

Quarterly Newsletter of the



MURRAY COUNTY —HISTORICAL SOCIETY—

Slayton, Murray County, Minnesota

Summer 2020

Murray County and the 1918 Flu Epidemic

By: Janet Timmerman

My mother was born in the middle of crisis. On October 3, 1918 my Grandmother Bessie gave birth to her in the second, most deadly wave, of the Spanish influenza pandemic in Park Rapids, MN. Just 150 miles west of their farm, great fires were sweeping across the northwoods near Hinckley and Cloquet. Grandma carried my Mom, Alice, through one of the driest farming summers and coldest winters in decades, and through the frightening height of World War I. It is no wonder that the family moved back down to northern Iowa soon after her birth. Tired of trying to farm in Minnesota's north country, they picked up their family of five and moved back to Estherville, the hometown they had left only a few years before.

The influenza epidemic of 1918 was called the "Spanish flu" but that was a misnomer. There is no true story of where or how the virus started, but the first cases in the US were at Camp Funston, now Fort Riley, Kansas, in March of 1918. The virus showed up at Fort Snelling on September 27 and within a week there were over 1,000 cases in Minneapolis.

This was a time before anyone knew what a virus was. Doctors believed the disease was a bacterial infection but understood how it spread. By the fall of 1918, young men coming back from Europe mixed with those just going "Over There," on military bases across the US. More soldiers succumbed to the pandemic than died on a battlefield. The pandemic would eventually take 675,000 American lives.

A second wave of the virus in the late summer and fall took many more lives than the first spring wave, possibly because of young infected soldiers coming back from the war. The flu showed up first as a news article in the Fulda Free Press about the "pneumonia" epidemic at Camp Dodge, Iowa. Pneumonia as a symptom of the influenza had not yet been determined. Over 100 soldiers died of the virus in one month at Camp Dodge before it ever had the name Spanish flu.

A personal interest paragraph in the Free Press on August 18, 1918 stated that Miss Ethel Coffit of Fulda, was home from her position as a teacher in Sherburne because the schools had closed indefinitely due to influenza. Three months later Ethel's mother, Amelia, died of the virus. One issue in containing the virus was a lack of medical staff as many doctors and nurses were helping in the war. Dr. Emil King, Fulda's respected doctor was killed in the war just a month before the outbreak started. Nurses like the Harmsen sisters of Lake Wilson, had either been sent to the European front or worked with the Red Cross in stateside military camps.

By October, the Lake Wilson Pilot reported news of whole families quarantined from the virus. Ole K. Olson's family of Hadley, and the Nipperts and Tyler families in Lake Wilson were all suffering from attacks. Schools were imposing fines on children who did not bring a... (Continued)

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Murray County and the 1918 Flu Epidemic Continued

A new dance called "Flu Flitter" has ben invented. To dance it, you take one step forward, then sneeze twice, pivot and swallow two quinine capsules, swing your partner, then cough in unison, take two steps backward and blow your nose, and then waltz home and consult a doctor.—Winnebago Enteryrise.

Published in the Fulda Free Press.

December 20, 1918.

handkerchief with them to cover coughs and sneezes. The Teacher's Institute in the county was canceled by Superintendent of Schools, Jennie Holm, due to cases of influenza. By the end of October Fulda City Council and the school board closed schools and churches, banned public gatherings, and closed businesses in efforts to stop the spread. Fulda set up special "flu police" to make sure people did not loiter in town "Special police will be employed to assist the forgetful ones should there be any disposition to gather in crowds to discuss the weather or Damn the Kaiser." They were following the example of Iowa that had already mandated public distancing. At the same time the local churches and the Boy Scouts were gathering supplies and bedding to be shipped to the victims of the devastating northern fires.

On October 8 the Board of Health declared Influenza a Highly Communicable Disease and began spreading a campaign of quarantine, cleanliness (including a ban on public spitting!) and social distancing. On October 31, the State Board of health banned all public funerals. All caskets were to be closed and only members of the residence where the person had died and the minister were allowed.

