

# THE EAGLE SPEAKS

CHIPPEWA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NOVEMBER 2017



"OLD ABE"

www.chippewacountywihistoricalsociety.org

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Area History Center will be  
**Closed for the Holidays**  
December 19, 23, 26



Our local history books  
make great Christmas gifts.  
See ad on page 9



December 1896 photo shows ice jammed up under the Chippewa River or Wagon Bridge looking south. Small inset photo shows the normal river water level.

## 1896 Battle of the Ice Gorge

REPRINTED BY THE CHIPPEWA HERALD-TELEGRAM MARCH 2, 1957

**Y**ou could almost hear disaster approaching! It came riding in on a soft warm breeze approaching from the southwest. Suddenly an ominous warning signal, a long low rumble of what sounded like thunder.

"What's that," John Murray asked as he looked up sharply from the December issue of the Police Gazette. "Sounds like thunder," he said to nobody in particular. The hotel proprietor checked the clock above the pigeonhole desk. It was 7:30 p.m. Then he glanced at the date on the calendar. What was it doing thundering on the evening of November 30, 1896.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



**Congratulations to the Jacob Leinenkugel Brewing, Company for celebration 150 years of continuous business in Chippewa Falls!**

An incredible celebration was held the second weekend of August 2017 at the brewery, Leinie Lodge and the Northern Wisconsin State Fairgrounds.

The CCHS has been awarding plaques to 100-year old businesses since 2012. Our current members who have received this recognition are listed below.

**Chippewa Falls Centennial Businesses**

1. Jacob Leinenkugel Brewing Company (1867)
2. Chippewa Herald (1870)
3. Mower Insurance (1871)
4. Eagle Point Mutual Insurance (1879)
5. Chippewa Falls YMCA (1883)
6. St. Joseph's Hospital (1888)
7. Sokup's Market (1891)
8. Premium Waters (Chippewa Spring Water) (1893)
9. Northern Wisconsin State Fair (1897)
10. Chippewa Veterinary Clinic (1902)
11. Pederson-Volker Funeral Chapel (1902)
12. Chippewa County Abstract and Title Company (1904)
13. Klinger Farms 1904
14. Mason Shoe Company (1904)
15. Northwestern Bank (1904)
16. James Sheeley House (1905)
17. Wiley Law, S.C. (1907)
18. Xcel Energy (NSP) (1910)
19. Chippewa Area Chamber of Commerce (1911)
20. Phalen & Popple Plumbing & Heating (1911)
21. Edward Rutledge Charities (1912)
22. Hanna Rutledge Home for the Aged (6-14-1913)
23. Chippewa Falls Elks Lodge 1326 (7-1916)
24. Raihle Law Office, 1916
25. Tcshopp Durch Camastral Company (1917)

**Ice Gorge** CONTINUED FROM FRONT

"I'll go take a look," a lounging lumberjack pulled his long legs under him and pushed open the door. The evening air was mild. It was clear with a couple of evening stars shining brightly in a winter sky. There was no moon and yet from the northwest came the low rumble of thunder.

Neither man realized it at the time, but in the next five days, the young, vigorous, swashbuckling city of Chippewa Falls was to fight a battle of the elements and of tense frayed nerves. It was to be known later in history, as the Battle of the Ice Gorge.

It all started with an equinoctial rainstorm, which had begun four days before. The Chippewa River rose rapidly and then receded as the rains drizzled out. Even so, the C.L. and Boom Lumber Co. lost 250 feet of boom, which had been carried out by the rushing water.

In another part of town, at the Ottawa House (122 River St.), that same evening a grizzled old timber cruiser shook his head. "It looks bad, I seen it happen once on the Mississippi. I'm 'fraid were in fer trouble."

By morning the bad news spread like wildfire up and down Bay and Spring streets. A timber runner brought in word that ice was piling up at the Dells in a jam of logs and debris. To make matters worse the temperature dropped to 2 degrees below zero, in a matter of hours.

