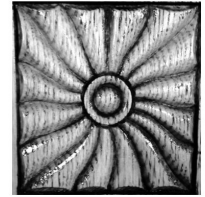


MURRAY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



Murray County
Historical Society

Winter/Spring 2017

Cold, Hot, Windy enough for Ya?

"In 1999, the relative humidity {in Murray County} dropped to 3 %, making it as dry as the Sahara Desert for a single day." quote from Draining the Great Oasis, 2001.

In the Upper Midwest there seems to be a Cult of the Weather. We greet each other with a weather comment. We stay up in the evening just long enough to watch the weather report before going to bed. A day doesn't go by that we don't check the weather report on our cell phones. We plan our days around the temperature. We complain about the weather 9 days out of 10. And, let's face it, some of the best stories we tell have something to do with an extreme weather event. Our region is well known for extremes. The most extreme event we can imagine is the tornado.

This year marks the 25th anniversary of the nation's only F-5 tornado of 1992, that tore through Leota, Chandler, Lake Wilson, and northern Murray County farms. This one storm changed the face of small towns, forced schools to consolidate and gave us some hair-raising tales. The anniversary allows us the opportunity to look at weather as a key player in human history. Our next exhibit coming for the summer of 2017 is called "Out of the Clear Blue Sky: Weather in Murray County." This mostly photographic exhibit will examine the ways that different extreme weather events have shaped our history, from blizzards and droughts to storms and floods. What we need, though, is help from the historical society members and general public in finding and scanning in weather-related photos. If you have a photo of an extreme weather event or the aftermath of it, please contact the Museum. We can scan it in and you can keep the original. Got a picture of your child on a huge snow drift? Hailed out or drowned cornfield? Giant hailstone? What was left of your barn after a tornado? We welcome all of them. Already a few photos have come in, like the one below donated by Rachel Malone of Currie. This depicts a field of dead carp in 1951, from either a flood or a drought, or a harsh winter fish kill. (Gives a whole new meaning to the term "fish farming" doesn't it?)



In This Issue

- Word of the week:
Deaccession
- New Staff
- Upcoming exhibit
- New in Collections
- New storage
- Grant

MCHS Bulletin Board

Southwest Minnesota Museum Directors hold quarterly meetings at the Dinehart Holt House.

L-R: Jerry Fiola, Nobles, Susan Hoskins, Pipestone, Linda Fransen, Cottonwood, David Grabitski, Minnesota Historical Society. Not in photo: Tod Mahon, MNHS, Janet Timmerman, Murray.



Big Thanks go out to Brian Harmsen and Dennis Miller who have spent a good part of the fall and winter helping the Museum ready the West Wing for new storage area, and the Sierk Agriculture Building with updated exhibits.



New to the Collection...



Of the many great things that we have accessioned recently, these two stood out. Brad Hovdet of the Lake Shetek area brought in a collection of Valhalla items including the stamp used to stamp posters, admittance tickets, and special invitation cards to dance at Valhalla free of charge. We wonder if this stamp was ever used as it has an alternate spelling of the name Valhalla.



The second item shown is an award given to Bert Teitema in December of 1931. You may not know what this is, but if you were in the newspaper business at that time, it would be a familiar item. It is a make-up rule similar to the steel ones used by print setters, but this one is purported in the newspapers to be solid gold. Bert was celebrating his fiftieth year as a master printer, giving him his start in 1881. He had been working for the Murray County Herald under John V. Weber for thirty six of those years. Weber ordered the rule and had it inscribed on the back. *"To Bert Teitema, Master Printer, whom God gave the gracious art of inspiring friendship and the noble urge to unwearying human service. 1881-1931-With every affection and gratitude from an appreciative employer-J.V. Weber."* The kicker to this story is when the Herald printed the news article of Bert's honor, who ever set the type spelled his name wrong!

The rule was donated by Bert's granddaughter, Marlene Magnus, of Fulda.

Legacy grant helps Museum hire a Contractor to develop a Historic Structure Report for the Dinehart Holt House



It has taken two years of grant writing to make it happen, but the Murray County Historical Society received a Legacy grant to hire a contractor to provide a comprehensive assessment of the condition of the Dinehart Holt House.