In November, reports continued of families being quarantined. The Charles Swan and William Heins families each had eight people in bed with the virus at the same time. It didn't say who was preparing meals and keeping the farms running while the families were ill. Death reports were becoming a common part of the local news. The young and healthy seemed at greatest risk. Jessie West, a six-year-old boy, Mrs. Coffitt and Mrs. Caldwell all from Fulda died in the same week. Eighteen-year-old William Bruns and young Joseph Wildfeur of Fulda passed after Thanksgiving. Young mothers, Mrs. Fred Voss and Mrs. Tryg Knutson of Hadley, and Mrs. Gladys McCrea of Fulda, died the first week of December, leaving several children behind. That same week Mrs. John Rasche and her brother John Chepa of Fulda went to visit relatives in Chokio, only to die there of the disease within hours of each other. On December 10th Roy Lounsberry, Fulda's 39-year-old well-loved Harness-maker, died after suffering a week.

The young men who were going off to war from the county were at high risk as well. In November the Lake Wilson Pilot sadly reported the deaths of seven local soldiers from the "Dreaded Influenza." Those lost at Camp Cody in New Mexico were Fred Bose and William Tebben of Cameron township, Marion Harris of Mason township, and J. Hurley of Fulda. The men had been gone only two weeks. Henry Heins, Ole Bach, and John Odenbret of Lake Wilson died just a week later at the same camp. This happened around the time of the Armistice on November 11. The young men would never have been sent to the war.

As with any medical crisis, there are always entrepreneurs at the ready to offer fake remedies for ailments. The Free Press ran an ad for "Knockout Drops" developed by a homeopathic doctor in Pittsburg. It was guaranteed to prevent and cure Spanish Flu. Some of its more interesting ingredients were creosote and iodine. Vicks Vapo-Rub made claims that the Influenza was no worse than regular gripe, the common name for influenza. Ads claimed that rest, taking laxatives, and Vicks Vapo-rub would purge it from the system. Doctors prescribed so much aspirin that there were reports of people dying from aspirin overdose.

At Christmas time papers reported that the 1918 school year would go down as the "lost year." Though schools had re-opened before Christmas, many families kept children home for fear of the virus. By the spring of 1919 the disease was fading, either from ... (Continued)

**DRUGGISTS!! PLEASE NOTE
VICK'S VAPORUB OVERSOLD
DUE TO PRESENT EPIDEMIC**

Tremendous Demand Last Few Days Has Wiped Out Excess Stocks That We Had Estimated Would Last Until Next January. Last Week's Orders Called For One and Three Quarter Million Jars—Today's Orders Alone Amount to 932,459 Jars.

November 15, 1918

most people gaining some immunity or having died, now called herd immunity. Minnesota lost 10,000 citizens. It will take some more research to find out exactly how many from Murray County succumbed, but neighboring Cottonwood County lost 79 citizens. The disease was not diagnosed until 2008 when doctors confirmed it was an H1N1 avian strain.

My mother and her family of seven siblings, survived the pandemic and then the Great Depression, the early death of her father at age 42, and WWII where four of her brothers served at the same time. Through it all what kept them strong was the same thing that keeps us going today; family ties, faith in a higher power, and the ability to care for one another in tough times. We're all in this together. —Janet Timmerman

2020 Front Porch Music Series (Tentative Schedule)

Bring your lawn chairs and enjoy another season of great local talent performed from the Front Porch of the Dinehart Holt House. All concerts start at 7 PM.

Free and Open to the Public, but we do pass the hat!



Thursday, July 16, 2020 7pm—Starfire

Well known Fulda group playing old time rock and roll and pop favorites!

Thursday, July 23, 2020 7pm—Kordal Kombat

Barbershop quartet based out of central Minnesota. Member Scott Veenhuis is a native of Slayton!

Thursday, July 30, 2020 7pm —Skally Line

They play a broad variety of historical music and feature mandolins, banjo, guitar, bass, and fiddle!

Social distancing will be practiced during the concerts. Announcements will be posted on Facebook and broadcast on the local radio station in case of cancellations due to Covid-19 or severe weather.

History on Broadway

Along with daily Facebook posts there is one other creative way you can get your share of Murray County History! We have paired with several businesses in downtown Slayton to bring history out into the community! Posters from the Murray County Baseball Exhibit are on display in the front windows of: Culligan Water Conditioning on Maple Avenue, the Murray County Wheel Herald, Left Bank Café, United Prairie Insurance Agency, and the Plaid Moose on Broadway Avenue. If you head outside for a daily walk, stop outside any of these businesses to learn some interesting history!

