



## The Union

**Prairie du Chien Historical Society Newsletter**  
**April 2021 Volume 24 #2**

### Prairie du Chien Historical Society Celebrates 25 Years

In 1995 when the State Medical Society decided it no longer would own and operate the Medical Museum in Prairie du Chien. Mayor Jim Bittner realized that the Fort Crawford Hospital was important to the city. He gathered a group of local people to plead his case for ownership of the museum thus giving the community a place to tell the rich history of the area. The group including Tom Farrell, Dave Skemp, Frank Weeks, Blair Dillman, Dr. Michael Garrity, and others agreed with Jim. They formed and incorporated the Prairie du Chien Historical Society in March of 1996. In April 1996 the Medical Museum property, buildings and collections were given to the Prairie du Chien Historical Society.

The Medical Museum became the Prairie du Chien Museum at Fort Crawford. A Board of Directors was formed to operate the Museum and provide guidance for the Historical Society. The Board of Directors consisted of:

James R. Bittner, President  
Mary Antoine de Julio, Vice-President  
Thomas F. Farrell, Treasurer  
Scott Sklenar, Secretary  
Michael P. Douglass  
Frederic Huebsch  
Delores Igou  
Mary Ann Stemper  
Eric Temte

Thanks to Mayor Jim Bittner's determination and persuasiveness, his vision became a reality, and it remains so 25 years later. Jim would be pleased.

#### Board of Directors

President  
Mary Antoine  
Vice President  
Chad Fradette  
Secretary  
Janet Finn  
Treasurer  
Lori Bekkum  
Joe Atkins  
Bill Howe  
Carolyn Sand  
Cindy Standorf  
Bob Ziel  
Mike Rider  
Vicki Mundt

#### Staff

Friday Wiles  
Jodi Russell  
Brandon Brockway  
Gene Bouzek  
Julie Metcalf Cull

#### Standing Committees

Collections  
Education  
Exhibit  
Finance  
Membership

#### Contact Information

Fort Crawford Museum  
717 S. Beaumont Road  
PO Box 298  
Prairie du Chien, WI  
53821  
608 326-6960

[ftcrawmu@mhtc.net](mailto:ftcrawmu@mhtc.net)

[www.fortcrawfordmuseum.com](http://www.fortcrawfordmuseum.com)

[www.fortcrawfordmuseum.com](http://www.fortcrawfordmuseum.com)

[www.fortcrawfordmuseum.com](http://www.fortcrawfordmuseum.com)

Newsletter

Kathy Koch

[kathygarykoch@gmail.com](mailto:kathygarykoch@gmail.com)

## Prairie's Attic



This season's new exhibit acknowledges the generosity of the community. Over the last 25 years many people have donated their family heirlooms and historical artifacts. There are wonderful photographs, stylish clothing from eras gone by, school mementoes, family trees and much, much more. The new exhibit, Prairie's Attic will enable us to "show off" some of our collection.

Brandon Brockway, who started working at the Museum last spring, is the creator/mastermind of this exhibit. He is having great fun searching the collection for items to display. Brandon is originally from Waterloo, Iowa and didn't know much about Prairie's history. He is discovering plenty of interesting facts while working on this display. He is especially fond of the work Cal Peters did when he was in Prairie du Chien working as "artist curator" at the Villa Louis from 1938-1948. His residency here was due to the WPA and the Villa Louis was owned by the City of Prairie du Chien at that time.

The above picture shows the exhibit nearing completion while a life size picture of Cal Peter waits to welcome visitors.

## Civil War Exhibit

The Civil War Exhibit in the Hospital Building was enlarged over the winter. Additions to the exhibit include artifacts and information about the GAR (Grand Army of the Republic) in Prairie du Chien and three Civil War veterans with ties to PdC. The three men are:

Dr. LeRoy G. Armstrong, surgeon for the Iron Brigade.

Edward I. Kidd, 25<sup>th</sup> Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry Regiment.

Thomas W. Plummer, Company C, Sixth Wisconsin Infantry.

