

# THE EAGLE SPEAKS

CHIPPEWA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NOVEMBER 2021



“OLD ABE”

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

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## “Colorful History of Chippewa County” Coloring Book

JIM SCHUH

For the past five years, I have served on the Capital Campaign Executive Committee with Bob Hogseth, who has served as Co-Chair of fund-raising efforts to raise \$4,500,000. During this time, I have noticed that Bob has shown a great interest in sharing our local history with school children. When he first attended *The Past Passed Here*, he enjoyed seeing our local 4th graders interact with re-enactors, and was surprised that about 600 county-wide 4th graders attended annually. He then organized a local history essay contest, with the help of county-wide 4th grade teachers. Lastly, he created and published a children's coloring book, working on illustrations with the help of his granddaughters, 10 year old Adrienne and 7 year old Natalie. I asked Bob if he would share his rationale for creating the book, and the process of doing it with his granddaughters. Here is Bob's response:

“During the past 4 to 5 years, I have spent a significant amount of time meeting with individuals, families and organizations, trying to convince them that a new



### There is still time

for you to donate to our new  
**CAHS building project**  
 and join our group of  
 distinguished donors.  
 Please see page 7 for details.



## CALENDAR

### *History Center is closed to the public.*

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic we have been closed to the public and will continue to be closed until we move to our new building. Monthly meetings have continued at remote locations or by Internet Zoom meetings.

The Chippewa County Genealogical Society is open by appointment for small groups Tuesdays, 9 am-4 pm.

**Jan. 18** | 9:30 am | CCHS Board  
Heyde Center for the Arts

**Jan. 18** | 11 am | Historic Marker  
Committee | Area History Center

**Jan. 18** | 1 pm | The Past Passed  
Here - Area History Center

**Jan. 25** | 9 am | Capital Campaign  
Committee - Raihle Law Office

**Feb. 14** | 6:30 pm | CCHS Semi-  
Annual Meeting | Heyde Center  
for the Arts

**Feb. 15** | 1 pm | The Past Passed  
Here | Area History Center

**Feb. 22** | 9 am | Capital Campaign  
Committee | Raihle Law Office

**Mar. 15** | 9:30 am | CCHS Board  
Heyde Center for the Arts

**Mar. 15** | 1 pm | The Past Passed  
Here | Area History Center

**Mar. 22** | 9 am | Capital Campaign  
Committee | Raihle Law Office

**Mar. 22** | 11 am | Historic Marker  
Committee | Area History Center

### **NEWSLETTER COMMITTEE:**

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Mary Erickson.....Author  
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Frank Smoot.....Author  
Saul Japuntich..... Guest Author  
Tiffany Wogahn..... Guest Author  
Elly Rochester..... Design / Layout

## A Message From Your President



DAVE GORDON

Visits to the building site now confirm, "It is really happening." The exterior of the building is complete except for landscaping. The cupola windows are in, the pergola is complete, steps and sidewalks are finished and the blacktop drive and parking spots are scheduled as I write this message.

Interior is almost complete. Stairwells are finished, elevator is working, and building mechanical systems including heating, air conditioning, plumbing, and fire protection are mostly complete. All interior walls are up and painted and electricity is on. So when will we get occupancy? As with all construction projects, a few items usually affect that. In our building they are heat detectors and glass railing panels. Ordering heat detectors got missed and frantically are being ordered now and will have to be installed. There were problems with the glass railing panels, which are being reordered and will be installed. So I can't give you a date for occupancy, but everything is being done to complete these items.

Now the Exhibit Committee shifts into high gear to research design and construct the exhibits that will tell the interesting stories of the Chippewa Area. Stories will include original inhabitants, fur trading, lumbering and agriculture. Artifacts will include a fire truck, lumberjack trailer and a model A Ford. Visitors will want to return to see the ever changing exhibits and regular educational programs.

At the new Center, you may be able to take advantage of using the auditorium and areas for meetings available to the community. And, of course, you'll want to visit the new gift shop with its local merchandise. Or, if you are interested in genealogy, you will want to visit the Chippewa County Genealogical Society's new library and research center.