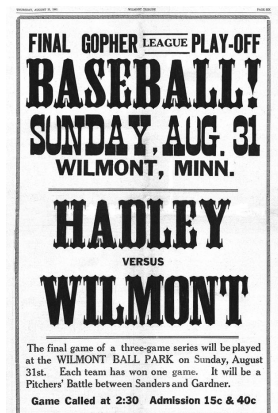




Exhibit Opening in August...

The 1920s: Murray County Through a Decade of Change

This exhibit is the result of hard work put in by Museums Coordinator Janet Timmerman and Historian Anita Gaul.

Timmerman secured funding for the project through the Clean Water Land and Legacy Amendment. Gaul spent hours researching the 1920s in Murray County and the pair have interpreted and designed this new exhibit that is sure to wow!

- A decade of economic depression in farm country.
- A time of social change as women exercise their newly-won right to vote and young women assert more independence and autonomy.
- A decade of social experimentation as Prohibition goes into effect and the nation struggles to change its drinking habits and social customs and law enforcement struggles to enforce the law.
- A time of changing technology as traditional modes of labor, travel, and communication are replaced by new modes such as the tractor, automobile, and radio.
- An era of political conservatism as anxiety about the changing social and cultural landscape, combined with the disillusionment resulting from World War I, prompt a desire for a “return to normalcy.” When the fear of change and economic hardship exacerbate underlying racial and religious tensions, fueling the rise of xenophobia, white supremacy, and anti-Semitism.



This is the 1920s in Murray County.

New Covid-19 Archive

History is made everyday. In the future, people will look back on the time we are living in now as a major event in history — The Covid-19 Epidemic. At the Murray County Historical Society we want to be proactive in collecting historical information on this current event. We are asking our members, and any residence of Murray County, to please consider donating digital or hard copies of photos or documents concerning Covid-19. Examples would be emails about staying home from work, “essential worker” slips, photos of empty store shelves or signs in windows. Anything that concerns Covid-19 in Murray County would be a welcome addition to this new archive.

Check out these photos we have already received:



Main entrance at the MCMC in Slayton



Subway window advertising Curb-Side Pickup



Sign outside the MCC Central High School

Happenings at the Murray County Museum

By: Rose Schmit Site Coordinator/Collections Manager



By now, most of you have gotten used to me starting my articles out by saying how busy things have been at the museum...while that is still true, we are busy in a way that none of us were expecting!

Our spring and summer was looking cramped with programs, field trips, exhibit planning, and everything else that goes along with daily work here. Now, with all planned programs and Dinehart House rentals cancelled for the time being, the focus here has shifted from visitors to exhibit preparation, maintenance, and collections care.

Exhibit preparation: Our new 1920s exhibit will be opening this summer which means the Recreation on the Lakes Exhibit has got to be put away. Part of that task means finding a new home for the 1957 Slayton built boat. Before the recreation exhibit, the boat had been stored out in the Sierk Agricultural Building, now that we have had it out of there for two years, we don't want to see it moved back as it doesn't fit the mission of the building. Thus, a complete reorganization of the South Wing is underway. In 2017 the West Wing was sheet rocked, meaning that all the artifacts stored there were moved to the South Wing, since that time, the South Wing has not been open for display and has collected quite a few artifacts. Every day we are getting closer to having the South Wing organized and ready to take on a modified Lakes exhibit, an exhibit on the railroads in Murray County, and an exhibit about transportation and the 1940s car accident! We are so excited to again open this section of the museum to the public!

Collections Care: One collections care project that has been finished up during this time is scanning and digitizing a collection of 35mm slides. There were 232 slides in the collection. We have copies of some of the images already but some were ones we had never seen before! Another major project being worked on now is the attic book project. As of today (April 29, 2020) 370 books have been added into our collections management system. A rough guess from me would be that there are about 400-500 left to go.



One of the photos from the Slide Collection.
Stone Man June, 1968

With Janet working from home, Karen out on leave, and Jakob moved out to End-o-Line, it certainly is quiet around here. I am still coming in during our usual hours (9-5 Tuesday through Friday) and am available to answer any research questions you may have. As for when we will be open, we are playing everything by ear for now. Our main concern when it comes to opening is that we want to be sure everyone who comes to visit is safe! Until then, check out our Facebook page where there is a new post everyday Tuesday through Friday! Stay well!



