

# THE EAGLE SPEAKS

CHIPPEWA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

SEPTEMBER 2023



“OLD ABE”

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

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Speakers pictured from left were CCHS Executive Director Frank Smoot, Governor Tony Evers, Chippewa Economic Development Director Charlie Walker and Senator Jessie James.

## Cobban Bridge Ribbon Cutting

JIM SCHUH

A new Cobban Bridge has opened at the site of the more than 100-year-old Cobban Bridge. After a 2017 inspection found the old bridge unfit to safely handle vehicles, the new Cobban Bridge was reconstructed and re-opened July 25 with a ribbon cutting ceremony to more than 100 people, including Governor Tony Evers.

“Even though that bridge was beautiful, and everybody loved it, the most beautiful bridge in the world might be failing, so it was too bad for it, but everybody’s got its life and 104 years is a long time to live,” said Chippewa County Historical Society Executive Director Frank Smoot.

The bridge, originally constructed in 1908, was relocated to the Jim Falls/Cornell area in 1919, standing as a unique icon for 104 years.

“When it came down last year, it was the oldest of what they call a Pennsylvania Truss Bridge in the state of Wisconsin, and one of the oldest in the whole country, so it served the longest of any of its kind of bridge,” Smoot said.



### CCHS Semi Annual Membership Meeting

Monday, Sept. 11 | 6:30 p.m.  
Chippewa Area History Center

See page 2 for details



## CALENDAR

Sept. 11 | 6:30 p.m.

### CCHS Semi Annual Membership Meeting

Chippewa Area History Center

You can meet our new museum educator Jarrod Showalter, who will also be giving the evening's program revolving around the American Civil War.

All members are welcome and refreshments will be served.



Jarrod Showalter

#### NEWSLETTER COMMITTEE:

Jim Schuh..... Author/ Editor  
Anne Keller..... Author / Proofreader  
Jim Erickson.... Author / Proofreader  
Dave Gordon..... Author  
Frank Smoot ..... Author  
David Jankoski ..... Author  
Wendy Sullivan..... Author  
Bob Hogseth ..... Guest Author  
Tiffany Wogan..... Guest Author  
S. Durbin & T. Straka ... Guest Author  
Elly Rochester ..... Design / Layout



A shady spot to enjoy a rescued part of the Cobban Bridge.

## History Center Updates

FRANK SMOOT

After our “Hey, We’re Pretty Much Ready” event on June 3, when the History Center made its formal debut, we’ve managed to settle into a fairly steady operation.

Knock on wood, we haven’t been skunked on a single day since February 3, when we unofficially opened our doors — that is, we’ve had visitors every single day we’ve been open regardless of the weather or what else has been going on around town.

We’ve welcomed well over 3,000 folks from down the street to the other side of the world. They’ve come from all corners of Wisconsin, from Eagle River to Racine, from Madison to Hayward. They’ve come from at least 34 states. They’ve come from Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, South Korea, and Vietnam.

We’ve doubled our membership, and taken in some \$45,000 in earned income through the end of July, not counting donations, gifts, and grants.

We’ve been drilling down into the details in the exhibit halls: still putting up photographs and interpretive text, moving artifacts to new spots, finishing cases with i.d. labels.

The museum store is getting more robust every week. We’ve welcomed a score of meetings in our rental spaces and offered space this summer to the Boys and Girls Club, which has been under renovation.

Thanks mainly to Skip August and Paul Nadreau, we’ve put together an installation with parts from the dearly departed Cobban Bridge, the treated deck of which you can now walk on again. (You should be able to sit there, too, once we get a picnic table.) It’s on the west side of the History Center in a spot shady and breezy all day long.

While things are going well, we’re still looking for more visitor-services volunteers to staff the front desk and museum store. If you like to meet people from all over who are in a good mood, you’ll definitely like these jobs. ♣



◀The Chippewa Area History Center Board of Directors from left clockwise: Dave Gordon, Diana Germain, Jim Schuh, Skip August, Wendy Sullivan, Jim Docksey, Bob Hogseth, Karen Rooney and Dave Raihle.

