

Price County Historical Society Newsletter



Old Town Hall
Museum



Louis A. Koenig
Research Center



Greenfield School
Museum

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CATCHING UP WITH LIFE AT PRICE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

By: John L. Berg

What has been happening since your last issue of the Newsletter was published? This has been another busy season for the Society! We continue to have consistent attendance of visitors at both the two fundraisers as well as during the regular schedule on the weekends. This speaks well of our membership that our campus facilities are in such good condition that the public has taken notice and makes an effort to visit us. Your work and dedication is paying dividends.

AT THE LOUIS A. KOENIG RESEARCH CENTER

What is Happening at the Louis A. Koenig Research Center? The Center has been in operation for two YEARS as of September 16! What was once a distance dream is now a viable, secure location for the most fragile paper based artifacts in the Society's collections. Although it is staffed by volunteers and limited to access by appointment, much work goes on in this facility.

We have had a number of research inquiries during the year regarding our archival records and photographs housed at the Koenig Center. We process these requests and provide answers as completely as possible. In the event that we don't have an answer, we provide a lead to sources that hopefully will assist the person conducting the research. The bulk of the hands on work has been greatly facilitated by the acquisition of an entirely new set of computers, and professional quality copiers, and a book scanner with a WIFI system that integrates the equipment and connects unto resources outside the immediate area. This has been the result of a generous gift from Carol Koenig whose support directly

serves the preservation of the artifacts of Price County's history.



The Skating Rink in Park Falls, which we believe to be early 1950s, as Lincoln High School is shown in the background prior to the 1957 gymnasium addition.

Since we have begun operations, the Society has had an increased amount of donations of original photographs and documents from Price County. This is very encouraging, as the Koenig Center was designed and built for such materials. When one stops to consider the ages of many of these photographs and the scenes and people they document, it is truly amazing that so many people had the prescience to hold on to them and not let them be lost or destroyed! Because of their desire to continue this preservation, they are now being donated to PCHS and housed in the Koenig Center. These are a small sampling of the types of the thousands of photographs in the PCHS Archives.





Undated photograph. Information on the back of photograph reads: A. Kaley and Gus Schmidt en-route to hunting camp crossing Flambeau at Oxbo.

Our main archivists, Etola Foytek, Traci Dunbar, and Eric Tollefson continue their work in accessioning and digitizing the photographs and other materials in the collection, along with the new acquisitions that we are fortunate to receive, Traci has taken on an additional “mission” to accession and organize the archival storage of the original copies of the Phillips Times and the Phillips Bee for preservation. Here the purpose is strictly preservation as these originals date from 1879 through the 1980s. Their fragile condition means the public does not have direct access to the bound volumes from 1879 to 1959; they are referred to microfilm copies at the Phillips Public Library, or in the case of inquiries from out of town, to inter-library loan through the Wisconsin Historical Society. Bound original volumes of the Phillips Bee from 1960 through the 1990s are available for on site reading at the Koenig Center.

On the buildings and grounds side, our landscaping project between the Koenig Center and the cold storage building directly to the west of it was completed this summer. While replacing the back door of the cold storage building with a metal one the crew from Huotari Construction found deteriorating floor joists, Once these were repaired or replaced the project continued with the original plan to divert water away from the buildings. Trenching was done along the east wall of the cold storage building, a window in the basement was cemented in blocks, drain tile and a poly moisture barrier added, the east wall sealed and metal siding extended to the base of the building with crushed rocks leveled between the two buildings. This will help prevent moisture from seeping into the cold storage building and ensure proper drainage between the Koenig Center and the cold storage building.

AT THE OLD TOWN HALL AND GREENFIELD SCHOOL

What is happening at the Old Town Hall and Greenfield School? The short answer is A LOT! The Greenfield School received a badly needed coat of paint which makes it shine like new. Dave Scholz of Phillips was hired as the painter and he did a thorough job of surface preparation and painting. The effort took some time but has paid off in both preservation of the structure and its curb appeal. The Board hired our “foundation man,” Bill Smasal of Fifield, to clean out and repair the foundation, install a poly moisture barrier under the building and add new vents along the foundation. This essential work allows for proper moisture control and venting of the crawl space under the building, especially during the warmer months of the year.

The Old Town Hall received several structural improvements essential to its continued health and well being. Bill Smasal also took on the essential job of cleaning out and repointing the field stone foundation of the Old Town Hall. Bill began work in the early summer, and by August he was finished. Bill takes great pride in his work and it shows—he is meticulous and has a great interest in both doing the job well and correctly and preserving the 131 year old foundation of the Society’s unique building. So next time you are driving by, stop and take a good look at Bill’s work—the Old Town Hall should stand for another 131 years!



Bill Smasal working on repointing the exterior of the foundation of the Old Town Hall Museum. Over the last several years Bill has reinforced and repaired both the interior and exterior of the foundation.

