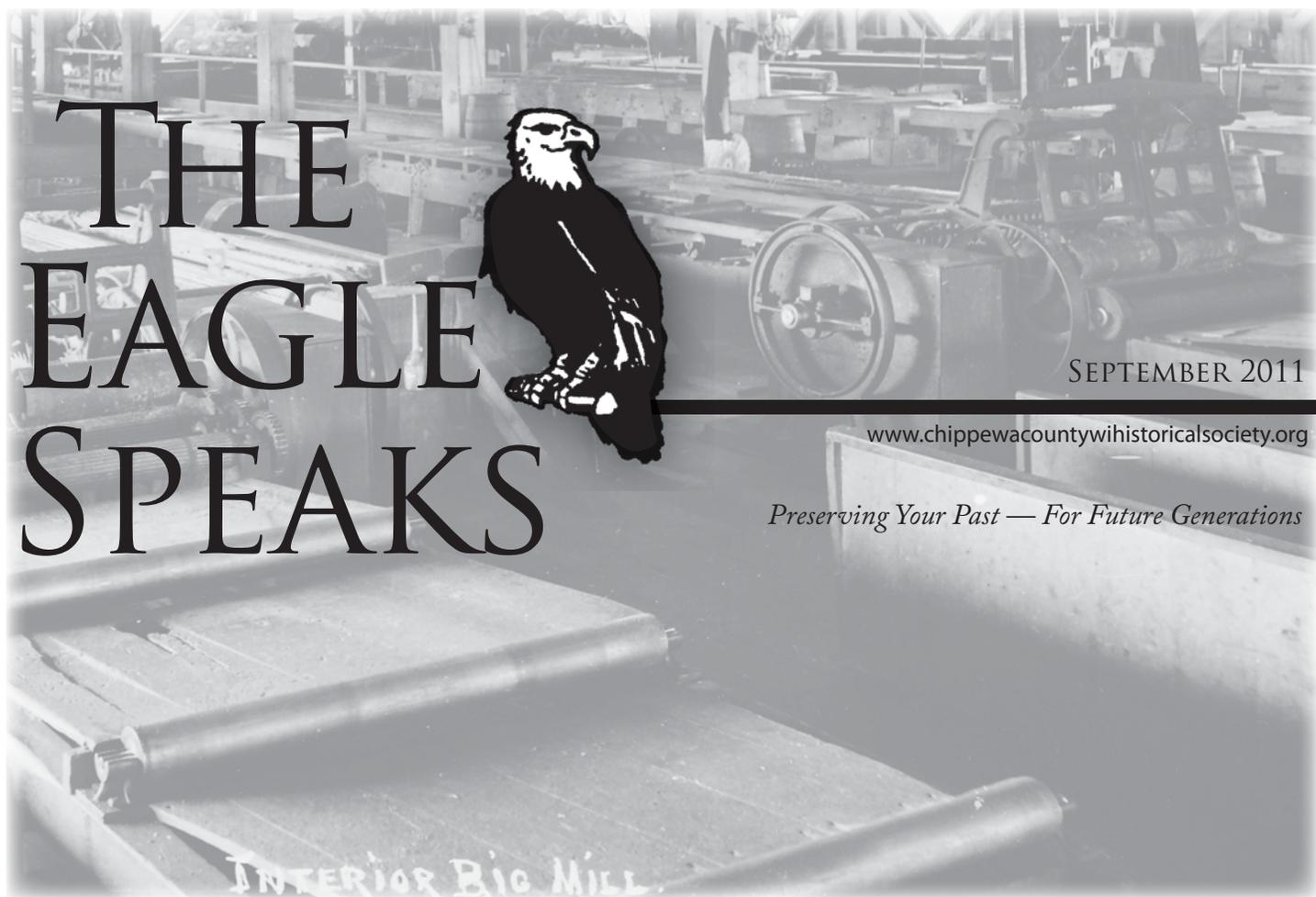
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Interior of the Chippewa Lumber & Boom Company Sawmill.



# THE EAGLE SPEAKS

SEPTEMBER 2011

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*Preserving Your Past — For Future Generations*