CONTINUED FROM COVER

## Cobban Bridge Ribbon Cutting

With the historical value that the bridge holds, Highway Department officials made preservation a key focus.

“The challenging thing was, you know, we wanted to preserve as much history as we could,” said Chippewa County Highway Commissioner Brian Kelley. “We kind of came to the understanding that we couldn’t just pick up the old bridge and save the whole thing, but saving key parts of it and saving memories and history was really important throughout the whole process.”

Collaborating with the Chippewa County Historical Society, the Highway Department is using old portions of the bridge in various historical displays including one at the Chippewa Area History Center. ♣



A big thank you to the Tilden Lions Club for running our food booth for the third year at The Past Passed Here! This year eight members volunteered to cook and serve our old fashioned treats including those pictured from, left, Dave Boese, Buzzy Stoffel and Tom Clark.

# CHIPPEWA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## 2023

### OFFICERS & DIRECTORS

#### OFFICERS

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Jayne Bowe, ajabowe@gmail.com

Treasurer – vacant

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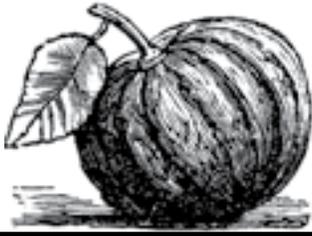
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Deborah Smith,  
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Two current openings for Directors

\*Indicates directors who serve as CCHS representatives as directors on the CAHC board.

CURRENT AS OF AUGUST 16, 2023



## COUNTY NEWS

### Stanley Area Historical Society

DAVID JANKOSKI, PRESIDENT

As was foreshadowed, in our last report we were designing a building project that has now been completed. The result is we now have an enclosed work area for our digitization team and an area where new donations to our collections can be accessioned, before they are digitized for cloud storage. The project was completed by three volunteers, with the majority of the work being done in two short weeks. The major construction included building a 27 foot separation wall and the lowering and enclosing the ceiling.

On June 11, Menomonie Historian, Matt Carter, did a presentation on German prisoner of war (POW) camps in Wisconsin. We had a full house of attendees who listened intently. Matt answered a considerable number of questions. His presentation included how the German POWs were treated, how the communities interacted with them, what work they did in the communities, and what happened when the war ended.

On July 9, our second presentation was entitled "Reminiscing the Day of the Concertina." Because of the large crowd, we moved the presentation to the church basement located directly across from our museum. With six concertina players and a drummer performing singularly, as duets and as a whole group a lot of enjoyable music was played in the nearly 3-hour event.

Our third presentation this year will be on Sunday, Sept. 17 at 1:30 pm, when Betty Plombon will do a repeat presentation of her research on the "Operation of the Ku Klux Klan in Stanley." ❖

### Your President's Remarks at the Grand Opening

DAVE GORDON

I'd like to thank everyone in the Chippewa Area for their support. We did it. The community decided our rich history should be shared with everyone and now we can. In every community project the whole community needs to get involved. You've heard from Dave Raleigh, Bob Hogseth, Frank Smoot and Dave Paukner who all stepped up in leadership roles to make this happen. "What's Your Story?" is the sign on the new Chippewa Area History Center and it too has a story.

I joined the Historical Society in 2005. At that time Freddie Glass and Jim Schumacher were talking about finding a new home for Historical Society Museum. It wasn't until 2016 that things started to happen. The property we stand on today went up for sale. Fortunately, the Historical Society had saved some money and with the help of five Historical Society and Genealogy Directors donation we bought this property. Next, we decided to run our own Capital Campaign to raise needed funds. We decided it would be cool for the building to resemble the Chippewa Lumber and Boom Company Sawmill. Then we hired CBS2 to design the building and all local contractors to build the facility. Today we are opening a facility that is paid for.

Since Ann and I moved back to Chippewa and I've been involved with the Society, I realized how much of an impact our little town in the middle of the United States has had on the world.

