

THE EAGLE

CHIPPEWA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



SPEAKS

SEPTEMBER 2014

www.chippewacountywihistoricalsociety.org

"OLD ABE"

Inside this Issue:

Calendar	4
Committee Members	3
Donations	7
Genealogy Corner	2
Heard About Town	8
Lake Wissota Centennial	3
Membership Form	9
Membership Meeting Details ...	7
New in Town	9
Newsletter Sponsors	6
County News	5
President's Letter	4
Publicity Committee	7
Sears and Wards	1
Volunteer Profile	5

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Sears Roebuck & Company and Montgomery Ward

ARLEY ENGEL

Can you remember the good old days when we could not wait to get our new copies of these catalogs? If our neighbor happened to receive their copy the day before we did they spread the word at school and when we got home our first stop would be the mailbox. This was a prized possession of the whole family and had a special spot in the magazine case in our living room.

After chores were done in the evening we took turns checking out the new boots and pocketknives, then on to the different style of shirts and jeans and guns. As there were five boys to snoop through these new issues this took quite awhile. The catalogs came within

Mark your calendars and save this date:

Monday, Sept. 8 at 6:30 p.m.

CCHS Bi-Annual Membership Meeting and History of Irvine Park Program.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



“Mother’s hats were much smaller... only held on with two or three bobby pins.”

GENEALOGY CORNER

ANNE KELLER

It was Judith Loisselle Rubenzer’s initial contribution to the Community Foundation of Chippewa County a few months ago that started a “Seedling Fund” in the name of the Chippewa County Genealogical Society. Since then, the society has matched her funds to honor all past and present CCGS members. When this fund reaches \$10,000, we will be able to use the earnings to compliment our ongoing program of providing resources and expertise to those researching their Chippewa area families. We encourage members, as well as non-members, to give memorials to this fund so that it can grow; in a few years we’ll realize the benefits. To do so, memorials may be sent to: The Community Foundation of Chippewa County, P.O. Box 153, Chippewa Falls, WI 54729-0153. 🍂

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.

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Catalogs *continued from cover*

a week of each other so we could do our comparison-shopping. Us boys would giggle as we flipped quickly through the pages with women’s corsets and other unmentionables. We were amazed how the men stood so tall in their long johns, especially as they stood with one leg resting on a stool to show the comfort of the garment, most likely standing there with a pipe in hand to give him more dignity. The women also looked comfortable in their corsets, not a bit ridiculous as I remember in real life.

The Sears Catalog was used as a booster seat under the smallest brother still sitting in the high chair. It was also used as a rest spot for the old flat iron. The Montgomery Ward was given to the kids. We saved the little girl pages for the Baier girls and received unwanted pages from them to use for tracing of horses and harnesses while holding these pages up to a window. Other pages were used to wrap green tomatoes. We would sit on the floor and pull out 1 page at a time and carefully wrap each tomato and gently lay it down in a cardboard box. One by one they were wrapped and placed in neat rows like the oranges in tissue paper that we got once or twice a year. A page could also be rolled up and twisted into a plug for a kerosene can in case a raw potato was not available. The same plug could be used for a lantern or lamp if the plug was lost. Dad use to roll up a page of the catalog and stick it into the fire in the kitchen stove to provide a light for his cigar or it could have been used to start the kindling afire if the stove had been allowed to burn itself out over night.

My Mother’s hats were nothing like the big, monster hats the ladies displayed in the catalogs. On many occasions, like even going shopping in Chippewa Falls, my Mother wore small hats. Her hats probably cost one dollar or less and were only held on with two or three bobby pins.

At times we tore the pages of the catalog into little strips and then we tore them into smaller pieces to use in the nest of our chicken coop. The old story goes that this would keep the hens from eating their eggs. Some farmers thought the chickens got some important nutrition from the paper.

Most of our neighbor ladies sewed dresses for themselves after looking at the fashions. Mom was not that talented. She had to order patterns and sew the dress together from the patterns. This took a little longer but the results were nearly the same. The sewing machine was kept quite busy with five boys rough housing around the farm. We had a few sewed on patches and a few iron on hot patches where it was nearly impossible to get the machine into those little pant legs.