Last spring, Tom Kaiser contracted with a local photographer, Ty Bleicher of Northwoods Aerial Photography, to conduct a drone survey of the roof and chimneys to determine to what extent, if any, there was necessary maintenance to be done. This expedition proved prescient as several critical structural deteriorations were discovered, particularly in the three chimneys and the shingles of the ridge line of the roof. The caps on the chimneys were also found to be deteriorating and the roof ridge line also had some holes in it and needed replacing. Tom immediately met with the PCHS's current construction company Huotari Construction and its owner, Dennis Huotari. Dennis immediately assessed the issues personally and recommended structural tuckpointing and replacing deteriorated grout and bricks in the chimneys and replacement of ridge line shingles. Immediately Dennis had his crew replace the ridge line shingles. His crew, James Stadter and Mike Vilt, brought in the lift and began the meticulous work of cleaning out the rotted grout and replacing deteriorated bricks and repairing the cement caps on the top of the chimneys. The chimneys are now completely restored and a sealer applied to further protect the 131 year-old structure against the Price County four seasons weather. And the roof is again ready to keep the old building dry! Additionally, the railings on the front entrance of the building were replaced and the landing repaired. A moisture barrier and crushed rocks were placed under the front entrance to improve drainage and help prevent moisture. Dennis Huotari also procured new vents for the foundation of the Old Town Hall, which were installed by Bill Smasal to maintain secured air ventilation for the basement. Completing these project should ensure that the Old Town Hall stands for another 131 years!



James Stadter spent weeks repairing and tuckpointing the three chimneys atop the Old Town Hall Museum.

Visitors this summer were treated to a new display on the landing of the stairs to the second floor of the Old Town Hall. Last year, Tom discovered an original 1873 Springfield rifle in the vault of the Museum building, and being knowledgeable on these matters, researched the pedigree and the proper method of

cleaning and preserving this historical artifact. The piece is significant for two reasons; first it is a Price County artifact, and secondly it is basically in an "as delivered" condition. It has all the original cartouches for serial numbers and inspection marks, and has seen very little use. He then contacted Dennis Peterson, of Rice Lake, to have a rustic looking display case made. By June 3 of this year, Tom and some of his friends, namely Tom Jirschele and Jason King had mounted the case on the west wall underneath the painting of the Ojibwe hunter and next to a pair of snowshoes. Recently Tom had Dennis construct another case for the PCHS's LC Smith shot gun, again significant because it is a Price County artifact, and is basically in an "as delivered" condition, with all the original cartouches for serial numbers and inspection marks. Next summer, visitors will be able to inspect both of the original antique guns side by side on the landing. The Old Town Hall and Greenfield School are looking good and ready for another winter's rest, as we eagerly anticipate the 2026 museum season and the new displays!



Mike Vilt placed new colonial style railing on the front entrance of the Old Town Hall Museum.

PRESIDENT'S PERSPECTIVE [or, when she speaks we listen]

A Word from PCHS President Etola Foytek

I'll start my report with my Thank You's. The first Thank You needs to go to Carol Koenig for her continued support for the Louis A. Koenig Research Center and our other buildings. Next would be to my board who willingly donate their time to pay bills, file reports, check on our buildings, find people who can fix the problems, volunteer to host, clean and update

displays and do all the jobs necessary to keep our organization functioning. Then there are the many people that host in our buildings. We could not be open without you.

Our 2025 hosts were: Donna Bubenec, Terry Upson, Grace Kielsmeier, Karen Baumgartner, Jim and Irene Wedemeyer, John and Louise Berg, Chuck and Holly Basting, Steven and Sylvia Kerner, Joe Janacek, Peter Dahlie, Joe Oskvarek, Marge Brzeskiewicz, Eva Reilly, Kathy Cervenka, Barb Schultz, Dan and Jean Patenaude, Nate and Sally Nez, Therese Trojak, Maureen Trojak, Traci and Jeff Dunbar, Etola Foytek, Al and Diane Barkstrom, Gay Marschke, Diane and Harlon Falstad, Carol Forward, Steve Gustafson, Lucy Ross, Amy Hulbert, Barb and Steve Wolf, Kathleen Cleven, Bev Brayton, Laurie Fox, Jerry and Gail Movrich, Richard Wilson, Ginny Luoma, Sonja Moskaluk and Sally McFadyen.

A special Thank You goes out to Carol Forward who organizes the hosts at the Greenfield School, and the retired educators that host. A Thank You to Tammy Lanham and her brother, Richard Lapp, for working on the flowerbed and planters at the school that beautifies the setting. A Thank You to the American Legion Post #532 of Fifield for donating and making sure that the American flag is flying each year between Memorial Day and Veterans Day. I also need to give a big Thank You to the 40 plus pie bakers that make our pie social a big success and continues to grow each year. I want to add a Thank You to Jeanne Larson and Rosa Bogdanovic for their delicious cakes and to Jeanne and Peter Dahlie for their help at the pie social. My final Thank You would go to Sally McFadyen for her many years of serving on the board and her countless hours cleaning the Old Town Hall. I would also like to welcome Jenni Werkmeister, our newest board member.

Two volunteers need special recognition. They are Grace Kielsmeier and Karen Baumgartner. Grace will host two Sundays each month and Karen volunteers one Sunday each month. They have done this for years, which makes my job of arranging hosts much easier. This past summer Karen also spent many Tuesdays inventorying an entire book shelf of books.

I would also like to recognize those members who for many years supported the Society that sadly passed away this year: Life Members: Irene Fleming, Gary Ocker, Kathryn LaPointe and Lillian Neeck, and Individual members: Dee Hintz, Doris Kronberger, Kay

and Jerry Thelen, Leonard "Manny" Stein, and JoAnn Gehrman.

We have been getting many large donations this year, so in 2026, you will see new wedding dresses displayed, new dishes in the dining room and a sauerkraut display in the kitchen. We also plan to have a special display honoring the 150th anniversaries of Ogema, Phillips and Fifield.