Did you know - we had 1/6th of the World's white pine in the Chippewa Valley and had the largest sawmill in the world under one roof. Oh and the Lake Wissota Dam was the largest earth filled dam in the world when it was built

Did you know - Agriculture took over when lumbering was done. We raised tobacco and had 5 cigar manufactures, raised sugar-beets and had a large sugar beet factory. Dairy farming grew.

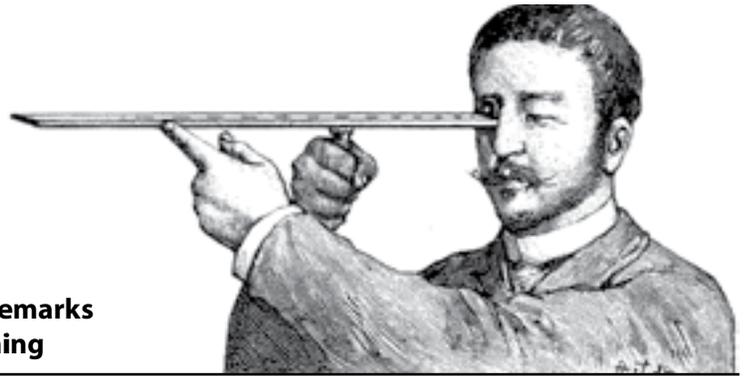
Did you know - Darley Pumps were on all Navy warships during World War II and now are on Fire trucks all over the world.

Did you know - The Cray Supercomputer was invented by Seymour Cray right here in Chippewa Falls.

Did You Know - There are 24 businesses or organizations that are over one hundred years old and still exist here in Chippewa

Finally, Did You Know - When we sat in our living rooms and watched Apollo eleven land., that the Navy seal who went in the water to attach floats and open the hatch was Chippewa's own Clancy Hattelberg.

As we were approaching completing the building and I was beginning to relax, Frank reminded me we were not approaching the finish line but the starting line. Since we've opened February 3rd, we've had 4000 visitors and I now know what he meant. We need your help in running the History Center. The operating cost is estimated to be \$160,000 a year and we need about 120 volunteer hours a week to operate. So, let's keep this new community asset going. Enjoy your time at the History Center. *Dave* ❖





◀ Wisconsin Tourism Deputy Secretary Maria Van Hoorn visited July 14. Jim Schuh and Frank Smoot gave her a tour of the history center. Thank you to the Chippewa Falls Area Chamber staff for coordinating the visit.

# Grand Opening Remarks

BOB HOGSETH

Editor Jim Schuh asked me to write an article summarizing my comments at the June Grand Opening ceremony. As Capital Campaign Co-Chair, I decided I would talk about the past 100-year history of Chippewa Falls philanthropy, and its relationship to our 2017-2022 efforts to build our new Chippewa Area History Center.

First, a very sincere “thank you” to over 600 individuals, families, and organizations who contributed to the Capital Campaign with gifts totaling over \$4,825,000. Gifts ranged from \$10 to \$575,000. By definition, regardless of the gift amount, if your gift was given out of love for your community and the desire to help improve the quality of life for all citizens, then you are a philanthropist. If done out of love for others, the same applies to donating your time and services. This 100% volunteer effort and 100% privately funded History Center is a good example of many “grassroots” philanthropic projects in our community. Some are very visible. Just on the north side of town alone, we have the YMCA, indoor hockey rinks, youth baseball fields, the Northern Wisconsin State Fairgrounds, Irvine Park, Erickson Park, and now, a new History Center. Each exists because of community philanthropy.

Second, there were dozens of interesting experiences and stories behind each project, including our fund-raising efforts to build the History Center. All gifts are appreciated, but most multi-million-dollar campaigns will fail without several major gifts. While reviewing the list of donors, I found it fascinating that the three largest gifts, all \$500,000 or more, came from individuals who died decades ago. Rutledge, Phillips and Casper are familiar names to many area residents. Edward Rutledge was born in 1834 in Northern Ireland. Following a career in the Chippewa Falls lumber industry, he died in 1911. His will established the Edward and Hannah Rutledge Charities. Lewis Phillips was born in Lithuania in 1899. He became President of National Presto Industries and established the L. E. Phillips Family Foundation in 1942. He died in 1978. Bill Casper was born in 1902 in Chippewa Falls. His mother was Rose Leinenkugel, and he became President of the Chippewa Falls family brewery. He died in 1999. Bill's will established the William & Gertrude Casper Foundation. I'm sure all these historic local philanthropists would heartily approve the Board member's/Trustee's decisions to make such generous gifts to help preserve our local history.