The index pages were used as identified but they were also very popular in the outhouses that every farm had. Wiping was more relaxed with the soft index pages than with the stiffer main pages. Some of the catalog companies had special wallpaper issues and these were used to brighten the walls of the outhouse. *That’s all for now from Engel’s Little House on the Wheaton Prairie* 🍂

During the next few years each issue of our newsletter will feature an article on the 1913-1917 formation of Lake Wissota. Xcel Energy has provided the Chippewa County Historical Society and the Lake Wissota Improvement & Protection



Association. with written materials and approximately 1,000 images of dam construction in Chippewa Falls. We greatly appreciate their support of sharing this information with residents and members of our non-profit organizations.

Committees in sync!



Chippewa County Historical Society Committee Members

WHAT WAS HAPPENING 100 YEARS AGO AT THIS TIME ...

Chippewa River Dam & Power History

JIM SCHUH

(The following information, in quotes, was taken from The 7-9-96 Determination of Eligibility for National Register of Historic Places, for the Wissota Dam Historic District.)

Continued from June's The Eagle Speaks... In the summer of 1914 Charles Kelsey and Joseph Brewer had just purchased the Chippewa Valley Electric Railway and Light Company that had been owned by a powerful group of lumbermen. Assessing the challenges and potential the Chippewa River presented would require much planning prior to dam construction.

"During the 18th and 19th centuries, the Chippewa River was an important transportation route for the indigenous inhabitants, fur traders and settlers. In the late 19th century, the river was the heart of the western Wisconsin logging industry. Sawmill operations led the way to damming the Chippewa for hydroelectric production. The Chippewa was a particularly challenging river to harness, because of marked seasonal fluctuations in its level. In 1871, the Union Lumbering Company erected the first dam at Paint Creek on the Chippewa River. Situated just above the location of the present Wissota dam, it was a roll dam 12 feet high. It was rebuilt in 1880 by the Chippewa Lumber and Boom Company and transformed into a flooding as well as a storage dam, with a 24-foot head and five 20-foot Tainter gates. It was successfully operated until the great flood of September 10, 1884, when the long earth wing on the north end gave way."

The force of the flowing Chippewa River was first used to power simple sawmills. The early mill owners began using "up-and-down" sawmills. Mill machinery was operated off a shaft turned by a waterwheel, powered by either overshot or undershot water flow. Circular saws did not appear on the market until 1850. During the 1860s water turbines became available for powering mills and replaced waterwheels. Water turbines were much more efficient in utilizing the waterpower.

Sometimes called "white coal" for the color of the waves on a rushing river, hydroelectric waterpower was touted as the future of electric power in the Midwest. The nation's first commercial electric plant began operation in Appleton, Wisconsin in 1882, with hardware supplied by the New York Edison Company.

Organized in 1914 by a group of public utilities in northwestern Wisconsin and eastern Minnesota, the Wisconsin-Minnesota Light and Power Company sought to harness the power of the Chippewa River and its tributaries to produce electric power. ♣

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Column Authors: Arley Engel, Kathy Forsgren, Dave Gordon and Mary McKenna

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Don Bichner had three Leinenkugel's Kegs. He donated the one in the best condition to us and sold the other two. He then very generously donated the proceeds from the two sales to our building fund.



A Message From Your President

What happened to summer? Well besides the weather, which could not make up its mind about what season it was, the activity at the History Center since I last wrote you has been amazing.

At the June Board meeting we talked about needing some professional help to work with us to help move our museum to what we aspire it to be. At the end of that meeting I was told there was a young man who would like to volunteer at the Museum. Enter Nate Green. In talking with him I learned he had just finished his PhD in history at Washington University in St. Louis. He and his wife had just moved to the area and she had started a new job. Needless to say this could not have come at a better time. Nate and I quickly realized that his need for a job and our need for help was a match. Not wanting the Historical Society to become an employer just yet, I went to the Board with a proposed contract for consulting services of 25 hours per week with Nate. The Board and Nate agreed and we have been off and running ever since.

In his first two months he has written a grant applying for \$40,000 (we haven't heard back yet), he is learning our software Past Perfect, has started looking at our exhibits with the Exhibit Committee, has made suggestions to the Collection and Archive Committee about organizing our artifact storage on the forth floor, met with Dennis Mickesh to add information to the Survey Exhibit and has the Exhibit Committee looking at improving the foyer entrance to the museum. Oh yes I almost forgot the 1,012 e-mails he has sent me (oh, all right, maybe I exaggerated a lot). See Nate's full story on page 9.

