

THE EAGLE SPEAKS

CHIPPEWA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

SEPTEMBER 2016



"OLD ABE"

www.chippewacountywihistoricalsociety.org

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Wissota Hydroelectric Dam Construction. July 1916.



Mark your calendars and save this date:

Monday, September 12 | 6:30 p.m.

CCHS Bi-Annual Membership Meeting and Program
Lake Hallie Lives

See description on page 4

Lake Wissota Centennial Celebration and Book Plans Decided

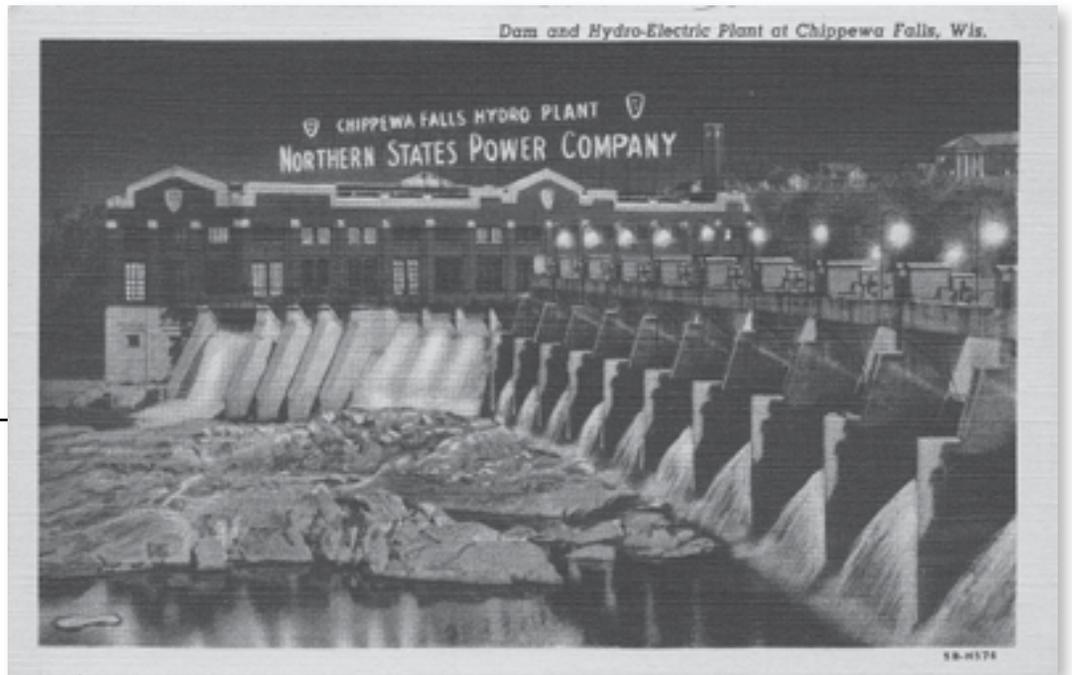
JIM SCHUH

From 1913 through 1917, Lake Wissota went from concept to completion. Harnessing the waters of the Chippewa River, Yellow River, O'Neil Creek, Paint Creek and Stillson Creek by building a dam resulted in the creation of Lake Wissota, which has had an enormous positive impact on this whole area of Wisconsin. The many recreational and sporting activities have made this body of water an attractive destination as well as a large lake neighborhood.

Next year will mark the 100-year anniversary of the creation of Lake Wissota. We have many reasons to celebrate the positive impact of this manmade lake. A committee made up of board members of Chippewa County Historical Society (CCHS) and The Lake Wissota Improvement & Protection Association (LWIPA) has been meeting for more

Restoration Project Highly Visible—NSP

Construction of the downtown hydroelectric plant was completed in September 1928. A huge roof sign included two logos and eight words, "Chippewa Falls Hydro Plant Northern States Power Company." It was illuminated each night. After about 40 years, this sign was removed and a more modest lit sign with the letters, "NSP," was installed in 1968. That sign was lit for about 30 years. Now, after being dark for several years, this restored historic sign will be lit again this November. Thank you to Xcel Energy for adding a piece of missing history to our community's nighttime skyline. ♣



Lake Wissota CONTINUED FROM COVER

than a year. We have begun reaching out to businesses, clubs and organizations that are affiliated with the lake for their ideas, involvement and support. There are opportunities for event sponsors as well.