Something new this year was a display at the Phillips Public Library of 18 items from our collection asking "Do you know what this was used for?" Linda Johnson made a 3-ring binder with a picture of the item and an answer to what it was used for. After being at the Phillips Library, it was displayed in the Park Falls Public Library. The display drew much attention at both libraries.

GETTING TO KNOW PCHS' NEWEST BOARD MEMBER JENNI WERKMEISTER



Jenni Werkmeister with a very special donation to Locks of Love.

Since my great-grand parents, Albert and Eunice Abraham and my grandparents Junior and Helen Engeldinger homesteaded Fifield I have a few generations from Fifield. As adults my husband Jon and I decided to live once again here in Price County starting in Phillips and ending in Fifield where we bought our house and lived for many years. We have

since built Jon's Auto Werks in Fifield. Jon owns and operates our business and is an Automotive Instructor at the area Community College. I worked primarily in Health Care. Recently I took interest in the history of the Fifield Congregational Church, and went to the Price County Historical Society looking for information, where I met Mr. John Berg who keyed me in on a few different ways to search for information. I became a Lifetime Member that day. In addition, I recently became the County Coordinator for WI genweb <http://wigenwebsites.org/price/> I look forward to working with the Board and community members to help preserve the history of Price County.

FROM THE ARCHIVES: A MOMENT IN PRICE COUNTY HISTORY

The first in a three part series of research in progress, compiled and written by John L. Berg:

“Best Dam Builder *in the Chippewa River Watershed*: The Enigmatic William H. “*Billie the Beaver*” England, Captain Charles Harmon Henry *and the Eau Claire – Chippewa Falls Pool in That Dammed Price County 1870 - 1900.*”

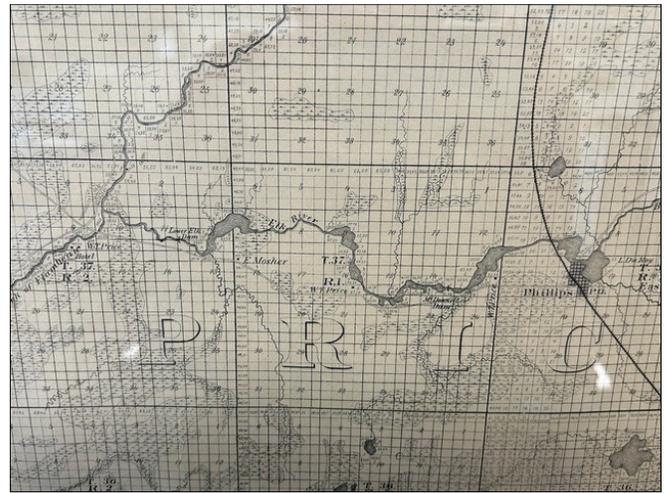
Part 1: A Work in Progress.

This research project originated in the early spring of 2019 when I met James Bokern, a retired high school history teacher and historian associated with the Manitowish Waters Historical Society. Jim and I had been invited to a meeting by John Grossman, then an officer in the Forest History Association of Wisconsin, to offer insight into the development of an archive for that organization at the Area Research Center located at the University of Wisconsin at Stevens Point. Jim expressed interest in the stories about timber trespass occurring during the 1860s up on the Manitowish River and Turtle River—both of which flow into the North Fork of the Flambeau River. He was interested in learning about the logging activities on the South Fork of the Flambeau River because it was his theory that anyone traveling on the river regardless of intent, be they traders, Anishinaabe Ojibwe of Waswaagoning [Lac du Flambeau], timber cruisers, licensed loggers, or timber trespassers—anyone and everyone—would simultaneously use both forks of the Flambeau in their endeavors. Jim suggested that we should team up to share research and source materials to help develop a history of these waters. Within a year, my wife Louise, with Kay and Jeff Krans (also associated with the Manitowish Waters Historical Society), Teresa Mitchell (director of the George Brown, Jr. Ojibwe Museum and Cultural Center at Lac du Flambeau), and Cindi Stiles (former archeologist to the Ojibwe at Lac du Flambeau) joined the research partnership.

Thus was born the Upper Flambeau Research Group, an informal association of historians and students of history whose purpose is to meet periodically to discuss the history of the Flambeau River Watershed. We are, if I may say, a very interesting and engaging people and our work has evolved into treasured friendships!

Regarding Words, Terms, and Usage.

The majority of entries in this paper are verbatim transcripts of primary documents and personal accounts published in the latter 19th Century and early 20th Century, and are thus centered in an era when certain words, terms, portrayals, and usage reflected sensibilities different from the present time. While it **is not** my intent of this research to perpetuate those terms, words, usage, or portrayals on their own, it **is** my intent to preserve historical information in the original text in which it was written. I realize such terms and words presented in this context form a primary historical record, and I trust that the contemporary reader will analyze and understand the nature of language used in its particular era and its change over time.



The Big Elk River from Phillips to the South Fork of the Flambeau River. Notice the location of the Lower Dam in section 11. From Jacob Miller's Map of the Pine Region Tributary to the Chippewa River Wisconsin June 1883. Price County Historical Society Collection.