Recently I began to wonder why Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin a town of 13,000 people in the middle of the United States had the largest saw mill under one roof and largest earth filled dam in the world at one time, was the birth place of the super computer, is the home of 19 businesses that started over 100 years ago that are still in business today. The list of things about Chippewa also includes such things as a sugar beet factory, cigar manufacturing, woolen mill, shoe factories and is the home today of Darley Pump, Mason Shoe and Leinenkugel Brewing to name just a few. Could our Museum attempt to answer this question? I hope so.

Speaking of museums, the activity around a new museum in Chippewa has increased in the last two months. Conversations of Irvine Park being the location of a new museum was enhanced by the for sale sign that appeared on the business property at 12 Bridgewater Avenue next to the entrance to the Park. Discussion continues with CFMIT about taking advantage of purchasing the property as a future sight of a new museum. I'll keep you posted on this new development.

Don't forget the Semi Annual Membership Meeting, Monday, Sept. 8 at the History Center at 6:30 p.m. See page 7 for details and see you there! *Dave* 🍷

👉 *Don't forget, the museum is open on the 4th Saturday of the month starting in September.*

CALENDAR

Sept. 8,

6:30 p.m. CCHS Bi-Annual Membership Meeting Irvine Park History - Area History Center

Sept. 16:

Noon Area History Center Birthday Lunch
1:30 The Past Passed Here Planning Meeting

Sept. 27

9 a.m. - 1 p.m. Museum Open 4th Saturday

Oct. 21:

9:30 a.m. CCHS Board Meeting
10:30 a.m. Historic Marker Committee Meeting
Noon Area History Center Birthday Lunch

Oct. 25

9 a.m. - 1 p.m. Museum Open 4th Saturday

Nov. 18:

9:30 a.m. CCHS Board Meeting
Noon Area History Center Birthday Lunch
1:30 p.m. The Past Passed Here Planning Meeting

Nov. 27

9 a.m. - 1 p.m. Museum Open 4th Saturday



Jake and
Betty
Jacobson



COUNTY NEWS

Stanley Area Historical Society

DAVID JANKOSKI, REPORTER

Summer is slipping by rapidly. We have had a good one so far with two informative programs held on June 7 and July 12. At our quarterly meeting held on July 28, we received the announcement that SAHS had been awarded a \$700 Mini-Grant from the State Historical Society and the Wisconsin Council of Local History. Our committee working on digitizing our collections has been working diligently on getting set-up to begin this seemingly endless project. The equipment needed has been purchased and the space dedicated to this project is nearly ready. The Mini-Grant, plus over \$500 in donations designated for the project, will fund about half the cost.

As most of you likely know Betty Plombon, our Museum Director, recently lost her husband Bill. Betty has returned to work at the museum and invites visitors to see the new exhibits that have been created for this season. Betty and other volunteers have put in a lot of volunteer time in developing them. Mackenzie Turner, a university student, has been working weekends for us this summer. We feel fortunate to have had her along with our regular volunteers who staff the museum during June through September. Betty also held a training session for any docents who wished to attend. There was fair attendance and the attendees found it very beneficial.

I would like to introduce the readers to our new treasurer, Jim Ericksen. Jim is the former owner of the True Value Hardware Store in Stanley and took over the duties from Twila Plummer, who served as our treasurer for many years. Jim is doing a great job.

We invite visitors on Saturdays and Sundays from 1-4 p.m. during the months of August and September. Our last scheduled day for the season will be October 4.

A VOLUNTEER PROFILE

JIM SCHUH

Allen (Jake) Jacobson

On June 2nd, 2012 the CCHS coordinated an antique auto event in Irvine Park celebrating the 100th Anniversary of the Yellowstone Trail, a cross continental highway that was starting to be created in 1912. The event provided a free lunch for antique auto enthusiasts including Sokup's homemade bratwursts. Jake generously volunteered to bring his grill to the park and cook hundreds of brats for our guests. This event was his introduction to our local history group and soon Jake and his wife Betty would become much more involved. When in town they began attending our events and membership meetings. They live on small Lake Wissota for much of the year, but are snowbirds and have a winter home in the desert.