An anxious Chippewa Falls watched and waited throughout Tuesday, Dec. 1, 1896. By mid-afternoon a call came for every available man to turn out. Lumberjacks poured out of Dick Kunsman's saloon and offered their services. Merchants discarded aprons to gather at the Chippewa River Bridge.

Great chunks of ice still floated silently downstream in the boiling waters at their feet. And then the news turned even worse. A wary surveyor brought word that ice was jamming downriver at Gravel Island (now the Town of Hallie). He had measured the ice to be from 15 to 40 feet thick. It was freezing all the way to the bottom and the floating ice was continually jamming up against the enormous bottleneck.

Quickly the men formed a fighting team. Merchants with establishments out of the Spring Street area, joined forces with the lumberjacks. The grizzled timber cruiser for some reason was elected head of the party. Webb and Fletcher hardware merchants broke out all available supplies of dynamite. The fighting team took off.

At the battle scene towering icebergs cast an eerie glow in the light of lanterns as men drilled holes in the ice. Charges were placed and detonated. A few ice chips exploded into the air, but the main gorge held fast and firm.

Meanwhile back in Chippewa Falls, the river continued backing up. Already there was water in the basements of Murray's Hotel at the corner of Bay and River and in Gailey's Furniture and Hodge's Store halfway up Bridge Street. Duncan Creek, up to its old tantrums, started backing up and flooding when no more of its overflow could get into the Chippewa.

By morning, (Dec. 2, 1896), The Daily Independent printed this editorial on its front page: "It looks serious. It seems now as if the calamity cannot be averted. The situation is growing worse hourly. Water is now over the first floor of all buildings below Spring Street and is still rising." Draymen changing teams every four hours, worked around the clock moving merchandise to safe ground. Old-timers stopped talking about the bad floods of 1880 and 1884 and pitched in to help out wherever they could.

Trains on the Wisconsin Central, operating on 'slow order' for the last 24 hours, were stopped completely. The Milwaukee Depot had been chained to the rails.

Chippewa Area  
HISTORY CENTER



Total Campaign Goal: \$3,500,000 \* Construction Begins At: \$2,450,000

**Gifts and Pledges**

Received as of October 31, 2017: \$920,000

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Mary Kay Brown	Joe and Cathy Carroll	Mary Klawiter
Ken and Diane Koss		

**Thank you for supporting historic preservation and education!**

Please note: As explained in the "Donor Recognition Plan", we are printing only the names of those gifting \$100 or more to the Capital Campaign. We do, however, sincerely appreciate the many gifts under this amount! If you believe your gift was omitted or listed incorrectly, please call 715-723-4399. We apologize for any errors and will do our best to correct them.

**CHIPPEWA COUNTY  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
2017-2018**

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**OFFICERS**

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5432 178th St., Chippewa Falls
- ❖ Teri Stahr, 715-723-9007  
7493 County Hwy. K, Chippewa Falls



This is our new Chippewa Area History Center building elevation rendering

Our CAHS Capital Campaign has reached a major milestone of \$1 million.

Your help is needed to raise another \$2.5 million to reach our goal.



## CALENDAR

History Center open every Tuesday | 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

### Dec. 5

10:00 am Capital Campaign  
Communication Committee

### Dec. 12:

8:00 am Capital Campaign  
Executive Committee  
9:30 am CCHS Board Meeting

Noon Area History Center  
Birthday Lunch

### Dec. 19, 23, 26:

History Center Closed for the Holidays

### Jan. 2:

10:00 am Historic Marker Committee

### Jan. 9:

9:00 am Capital Campaign Executive  
Committee

### Jan. 16:

9:30 a.m. CCHS Board Meeting  
Noon Area History Center Birthday  
Lunch  
1:30 The Past Passed Here Planning  
Meeting  
4:30 Capital Campaign  
Communication Committee

### Jan. 23:

9:00 am Capital Campaign  
Executive Committee

### Jan. 27:

9 am-1 pm Museum Open  
Fourth Saturday

### Feb. 6:

10:00 am Capital Campaign  
Communication Committee

### Feb. 12:

6:30 CCHS Bi-Annual  
Membership Meeting

## A Message From Your President

**\$1,000,000!** I had to pinch myself when I typed the capital campaign status to date. We are on our way to having a new history center. Next goal is \$2,450,000, which is the amount the board said we needed to have pledged to start construction.