Looking forward to the contribution that the Chippewa Area History Center will make to our area. "Good Lord willing and the creek don't rise," we'll be open spring 2022. *Dave* ✦

## Donations



### **Memorial Gifts:**

In memory of Cath Lea Devine and in honor of her work with *Past Passed Here*

### **Contributions in Support of Historical Markers**

Ken Koss  
St. Charles Parish

### **New Lifetime Members**

William and Sheila Volker

### **Donations Toward Operating Support:**

Chippewa Chapter No. 770  
Women of the Moose

Elinor Brady  
Susan DeLong  
Patrick Kurtenbach  
Evelyn Maloney  
Lorraine E. Pontius  
Linda Mattison  
Mary Hladish  
Gail Benson



Colorful History of Chippewa County



Don't forget to renew your membership!

## COLORFUL HISTORY CONTINUED FROM COVER

History Center was worthy of their charitable donation options. My presentations always included the many positive impacts that the History Center's youth programs would have on our children, learning about their local history and genealogy. I have always had an interest in U.S. and World History, but only recently became more interested in local history. I was very surprised to discover so many interesting local stories, and wondered why we didn't learn about them when we were children. I also recently learned that all 4th graders in all state school districts have a course in Wisconsin History. With my involvement in our Chippewa Area History Center, it was only natural for me to think about improving youth local history education, beyond *The Past Passed Here* and a few other programs. I knew there would be a gift shop in the new History Center, so I began to think that maybe a coloring book would be a good addition to the other great local history books recently published, but geared towards adults.

When COVID 19 changed our lives and kept us more house-bound in 2020, I decided it would be a good time to attempt to create a coloring book targeting kids ages 4 to 12. And since my granddaughters were 7 and 10, and liked to color, why not try to spend some quality time doing something productive together? So I asked for their help. All three of us drew at least one feature on each page. The girls live 200 miles from Chippewa Falls, so the process took about ten months, as we usually completed 3 to 4 pages each time I saw them. We dedicated the book to their Grandma and guardian angel, my wife Donna. Once the draft was finalized, 3,000 copies were printed and donated to the History Center. All proceeds will go to help sustain future operating expenses. Area 4th grade teachers have seen and embraced the book, and each 4th grader will receive a book annually, thanks to the purchase and donations from local sponsors. Kids will have fun learning while coloring, and even their parents will learn something they never knew before. Hopefully, some will even be inspired to be future volunteers and supporters of the new History Center."

Thank you Bob for all of your efforts you have put into the new Chippewa Area History Center. 🍷



**The new coloring book is available for \$5** at the Area History Center, 123 Allen St. and downtown at Foreign 5, 123 N. Bridge St.

Our other books are available at:

- Area History Center, 123 Allen St.
  - Chippewa Falls Main Street, 514 N. Bridge St.
  - Collective Charm, 16 W. Columbia St.
  - Country Treasures, 216 N. Bridge St.
  - Foreign Five, 123 N. Bridge St.
  - SandBar & Grill, 17643 50th Ave.
  - Wayside Bar & Grill, 18091 Co. Hwy X
- And in Eau Claire an Eau Claire at:
- Chippewa Valley Museum, Carson Park
  - Volume One Local Store, 205 N. Dewey St.

## 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



Saul Japuntich demonstrates saw filing at *The Past Passed Here* in 2019. The event will return to Marshall Park May 12-15, 2022.

## The Saw Filer

SAUL JAPUNTICH

The saw filer filled a very crucial, vital role in the logging camp. It was his job to file every company saw in the camp, and ensure that enough saws were in rotation. Why do I say “file” rather than “sharpen?” File is the proper term for tuning up a saw and encompasses a lot more than the actual “filing.” Let’s delve into the basics of saw tuning:

### **Straightening and Tensioning**

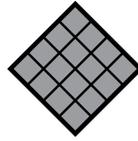
Saws are checked with a straight-edge. All dents, kinks, and bumps, are leveled. The saw is stretched with a hammer to provide tension, and thus, stiffness.

**Cleaning** Saws must be kept free from rust and pitch. Rust in those days was removed with a round axe sharpening stone, and still must be done this way in order to avoid rounding over edges or creating low spots on the blade. Pitch is removed with kerosene.

**“Gumming”** The spaces between the raker and the teeth must be cleaned down to shiny metal, or deepened as the teeth are filed shorter.

**Jointing** This is simply the act of ensuring that all teeth are the same height, and follow a curve or an arc. This is done with a file, held flat across

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the entrance to Irvine Park!



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# Update on the Building Project

FRANK SMOOT

Building projects have a life of their own, and they can also be buffeted around by factors beyond their control. Both are at play for the new Chippewa Area History Center.

The big picture is this: the building is monumental and beautiful; it will serve the Chippewa County Genealogical Society (CCGS) and Chippewa County Historical Society (CCHS) for decades.