Minnesota Historical Society approved the Arts and Cultural Heritage grant funded by the Legacy Amendment voted on by the people of Minnesota in 2008. A three person selection committee reviewed the proposals from three different contractors and awarded LHB Incorporated the contract. Under that contract LHB will provide a historic architect, a structural engineer, a historian and a conservator to assess the structural, electrical, HVAC, as well as the structural changes over time to the building. The job of the conservator is to devise a plan for securing, packing, and moving all of the artifacts in the areas that may need repair or restoration. At the end of this process the Historical Society will have a detailed plan for restoration of the home, repairs and cost estimates, as well as a detailed history of the building and the family who built it, all of the structural changes that have occurred through time, and a plan for any restoration back to an original state. Completion of this report will be sometime in September, depending upon the needs identified in the process.

Once this report is complete the Historical Society will have a road map for further grant projects for repairing the home.



Upcoming Exhibit: Out of the Clear Blue Sky: Weather in Murray County

Murray County has a continental climate, with usually cold winters and hot humid summers. It is also a climate of extremes. Murray has the dubious honor of holding the state record for Minnesota's only f-5 tornadoes: The 1968 Tracy tornado started over the Lake Shetek area and the 1992 Chandler and Lake Wilson tornado, pictured to the left.

Living in a climate of extremes changes the cultural landscape and affects human memory. Murray County Central High School is a direct result of the 1992 tornado. The economic history of Lake Wilson is tied to three disasters; a fire, a tornado and a man made explosion. Agriculture is directly tied to the weather and a farmer's daily decisions are based on its outlook. The museum will explore how weather has changed the history of the area, both economically and culturally. We will try to answer questions like; did the dirty thirties affect our area? What was the effect of the 1975 Blizzard of the Century on farming? How do the first students of the combined MCC remember their school years? And many more. The twenty-fifth anniversary of the 1992 tornado this year and the fiftieth anniversary of the Tracy tornado in 2018 seem good milestones to explore weather. So keep an eye to the sky and your ear to the ground for upcoming announcements on when the new exhibit will open. We hope to have it in place by the time of the Chandler-Lake Wilson All -School Reunion on June 17th.

Thanks for the Help!

A BIG thank you to Berdena Buys for designing and making two canvas garment rack covers. The canvas garment covers she made have tie back closures so that we can access the textiles underneath with no damage to the items. She used her sewing skills to first make the pattern and then stitch them together.

If you are wondering what is under the canvas, it is two hand crafted metal racks designed, made and donated by Jim Surprenant. We thank them both for sharing their time and talents to preserve the museum's textile collection.



Tentative Dates Set for Front Porch Music Series

Save these three Thursday
evenings for good music on
the front lawn of the
Dinehart Holt House.



July 20
July 27
Aug. 3

Long Term Strategic Plan

History is a thing with wings that makes our imaginations soar!

Last fall a group of members, community leaders, staff, and historical society board members met to hammer out a long term strategic plan. Under the guidance of facilitators Toni Smith and Heather Bandeen, from the Association of Minnesota Counties, the group brainstormed their big ideas and dreams, and then honed them into a three year strategic plan that addresses four major subjects. The plan lays out the goals and yearly strategies to accomplish the final outcome. This plan will be reviewed annually and modified as needed by the board.

Preserve & Inventory Collections: Prioritize 3-D objects only

Staff will develop a plan for this project in three annual phases

Phase I: 2017

- A. As items are returned to the 3-D vault area in the west wing upon project completion in early 2017, each item will be inventoried and added to the Past Perfect catalog.
- B. MCHS will add a line item in budget for Collection Care supplies
- C. Items deemed not applicable to the collection, have no provenance, or are in such poor shape as to be non-restorable, or are a danger to the rest of the collection, will go through a formal deaccession process as stated in the MCM collections policy.
- D. Staff will begin grant process for a moveable shelving system and adequate HVAC.

Phase II: 2018

- A. Items in the Sierk Building for Agricultural History will be inventoried and entered into the Past Perfect catalog.
- B. Items deemed not applicable to the collection, have no provenance, or are in such poor shape as to be non-restorable, or are a danger to the rest of the collection, will go through a formal deaccession process as stated in the MCM collections policy.
- C. Part time staff may be hired to perform this project through Legacy grant funds.
- D. New Senior Employment Staff will copy, inventory and organize obituaries, and the biography files.

Phase III: 2019

- A. Archival materials will be inventoried and re-housed in appropriate document boxes and files using best museum practices.
- B. A legacy grant will be prepared to hire an outside archivist to direct this project.

Finance & Fundraising: The Murray County Historical Society Board will diversify funding to allow for more freedom from county budgetary fluctuations and stabilize financial resources.

Annual Fundraiser- A committee will research and develop an annual fundraiser within the three-year timeline.