Volunteer Wanted!

We are looking for one volunteer with great handwriting and a lot of patience! Each of the books catalogued in the book project needs a tag written on acid-free paper.

We would love to have a volunteer help with this task once we reopen!

If you are interested, please contact Rose at the museum.

I started working for Murray County Museums in July 2017. Looking back, there have been some crazy times at End O Line Park. In 2018, the park was closed for three weeks due to major flooding. And now, COVID-19 has ravaged the country. As I write this, we have 11 school field trips and two groups tours scheduled during the month of May at the park. Unfortunately, we are under the assumption that schools in MN will remain digital through May and these tours are going to be cancelled. It's a big bummer because we enjoy teaching kids about history. A large group bus tour from the Chicago and North Western Historical Society Convention that was scheduled to come to the park the week after Memorial Day has already been postponed. All we can do is roll with the punches!

Despite everything, I did have a very busy winter. I've submitted three grants: One in January was through the MN Historical Society Legacy Amendment for funds to conduct research on the history of End O Line Park. In 2022, the park will be celebrating its 50th anniversary. To honor the celebration, we would like to write a book detailing the history. This grant will pay for a few extra hours a week for Janet to conduct interviews and dive into the history of the park. The second grant in March was for the Murray Co. Historical Society. This one was through SW MN Arts Council to pay for artists to perform at the summer Dinehart Front Porch Music series. We are hoping this pandemic will pass by late July and we can still host the concerts.

The final grant I submitted was just in early April. This one too is a MNHS Legacy Grant for funds to move the original Currie General Store at End O Line Park. In March 2019, the General Store and Grist Mill buildings received flooding and water in the buildings. Thankfully, the damage was minimal. But looking at past photos, the area in the park where the mill and store are located have had flooding almost every year in the last 40+ years. So, our goal is to take these two buildings and move them to a higher elevated spot within in the park. More details on this later.

Also grant related, I received the final report for a grant we got last July. That grant was to hire a specialist to perform a conditions assessment on our historic manual turntable. LHB, Inc. out of Minneapolis did the assessment last fall. Their report details the condition and recommended preservation measures for the turntable bridge and the limestone-lined wall of the pit. Because of this assessment, we now have the professional evidence to apply for larger grants to fund future preservation projects on the turntable.

Despite the closure, I moved my office back out to End O Line in late March; mostly to keep a social distance between Janet, Rose, and I. So if you need anything or have any End O Line related questions, feel free to contact me. At this time, we aren't sure if we will be open to the public by Memorial Day. In the meantime, I have been posting on the End O Line Facebook page more frequently. If you are on Facebook and you haven't already, please like the park's page.



find us on **facebook**



The Murray County Historical Society updates its Facebook page on a regular basis with upcoming events, behind the scenes work, and interesting artifacts! Be sure to hit "Like" to get post notifications!

“Doing Our Bit” During Covid-19

As we work to deal with the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Outbreak, the Murray County Museum, in concert with the Murray County Administrator, Thomas Burke, has developed the following protocols. We want to make sure we are doing our “bit” to reduce the spread of the virus and hopefully save lives.

1. The Murray County Museum, End O Line Park, and the Dinehart Holt House will be closed to public use starting Wednesday, March 18 at 10 AM until further notice.
2. All planned events will be cancelled until further notice. This includes public speaking engagements, the Brownie Bake-Off, the 1920's Speak-Easy Dance, and the April Lunchbox lecture with Arn Kind. Events may be rescheduled at a later date as safety permits.
3. Staff will still be at worksites completing non-public inter-facing projects (of which there are plenty!).
4. Staff will work to do a complete surface cleaning of all non-porous surfaces during the first week of closure.
5. There will be no weekend staffing provided unless projects require it.
6. Researchers will be asked to send their research requests via phone or e-mail for staff to complete.
7. Donors of artifacts will be asked to postpone their donation visits until they can safely do so without risk.
8. All ACE volunteers and community volunteers (including Historical Society Board Members) will be asked to stay away until it is deemed safe to come back.
9. Messaging will be done through Facebook pages, Museum and End O Line Webpages, our E-newsletter, and local radio.



WANT TO DONATE SOMETHING TANGIBLE TO THE MCHS?