There’s every chance it will become an important civic institution for Chippewa County and the City of Chippewa Falls — we’ll all wonder how we ever got a long without it. Second, it will provide a safe, secure, climate-controlled repository for our “material culture,” just a fancy term for the stuff that tells our story.

The project has taken a slightly different path than a lot of projects of its kind. Often, there will be one general contractor, and every subcontractor answers to the “general.” That has a downside, though: the general contractor charges a management fee to oversee those contractors, and that fee can add up, especially with large-budget subcontractors. CCHS signed separate contracts with the project’s largest providers. That’s more work for the society’s volunteer board and committee members, but a terrific cost savings. It does put more balls in the air to juggle.

The pandemic, and the related supply-chain breakdowns, has added other layers of complexity, expense, uncertainty, and delay. To give one representative example, three or four years ago, a sheet of fire-rated 3/4-inch plywood was about \$40. This year it’s \$135.

Even so, the project is still under budget. Carefully considered changes and “value engineering” have kept costs in line.

However, delays in this challenging environment have been inevitable. Something as simple as fiberglass insulation, which used to be an over-the-counter transaction, has now become a three-month wait.

A year ago, we thought we might get the keys by the end of this past summer. Now it’s looking more like New Years. If that timeline holds, we’ll have an excellent, exciting winter installing exhibits and getting the building ready to open sometime in the spring.

Getting the keys will conclude this early chapter of the project. But all the other chapters are yet to be written. We’re just at the beginning of this great story. 🍷



Debbie Smith

## Meet Our New Area History Center Secretary, Debbie Smith!

MARY ERICKSON

As a recent retiree from the Chippewa Falls Fire and Police departments, Debbie Smith became a volunteer at the Area History Center where she spent many hours accessing, sorting and packing artifacts. In addition to that important work, she accepted the office of secretary for the History Center Board of Directors. Being a detail person, she takes excellent minutes at our monthly Board meetings. Something that is much appreciated by the Board members.

Debbie has been married to Tim Smith for 46 years and they have a daughter, son and grandson. She has lived in Chippewa since she was adopted at three months of age. Recently she has found biological family members and is enjoying getting to know them.

Volunteering started in high school as a Red Cross Volunteer (Candy Striper). Later, being a volunteer room mother at her children's school, Sunday School teacher and Girl Scout leader. Debbie sang in the church choir and plays the hand bells. She was union president and steward while working and was a mentor and Big Sister.

For fun, Debbie loves reading, knitting and crocheting prayer shawls, baptismal blankets and other items which are donated to the community. In nice weather you might find her in her kayak and on cloudy days, she might be rubber stamping cards for friend's birthdays. Gardening, and reading on her front porch, are favorite pastimes along with getting together with friends and neighbors to visit.

We are so happy Debbie has become a member of CCHS Board of Directors as our secretary and friend! ♡



### SAW FILER TOOLS:

Included in the photo, left to right; Horn type setting anvil, setting stake, setting hammer. Between the hammers are various raker gauges, including one with a dial. The smallest tools are the spiders for set measurement. At middle is a leveling hammer. At right are more gauges, spiders, and an 8" flat file for pointing up teeth.

### SAW FILER CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

the teeth by a jointing tool. A tooth that is even a tiny amount short will not engage wood.

**Rakers** Rakers act as chisels to scrape out the shaving made by cutter teeth. Rakers must be lower than the teeth and a gauge is used to determine this. They are then filed accordingly. In some cases raker tips have a bit of a hook hammered into them, to better remove shavings.

**Cutters** Cutter teeth must be offset to provide clearance for the saw blade. A gauge called a "spider," measures how far the tooth tip is bent or set.

**Filing** This is the part most people think of: the act of "pointing up" the cutter teeth with a file.

And, that is how you "sharpen" a saw.

Saw filers worked alone in a shack at the edge of camp. They needed peace and quiet. The shacks had real glass skylights, as light was greatly needed in the process. This was in a day and age when camps had no real windows. This just reinforces the significance of the saw filers role in the camp. ♡



### **The Past Passed Here will return to Marshall Park May, 12-15, 2022**

As usual, the 19th Annual event will feature French fur trade era camps and lumberjack history. Our knowledgeable re-enactors will share their expertise and experience in a variety of topics from life in Chippewa County during the 1700s and 1800s. Currently the school system is planning to have the fourth grade students attend, who study Wisconsin history during the school year. ♡



## COUNTY NEWS

### Stanley Area Historical Society

DAVID JANKOSKI, PRESIDENT

Our museum has officially closed for the 2021 season, although we continue to have volunteers work on Tuesdays, and thus we can accommodate visitors and individuals seeking to use our archives or genealogy materials/records. Our being open weekends during the past summer was attributable to 50 volunteer docents. U-W Eau Claire student Eric Mehnert, completed his summer internship with us, during which he was provided exposure to the breath of our museum operations.