The Capital Campaign Committees is busy making sure we reach our goal of \$3,500,000. If you haven't joined the ever-growing group of supporters, you need to make a pledge today.

At the membership meeting on October 2, 2017, changes to the bylaws were approved. The following were elected:

Vice President – David Raihle Jr.

Secretary – Mary McKenna

Treasurer – Cate Murphy

Directors – Skip August, Greg Misfeld, Mary Erickson, Jim Schuh

It is that time of year again to nominate candidates for the Chippewa County Historical Society's Hall of Fame. The board started the Hall of Fame in 2008. The following is information about the Hall of Fame:

The purpose of the Hall of Fame is to recognize the members, officers and directors who have made a significant contribution to the Chippewa County Historical Society.

Annually, in the November newsletter, the membership will given an opportunity to nominate people for induction into the Hall of Fame. The Board of Directors each January will determine if any members of the society should be inducted into the Hall of Fame. Except for the initial class of inductees the maximum number of inductees shall be three each year.

Qualifications include but are not limited to:

- Served as an officer or director for at least one full term.
- Contributed major artifacts, books or manuscripts to the Society's collection.
- Donated a significant amount of volunteer time to the Society and/or its collection.
- Made a large monetary donation to advance the Society's mission.
- Had a significant impact on the Society.

Hall of Fame living inductees will be notified of their election and presented with a plaque at the February Membership meeting. If possible families of deceased inductees will be notified of their relative's election. A display of inductees will be maintained in the History Center.

Let's all make sure everyone we know is aware of our capital campaign for the new Chippewa Area History Center. This is an important addition to our City and County that needs everyone's financial support to make it happen. *Dave*



Kurt Gaber installing the Lake Wissota Hydroelectric Dam historic marker.

## Historic Marker Committee Update

TOM LARSON

Another year is coming to a close and 2017 has kept your Chippewa County Historical Marker Committee busy working on several projects throughout Chippewa County. Here is a summary of what Jim Erickson, Kurt Gaber, Chuck Nagel, Joe Niese, Jim Schuh and I have been working on.

Two new county markers were researched, created and installed. One in the Lake Wissota State Park. CCHS Marker #57 designates the 100th Anniversary and site of the Lake Wissota Hydroelectric Dam. The second marker, CCHS Marker #52 – The Site of the Chippewa Canning Company, was installed near the front entrance to the Chippewa County Highway Department shop building on East Grand Avenue.

Several of our current 57 Chippewa County Historical Society aluminum markers and wooden marker houses were cleaned up, re-painted and repaired this past year, including three markers at Stacker Park in Cornell. To minimize the amount of future maintenance, Kurt Gaber designed a new, no-maintenance, brown poly-plastic roof that has the same look as our current high-maintenance wooden roofs made of wooden cedar shakes.

With the guidance and help of Chippewa Falls Area Chamber of Commerce Tourism Director, Jackie Boos, the Chippewa County Activity & Attractions Tourism Guide (2018) was updated with new historical marker information and expanded promotion of the Yellowstone Trail. Jackie also worked with the Chippewa Falls Street Department to replace two missing aluminum Yellowstone Trail directional signs.

