



Old Town Hall Museum

# Price County Historical Society Newsletter

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Greenfield School

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Newsletter Editor: John Berg

## 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? Since September 16, 2024, the Society has set its focus to include the new Louis A. Koenig Research Center in the Fifield campus. Now we have ALL our artifacts and paper-based archives in ONE location, which allows us to focus on one site and work with each building as we prepare for the 2024 museum season. SO, without further delay, let's take a look at what is going on at the Price County Historical Society.



Logger Manufacturing Class, left to right: Brody Janacek, Arlo Berens, Etola Foytek [PCHS Board President], instructor Troy Makovsky, Thomas Kaiser [PCHS Board Member], Logan Lontcoski and Charlie Cummings. Not pictured: Kaelyb Yasaitis. Submitted Photo



The BIG NEWS is the completion and placement of the Donor Recognition Board next to the Louis A. Koenig display in the north-east corner of the Koenig Center. This project was taken on by the Logger Manufacturing Class in the Technical Education

Department at Phillips High School. The students were responsible for taking the project from design to completion, ensuring that it is structurally sound and visually appealing, while giving them a real-world experience in a manufacturing setting. Let me assure you these young men: Brody Janacek, Arlo Berens, Logan Lontcoski, Charlie Cummings and Kaelyb Yasaitis, under the tutelage and supervision of instructor Troy Makovsky, have succeeded beyond expectations. This outstanding display is one that the people being recognized and the general public can view with admiration and pride. The Society extends our deep gratitude to these young men and their instructor for a job very well done!

## AT THE LOUIS A. KOENIG RESEARCH CENTER

By John L. Berg

What is Happening at the Louis A. Koenig Research Center?

Before I catch you up on our work here, let me just express our deep gratitude for each of you who contributed to the Society for the construction of this beautiful building!! We can come and go as we please or need, and snuggle in when the snow is flying or the rain is pouring. And, at their work stations, Laurie Pilch, Traci Dunbar, Eric Tollefson, and Etola Foytek can leave their projects out and ready for their next work session. It doesn't get much better than that! We have a cozy set up in the northeast corner where work tables are in close proximity to the display honoring Louis A. Koenig and the donors who made this dream a reality—gentle reminders of how we got to where we are. I think of our past boards and those who put so much of their passion into organizing the museums and materials and ponder what they would say if they saw the Koenig Center. So our work is possible, as Sir Isaac Newton once said, because we stand on the shoulders of giants who have built and maintained our Society since November 1959.

After the dedication ceremony on September 16, our board started getting down to the business of organizing the physical set up of the Koenig Center. Placement of shelving and work areas were tweaked so that our space and movement was maximized. Then the work of accessioning the many photographs, documents, maps, and related material resumed. This work was suspended a year ago—late last spring—as we packed everything up in Phillips at our archive and storage rooms at BW Paper-systems and the Price County Courthouse.

We started systematically sorting through the

materials stored in the old Burgmeier House next door and they were brought over for accessioning and storing. This included the bound volumes of the original Phillips TIMES from 1879-1880s and the Phillips Bee from 1932-1986. We also sorted through the upper floor storage rooms in the Old Town Hall Museum and brought over volumes of books for inclusion in our library. As a RESEARCH center, we are building a library of books whose titles are about Price County history AND the related topics giving broader reference and context to the events, processes, equipment and ideas that impacted those who lived in this crossroad of history.

At last September's Dedication, Board Member Len Schmidt explained to the audience the importance of family history and preserving those recollections. He made a passionate call for all in attendance to record their histories and submit copies of them for accessioning in the Koenig Center, citing the Koenig Center's Mission to preserve the history of Price County. The Society supports Len's call for family narratives, and hopes each of you will consider putting your history to print, and submit a copy for the Archives.

Since beginning our monthly meeting schedule in January, we have been busy planning the purchase of new computers, scanners, a copier, and materials needed for the digitization and record keeping necessary for efficient organization, access, storage and retrieval of the materials in the Koenig center. Tom Kaiser, our building and grounds coordinator, has been working with Huotari Construction on ideas for completion of the landscaping work on the west side of the building. John Berg and Tom are also working on details for installing a rail system to hang maps and photographs inside the building. Once again the generosity of Carol Koenig will provide the financial support to continue to make the Louis A. Koenig Research Center a source of pride for all.

