

Museum Notes

for the week of September 28 – October 4, 2025

by Kristen Parrott, curator

On a thin, curved, metal tag at the museum is this inscription: “L-C. & S-E. RY. CONDUCTOR”. The tag was once attached to the cap of Blaine Larson, a conductor on the La Crosse and Southeastern Railway. It’s now on display in a temporary exhibit about trains at the Vernon County Museum and History Center.

Blaine Larson was born in Viroqua in 1879, son of Ole and Amelia Larson. During his short life, he had a career with various railways. In the early 1900’s, he was a brakeman on the La Crosse division of the Chicago, Milwaukee, and St. Paul Railway, commonly called the Milwaukee Road. After some time there he got the job as conductor for the La Crosse and Southeastern, which was built in 1905 and extended from La Crosse to Blaine’s hometown of Viroqua. Then in late 1907 he moved to Aberdeen, South Dakota, to work as conductor on the Black Hills extension of the Milwaukee Road.

In mid-December of 1907, Blaine was injured while trying to board his train, and died several days later, age 28. His body was returned to Viroqua, and he was buried at Coon Prairie Cemetery. His older sister Ella Rogers donated the tag from his cap to our museum many years later.

You can learn more about the La Crosse and Southeastern at our next free public history program, which will be held on Tuesday, October 7, at 2PM, at the History Center. Wisconsin railroad researcher Arlyn Colby will talk about his new book, *The Coon Valley Line: The History of the La Crosse and Southeastern Railroad*.

Everyone is welcome to attend. Programs are held in the first-floor, wheelchair-accessible conference room. Copies of Arlyn’s book will be available for sale (\$30 each) at the talk. Note that this is a day-time program.

The October genealogy class will be held on Thursday, October 9, at 10AM, at the History Center. A librarian from the Prairie du Chien public library, in Crawford County, will talk to the class about the genealogy materials available there. Prairie du Chien is the second oldest city in Wisconsin, and the library has some very early records. New students are always welcome to join the class. Vernon County Historical Society members attend for free, and non-members are asked to pay \$5 per class.

Autumn hours begin at the History Center on October 1. Throughout the month of October, we’ll be open Monday through Friday, 11AM to 4PM, or by appointment.