The level of philanthropy in a given community often makes the difference between an average community and a great community. Make no mistake about it. This little town in rural Northern Wisconsin is a GREAT community thanks to thousands of past and present philanthropists. May they inspire future generations to continue our impressive history of giving to improve the quality of life for all citizens of the Chippewa Falls area. ✪

## MEMBERSHIP FORM

### CHIPPEWA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

DATE

NAME

ADDRESS

CITY

STATE / ZIP

TELEPHONE

#### Type of Membership:

- Individual / Student ..... \$25/year
- Family..... \$50/year
- Iron Business or Household..... \$125/year
- Copper Business or Household \$250/year
- Silver Business or Household... \$500/year
- Gold Business or Household.. \$1000/year
- Lifetime Membership  
Household ..... \$5000/year

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Chippewa County Historical Society  
12 Bridgewater Ave.  
Chippewa Falls, WI 54729

## York Iron Company Charcoal Kilns in Chippewa County

SHARON A. DURBIN AND  
THOMAS J. STRAKA

The iron furnace (smelter) of the York Iron Company of Black River Falls first went into blast in August of 1886, using ore from the Gogebic Iron Range, with over 1,000 tons of ore shipped in weekly by rail. It was a large charcoal iron furnace which would require 1,500,000 bushels of charcoal annually for fuel. Charcoal kilns had been erected in various parts of Jackson County to supply fuel for the furnace, but by October more fuel was needed and new kilns were planned for north of Jackson County.

Cartwright, an early name for New Auburn, was chosen for a set of ten charcoal kilns, each sufficient to "burn" 1,000 cords of wood annually. The kilns were built by Silver and Son in 1886 and would operate until 1891. These were commonly called "coal kilns" and this resulted in New Auburn falsely being credited in early historical accounts as being near coal mines. The original kiln construction would require 200,000 bricks and later the furnace would create a new industry in Cartwright. New Auburn was the most prominent charcoal production locations in Chippewa County. In 1890 a Chippewa Falls newspaper announced the kilns at Cartwright would require "an immense quantity of wood" for the coming winter. Eventually, New Auburn would send from 400,000 to 500,000 bushels of charcoal to Black River Falls annually. The Centennial History noted that from a distance the group of kilns "looked like an Indian village of teepees."

There were other York Iron Company charcoal kiln locations in Chippewa County or nearby. Stanley was one of the best-known, with eight kilns constructed in 1886 near the county line. Two additional kilns were added in 1887. Seven miles beyond the county line was Thorp, a large charcoal operation with 16 kilns. By late 1887



▲This artist's rendering shows what's in store for River Street building revitalization.

## Wisconsin Farmer's Union

TIFFANY WOGAHN

**R**emember hearing about the great dustbowl of the 1930's? The great depression was in full swing. Crop prices were low and costs for machinery were high. The weather in the plains was dry and farmers tried to compensate by over ploughing and over grazing their land. With different farming methods this all could have been avoided.

Enter Farmer's Union! In 1930, when Farmer's Union began, our country had a much larger agricultural industry than it does now. Many people knew the important role agriculture played in every day life because there were so many farms. As farms got smaller and disappeared, people began to realize they needed to work together to let lawmakers know the needs of rural Americans and farmers. Every farmer has a voice when he or she joins Farmers Union. They can have a say concerning the policies of the organization through the democratic process that begins at the local level. Informed members can make constructive contributions to their Farmers Union's three-sided foundation of education, cooperation and legislation.