**Opening day is May 1<sup>st</sup>. And the site is opened every day until October 31<sup>st</sup>. Please come and visit the Fort Crawford Hospital and Prairie du Chien Museum during this season of celebrating 25 years of existence. The buildings and exhibits have changed over the years. Visitors will find new and interesting stories while reliving the past. Remember: admission is free for all members!**

## First Members

The first PdC Historical Society membership drive got underway in November of 1997. Charter members were:

Mary Antoine	Virginia Antoine & Thomas Schmidtkunz
Thomas & Jean Farrell	James, John & Eric Dyrud
Robert & Kathleen Sutton	Dr. Michael & Mary Ann Garrity
James & Doris Bittner	Fred & Barbara Huebsch
Eric & Diana Temte	Griffith & Virginia Williams
Terry & Delores Burrington	Charles & Teresa Connell
Gregory & Mary de Julio	Michael Douglass
Paul & Delores Igou	Gary & Kathy Koch
Morris & Maureen McFarlane	Arnold & Patricia Mueller
Mahmoud & Mary Shihata	Stephen & Lynda Welter
Dewey & Connie Christoph	Von & Jean Denlinger
Robert & Sharon Harris	John & Vicki Howe
Chuck & Linda Kramer	Ben Logan
Gregg & Deb Miller	John & Sara Ryan
Dr. Ren & Beverly Whitaker	Gary & Mary Don Olson
Victor Rossetti	Brian Rude
Charles & Juanita Dyer	Jack & Betty Howe
Dr. Jan & Odean Kieser	Charles & Myra Lang
Walter & Gwen Maass	Don & Edith Ritchie
Jack & Dawn Slyfield	George & Adeline Sutton
Robert & Helen Valley	Dean & Connie Achenbach
LeRoy Bunders	Patricia Miller
Rod J. Satter	The Prairie du Chien Militia
Geraldine Dearborn	Craig Malven
Eugene L. LaPointe	Cathy Nelson
Julia P. Schmidt	Paul & Mary Joan Pinard
Russell Cleary Family	

## Prairie du Chien Volunteer Fire Companies

The first exhibit in the Museum building showcased the Volunteer Fire Companies of PdC. The Prairie du Chien Fire Department's collection of old firefighting equipment, firemen's mementos, photographs, and record books were offered to the museum in the fall of 1997. The display of the artifacts was ready for opening day of the 1998 season. The exhibit is still on display with a few additions.

Check out the museum's Facebook page for an interesting video showing leather water buckets used by Prairie du Chien firemen in the mid 1800's.

## **Prairie du Chien Historical Society Staff 2021**

The hard-working and very knowledgeable staff members who greet the public and interpret history for our visitors this year are:

**Friday Wiles**—office manager. She maintains institutional files, sets schedules and coordinates staff. She also conducts workshops, her specialty being woven baskets.

**Jodi Russell**—manager of the museum store which includes researching and ordering merchandise, creating displays in the store, and organizes “Friday at the Fort” programs.

**Brandon Brockway**—manages and maintains records for museum collections, plans and coordinates exhibits.

**Gene Bouzek**—maintains the Fort Crawford Museum facilities and interprets history for special events. His favorite character is Captain Willoughby Morgan.

**Julie Metcalf Cull**—prepares public relations material for the Prairie du Chien Historical Society. This is Julie’s first year with us.

## **The Union Newsletter of the Prairie du Chien Historical Society**

The first issue of The Union was sent to the membership in February, 1998. Mary Ann Stemper was the Editor. Mary Ann explained in the second issue of the newsletter the reason for the name Union. She wrote “we wanted our newsletter to not only inform about the Museum and Prairie du Chien history but to represent a part of the history of our community. The Union was a newspaper published in Prairie du Chien. It was an alternate voice to the Prairie du Chien Courier from 1864 to 1914.”

In 2008 Kathy Koch took over duties as editor.

## **Volunteers Needed**

The St. Germaine house will be open on Friday, Saturday and Sunday beginning Memorial Day weekend until Octoberfest. The hours will be 10:00 am to 3:00 pm. Admission is free but a donation box will be out. We are looking for volunteers to greet visitors, give a brief history of the house and invite them to look around and view the exhibit which will include the history of the house, other French-Canadian homes in Prairie du Chien and the 4<sup>th</sup> Ward. There will be items from the Museum store for sale as well. Money would be collected from the sales and a record would be kept of the transactions. Mary Antoine would conduct a training day for those interested. Written materials about the house and exhibit would be supplied. Call the museum (326-6960) if interested.