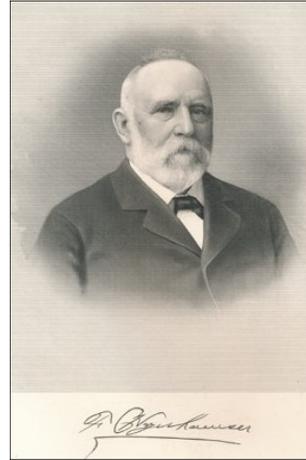
The Setting

Wisconsin is blessed with an immense fresh water system that is central to its history from its earliest indigenous citizens to the present day. These water systems emerged to form inextricable links from nascent industrial communities across the center of the state to the remote, resource-rich hinterland of the far north. One such system in the northern region of the state extends from the Manitowish Waters area in Vilas County, as well as further west in Ashland and Sawyer counties flowing southwesterly to the Mississippi River. This system, the Upper Chippewa River watershed, is comprised of numerous tributary rivers and the streams, lakes, and wetlands that feed the main river.

One of these tributaries, the Elk River, traverses central Price County, and is comprised of two branches originating in the eastern upland region in the Town of Emery. The northern branch, the Big Elk River, begins its journey fed by the springs and wetlands in what is now called Big Elk Valley; the first European immigrants settlers named it Skookum Valley. The Little Elk is the southern branch, having its origin about a mile south of the larger branch. These two streams flow westward into Lake Duroy, which flows into Elk Lake to form the main Elk River at Long Lake. From there the main Elk continues westward to its confluence with the South Fork of the Flambeau River, a distance of approximately 10 miles. The South Fork continues its southwesterly journey to join the North Fork, thus forming the main Flambeau River. From there the Flambeau flows into the Chippewa River, which then empties into the mighty Mississippi River.

The antebellum period saw the collapse of the fur trade coinciding with the United States government coercing indigenous people into treaties to gain access to resources, while ultimately threatening removal or banishment to reservations. During the decade of the War of Rebellion, Congress acted quickly in 1862 to promulgate three momentous bills: the Homestead Act, the Agricultural College Land Grant Act, and the Pacific Railroad Act. Within a two-week period in that year President Abraham Lincoln signed all three into law, thus initiating an onslaught through the largest transfer of public lands to private ownership in the nation's history. Two of these directly impacted the Upper Chippewa River watershed concurrently with the Wisconsin Central Railroad Land Grant bill through the Wisconsin Legislature. Long known for its dense forests, its tributary Flambeau River watershed was particularly prized for prolific stands of *pinus strobus*: the white pine. This particular tree was coveted for its qualities as finished lumber for construction of wood framed buildings. From its light weight yet sturdy fiber, this tree was often referred to as "cork pine," with buoyancy analogous to that of a cork bobber floating on a fishing line. *Pinus strobus* could be cut down, skidded or hauled by sleighs to landings along the lakes and rivers, and in the spring of the year, floated down the rivers to be sorted at Chippewa Falls, Eau Claire or at the Beef Slough, all on the main Chippewa River.

This relatively cheap mode of transportation was only viable if there was enough water to flush the immense volumes of white pine logs crowding these bodies water. To create and maintain such capacity, dams were constructed at the source of major and minor rivers for sluicing the great white pine logs to the sorting works at the sawmill towns, sometimes a hundred miles downstream. Built using native material—trees, rocks, and gravel—at or near the site of the proposed dam, the largest, called flooding dams, sluicing dams, or driving dams, were necessary to impound enough water to flush the logs down rivers that were often crooked, sharp curves cluttered with rapids, dead trees and brush, thus creating barriers impeding the floating logs. This was typical of the upper reaches of the North and South Forks of the Flambeau River in northern Wisconsin.



Frederick Weyerhaeuser

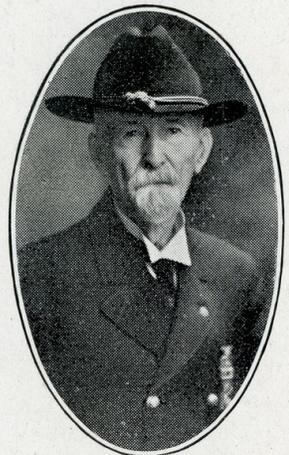
Frederick Weyerhaeuser rose to become the most prominent of all the loggers in the Chippewa River Watershed in the 1880s and 1890s.

Resurrecting A Long Lost Enigmatic Legend

Our quest to encounter the enigmatic William H. ("Billie the Beaver") England opens in ambiguity, with a visit to the reconstructed logging dam at the source of the South Fork of the Flambeau River—Round Lake—in northeast Price County, Wisconsin. In his research to nominate the Round Lake Logging Dam on the National Register of Historic Places, John N. Vogel wrote "The Round Lake Logging Dam: A Survivor of Wisconsin's Log-Driving Days." Published in the *Wisconsin Magazine of History* (Volume 66, Number 3, Spring, 1983, pages 170-191), Vogel presents a thorough description of the types of dams constructed and their purposes. And, just as importantly, he resurrects the person who learned and practiced this trade to its highest level: William H. England of Eau Claire, Wisconsin.

Captain C. H. Henry

Charles Harmon Henry of Eau Claire was the supervisor of dams and river driving operations for Frederick Weyerhaeuser's Chippewa "Pool," a merger of several Eau Claire and Chippewa Falls-based companies all controlled by Weyerhaeuser. Chippewa Valley Museum Archives Collection.