Working with Chippewa County Highway Commissioner, Brian Kelly, we were successful in getting four additional new aluminum Yellowstone Trail directional signs installed along the heavily travelled County Highway “X” in the Town of Lafayette. Building upon the original historic way of marking the Yellowstone Trail across the United States with brightly painted yellow rocks, we were successful in getting three local businesses along the trail to do just that. The View on Lake Wissota (County Highway X), Goodie’s (County Highway X) and Chippewa Valley Financial Services (W. Park Avenue) all installed large rocks which Chuck Nagel then painted bright yellow and Kurt Gabor installed the black directional arrows.

Several proposed new markers are currently being researched, many of which may be installed along trails in the new Riverfront Park in Chippewa Falls. Joe Niese is working with city officials on that project.

Last, our Chippewa County Historical Marker Computer PowerPoint program was re-created with expanded historical information. *The 82 Historical Markers & Sites in Chippewa County, Wisconsin* will soon be available for viewing on several area community websites including the CCHS site at: [www.chippewacountywihistoricalsociety.org](http://www.chippewacountywihistoricalsociety.org). It is also free to anyone who has Microsoft PowerPoint and may be downloaded via a flash drive in just a few seconds. Contact Tom Larson at 715-828-0731 for further details. ♣



### Added Curb Appeal For *The Past Passed Here*

Our major improvements for 2018 will include a large tent with stockade fence and functional gates at the main entrance. These will serve several purposes. Among them, they’ll give guests a feeling of walking back into earlier days while adding some protection from the elements for the period-dressed gatekeepers. Further, the tent will allow for interesting displays, including a dozen large logging history banners on loan from the Forest History Association of Wisconsin.

As a further update, we have held two planning meetings already and are on track with the considerable number of tasks. And, we are pleased to tell you that all the schools attending last year have informed us they will be returning again this spring. New medallions with the event logo have been purchased for use with souvenir necklaces and we have once again purchased an ad on the back cover of the Chippewa County Tourism Attractions Guide.

Interested in volunteering for this exciting offering to the community? New volunteers are always welcome and necessary to help make this a great success. The Past Passed Here event will be open to the public May 10-13, 2018. ♣



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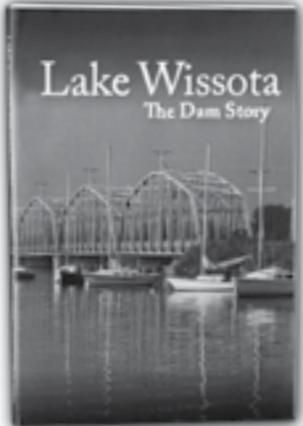


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(If we have missed anyone please let us know)



## Donations

**Donation to the Building Fund in Memory of John F. & Lucille McQuillan Kelly**  
Mary Kelly Anderson

**Donation to the Building Fund in Memory of Ramona (Mona) Zutter**  
Don Zutter

**Donations to the Building Fund in Memory of Joan Larue:**

- |                              |                          |
|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Northwestern Bank            | Keith & Alison Martin    |
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| Thomas & Penney Graham       | Ellen Devine             |
| Brown County Flooring Inc.   | Doris Blake              |
| Barbara & Ken Fortney        | Joseph & Kristi Kastelic |
| George Dingman               | Don & Delores Bichner    |

**Other Building Fund Donations**

- William Zembahl, Jr.
- Genealogical Society of Eau Claire
- David & Donna Gibson
- Kathleen McLaughlin & Daryl Skobba
- Women of the Moose-Chippewa Chapter
- David & Patricia Jankoski

**Other Donations**

- Lorraine Pontius
- Paul Nicolai
- Conrad & Judy Mazur

**Life Membership**

- Shiela Rooney

### Lake Wissota: The Dam Story Celebrating Lake Wissota's 100-year Anniversary

CCHS published this new pictorial history book in early June. They are available for just \$20. It's exciting to tell you that book sales are now approaching \$35,000 and that the authors — Donna Bourget, Anne Keller, and Jim Schuh — are donating all proceeds to the new Chippewa Area History Center Capital Campaign.