The celebration will be held Saturday, July 29, 2017 at the Lake Wissota State Park with several activities. They include the unveiling of a new CCHS Historic Marker, informational displays, a ceremony with comments from dignitaries, recognition of descendants of people involved in creation of the lake who are present, historic musical tribute concert by Jerry Way and the Swampers, picnic lunch and registration to take tours of the Lake Wissota Dam (Hydro Electric Plant).

To document the century of the lake a pictorial history book will be published by the CCHS. The book will include building the dam that created the lake, the events that followed, recreational and residential growth, and some of today's important topics.

During the next few months, the CCHS will be collecting photos and stories about Lake Wissota. Quality photos spanning the last 100 years are being sought for consideration in a book to be published about the lake and its surrounding shoreline. Images of buildings such as the dance hall and roller rink, resorts and cabins, restaurants and taverns and other areas around the lake, are needed. Photos that include various forms of recreation and events are also desired. If you have photos or stories you'd like to submit for consideration, you are encouraged to bring them to the History Center (123 Allen Street, Chippewa Falls) during an open house on September 24, 10:00 am–2:00 pm or on any Tuesday until September 27 (10:00–2:00), or by email at wissotabook@gmail.com

Authors Jim Schuh, Donna Bourget and Anne Keller plan to donate all book sale proceeds to the Chippewa Area History Center Capital Campaign Fund. If you would like to become involved or have questions about the celebration or the book, contact CCHS Vice President, Jim Schuh at 715-726-2376 or wissotabook@gmail.com. ♣

Cover photo details: The July 1916 photo shows Wissota hydroelectric dam workmen building wooden draft tube forms that concrete would be poured around. During the construction project spanning twenty months the Wisconsin-Minnesota Light and Power Company documented progress with more than 500 pictures that were taken by a professional photographer. Xcel Energy donated all of these photos to the CCHS. Several of the photos will be included in the book about the history of Lake Wissota, which will be published in the spring of 2017.



**WISSOTA
PHOTOS
SOUGHT**

We are seeking photos of old cottages, recreation, family activities and hot spots on Lake Wissota to be considered for publication in conjunction with the 2017 Lake Wissota Centennial Celebration.

Please contact Donna Bourget at wissotabook@gmail.com or 715-723-6559.



MEMBERSHIP FORM



Boom Log Concerns

JIM SCHUH

Our “one-of-a-kind” 41 foot long Boom Log needs your help ... it needs to be stored indoors so it can dry out. The rainy summer has caused the log to remain damp and with moss growing on it, it’s beginning to rot. Deteriorating quickly! It was about eight years ago that it was found in the Chippewa River and placed in Allen Park. And just this last May, Ed Forester (a member of the Forest History Association of Wisconsin) examined the lumbering era artifact and said the log is unique. He had “never seen one like it before.” What was a boom log? It was a log that was a part of a series of logs used in the river to direct the flow of cut logs to the sawmills. We would like to include the log in our new museum, but it will be years before that will be built. Until then, we need a dry, free or very low cost, indoor storage space. If you know of such a space, preferably close to Chippewa Falls, please contact me at 715-726-2376. Thank you! ❁

Grant Applications Successful

Thank you to our grant writer, Marge Hebring, for leading the efforts to obtain these grants!

The Wisconsin Historical Society, and the Wisconsin Council for Local History, is pleased to announce that the Chippewa County Historical Society has received a mini-grant to support the purchase of a new computer and printer/scanner. In 2016, the mini-grant program has awarded \$15,475 to 28 affiliated local historical societies. The Chippewa County Historical Society is grateful for the \$695 matching grant award and pleased that the new computer system will improve management and preservation of our photo archives in conjunction with our PastPerfect museum collection management software network.