C. H. HENRY

nature and leaves a large list of acquaintances and warm personal friends." His family was "...highly esteemed." The *Weekly Leader* alluded to his business associations: "For some years prior to 1889 he was a partner of Geo. W. Thomas, in the firm of England & Thomas, logging near Hayward in Sawyer County. For three years past, [1892-1895] he has been associated with Daniel McGillis, in logging operations."

None of his legendary accomplishments regarding dam building in the Chippewa River watershed were considered worthy of note—an interesting omission.

Building a Skill Set and Reputation in the Upper Flambeau River Watershed.

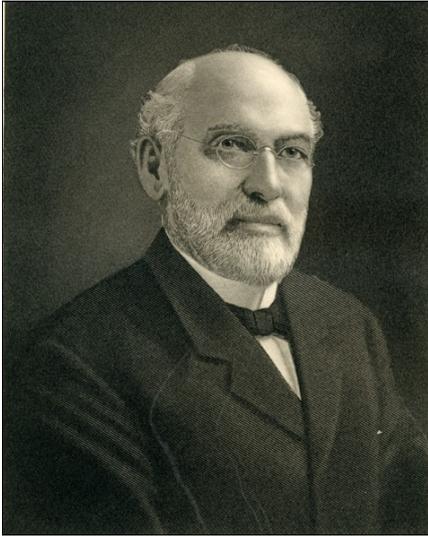
We read in the *THE PHILLIPS BADGER*, [July 26, 1882] that "Wm. England came down from the south fork dam on Monday and took a look at Phillips. Building operations on the new dam have been suspended during the drive." Then on August 9, 1882, the *BADGER* reported: "Wm. England came up from Eau Claire on Tuesday on his way to the South Fork dam, and stopped overnight in Phillips to catch his breath. He carries the same pipe yet, at the same angle." And seven and a half weeks later, in the *PHILLIPS TIMES*, Saturday, September 30, 1882: "The Eau Claire Lumber Co.'s new dam across Rice Creek, which empties into the South Fork of the Flambeau at Pike Lake, has been completed. It is 110 feet long and has a nine-foot head."

This teaser piques one's curiosity: just who was William H. "Billie the Beaver" England, and how and where did he learn and earn his sobriquet? Let us float down the Chippewa River to the city of Eau Claire, where we can locate some of the earliest references found to date naming the England brothers. Some details are gleaned from his obituary in the *Eau Claire Weekly Leader*, June 8, 1895. From that report, we learn that he was raised in Quebec, Canada, in a family comprised of his parents, a brother [John], and two sisters. England immigrated to Eau Claire in 1873, possibly with his brother John; at the time of his death, it was recorded his mother, a brother [John?] and two sisters had removed to Snohomish, Washington, while a third sister was reported to reside in Minnesota. England, lived his life as a resident of Eau Claire. A further search into his genealogy found that he was married to Olive Grace Moores in Restigouche, Quebec, Canada on August 18, 1870. They were the parents of three daughters Elizabeth [Lizzie], Charlotte [Lottie], and Jessie. England was a member of Masonic Lodge No.112, and was described as a "a man of kindly

Where did William H. "Billie The Beaver" England build his reputation? Right here in the Upper Flambeau River Watershed! We have evidence that he was on the Flambeau River—both branches—in the early 1880s. As our examination shifts to the first periodical published in the headwaters of the Flambeau River Watershed: *THE PHILLIPS TIMES*, printed and sold beginning on January 6, 1877. Phillips was platted by the Wisconsin Central in October, 1876, and quickly established itself as a supply depot and stopping place for the loggers. Five years later *THE PHILLIPS BADGER* became the *TIMES'* earliest competitor, established on July 6, 1881. The *BADGER's* stated purposes to document the activities of the local people and the loggers both large and small operators. Last published on May 21, 1884; it was then merged with the *TIMES*.

While William H. England is the focus of this research, his brother John is the first to make an appearance in *The PHILLIPS TIMES*, Saturday, February 15, 1879, page 1, col. 3: "Johnny England, one of the whitest boys and best loggers in Northern Wisconsin, was in this village on Wednesday. Johnny is running a camp for Mosher and Law this winter and is doing excellent work." William's earliest [thus far located] entrance into the published record of the Flambeau River Watershed is in *THE PHILLIPS BADGER*, Wednesday, July 6, 1881 [LOCALS, Column 2]: "A.B. McDonnell and Wm. H. England, of Eau Claire, with a force of twenty-two men, arrived in Phillips Wednesday eve, bound for the dam at the foot of Long Lake. They will make Phillips headquarters for about two months, while they give that dam a thorough overhauling."

Early on, England was hired by one of Weyerhaeuser's Superintendent of Dams: Alexander B. McDonnell, of Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin. McDonnell seems to have been the driving force behind England's development as a skilled builder. Perhaps the most detailed account of England's prowess is found in an article published in *THE PHILLIPS BADGER*, August 17, 1881. "The Lower Elk Dam" offers context to that newspaper account. The structure of this research was situated on the Elk River, a tributary of the South Fork Flambeau River, and was originally referred to as the Lower Elk Dam; it has since been reconstructed into a modern cement and steel structure now known as Wiemer's Dam.



Alexander B. McDonnell

Alexander B. McDonnell, arrived in Chippewa Falls, eventually rising to a position of Supervisor for the Mississippi River Logging Company, 1873–1881. History of Western Wisconsin, 1905.