Bourget, Keller, and Schuh have actively and enthusiastically promoted the book by speaking at a myriad of book signing events. Recently, they spoke at the Celebrate the Chippewa River Conference at UW-Eau Claire. Next, they will speak at the Chippewa Falls Senior Center on December 13 at 10:45 a.m.

The book is available by U.S.P.S. mail by adding \$5.00 and sending a check and request to the Chippewa County Historical Society, 123 Allen Street, Chippewa Falls, WI 54729. Contact Jim Schuh at 716-726-2376 for more information.

**Available in Chippewa Falls:**

1. Area History Center, 123 Allen St.
2. Foreign 5, 123 N. Bridge St.
3. SandBar & Grill, 17643 50th Ave.
4. Wissota Express, 17255 Cty. Hwy. X
5. Sherri Jo's Wayside, 18091 Cty. Hwy. X
6. Dick's Chalet, 17415 Cty. Hwy. X
7. Country Treasures, 216 N. Bridge St.
8. Chippewa Falls Main Street, 514 N. Bridge St.

**Available in Eau Claire:**

1. Volume One Local Store, 205 N. Dewey St.
2. Chippewa Valley Museum, 1204 E. Half Moon Dr.

## Ice Gorge CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

Everywhere there was water and debris and activity as men fought the elements. The weather turned bitterly cold overnight. The Ice Gorge at Gravel Island (Hallie) had expanded to four miles in length. Every effort to break up the pack proved fruitless. Millions of saw logs stuck like so many toothpicks out of the ice as far down as Badger Mills.

Wisconsin Governor Upham telegraphed city officials his condolences and offered whatever assistance his office could provide. At noon Wednesday, a government engineer, Col. Jones from St. Paul, arrived on scene. Immediately spirits rose. Directing activities at Gravel Island the Colonel ordered a large hole carved in a crevice, under a huge shelf of ice. A 300 lb. charge of dynamite was poked into the crevice. The fuse burned slowly... and then....

Telling about it later an old lumberjack commented: "It seemed as though the very bowels of the earth erupted."

Strong men waited, watched and prayed. Outwardly the ice gorge appeared to be the same but then the water started rushing through the channel some 40 feet wide and 50 rods long beneath the ice pack. Chippewa Falls has survived still another battle with the mighty Chippewa River and the elements. In less than a week the newspaper reported business as usual on Spring, Bay, and River Streets. ❧

Santa says—  
a membership  
to the Chippewa  
County  
Historical  
Society makes  
a great gift!



Johnny "Blood"  
McNally football  
card

## MEMBERSHIP FORM

### CHIPPEWA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

DATE

NAME

ADDRESS

CITY

STATE / ZIP

TELEPHONE

#### Type of Membership:

##### Individual

\$25 (1-year)       \$70 (3-year)

##### Family

\$35 (1-year)       \$100 (3-year)

##### Contributing Member

\$60 (1-year)       \$170 (3-year)

##### Life Membership

\$500 (individual)       \$750 (couple)

I would like to make an additional donation

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

#### MAIL TO:

Chippewa County Historical Society  
123 Allen Street  
Chippewa Falls, WI 54729

## Time Capsule: Chippewa Herald

In September, the Chippewa Area History Center (comprised of the County Historical Society and the Chippewa County Genealogical Society) began partnering with the Chippewa Herald newspaper to highlight the incredible historic photos archive of the Chippewa County Historical Society. This partnership has created the weekly TIME CAPSULE section found in the Saturday print edition of the Chippewa Herald as well as in the online edition under the Community Section. Not only has this been a great new way to share our amazing historic photos archive with the public, but also has provided a fun way to dig a little deeper into the photo histories.

This photo collection has been accumulated over many years through donations from the public and through hours of work by Lucy LeClair (retired), Donna Bourget and Debbie Smith (new to the department). They diligently sit in their tiny room, freezing in winter and roasting in summer, while scanning, labeling and organizing thousands of photos. Our thanks to you! Below is the Time Capsule edition from October 21, 2017.