The Community Foundation of Chippewa County has approved a 2016 grant to be used toward the Chippewa County Historic Marker Program. The \$500 grant will allow the program to maintain and upgrade some of the 56 existing historic markers located throughout the county. It will also allow materials for new markers to be purchased. These activities were made possible by a grant from the generosity of the Nyhus Centennial Endowment Fund in the Community Foundation of Chippewa County. ❁

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MAIL TO:
 Chippewa County Historical Society
 123 Allen Street
 Chippewa Falls, WI 54729





A Message From Your President

CALENDAR

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

Monday, Sept. 12:

6:30 p.m. CCHS Bi-Annual
Membership Meeting—Lake Hallie
History, Area History Center

Tuesday, Sept. 20:

Noon Area History Center
Birthday Lunch

1:30 The Past Passed Here
Planning Meeting

Friday, Sept. 23:

4-6 p.m. Celebration of the Rainbow
Bridge Reopening at the Bridge

Saturday, Sept. 24:

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

10 a.m.-2 p.m. History of Lake
Wissota Book Open House:
Collecting stories and scanning
photos for consideration

Tuesday, Oct. 18:

9:30 a.m. CCHS Board Meeting

11 a.m. Historic Marker
Committee Meeting

Noon Area History Center
Birthday Lunch

1:30 The Past Passed Here
Planning Meeting

Saturday, Oct. 22:

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

I'm fortunate that as I write this message I'm looking out at a lake at my sister-in-law's cabin near Ely, Minnesota while the New Museum Committee is taking a well deserved two-week break from its weekly meetings. We are lucky to have dedicated Committee volunteers willing to make such a time commitment. Even on break their work continues with e-mails going back and forth. And we continue to make progress on the very challenging and complex project of planning a new area history center.

For those of you who may have missed this, our longtime treasurer, Kathy Forsgren, lost her battle to cancer in July. Sadly, we will miss her smile and her dedication to accounting matters of the Society. As a conscientious treasurer, she kept me out of trouble for many years. Thank you, Kathy, for being all you were.

Facing this loss, we are fortunate to have Blake Bertrand volunteer to handle what were Kathy's accounting responsibilities. Recently, Blake and I audited the CCHS finances. And further, he is computerizing more of our financial records. A student at UW-EC, Blake is majoring in finance and has had an internship at Northwestern Bank. Oh, and there is also a wedding in his future!

Another addition to our organization's Board as a director is Greg Misfeldt. Greg brings new ideas and expertise to the Board and is an executive at Northwestern Bank. He has also volunteered to be on the New Museum Committee and hopes to make good use of his minor in history from UW-EC. Welcome Greg and we look forward to working with you.

Currently, the Board is striving to make the New Museum Committee structure more effective. Not only is this important to advancing the present Society and Museum, but also to the added responsibility of a creating a new museum.

As you can see, much is happening right now at the History Center. And watch for information on the upcoming Capital Campaign for the new Chippewa Area History Center. The current History Center is open every Tuesday and we would love to see you there. *Dave* 🍷

Membership Meeting Program

Lake Hallie Lives - An Oral History Project

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

Lake Hallie is one of those hidden treasures that its many fans call "paradise." Originally used in 1843 as a holding pond for the blue Mills Sawmill, Lake Hallie is currently a recreational lake dotted with 26 homes. This 23 minute film is filled with fifteen voices from some of the people who have lived on Lake Hallie the longest along with still photos of the lake and its people throughout history. This presentation will be led by UW-Eau Claire instructor and Lake Hallie resident Patti See.

University of Wisconsin
Eau Claire

Department of History
Hibbard Humanities Hall 701
715-836-5501 | 715-836-3540 fax

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

August 23, 2016

RE: UW-Eau Claire Student Project and the Proposed Chippewa Area History Center

For the fall semester of 2016, Public History graduate and undergraduate students at UW-Eau Claire will be working with the Chippewa County Historical Society to create interpretive proposals for the forthcoming Chippewa Area History Center. This exciting project will give students an opportunity to apply their historical knowledge, museum acumen, and creativity to create interpretive proposals that will benefit a real world project partner in CCHS and the community of Chippewa Falls.