Did you know that it's because of the efforts of the Farmer's Union that food we import is labeled as to which country it is from? The Soil Conservation Service, the Production Marketing Administration, the Commodity Credit Corporation, the Farm Credit Administration and the Rural Electrification Administration were among the institutions established by the federal government which bore the stamp of early Farmers Union influence.

Farmer's Union doesn't just focus on lobbying lawmakers in the interests of farmers. They also focus heavily on educating the youth about the importance of agriculture in our communities. Kamp Kenwood is a 30-acre wildlife refuge along Lake Wissota that was dedicated in 1951. The camp offers rural and urban kids from ages 8-18 an opportunity to learn about family farms, co-ops and social justice. The Farmers Union youth program was a forerunner of many of the lasting institutions which emerged from the depths of the Great Depression.

After speaking with Al Namejunas who worked for the Wisconsin Farmer's Union from 1953 to 1995, I felt I'd barely scratched the surface on learning all the Wisconsin



▲Originally the Chippewa Valley Mercantile Company, this stately building at 128 River Street, is proposed as the Wisconsin Farmers Union downtown anchor.

## Wisconsin Farmer's Union

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

Farmer's Union does. We talked about rural healthcare, redistricting, genetically modified food, and much more. While we chatted he handed me a photo from 1992 of Bill Clinton and Al Gore speaking at Peck Farms in Chippewa County while on the campaign trail. Farmer's Union was able to get the future President of the United States to Chippewa Falls to hear our concerns! Not downtown in the middle of the city but on a local farm!

Staying true to the foundational values of education, cooperation, and legislation the Farmer's Union is taking on a huge new project in Chippewa Falls. They've purchased the building behind them that happens to have been Chippewa's first mercantile! They're hoping to build a local food movement in the city that has been their headquarters since the beginning.

Located at 128 W. River Street will be Market on River. The venue will host local food vendors with ingredients procured from Wisconsin Farmers. There will be community event spaces, meeting rooms, and apartments in this historic building. Every floor will offer something for the community while helping farmers access markets to improve their bottom line.

You don't have to be a farmer to support Wisconsin Farmer's Union. The easiest way to show your support is by visiting Market on the River and check out all that Wisconsin farms have to offer! ♣

## Cook-Rutledge Mansion Schedule of Events

Mark your calendars for these activities and events at 505 W. Grand Avenue, Chippewa Falls

**September 24**  
Noon to 3 pm  
Chili Feed Fundraiser

**October 7, 14, 21 and 28**  
Flashlight tours of the Mansion  
Call 715-723-7181 to reserve a spot



## Charcoal Kilns

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

hardwood prices along the Wisconsin Central Railroad advanced from 30 to 40 per cent due to the new kilns.

In 1892 the York Iron Company was seeking a new site for its iron furnace, closer to the hardwood and iron ore regions. Chippewa Falls was one of the locations considered, but the mayor reported the City Council did their best to discourage it. The furnace went out of blast later that year and the plant was moved to West Superior. Once the charcoal kilns ceased operation in Stanley, the Chippewa Herald-Telegram reported that "many residents welcomed the relief from weird, smoke-belching kilns." The relief did not last, as by 1893 the kilns were producing for the Spring Valley Furnace. In 1898 the property was sold for use as an industrial site.

The centennial histories of both communities included sections on the charcoal kilns (the Stanley history even includes a vague photograph of their kilns); so, they were once recognized, but now forgotten, fragments of local history. Often, with some detective work, one can still find evidence of the many charcoal operations near railroad stations (usually the long-enduring foundations). We tried at New Auburn and Stanley and failed. It turns out the New Auburn kilns were on the current St. Jude Catholic Church property and in Stanley the kiln site has been occupied by a succession of manufacturing companies, most recently Ike International. Local memories recall the New Auburn kilns were gone by 1955 and corn was planted on the site for a few years before the church was built. ♣



CHIPPEWA COUNTY GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

## GENEALOGY CORNER

# Donations

### Donations for operating costs of Chippewa Area History Center

Barbara Ray  
Barbara Walk  
Karen Kressin

### Memorial Donations

- Don Dachel by Friends & Family
- Don Dachel by Robert & Myrna Garnett
- Ray Andress by William & Sheila Volker
- Mary Aasterud by Janet Mazur
- Joyce Connolly by Nancy Sweet



## Potluck Picnic

The Chippewa County Genealogical Society will meet at  
**6 pm on Monday, Aug. 28,**  
 in the History Center's Diamond Room (12 Bridgewater Avenue), for its annual indoor potluck/picnic.

