



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

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Newsletter

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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, 25th Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry Regiment.

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

Opening day is May 1st. And the site is opened every day until October 31st. 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.

Jody 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 4th 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.

Prairie du Chien Historical Society Special Events 2021

May 1 - Fort Crawford Museum, 717 S. Beaumont Road, opens for the 2021 season. Open 9:00 am – 4:00 pm. Daily. Admission charge.

June 12-13 –*Joie de Vivre!* Formal dedication & opening of the St. Germain *dit* Gauthier House. French-Canadian music, dancing, food, and activities. Saturday 10:00 am – 4:00 pm. Sunday 10:00 am – 3:00 pm. St. Feriole Island Park. Free. Donation appreciated.

June 19 – “Pies-a-Plenty” annual fund-raising auction of homemade pies. Jaycee Shelter, St. Feriole Island Park, 4:00 pm.

June 25 - “Friday at the Fort” Free program for families and children beginning 1:30 pm. Fort Crawford Museum, 717 S. Beaumont Road.

July 9 - “Friday at the Fort” Free program for families and children beginning 1:30 pm. Fort Crawford Museum, 717 S. Beaumont Road.

July 16 - “Friday at the Fort” Free program for families and children beginning 1:30 pm. Fort Crawford Museum, 717 S. Beaumont Road.

July 23 - “Friday at the Fort” Free program for families and children beginning 1:30 pm. Fort Crawford Museum, 717 S. Beaumont Road.

July 24 – Ice Cream Social to Celebrate 25th Anniversary of Prairie du Chien Historical Society. 2:30-4:30 pm. Fort Crawford Museum, 717 S. Beaumont Road. Free. Donation appreciated.



July 30 – “Canoe with a Voyageur.” 1:30 pm. Learn about the French Fur Trade and help paddle a *Montreal Canoe* on the *Marais de St. Frioie*. St. Germain *dit* Gauthier House, St. Feriole Island Park. “Fridays at the Fort” free program for families and children.

August 6 - “Paint a Pony and Ride in a Carriage.” 1:30 pm. St. Germain *dit* Gauthier House, St. Feriole Island Park. “Fridays at the Fort” program for families and children. Donation to offset cost appreciated.

August 13 – “Tea at the Fort.”

Fine teas and delicate treats with “historic personages.”

1:30 pm at Fort Crawford Museum, 717 S. Beaumont Road.

Reservations limited and required. Admission charge.



October 2 – “Visiting Our Ancestors.” Annual tours of historic cemeteries in Prairie du Chien and visits with historic personages. Tours begin at 10:00 am and 1:00 pm at Fort Crawford Museum. Admission charge. Limited space, reservations recommended.

October 13-15 – Annual Bus Trip to the Twin Cities Area***

October 30 – “Spirits of Early Prairie du Chien,” meet men and women who lived at Prairie du Chien when there were three villages on the prairie.

6:00 – 8:00 pm. Fort Crawford Museum, 717 S. Beaumont Road.

Admission charge, reservations appreciated.

December 11 – “Christmas at the Fort.” Annual sale of homemade cookies and candies.

Begins at 9:00 am. Fort Crawford Museum 717 S. Beaumont Road.

Display of decorated Christmas trees through January 1, 2022.

January 2, 2022 – *Bonne Année*. Celebrate the French-Canadian New Year’s traditions of visiting, music, food, and gifts for children. 1:00-3:00 pm.

St Germain *dit* Gauthier House, St. Feriole Island Park. Bring a gift for another.

January 13, 2022 –Annual Dinner Meeting. Huckleberry’s Banquet Hall, Prairie du Chien.

Plans are being made for this year’s events at the Museum. Of course, nothing is for certain with the pandemic still playing a role in our lives. If there are cancellations a timely notice will be given.



***Janet Finn has not yet decided if the bus trip will occur this year. She is going ahead and contacting places and making preliminary arrangements. Certain health protocols will be in place—mask wearing and COVID vaccinations required. She will make the final decision in July. Keep your fingers crossed. This get away is so fun and enjoyable!