This summer we will begin welcoming patrons to the Koenig Center by appointment. In order to conduct your research, you need to call or email ahead of your desired visitation date, and prepare a detailed outline of the type of research you are interested in conducting. This will allow us time to retrieve the material you are searching for, and maximize your time in the Center. The Koenig Center will be open from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. on June 22 [the day of our Pie Social] and August 10 [the day of our Strawberry Shortcake event] for the public to come in and see the set-up of the building and observe some of the work in progress. Those desiring directed research will need to set up an appointment and prepare an outline of intended search. Contact me at 715-323-3414 or by email at [jlmj@wctc.net](mailto:jlmj@wctc.net) or our website e-mail at [rjlpilch@pctcnet.net](mailto:rjlpilch@pctcnet.net)

### THE CAMPAIGN TO PRESERVE PRICE COUNTY'S HISTORY

This past February, 2024, I spent ten days working at the Koenig Center organizing my collection, which I have donated to the PCHS, and also traveling around Price County collecting and scanning photographs from donors. These new scans and collections totaled just about 100 photographs. I have been doing this since 1973, when I first discovered Art Johnson's photos of the Lake Shore and Eastern Railroad on display in the big window of his hardware store on Lake Street in Phillips. Since then I have collected, copied, and scanned hundreds of original Price County photographs—BUT 90% of these from February's safari were images I had never seen before. For people who love history this was another great discovery. AND now these images will become part of the Price County Historical Society's collection and will be securely housed and accessioned at the Louis A. Koenig Research Center for use in research projects. In fact, the majority of the photographs in the feature article on CCC camps are

from scans donated to the Society. SO, once again I continue to make A CALL FOR documents, narratives, family histories, maps, plat books, ledgers, diaries and related paper ephemera in our campaign of PRESERVING THE PAST FOR THE FUTURE. If you are cleaning out your collections, closets, attics or garages, PLEASE CONSIDER DONATING ANY PHOTOGRAPHS, PLAT BOOKS, MAPS, FAMILY HISTORIES, DOCUMENTS, LEDGERS AND DIARIES TO THE PRICE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY! We at the Society understand if you have historic materials, and you want to keep them. Please consider allowing the PCHS staff to digitally scan the items (s), and then accession the scanned copy to the PCHS archives with Permission to Publish. We will accession the item in your name (or designated name) as part of the collection. By so doing, an image of your item is preserved and becomes available for research and use by PCHS staff as well as other historians or people conducting historical research. The Louis A. Koenig Research Center is THE secure housing for preserving and accessioning these artifacts for use by historians, genealogists, scholars and students of history and interested individuals.



Interior of the Louis A. Koenig Research Center. Areas exist for archival storage, work, research, administrative and meeting space. Photo by John L. Berg

## **AT THE OLD TOWN HALL AND GREENFIELD SCHOOL.**

With spring comes a noticeable uptick in activities at our campus. Board member Tom Kaiser, our Building and Grounds Coordinator, has many projects lined up for completion this summer. Two important maintenance projects in the works are the reinforcement of the basement structure directly under the vault area in the room that houses our logging displays at the Old Town Hall and the completion of painting the west wall of the Greenfield School. Several years ago we did an extensive structural repair of all the concrete supports under the Old Town Hall. Now we have noticed that the vault area needs some additional reinforcement. Plans are in the works to get both of these important jobs done as soon as possible. Inside we are updating or creating displays and thoroughly cleaning both buildings. Our spring cleaning activities will start in May. We can always use volunteers to assist us. If you would like to help, please call Etola Foytek at 715-339-2415 for details.

**A CALL FOR VOLUNTEER DOCENTS** The Board is urgently seeking to expand the involvement of the membership [and non-members interested in history] to serve as hosts at the museums during the 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. I, Berg, will host a training session on Friday, June 21, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. You can show up at any time at the Old Town Hall Museum during those hours and I will take the time to meet with you and acquaint you with the buildings and hosting duties. Hosting is very rewarding and you'll get a chance to hang around in really awesome old buildings and meet interesting people as they visit. It's an easy gig and supports the mission of the Society!