Throughout the semester seventeen students enrolled in "Museums in the United States" will be learning about methods, theory, best-practices, and trends in the professional world of historical museums as they prepare for careers in public history after graduation. To enhance this classroom experience they will also be visiting museums in the region and meeting with professional practitioners. Throughout this course, they will be using the Chippewa Valley Historical Society as a real world case-study of a museum organization moving to the next level. Students will be visiting the current museum, touring Chippewa Falls and the future Historic Center site as well as interacting with board members and volunteers to gain an understanding of CCHS and its resources in the larger community.

At the conclusion of the course, students will present interpretive proposals to the Historical Society for the future History Center. These proposals will likely include key concepts for new exhibits, family engagement, outreach and education programs, collections, and digital media at the History Center and beyond. While it is not expected that CCHS will adopt all of the proposals, it is certain that students will provide fresh, creative, and historically-informed ideas that will assist in the planning process and ensure a final product that is effective at reaching new audiences through offering engaging and thought-provoking interpretation of Chippewa County History.

The instructor and advisor for this project is Dr. Daniel Ott, a new Visiting Assistant Professor at UW - Eau Claire, specializing in public history and the history of the upper midwest. Please feel free to contact Dr. Ott at ottdp@uwec.edu if you have any questions about the project.

105 Garfield Avenue | PO Box 4004 | Eau Claire, WI 54702-4004 | uwec.edu

AND



CHIPPEWA COUNTY GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

GENEALOGY CORNER

ANN KELLER

The Chippewa County Genealogical Society is indeed fortunate to share a building with the Historical Society. Genealogy is sometimes called "family history," so one of the goals of the Genealogical Society volunteers is to help researchers set their ancestors' lives into the context of time and place. This means learning about the events and culture surrounding the life of the ancestor who is being studied. One of the ways the CCGS is doing this is by including on its webpage and facebook page an example of a well-known area person, tying him/her to an historical event or place.

For example, during Chippewa Falls' "Pure Waters Day," Thaddeus Pound was featured on facebook. He served as president of the Chippewa Spring Water Company for many years. Also recently included was Marshmill Lake. A

CCGS member was researching the lake and wondered if it was named for Marshall Miller, a logger and farmer. Go to ccgswi.wix.com/ccgswi and facebook.com/ccgswi to learn how genealogy is not just about names and dates but that a story is told. ✪



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Misc. and Building Fund Donations:

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Kathy Forsgren Remembered

In less than a year we have lost 3 long time, dedicated volunteers.

First there was Arley Engel, then Mary Brown and now we are sad to report the loss of Kathy Forsgren. Kathy volunteered here almost 25 years. She even met her second husband while they were both volunteering for CCHS.

Over the years she worked in the library the photo room and as assistant treasurer. For approximately the last 10 years she has been our Treasurer, an officer on our Board of Directors and most importantly she was our friend.

This photo was taken on Kathy's last day at the History Center. Kathy is in the front row, the fourth from the left. ♣



FEATURED ARTIFACT

Old Abe Feather: War Eagle Controversy Resolved

JIM ERICKSON

A decade after Old Abe died, the eagle made headlines. In 1889, suffragette Lillie Blake stated Old Abe was female and laid eggs. Responding, supporters demonstrated Old Abe was female, and detractors insisted male.

Questions of Old Abe's gender began during the Civil War. In 1861, Ambrose Armitage, Wis. Infantry, wrote that Eau Claire Company C had a "four month old female eagle with them." Later writing that despite a male name, it was female. However, most Company C accounts said Old Abe was male. Despite this, Blake's claim ignited a controversy with Wisconsin and national newspapers picking up the story.