While monetary donations are a great way to support the MCHS sometimes it feels nice as a donor to give something tangible. What is the MCHS in need of?

1. **Volunteers!** Donate your time to help with a variety of tasks. We have volunteer tasks that fit a range of physical abilities! Cleaning, filing, scanning, helping with school tours. Volunteers must be 16 years old or older. Call or email the museum if you are interested in helping out!

2. **Clear Sheet Protectors.** We are constantly filing away documents and photos using clear sheet protectors. After sitting down to do some filing it's not unheard of for a 100 pack of protectors to be used up in one afternoon! While any brand will do, we generally use the “Pen + Gear” brand protectors which can be purchased at any Walmart.

3. **Caster wheels.** This summer we will be working to place our oversized artifacts on frames with wheels to make moving them around much easier on staff members and on the artifacts themselves. To do this we will have to purchase a massive quantity of heavy duty castor wheels. If you have some lying around at home or have a few dollars to spare and could purchase them in sets of four, that would be amazing! Be sure that they are HEAVY DUTY as the artifacts that will be placed on these frames are extraordinarily heavy.

Thank You For Your Support!

World of Hearts

We are Participating in the “World of Hearts!” Residential homes and businesses are displaying hearts in their windows to send a message of love and support from afar. Here are our hearts in the museum building and Dinehart House windows!



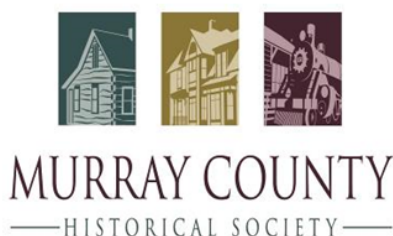
2020 Membership Renewals or New Memberships received as of April 29

Janet Anderson	Dreesen	David and Linda Johnson	Nona Magnussen	Jon and Michelle Schmit
Cathy and Joe Amato	Kimberly and Rodney Einfeld	Jerry and Louise Johnson	Mike and Sheryl March	Rose Schmit and Kele Moudry
Carmen Barry		Laurel Johnson	Jackie Meier	
Hilary and Marilyn Barry	Curtis and Lois Erickson	Elaine Johnson	Mary Mesner	Gayle Sigurdson
Daniel and Linda Beerman	Jakob Etrheim	Larry Joosten	Cleo and Pat Metty	Wendy Steffen
Brad and Diane Bergerson	Karen Frisk	Gary Kass	Jerry and Irene Moline	Julie Sundhurst
Dorothy Bloemendaal	Colleen Gengler	Terrance Keller	Jeaneen Nelson	Jim and Bard Surprenant
Mary Borgstahl	Martha Giefer	Alice Knutson	Patricia and Harold Nelson	Phillip Swenson
Dennis and Jan Brech	Sandy Grams	Robert and Ruth Koehler	Claris Nord	Janet Timmerman
Richard Brown	Diane Green	Joycelyn Koenig	Eleanor Norton	Karyn Tomblin
Bill Bryan	Trace Hafner	Mary and Marty Krogman	Marv and Theresa Nysetvold	Karen Tommeraasen
Doris Carda	Doug and Grace Hart	Jan Kunselman		Clayton and Karen Torbert
Barbara Carlson	Todd Hieronimus	Steve and Nancy Liable	Arlene Oolman	Betty Tyrrell
Jim Christensen	Philip and Janet Hintermeister	Marjorie Larson	Dwayna Paplow	Rich and Nancy Vanderziel
Marge Christensen	Judy Horn	Skip and Evey Larson	Fran Pedersen	Kyle Vos
Eleanor Clauson	Steve Horn	Sharyl Larson	Mary Perry	Leo and Judy Voss
Jenna and Bradley Davis	Jon and Ruth Hoyme	Rita Lear	Ray and LaVonne Priebe	Jodi White and Kevin Ohme
Larry and Kathy DeBoer	Wesley Hromatko	Rebby Lee	Gail Radke	Marilyn Wahl
Nicholas Demuth	Rebecca Hudson	Robin Leonard	John and Mary Risacher	Rosanne Wancenried
Joel and Carla Deslauriers	James and Doreen Jens	Murl Cole and Colleen Miller	Joyce Risacher	Keith and Betty Wilcoxon
Romane and Pattie Dold	Brent and Dianne Johnson	Henry and Marlene Magnus	Clint and Donna Rohrer	Joyce Wynia
Brandon and Rachel	Darwin and Pam Johnson		Hub and Marilyn Sandman	Robert and Mary Zishla

If your name is NOT on the list above and you are not a Lifetime Member, we have not received your 2020 membership renewal. Please fill out the membership form below and return with payment to renew.