The Lower Elk Dam

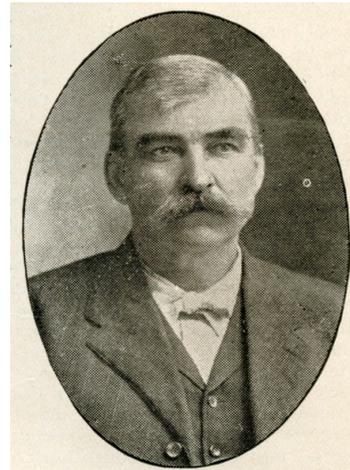
November 1872: Loggers Make Their Way to the Upper Flambeau

According to the narrative of William Seeburger published in *A Glimpse at the Early History of the State of Wisconsin Relating to Price County* (F.W. Sackett, ed. Phillips, Wisconsin, *The PHILLIPS TIMES*, ca.1905-1906. pp. 73-75), the first to log the Flambeau River's upper watershed were himself, Charles H. Roser, and Ephraim L Hackett. On November 11, 1872, they employed three Ojibwe Indians (who names were not included by Seeburger in his original narrative), to load three canoes with supplies and iron necessary for a substantial camp. These six men, Seeburger recalled, began their journey: "Our

destination was what has since been called Hackett's Farm, at that time the farthest upriver lumber camp on the Chippewa waters." After an arduous upstream struggle battling strong cold water current and rapids, the crew arrived at Bruno Vinette's Logging camp, about a mile above the present city of Ladysmith. Again, Seeburger: "On the morning of November 13th, 1872, we started out on foot for what is now known as Hackett's Farm, a distance of 22 miles, on a newly cut tote road. This trip from Vinette's camp to Hackett's Farm took three days. We had with us a team of four oxen, which had been sent to meet us from the farm, and all the four-ox team could haul was about a thousand pounds of supplies." From there the men cut a crude trail in bitterly cold and snowy weather, leading their ox-drawn wagons to the North Fork Flambeau River, near what is now named Connor's Creek.

Upon reaching the designated site in late November, Seeburger continued, "We were put to work the next day on building the camps, stables, blacksmith shop and store house." Hackett's logging camp was complete by January 1, 1873, and within the next week, logging operations commenced, harvesting the "cork" white pine which was floated down river to Chippewa Falls and Eau Claire.

After a tote road was cut from Vinette's camp to Hackett's Farm, and then to his logging camp, other loggers working as subcontractors for the major lumber companies in Eau Claire and Chippewa Falls, and those located as far away as Winona, Minnesota, Rock Island, Illinois and Muscatine, Iowa, soon ventured north, establishing camps and setting up operations.



William Seeburger

William Seeburger arrived in 1872 to log and eventually settled in Phillips. Mr. Seeburger was elected Mayor of Phillips from 1906–1914 and 1918–1922.

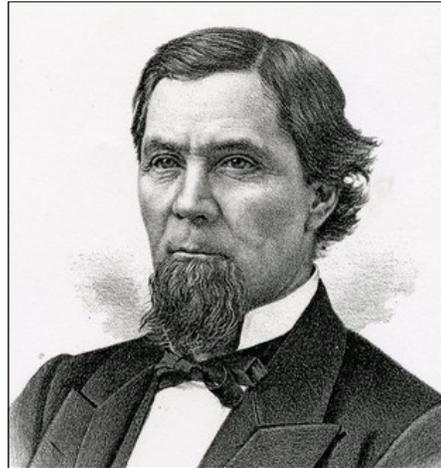
The Wisconsin Central Railroad had built as far north as Milepost 101 in 1873 until internal financial troubles and the national economic panic halted progress. In spite of its location approximately 35 miles east of Hackett's Farm, the railroad established an engine house and turntable at Milepost 101, which was also named Worcester, (after the town near Boston, Massachusetts) further enticing loggers to the Flambeau River pine region.

1877: The Lower Elk Dam is Constructed.

One such "boomer" was William Thompson Price of Black River Falls. Seeburger narrates this account: "In the fall of 1875 a road was cut direct across from Hackett's Farm to Worcester, mainly following the line between townships 36 and 37. That fall, W.T. Price located his first camp on the Elk River, on Section 13, Town 37 North, Range 1 West; another on Section 8, Town 37 North, Range 1 West, and also a camp on Section 12, Town 37 North, Range 2 West. In the spring of 1876 W.T. Price attempted the first drive ever made on the Elk River, but it was "hung up." In the spring of 1877, A.B. McDonnell started the first dam to be erected on the Elk River, locating it on Section 11, Town 37 North, Range 2 West. It was built solely for log driving purposes. In the fall of 1879 and winter of 1880 Mr. McDonnell built the second dam, known as "Job's Dam," located at the foot of Long Lake, on the S.E. 1/4 of Section 14, Township 37 North, Range 1 West."