## **PRESIDENT'S PERSPECTIVE [or, when she speaks we listen] A Word from Etola Foytek**

I also am so grateful that we have the research center with everything accessible whenever we desire. During the COVID years my spare bedroom became an extension of the Price County Historical Society as I couldn't go to our rooms at BW Papersystems or the Price County Courthouse to store any newly acquired photos and other items. Recently, Traci Dunbar, Eric Tollefson and myself have been working at the research center on Saturdays as Eric still has a "real" job. Traci has filed two large boxes of scanned photos and is now organizing and inventorying the Phillipsonians, the Phillips High School paper, from January 1930 to April 1968. We are missing some issues, so anyone that has any they would like to donate we would love to add them to our collection. Eric continues scanning our photos and has a great eye for detail, thus being able to sharpen up some of the faded images of these old photos. I always have new artifacts to inventory and continually add information to our Vertical File, which has hundreds of topics of local interest from family histories to stories of settlement areas such as Sassen, which we now know as Holy Cross. Recently we received photos that hung in the Murphy Building in Park Falls and this summer Dr. and Mrs. Murphy's picture will join Dr. McKinnon in the hallway of the Old Town Hall. Also look for some "memory" prints that were donated by Jerry and Gail Movrich that will be hung in the Greenfield School and in the Old Town Hall Museum. All these donations will add interest and beauty to our walls. If you see the lights on in the research center feel free to stop in and say "Hello" and see what we are doing. We would love to show you around!

## FROM THE ARCHIVES: A MOMENT IN PRICE COUNTY HISTORY

### “C’s, Wood Ticks, Soil Soldiers, Forest Soldiers, and Roosevelt’s Tree Army: A Photographic Journey Through Price County’s Civilian Conservation Corps Camps, 1933-1942.”

By: John L. Berg

Last autumn I received a letter from Therese Trojak inquiring about the dearth of articles in the newsletter regarding the Civilian Conservation Corps in Price County. Well, I immediately got on the phone and discussed the matter with her. She, of course was once again prescient about the importance of this era in County history, and the fact that there are a few folks around who grew up during that time. Therese, Delia [Plyer] Pritzl, and Sanford and Vicki West have significant collections of photographs from their parent’s time in the camps. The title of this article is actually from Therese, who made a comment about the nicknames the CCC boys earned. CCC history is a BIG story and covers so many aspects. I pondered how to present this and since I only have a cursory knowledge, I purchased three books about the CCC which I highly recommend to those who want to take a deep dive into that history. The first book, *The New Deal’s Forest Army: How The Civilian Conservation Corps Worked*, by Benjamin F. Alexander, is one of the “How Things Worked” series published by the Johns Hopkins University Press in 2018. This is a broad narrative in a compact volume [179 pages], well footnoted with a superb bibliography of sources for that deep dive. Next is *The Civilian Conservation Corps in Wisconsin: Nature’s Army At Work*, by Jerry Apps. Professor Emeritus Apps is a former county extension agent and professor at UW Madison’s College of Agricultural and Life sciences. You may have heard him on the educational WPR Radio programs or read one of his thirty-five books on

rural Wisconsin and environmental issues. Apps focuses on the Wisconsin CCC history, and features some sidebars about Price County with information from none other than our own Therese Trojak! His volume is also well documented with the sources cited in the footnotes. *The Soldiers of Poverty*, by Mary J. Schueller, is the narrative of her father, Mike Kerkes, as he started work in camps in Illinois, was transferred to Copper Falls State Park where he was a lead carpenter, and ended fighting the big fire on Isle Royale in 1936. End notes, glossary, and a bibliography provide the sources for this story. If you obtain any of these books through inter-library loan or direct purchase, you will see the volumes of monographs and theses, and articles that have documented the CCC history. Thus you see my challenge. I decided that the best format to present is a set of photographs from each of the Trojak, Pritzl, and West collections with captions from the donors. This topic will cover several issues of the newsletter, and give you a taste of the deep impact the CCC boys left in Price County. For now, let me tease you with some photos showing some of the CCC Camps in Price County. Stay tuned for more in the Fall Newsletter!



Delia [Plyer] Pritzl Collection.





Photographs of Camp Riley Creek.

Top: From the Sanford and Vicki West Collection.

Bottom: From the Therese Trojak Collection.