If you are a lifetime member, please consider donating.

Also, please consider recommending a family member or friend.



After completing this form, please deliver or mail to with payment to:

Murray County Historical Society
2848 29th Street
PO Box 61
Slayton, MN 56172

2020 Murray County Historical Society Membership

Name(s)

Mailing Address

Phone

Email

Check One

☐ Annual Membership \$15.00

☐ Family Membership \$25.00

Life Member—Donation \$ _____

Method of Payment

☐ Cash ☐ Check

Checks may be written out to the:
Murray County Historical Society

Please do not mail cash payment

☐ New Member



Please direct any questions to: (507) 836-6533

Many Thanks for Donations and Memorial Gifts

Monetary Donations:

Norleen Cooke

Tom & Loretta Pryor

Carolyn Sowinski

Memorials:

In memory of Sandra Bolin — Janet & Mark Timmerman

In memory of Bill Bolin — Bye Krogman Charitable Account

Lifetime Membership Donations:

Caryl and John Busman

Terrence Keller

Dean and Muriel Pearson

Mike & Amy Rucker

If we missed your name as a donor, please contact Janet to make sure we have your donation on our list.

We are deeply grateful for every donation and memorial. The Murray County Historical Society, is a non-profit, 501(c)(3). Donors may deduct their contributions as directed in the US Income Tax Code.

The society's tax number can be given upon request.

We Thank Our 2020 MCHS Business Members!



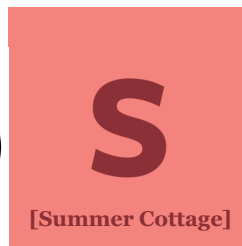
Chandler Co-Op

Spartz Plumbing & Heating
Furnaces · Air Exchange
Air Conditioners · Backhoe
Design & Install Septic Systems
Geothermal Heat Pumps
Phone: 507-836-8393
Cell: 507-227-9335
Fax: 507-836-1044
921 US Hwy 59 Slayton, MN

Business

Members Since

Chandler Co-Op	2020
Hoffmann Construction	2020
Jerry V. Moline CPA	2020
Rooster's On/Off	2020
Slayton Area Chamber	2011
Slayton Building	2019
Spartz Plumbing & Heating, Inc.	2020
State Bank of Chandler	2003
Summer Cottage	2020
VIP Floral and Garden	2020

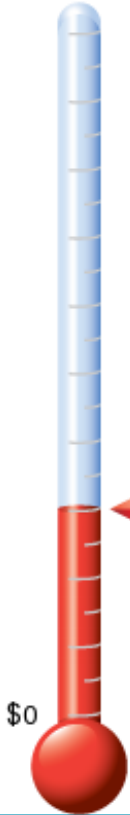


Hoffmann Construction

Jerry V. Moline
Certified Public Accountant

The MCHS Board of Directors have added a new "Business Members" category to the types of memberships available. If you or someone you know would like more information about business memberships, contact the museum by phone or email.

Goal
\$10,000



Help us Return the Bears!

We are still working on raising funds to return the iconic hand-carved Black Forest bears to the Dinehart Holt House. As of now, we have raised \$3,000 out of the total \$10,000 needed. If you are interested in donating towards this cause, please contact Janet at (507) 836-6533 or jtimmerman@co.murray.mn.us or send donations to: PO Box 61, Slayton, MN 56172. The Murray County Historical Society is a non-profit, 501(c)(3). Donors may deduct their contributions as directed in the US Income Tax Code.

MCHS Board Members:

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Judy Horn
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Kyle Vos
Cty Comm'r Rep: Jim Jens

Staff:

Janet Timmerman
Rose Schmit
Jakob Etrheim
Karen Finne

Visit the Museum & Dinehart House!

Tues-Fri: 10am-5pm

Sat: 10am-5pm

(507) 836-6533

www.murraycountyhistoricalsociety.org



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MURRAY COUNTY
—HISTORICAL SOCIETY—

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