The dam McDonnell built on Section 11 was popularly known as the "Lower Dam," and is documented in *The PHILLIPS TIMES*, Saturday, June 30, 1877 page 1, col 2: "The boys from the Elk drive have returned home this week. They report the logs as all sluiced through the dam, and that a canoe channel is being opened at the mouth of the Elk." Evidently the dam was only partially completed during this drive, as evidenced by this account in *The PHILLIPS TIMES*, Saturday, August 4, 1877 page 1, col 2: "A.B. McDonald [sic A.B. McDonnell] arrived in town last evening with his crew of men who have been at work on the dam on the Elk. Said dam is now completed, and the men are now on their way to the Chippewa river to put in a dam about twenty miles below the Central Ry. Crossing." McDonnell's dam is clearly drawn and named as the "Lower Elk Dam" on the *Map of the Pine Region Tributary to the Chippewa River, Wisconsin*, compiled and published by Jacob Miller in June, 1883. Intensive logging operations from the source of the Elk river to its confluence

with the South Fork Flambeau took its toll on the dams, such that by 1881 the Lower Elk Dam needed immediate attention. McDonnell called upon one of the most highly regarded "folk engineers" to lead the rehabilitation project.



W. T. Price

William Thompson Price was early to the Flambeau River Watershed, focusing on the Big Elk River and South Fork Flambeau Rivers in the mid-1870s and 1880s. History of Jackson County.



This is the Lower Elk Dam in 1907, some 26 years after William H. "Billie The Beaver" England rebuilt it. Later known as Murray's Dam, by the 1930s the dam was replaced with a cement structure still in operation, and is now known as Weimer's Dam. Catherine Mess Collection Murray Dam Oct 1907.

At this point our narrative will conclude its first part. Part II will be published in the Spring, 2026 edition of the Newsletter, and the series will conclude a year from now in the fall, 2026 edition. Stay tuned - the story gets better—and most of it happened right here in Price County!

AN EXPEDITION IN THE TOWN OF EMERY, PRICE COUNTY, WISCONSIN

By: John L. Berg

This expedition had its origins ten years ago when I gave a presentation on the Lake Shore and Eastern at the Friends of Fred Smith Center at the Wisconsin Concrete Park south of Phillips. There I met Steven and Sylvia Kerner and Thomas F. Kaiser. They had a personal interest in this story because their family owned a farm over which the Lake Shore and Eastern Railroad operated in the closing years of its operations in the Town of Emery. Tom and Steven both pitched the idea of hiking the grade on Mildred Kaiser's farm—a section of the rail grade I never had the opportunity to trek because it was on private property. Enthusiastically I replied "YES!" BUT I quickly threw in a caveat: I needed to complete the work on publishing my forthcoming book, *The Lake Shore and Eastern: A Logging Railroad in North-Central Wisconsin*.

Well that book was published ten months later, in August, 2016, BUT (again!) all sorts of "life events" and demands then came my way. During these past ten years Steven continued to mention that we need to get out to hike that grade, however, Tom had sold his acreage he inherited, so it appeared our window of opportunity had closed. Steven was having none of it. Earlier this year he made the offer again: If he contacted the present owner and received permission to access the grade, would I commit to joining him? YES! I told Steven I would love to hike that grade BUT (again!) I wouldn't be available until early October...Steven is a persistent young man, and by golly he worked it out—he had the land owner's permission to walk his parcel. So the Big Day was set for Tuesday, October 7, 2025.

The day dawned cold and clear—perfect for a trek in the woods. I drove from my family's cabin at Round Lake to pick Tom up in Fifield, and then to Steven and Sylvia's home east of Phillips. There we met the Kerners, along with Steven's sister Marigene, Sylvia's brother Joe Janacek, Etola Foytek and Karen Peterson Baumgartner. Etola is president of the Society and Karen, also a member of the Society, is a font of historical knowledge in all things Price County.

Steven organized the itinerary for The Big Day of Field Explorations to:

Site 1: Lake Shore and Eastern Railroad crossing on Popple Creek Road Town 38 North, Range 2 East of the Fourth Principal Meridian, in Sections 21, and 28.

Site 2: Peninsula Road Boat Landing at Musser Flowage on the Big Elk River. Town 38 North, Range 2 East of the Fourth Principal Meridian, in Section 32.

Site 3: "Kaiser's Hill," on the Popple Creek Spur of the Lake Shore and Eastern Railroad [LS&ERR]. Town 37 North, Range 2 East of the Fourth Principal Meridian, in Section 4, and Town 38 North, Range 2 East of the Fourth Principal Meridian, in Section 33.

Picnic Lunch at Emery Park.

Site 4 : Lake Shore and Eastern Railroad at Milwaukee Sheep and Wool Company Ranch. Town 38 North, Range 3 East of the Fourth Principal Meridian, in Section 9.

Site 5: Civilian Conservation Corps Camp Sheep Ranch Co. 644-E-4 in Skookum Valley of the Big Elk River. Town 38 North, Range 3 East of the Fourth Principal Meridian, in Section 30.

Site 6: Heinz's Sand & Gravel Pit with Spring Near Wilson Flowage and Popple Creek. Town 38 North, Range 2 East of the Fourth Principal Meridian, in Section 21.

Site 7: Musser Road to the Musser Dam on the Big Elk River. Town 38 North, Range 2 East of the Fourth Principal Meridian, in Section 31.



Expedition Members: Front Row L-R Marigene Kerner, Etola Foytek, Karen Peterson Baumgartner. Back Row L-R John L. Berg, Joe Janacek, Tom Kaiser, Steven Kerner. Photo by Sylvia Kerner.