## A Piece of History Comes Back to Lugerville

By: John L. Berg with submitted article by Maureen Trojak

Price County has long been blessed with numerous independent historical societies in towns and villages throughout the county. Our primary article this Spring tells a fantastic story of one of these settlements: Lugerville. Founded in November 1904. The Luger Lumber Company from Minneapolis, Minnesota, built a railroad spur from the Soo Line Ashland Division tracks westward to the South Fork Flambeau River. The entire outfit was sold to John R. Davis' Lumber Company in November 1909, and then reorganized as the West Lumber Company on December 1, 1915. The company was officially dissolved on December 21, 1935. One of the last remaining "artifacts" of that era is the Lugerville Graded School, a source of pride for the community. A dedicated group of residents have organized the Save the Lugerville School/Community Center Committee. In the March 2024 newsletter, Treasurer Maureen Trojak writes about a fantastic artifact that has been returned to the village 89 years

after the West Lumber Company shut down. Here's Maureen's wonderful narrative of this fabulous story: *"We Now Have A Gem of History in Front of the Lugerville School! A man went to Goebel's South Fork in Lugerville on a Friday in 2021. The man talked to John Slaby, Chairman of the Town of Flambeau, who was there. The man asked John if there was a museum in Price County. John thought of the Price County Historical Society in Fifield, WI, until the man told him what he had—parts of a boiler from the West Lumber Company in Lugerville! The man was cleaning a place that went out of business. He didn't want the boiler parts to go to a scrap pile as the lettering said Lugerville. John said the Save the Lugerville School/Community Center Committee would like the boiler pieces. The man, Kirk Lewitzke of Wausau, WI,*



Lugerville School with display on left.  
Photo by John L. Berg

transported the old, heavy, metal pieces from Wausau to the Town of Flambeau garage as the Town stored the pieces for us. We had other work done inside of the school in 2022, but we did the planning for cleaning the boiler parts, how and who to make the display. It was decided to make the display outside on the Lugerville School/Community Center north side as people could see it from Highway F. We poured the cement slab for the display. In 2023 we got going on the West Lumber Company boiler project. Wildwood Restoration took the boiler pieces to the Adam Korab family place which is about 3 miles from the Town garage and the Lugerville school/Community Center. Adam purchased metal, nuts, bolts, etc., that would match the boiler. He used cutting wheels, a torch and his welder to bend the metal and to put the pieces together. He made legs for the display to bolt down into the cement pad and an anchor to the school wall. Adam worked 39 hours on the boiler project. The metal pieces were sanded, de-rusted, cleaned, primed, painted and enameled several times. Wildwood Restoration transport, installed/mounted/bolted the boiler display at the Lugerville School on August 23, 2023. Wildwood Restoration worked 32 hours on the boiler project. 12 hours were donated. A cover/canopy was put over the display in the fall of 2023 by Wildwood restoration. Our Committee is so happy and humble that the West Lumber Company boiler is back in Lugerville! Thank you Kirk. It isn't quite home in the old mill yard, but it is close." [Maureen Trojak, Save the Lugerville School/Community Center Newsletter, March 2024. Page 2.]

The Price County Historical Society heartily congratulate the Lugerville School/Community Center, the Town of Flambeau, Wildwood Restoration, Adam Korab, and Kirk Lewitzke for their superb efforts to preserve a very rare piece of Lugerville history and display it where it rightfully belongs—the Lugerville School/Community Center. I have visited the school

site and took photographs this last February. I enthusiastically encourage those who want to bum the back roads to travel to Lugerville and take this in—it is a wonderful display of a rare artifact whose story is well worth your time!



Restoration complete and once again this piece of history is back home in Lugerville!  
Photo by John L. Berg

Price County Historical Society announces that the Phillips Centennial Book is once again back in Publication.



Copies may be purchased at Johnson's Hardware Store, Phillips Chamber of Commerce or online at [www.pricecountyhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.pricecountyhistoricalsociety.org)

The Old Town Hall and Greenfield School Museums open June 1 and are open every Saturday and Sunday from the first full weekend in June through Labor Day from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. The Louis A. Koenig Research Center is open by appointment and on the days of the Pie Social and Strawberry Shortcake events.

**June 21** Training Session for Hosts Old Town Hall 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

**June 22** Pie Social 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

**August 10** Strawberry Shortcake 11 am to 3 pm

**CALLING ALL PIE BAKERS!**

Pies are needed for the Pie Social on June 22. The past two years we have sold out of pies. This is a very successful fundraising event for the Society. If any of you can help us out in the pie baking department we would greatly appreciate it. Please call Etola Foytek at 715-339-2415 for more information.

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