### 1935 Green Bay Packers versus the Chippewa Marines

John Nicolai recently donated a Johnny "Blood" McNally football card to the Chippewa County Historical Society and told us an interesting story of how this player had not only played for the Green Bay Packers but had also played for the Chippewa Marines against the Packers in a game held at the fairgrounds in Chippewa Falls on Labor Day, September 2, 1935.

Johnny Blood had played for the Packers but had a falling out with Curly Lambeau after the 1933 season. So, when the Chippewa Marines were scheduled to play the Packers in 1935, Johnny joined the Marines to play against his former teammates. The game was anticipated to be quite the event with the Marines even setting up a training camp at Sam Melville's cottages near where the number 5 fairway is now at the Ojibwa Golf Club in Chippewa Falls. Sadly, even with the addition of Johnny Blood to their team the Marines lost 22 to 0.

After the 1935 season the Marines disbanded until after World War II. Johnny Blood rejoined the Packers before their regular season started and helped the Packers win the 1936 Championship. After his 14 year career in the NFL, Johnny Blood went on to serve in WWII as a cryptographer in India and China.

John Nicolai added that he believed that Johnny "Blood" McNally was the last player in the NFL who did not wear a helmet.



Exhibit Committee members, Jim and Mary Erickson, assisted in creating the Chippewa Woolen Mill themed Octoberfest display.

## Exhibit Committee Update

BY JIM SCHUH

During the last two years members of the Exhibit Committee have been visiting area museums and meeting with their directors. Chippewa Valley Museum Director, Carrie Ronnander, and Rassbach Heritage Museum Director, Frank Smoot, have been very helpful. We have gained many insights that will help us create an efficient and effective new museum and we have examined various museum spaces and their uses. Concessions, gift shops, exhibit space, storage, workshops, and office space have been viewed. For example, we have learned that traveling exhibits typically require 1,500 square feet and are on display for six to eight weeks. The committee has also been brainstorming ideas for exhibit themes for the new museum.

With our Chippewa Area History Center Capital Campaign in progress and awareness of our goals increasing, many people are offering artifacts. Nearly 500 items have been donated over the last few months and we have been kept busy accessioning donations. One of the large donations from Dewayne Schroeder included about 200 farm related artifacts. The quality of the late 1800s hand made farming tools have inspired us to create an future early agricultural exhibit called "Farming the Cutover."

Recent exhibit activity includes seasonal exhibits in the Chippewa Falls Public Library and an annual exhibit at Octoberfest with the 2017 theme, The Chippewa Woolen Mill. Also, many French fur trade items have been added to the Trading Post exhibit by Teri Stahr. ❄️

Our current exhibit, Christmas Past, includes antique toys. The fall display included mustache cups. Teri Stahr created these displays using her extensive antique collections. Since 2015 the Public Library has provided a showcase that our exhibit committee volunteers have been decorating with seasonal themed exhibits.



### Our Local History Books Make Great Christmas Gifts!

Stop by the Area History Center on Tuesdays between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m.

- ❄️ Lake Wissota: The Dam Story \$20, by CCHS
- ❄️ That's All For Now from Engel's Little House \$10, by CCHS
- ❄️ Postcards from the Past \$24, by David Tank (consignment sales)
- ❄️ Membership makes an excellent Christmas Gift! (see form on p. 8)

### Support CCHS by shopping on-line at AmazonSmile.

Amazon will donate 0.5% of the price of your eligible purchases to Chippewa County Historical Society Inc. when you shop.

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# Chippewa County Historical Society

AREA HISTORY CENTER | 715-723-4399  
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Open on Tuesdays 9 am-4 pm | Open on Fourth Saturdays 9 am-1pm, Sept.-May

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See page 4 for new  
Chippewa Area History Center  
building elevation rendering.

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NOVEMBER 2017

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