Please bring a "dish to pass."  
 The speaker will be Patti See, speaking about "Writing Obituaries."

For further information, visit the CCGS website at [ccgswi.wix.com/ccgswi](http://ccgswi.wix.com/ccgswi)

WENDY SULLIVAN, CCGS PRESIDENT

The Chippewa Falls Oktoberfest will celebrate its 20th anniversary Sept. 15-16, 2023. This family friendly event was created by the Chippewa Falls Area Chamber to provide a fun way to celebrate the German heritage of Chippewa County. It's a time to listen to polka bands and Crazy George, eat delicious German food, drink beer, wear lederhosen and dirndls, compete in the beer stein holding contest, watch the dancing at the Glockenspiel stage, and visit with friends.

The Chippewa Falls Oktoberfest is also a time to reflect on the many German families who settled in Chippewa County and who helped make our communities the great places they are today. In 2018, the Chippewa County Genealogical Society was asked to do research and provide clues for a new Oktoberfest tradition, the Oktoberfest Medallion Hunt, and it's been a lot of fun digging a bit deeper into the local German heritage. One of the first local German families that comes to mind is the Leinenkugel family. However, there are many others who also have influenced our area. Each year we select a person to base the Oktoberfest Medallion Hunt clues on and below is a summary of each year to date.

**2018: Lorenz Bischel** (1837-1916), a German immigrant, moved to Chippewa County in 1863. He farmed and later opened Bischel's Meat Market. His building was located at 514 N. Bridge Street and is now occupied by the Chippewa Falls Main Street. It has a well-known mural on it.

**2019: John B. Kehl** (1837-1909) moved to Chippewa Falls in 1874. He was involved in many business ventures in Chippewa Falls: Glen Flouring Mills, Hand Made Shoe Company, Chippewa Falls Water Works and Lighting Company, and First National Bank. He and several other local businessmen formed the Progressive League of Chippewa Falls, which was the predecessor to the Chippewa Area Chamber.

**2020: August Mason** (1848-1927) came to Chippewa Falls in 1856. He is known for shoes but also worked in lumbering, farming, and was the president and later a director of the First National Bank in Chippewa Falls.

**2021:** In 1867, **John Miller** (1837-1906) moved to Chippewa Falls with his friend Jacob Leinenkugel and formed the partnership of Leinenkugel & Miller, proprietors of the Spring Brewery. John lost his wife in 1883 and left his partnership in the brewery in 1884. However, he remained friends for life with Jacob Leinenkugel and the John Miller family shares a headstone in Old Hope Cemetery (Chippewa Falls) with the Jacob Leinenkugel family.

**2022: F.X. Schmidmayr** (Schmidtmeier) (1829-1904). According to his obituary, he started the first brewery in Chippewa Falls, about 1855. The brewery was located near the intersection of West River Street and Superior Street. He enlisted in the Union Army in 1861, during the Civil War, but returned to the brewery business in Chippewa following his military service. In 1871 he purchased land in what is now Irvine Park and expanded a natural cave to store beer. In 1877 he opened the Union House on North Bridge Street which later became the Shamrock Hotel. Today the building no longer stands but the location is part of the lawn of the BMO Harris Bank.

**2023:** Stay tuned to the Chippewa Falls Oktoberfest Facebook page to discover who is this year's Medallion Hunt subject. ♣

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SEPTEMBER 2023

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**MISSION: COLLECT, PRESERVE, INTERPRET AND  
SHARE THE RICH HISTORY OF CHIPPEWA COUNTY**

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.

Mail any comments or future articles to:  
Chippewa County Historical Society,  
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715-723-4399