Even those closest to Old Abe didn't really know as both genders share similar plumage. To end the debate, Wisconsin Veterans Museum recently used its technology to see what Old Abe was. Using four feathers, samples from each hollow quill were dissolved to extract the DNA. After nearly three months, samples showed these to be male feathers.

Ultimately knowing Old Abe's gender doesn't change his story or importance, but provides closure to an issue and discredits some false stories once part of his legend. ♣

PHOTO: During the Civil War, Captain Perkins (who lead Company D, 8th Wis. Infantry) sent items to his family including this Old Abe feather donated to CCHS and on display.



On February 22, 1916, Mr. Kellogg, President of Kellogg Engineering & Construction Co. invited the businessmen of Chippewa Falls out for a dinner and a view of the Wissota Dam construction work.

Wissota Looking Back 100 years

Lake Wissota is 60 Years Old

From the Chippewa Herald-Telegram 2-3-78. Ralph Christofferson

The Kellogg Construction Co. built housing facilities for workmen on the flat hill overlooking Paint Creek Rapids where the Power House is located. I carried Sunday papers out to the men by walking out from Chippewa along the old Soo Line tracks. Usually a thriving business was done because many of the men had Sunday off. Bunkhouses were steam heated which was a wonder to me – and they felt cozy and warm after trudging to the dam site in below zero weather. One bitter cold Sunday stands out in my mind. It was below zero and a cold wind was whistling through the boulder-strewn canyon, which was the river channel. (The cofferdam had diverted the water of the Chippewa River into the channel below the spillways – there was an island in the river near where the powerhouse is located – channels were on both sides of the island – I used to hunt rabbits on the island). On the bitter day mentioned above, a foreman wanted a volunteer to go down into the very cold river bottom to do some important work. The men were comfortable in their steam heated quarters so no one wanted to volunteer. Finally he located one man who seemed willing but the fellow said “I don’t have enough warm clothes to go down there today.” Without hesitation the boss stripped off his full-length fur lined overcoat and gave it to the volunteer. The incident really impressed me and I have remembered it vividly for 62 years. The generosity of the foreman was one thing – but letting a worker wear his expensive overcoat while doing rough work was another.

John Myrman related the following anecdote to me: In the winter of 1915, Mr. Kellogg, President of Kellogg Engineering & Construction Co. invited the businessmen of Chippewa Falls out for a dinner and a view of the construction work. He informed the men, at the dinner, that his company had now harnessed the “Mighty Chippewa River” with the “Coffer Dam” they built.

Erick Myrman, John’s Dad, told Mr. Kellogg after the meeting, “You don’t know what the Mighty Chippewa can do. That cofferdam you have built, will go out next spring like a broken up penny matchbox! And it did!

I remember very well when the coffer dam was ruptured because Dad salvaged some of the fine square timbers which were 8 to 10 inches thick – Dad was never completely forgiven by me for impressing me into doing this chore on my birthday while wading in cold river water in May.

The United States entered World War I during the time the DAM WAS BEING BUILT. I hunted in the woods on the northwest side of the river near the dam and trapped near

the spring, which gushed from the hills in the same area.

When some workmen saw me — a tall gangling youth — they said, “Why aren’t you at the front?” (In service) They didn’t realize that I was only 15 years old at the time.

Armed guards were stationed at the dam during the first Great War. One winter day a rifle toting guard came down to where I was checking some sets, He said, “What in the heck are you doing?” When he was satisfied that I was not an enemy he told me to go on about my business but suggested that I should stay a healthy distance away from the dam, itself – which I did.

Some trappers had sets near the edge of Lake Wissota as it was rising in 1916 and early 1917 but to their dismay and mine a sudden rise of the water completely covered the traps and they were, forever, lost. Some of mine are, probably, resting in the muck of the lake bottom in the swamp near where the Soo Line crossed Paint Creek. ❖

Xcel Energy has provided the Chippewa County Historical Society and Lake Wissota Improvement & Protection Assn. 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.

Chippewa County Historical Society

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SEPTEMBER 2016

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