We have all heard the saying "if you need something done, ask a busy person to help." This couple is always busy and always has a project in the works. Being a retired industrial arts and photography high school teacher and a former sawmill owner Jake has a wide variety of knowledge and skills. When we needed help on our Logging Room he assisted with identifying and organizing the logging tools and with putting the finishing touches on our new lumberjack exhibit. We have exactly 100 log stamp hammers. For a long time we have needed a more effective way to display them. Recognizing this need Jake designed, built and donated a specialized shelving unit that was perfect for the job. He also just happened to have a Pike's Pole that he willingly donated. This completed the needed tools for our display. When we held an Open House for our new exhibits Jake dressed up in his best lumberjack outfit and shared his vast knowledge of the lumber industry with our attendees.

Last spring, at the Past Passed Here, Jake once again dressed up like a lumberjack to help educate the students and the public about the important role of lumbering in the history of Chippewa County. He furnished his own logs along with other items to demonstrate important logging methods. When he wasn't teaching he and Betty were helping out in the CCHS food booth cooking and serving buffalo burgers and voyageur stew.

Since getting involved with the CCHS he has "caught the history bug." Now he is even helping out the Historical Society at his winter residence in Arizona by having created the "Queen's Valley's Got Talent" fundraiser for the organization. Jake invites residents who want to share their entertaining talents to participate by performing music, comedy or other amusing abilities. Jake not only emceeds the event but also performs because along with all his other talents he tells jokes, sings and plays the guitar.

Jake has expressed an interest in helping to research and create information for an improved antique camera exhibit at our museum. We value his contributions and thank Jake for the variety of ways that he has helped make Chippewa County history fun. Now we need to find a way for him to use those guitar playing and singing/songwriting talents at our History Center. ♣




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PUBLICITY COMMITTEE

JIM SCHUH

On June 29th a supplement to the Chippewa Herald titled "Postcards from the Past" was published. The introduction read: "Chippewa County's past embraces the start and end of the lumber age to the rise of the supercomputer industry. The Herald is honoring the county's past through "Postcards from the Past," a special section devoted to how life used to be in the county. Readers were asked to submit photos of the past to the Herald. The Chippewa County Historical Society along with the Stanley and Cadott Historical Societies also made contributions. The submitted photos that were not included in this section will be published throughout the year in the Herald.

We submitted several photos along with an article about the Chippewa Woolen Mill that I wrote for our newsletter along with feedback from Arthur Weiss. His father was a designer at the mill. We also placed an ad that we had designed with a postcard theme by our very talented, volunteer graphic design artist, Elly Rochester. Thank you to Elly for her continued contributions. Thanks also to the Chippewa Herald for their support and interest in sharing information about our rich history with the public!

CCHS Bi-Annual Membership Meeting & Program Monday, September 8, 6:30 p.m. at the Area History Center.

President's Progress Report, Election of Board Members & Program: "Search to Uncover the History of Irvine Park"

In the Spring Semester of 2014 Dr. John Mann's Public History Seminar course at UW-Eau Claire prepared a research project for Irvine Park in Chippewa Falls. After a semester of research, an artifact inventory, collections plan, PowerPoint presentation and a short film were delivered to Irvine Park. Jeremy Kingsbury is a graduate student at UW Eau Claire who participated in the project.


He will give a brief discussion of the project, and present the film and PowerPoint presentation.



HEARD ABOUT TOWN

Feedback...

 *The Ripon, WI, Historical Society recently contacted us. They had seen the article in the State Historical Society's May newsletter Columns that featured our new exhibits, which were created with help from UW-EC History Student Interns. A photo in our newsletter showed enlarged lumbering photos displayed on our window coverings in the lumberjack exhibit. They liked the look of the banners and wanted to know where we had them made and how we fastened the banners to our window openings. We explained that Gaber Signs printed our historic photos on vinyl banners and installed metal grommets in areas where existing screws were located in the wood window casings. Using this procedure we were able to use existing screws to install the banners without damage to woodwork.*

 *We were pleased to see that our annual five-day educational event, "The Past Passed Here" was featured in a half page article with three photos in The Cardinal, Summer 2014 issue that is published by the Chippewa Falls Area Unified School District. The eight-page, full color periodical is mailed to all school district postal customers.*

Shown here are the innovative window treatments that generated interest in Ripon, along with the custom shelving, made by Jake Jacobson (volunteer profile on page 5), that he designed, built and installed in the closet, to display our log stamp hammers.