When we re-roofed our original building last year, a tucking pointing project had to be scrapped in light of the higher than anticipated cost. Fortunately, a donor has again stepped forward and provided more than half the cost, thus allowing the project to be completed before winter.

Our Digitization Work Group, has regrouped after a summer recess. They are looking to add a few more volunteers to assist with photographing artifacts and adding them to Past Perfect files. Work continues on enhancing the archives catalog and they are now photographing high school memorabilia. The group also has a goal of utilizing TheClio to develop location tours of area cheese factories and rural schools.

On October 22, our museum received a historical collection of Native American artifacts. These artifacts included many arrowheads that were mostly found in farm fields in the Stanley area, when the donor's father and grandfather were plowing fields. The collection had left Stanley after the passing of the donor's grandparents and has for over 50 years been in Colorado and California. The collection has been studied by Native American experts and came with a reputable history. The collection will be the subject of the SAHS Annual Meeting in January 2022. Plans are to have it on display by the summer of 2022. Plan to see it then! ❄️



LEFT: The hole in the floor in front of the two tombs is where caskets were lowered into the basement for winter storage until the ground thawed out in the spring for burial.

BELOW: Leslie Willson



## Willson Chapel/Crypt

TIFFANY WOGAHN

In 1862, at the age of 15, Leslie Willson moved with his parents to the far western land of Minnesota from Pennsylvania. Instead of following in his dad's footsteps and becoming a banker, in 1867 he decided to move to Eau Claire, Wisconsin, and find work in sales. He worked for the Eau Claire Lumber Company. When it closed its doors, Leslie became a traveling salesman. He'd travel around Wisconsin and Minnesota selling teas, coffees and spices for a Chicago company called Bell, Conrad & Company.

In September of 1884, Leslie married Nellie Wilson. Going from Nellie Wilson to Willson was but a tiny change. In the next few years, their lives would become quite different! In 1889, the Willsons moved to Chippewa Falls. Leslie became the President of the brand new wholesale grocers, Chippewa Valley Mercantile Company. Judge Marshall built the Marshall Block on East Central Street specifically for the mercantile. Originally, part of the building was built for offices and apartments, but the mercantile soon grew and needed almost the entire building.

The pioneers of our city were always thinking about its future. Leslie was involved with other groups such as the Progressive League and was a member of the Library Board. In fact, Chippewa Falls can thank Leslie Willson for helping convince Andrew Carnegie to give money towards a library for our city!

When you run one of the most lucrative mercantiles in the Midwest, you tend to get to know community members quickly. Leslie wasn't just a great businessman, but also a good friend. After his unexpected passing, he was remembered as "... kindly, justly; his nature was without bitterness; his friendship was true; his interest in all public questions never failing. His genial personality will be missed." People also liked the parties they threw. The entire third floor of their home was a ballroom complete with stage! Their parties, and those lucky enough to be invited, were included in the newspaper's society pages.

Losing someone who was truly such a pillar of our community was hard for everyone. The community lost Leslie Willson rather suddenly on December 6, 1906. The businesses in Chippewa Falls closed during Leslie's funeral from 2 to 3 pm on a Saturday afternoon as a sign of respect for the great man they had lost. While the city mourned, Leslie's widow began planning a monument for the community in remembrance of her husband. Leslie and Nellie loved the people of Chippewa Falls and she wanted something the community would appreciate and find useful.

By 1909, the Leslie Willson Memorial Chapel was built at Forest Hill Cemetery; modeled architecturally after the Parthenon. Its vault, for the public to temporarily house bodies until burial, can hold 30 bodies. (Up to 60 can be accommodated if needed.) At one time, the chapel was decorated and arranged for funeral services to be held inside. It's only 12 x 17 ft., but could seat 50 people.

The structure currently contains the tombs of Leslie and Nellie, but is otherwise empty. The walls are covered in white enameled brick except for those marble encased bodies. Windows allow in light, keeping the small chapel very well lit. Truly, it is the perfect resting place for two much-loved and well-respected Chippewa Falls pioneers. ❄️

## A STEP BACK...



OLINE NYHUS • 1920

PHOTOS SUBMITTED BY KEN NYHUS • OLINE WAS HIS GREAT GRANDMOTHER

### PHOTOS TAKEN BY HENRY NYHUS IN THE 1920'S



Can you imagine doing that with handmade wooden skis strapped to your boots?