From a quick start at Sites 1 and 2, we traveled to our primary target, “Kaiser’s Hill.” The hike on this section of the Lake Shore and Eastern Railroad’s Popple Creek Spur was extremely informative. Aerial photos from 1939 clearly show the grade running northwest from the corner of County Highway H and Musser Drive. This spur ran up into the Popple Creek and Wilson Flowage area, where the Kneeland-McLurg Lumber Company had a railroad car camp for their final cut in the winter of 1925-1926. Gerald Krahl, a young man born and raised in Emery, worked that year as a lumber jack at the camp. He used his Kodak Postcard camera producing several photographs of these operations, profiled on pages 164-171 of my LS&ERR book. As we trekked the sag on “Kaiser’s Hill” we realized why the crew needed to “double head” the locomotives for the run southeast to the Viola Villa wye behind John Mljanek’s farm.

And this was not the only “hill and sag” stretch of this spur—further northwest from the segment we hiked it was the same all the way north of County Highway H in the Wilson Flowage area. LS&ERR locomotive engineer Martin Schlicht described the operation of the locomotives in this type of terrain: “*The mainline was run over country that was hilly and full of swamp holes—you had to run the locomotives full throttle or full brake.*” As we looked both north and south in the sag, we could visualize Schlicht’s description may well have applied when operating the locomotives over this spur.

After an hour the sun had significantly warmed the woods. We hiked our way to County Highway H and drove to Emery Park where we had a an outstanding picnic lunch prepared by Steven and Sylvia, whose chocolate chip cookies are to die for! Delicious and nutritious! After lunch we ventured to our next destinations: Sites 4,5,6, and 7. Our expedition members ended a superb day having enjoyed excellent company and left smarter than when we woke up! Kudos to our Expedition Commander Steven Kerner, who organized and facilitated an outstanding and highly interesting journey to parts of Price County right here in our back yard!

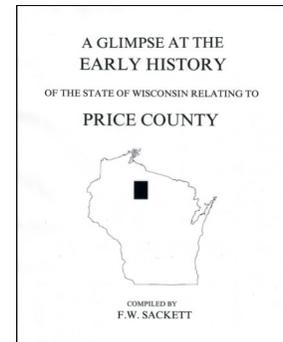
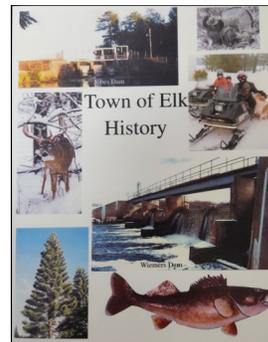
BUSINESS OF RUNNING THE SOCIETY

Laurie Pilch, PCHS Secretary/Treasurer

This year I am pleased to announce that we have two new historical books available for sale.

Town of Elk History was originally written by James Hrad, Jr., and published for the Town of Elk Centennial in 2012. The book contains an extensive history of the township and settlements located within its boundaries. It is filled with pictorial, historical and first-person accounts giving a voice to those who chose this area to put down roots, build the township, and leave their mark for generations to come. Out of print for some time, the book was reprinted in 2024 in memory of James “Jim” Hrad, Jr., by his daughter Joyce (Hrad) Anderson.

A Glimpse at the Early History of the State of Wisconsin Relating to Price County was first published ca. 1905-1906 by Phillips Times Editor, F.W. Sackett to commemorate a quarter of a century in Price County relating to its organization and historical events. A comprehensive historical reference written by Mr. Sackett documents the early history of government, schools, churches, and newspapers. Of particular interest are the recollections of Price County during its earliest years found in the highly descriptive first-person accounts written by some of the pioneers who immigrated to the new county. Also contained within its pages are copies of some of the earliest photographs of the area. The Price County Historical



Society has long desired to be able to share this publication with a broader audience and is extremely pleased to bring this work into a book form for all to enjoy and learn from.

All of our books are available for purchase throughout the year through our online gift shop at: www.pricecountyhistoricalsociety.org. During the summer months books are available at our gift shop at the Old Town Hall Museum. Certain books are also available at the offices of the Park Falls and Phillips Chambers of Commerce, and the Countryside Artists Gallery and Gifts at the Fred Smith House (from Memorial Day weekend through the month of October), located at the Wisconsin Concrete Park, south of Phillips.

WHAT EVENTS CAN YOU ATTEND DURING THE 2026 SEASON AT THE MUSEUM CAMPUS?

May: Training for Hosts Thursday, May 21 from 12:00 noon to 4:00 p.m.

June 6 through September 7, 2026. The museums are open every Saturday and Sunday (and the Monday of Labor Day) from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

June: Pie Social Saturday, June 27, 2026 from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

August: Strawberry Shortcake, Saturday, August 8, 2026 from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

The Louis A. Koenig Research Center is open by appointment. Your time and research will be efficiently applied if you can present an outline or list of your project and the items you are looking for prior to your visit. Contact us via email or snail mail so we may assess and prepare for your visit

A CALL FOR VOLUNTEER HOSTS: The Board is seeking to expand the involvement of the membership [and non-members interested in history] to serve as hosts at either of the museums next summer. Regardless of how much you know about Price County History, YOU can be a host! This job requires a willingness to welcome visitors and, if they choose, guide them through the displays. Many visitors like to browse on their own, so hosting often involves being present in a supervisory role. John L. Berg will be conducting the training at the Old Town Hall Museum in May (see above for date and time). You do not need to pre-register, just come anytime between those hours. Give hosting a try! You'll get a chance to hang around in two really awesome ol' buildings and meet interesting people as they visit. It's an easy gig and supports the mission of the Society!

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