The "Second Halfers" group picture in front of the Thorp "Welcome" Cow at the Holland's Family Cheese, LLC

Minnesota Group Visits History Center

MARY AND JIM ERICKSON

This August, twenty enthusiastic seniors from Faith Presbyterian Church in Minnetonka, Minnesota, visited the History Center. The "Second Halfers" group took a tour of many places in the Chippewa Falls area. It was arranged by Mary and Jim Erickson, volunteers at the Center. Making the stop at the History Center, the busload of "Tourers" was greeted by docents ready to expound on the many interesting subjects and exhibits. So many rooms to see! So much variety! It was a pleasure to see the curiosity grow with each new display. And, there was something there for everyone to experience.

The group had been told beforehand that the site of the Center was originally a Nunnery. But it surprised many that from the moment they entered the foyer, they felt something very special about this "Nun's abode." Later, on the third floor, seeing an actual, sparsely-appointed Nun's bedroom, or "cell" as it was known, was something quite eye-opening. Not even a mirror on the medicine cabinet! Moving on to other rooms made for a pleasant, continuing venture into the past.

For instance, they enjoyed the room loaded with a taste of the logging era that was of exceptional importance to early Chippewa Falls. And, speaking of tastes, the Grandma's Kitchen room, displaying so many items right out of their parent's and grandparent's kitchens of days gone by, just plain "made me happy," to quote one of the visitors. Too much to mention everything that fostered exclamations, of course, but what they all seemed to conclude was this. The Center was a site overflowing with items and information that reflected the rich history of this area in such an entertaining way. And this astute group even picked up the local, rather unexpected pronunciation of Chippewa. Not, "Chip-poo-wa" as outsiders might say, but "Chip-wa" as everyone around here says. Overall, the History Center was one of the places this group will not soon forget. 🍷





These Chippewa Woolen jackets and blankets were recently donated by Jane Nicolai of Wayzata, MN. The jackets are almost identical but one label reads "Chippewa Woolen Mill" and the other says "Vagabond by Chippewa." Jane generously donated over 40 items some of which will be featured in future newsletters.

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New In Town

NATHANIEL GREEN

I am a new resident of the Chippewa Valley, having lived the past seven years of my life in St. Louis, Missouri, where I was pursuing my Ph.D. in U.S. history at Washington University in St. Louis. My research and teaching focus on the early political history of the United States, but I also have experience in public history. A native Iowan, I was born and raised in a small town on the Mississippi River called Fort Madison. At around 11,000 people, Fort Madison has many parallels with Chippewa Falls: it's about the same size, and it also boasts a compelling local history that I was fortunate enough to learn about in some depth. After finishing the coursework for my M.A. degree in Virginia, I returned to Iowa and got a job as the Site Manager of the Old Fort Madison, a living history interpretive center dedicated to the history of the short-lived Fort Madison, a military garrison that stood between 1808 and 1813. Like Chippewa Falls, the Old Fort, and the town that later took its name, possesses a rich history that includes Native American nations and American settlers. As the Site Manager, I was responsible for ensuring that the reenactors told that story accurately, while also providing a fun environment for visitors of all ages to learn about history.

In the Chippewa County Historical Society, I see a local history center with tremendous promise, with a collection that is full of remarkable pieces that attest to the history of this community, and its place within the broader story of the United States. It is my job to help the Historical Society to tell that story better, and that means improving how we catalog and store our materials, and how we present those materials to the public. The volunteers here have already shown they have enthusiasm and creative ideas about how to make the most of the generous donations the people of the Chippewa Valley have made. We are already making plans to update existing exhibits, and we've even made some preliminary plans for new ones. In the future, I hope you'll stop by Chippewa County Historical Society and see what improvements we're making. Whether you've been here before or it's your very first time, my goal is that you learn something new about the Chippewa Valley, and leave us inspired to learn more. ♣



Nathaniel C. Green

Chippewa County Historical Society

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