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CHIPPEWA COUNTY GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

## GENEALOGY CORNER

ANNE KELLER, CCGS PRESIDENT

Those who are interested in history in general are often interested in the details of their own family's history. If you've traced your family tree, you know that it can take many hours, and ... you're never quite finished! To help add the pieces to the puzzle, you've probably listened to others, searched the internet, read books and traveled to the area of your family's origin. So, if your roots are in Chippewa County, you might like to join the Chippewa County Genealogical Society. When you do, you will receive its newsletter, which will tell you the details of its programs, the people to contact with various questions, and resources that are available in the CCGS library. (Several members' roots are not in this county, but they learn a lot about various genealogical approaches by reading its newsletter.) An individual membership is \$15 per year; a family can join for \$20 per year. A request can be sent to CCGS at 123 Allen Street, Chippewa Falls WI 54729, to the attention of the treasurer. ☛

### There is still time for you to donate to our CAHS building project!

To donate to the Chippewa Area History Center Capital Campaign  
call 715-723-4399 or visit our website at:  
[www.chippewaareahistorycenter.org](http://www.chippewaareahistorycenter.org)





## Al Capone's Car and the Day of Infamy

JIM SCHUH

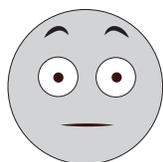
Think of the word “gangsters,” and the image of one man comes to mind. Al Capone. Big Al was one of the most powerful men in America during the gangster days of the 1920s and 1930s making \$6 million a week at his peak. His career in crime began with the passage of the Volstead Act on January 12, 1920. Capone turned 21 on that day, and with prohibition, he found his career in crime. People wanted alcohol and Al would provide it. Later, he branched out into illegal gambling and prostitution.

Capone and other gangsters seem to have treated the Northwood's locals very well, apparently not wanting to create any tensions in the area where they vacationed. Gangsters loved prohibition. Wisconsin had the reputation for being Chicago's distillery. Well-known in Chippewa County were Al Capone and his protégé, Joe Saltis. Capone traveled freely between Chicago and his hideout in Couderay, picking up liquor, which was flown in from Canada. Saltis financed a speakeasy northeast of Bloomer called the Gateway. Hans Stephans served as proprietor. Stephans designed the Gateway's interior with secret passages, trap doors and false ceilings. A copper tank located between floors held liquor that was delivered to patrons in a phone booth. A local man, Carl Lehret, also ran a speakeasy in Eagleton called the Log Cabin.

In the end, J. Edgar Hoover and the FBI beat Capone, aka “Scarface.” He was convicted of income tax evasion in 1931 and served eight years in Alcatraz. He was released in 1939 suffering from syphilis. Pneumonia took his life.

Hours after Pearl Harbor was bombed on December 7, 1941, the Secret Service found themselves in a bind. President Franklin D. Roosevelt was to give his Day of Infamy speech to congress on Monday and, although the trip from the Whitehouse to Capital Hill was short, agents weren't sure how to transport him safely. At the time, federal law prohibited buying any cars for more than \$750, so they would have to get clearance from congress and nobody had time for that. One of the Secret Service members, however, discovered that the U.S. Treasury had seized a bulletproof car that mobster, Al Capone, owned when he was sent to jail. They cleaned it, made sure it was running perfectly and had it ready for the president the next day. Al Capone's 1928 Cadillac Town Sedan V8 became the president's limo in December 1941. The sedan had been painted black and green to look identical to Chicago's police cars at the time. To top it off, the car had 3,000 pounds of armor, inch-thick bullet-proof windows, a siren, flashing lights behind the grill, and a police scanner radio.

Footnote: The car sold at auction in 2012 for \$341,000. 🚗



### Common Sayings with Historic Origins

#### Show Your True Colors

Meaning: To reveal one's true nature

History: Warships used to fly many flags to confuse their enemies. However, the rules of warfare stated that a ship had to hoist its true flag before firing and therefore, display its country's true colors.

#### Waking Up on the Wrong Side of the Bed

Meaning: Waking up in a bad mood

History: The left side of the body or anything having to do with the left was often associated with something sinister. To ward off evil, innkeepers made sure the left side of the bed was pushed against a wall so guests had no other option but to get up on the right side of the bed.

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