Criteria:

1. Adequate Return on Investment
2. Community people look forward to it and participate
3. Meets the mission of the MCHS.
4. If at all possible-do fundraisers in differing parts of the county

Phase II: 2018

Staff will create interpretive tours for school students that meet MN learning standards. Staff will create alternative interpretive tours structured for different interests, ie. The building of the structure and its place in 1890's modernity, Banking at the Turn of the Century, Victorian Era culture in the early rural settlement phase.

Finance and Fundraising continued:

Phase I:

A. MCHS Board will create a Development Committee, to include business leaders, board members, and community members.

B. Within first six months a committee will be gathered and organized.

1. Charged with creating a development policy and tools for fundraising efficiently and effectively.
2. Committee will cultivate giving utilizing a culture of philanthropy philosophy.
3. Committee will produce policies and strategies for increased community giving by end of 2017.
4. Committee will produce and disseminate a 2017 end of year giving letter.

Other:

5. MCM staff will develop one new mission based fundraiser per year for the next three years

Year1: Develop annual Cemetery Walk Program in various cemeteries around the county.

Year 2: Boat Tour of Lake Shetek based on the history of recreation on the lake.

Year 3: TBD

Disaster Planning & Hazardous Mitigation: Board and community members, with the assistance of staff, will develop strategies to deal with natural disasters

Phase I: Year 2017- Committee will work with MCIT & County Emergency Coordinator on risk mitigation policies.

Staff will work with the dplan.org to create a risk mitigation plan and disaster plan detailed for individual needs.

Phase II: Year 2018-19 A fire and smoke alarm system will be installed within three years that is connected to the Sheriff's department

Dinehart Holt House: Within three years the Dinehart Holt House will have a clear path to better utilization and restoration.

Phase I: 2017

Historic structure report will be completed on the structure offering prioritization of repairs, and adaptive re-use.

MCHS Board will form a Friends of the Dinehart House made up of MNHS members and community members.

The DHH Friends will-

Work with the Development committee to Research fundraising

Organize programming at house.

Encourage more rentals and organizational use.

Update use policies to interface better with needs of the community

Phase II: 2018

Staff will create interpretive tours for school students that meet MN learning standards.

Staff will create alternative interpretive tours structured for different interests, ie. The building of the structure and its place in 1890's modernity, Banking at the Turn of the Century, Victorian Era culture in the early rural settlement phase.

Phase III: TBD

Phase III: 2019 TBD

End O Line News

A lot of people ask me "What do you do when End O Line is closed during the winter?" Work does not stop on projects for End O Line Railroad Park and Museum when the park is closed. This winter I re-visited and updated policies for all aspects of the park. I also wrote and had a collections policy approved by the Murray County Commissioners. After completing the collections policy, I was able to move forward with a Legacy Grant to archive the photographs that were formerly on display in the visitor's center showcasing the development of the park. The grant was approved and will cover the costs associated with cataloging and housing the photographs, correspondence, and newspaper clippings in a manner consistent with museum best practices, as well as some of the staff time associated with the project.

I have done the groundwork for a mid-size to large Minnesota Arts and Cultural Heritage grant which will help us fund the track repair project to secure the 102 locomotive out in front of the depot. The ties underneath the 102 have deteriorated to a point that they are no longer able to hold up the weight of the locomotive, and the rails are sinking into the ground. The hope is to secure this grant and have the work done in 2018. A grant of this size requires a pre-application process and a final application. The process for grant applications of this size is an 8-12 month process.

The main project I have been working on is an eight to ten minute video which will be used to interpret the 1887 Courthouse records heist using footage from the 2007 reenactment. I am researching and writing a draft for an interpretive script that will accompany the video provided by professional narration.

I have also organized End O Line's annual open house that will be August 5. We have model railroads again this year, along with telegraph demonstrations. At 1 PM local singer songwriter Jerry Ostensoe will play railroad songs and tell stories about railroads, some of his own time as both a railroad worker and as a "hobo."

One day each week I make a trip to End O Line to make sure everything is in order. My tasks for the museum are organizing the baseball archives collection, helping researchers with their projects, and providing an all-round extra hand for the daily tasks around the museum. We will soon be hiring for seasonal museum assistants so please feel free to apply.

Looking forward to summer! Josh Jordan

New Staff Member at Murray County Museum



When you are in town stop by and meet Karen Finne, our new museum assistant. Karen comes to us through the Senior Employment Program. Since her first day, Karen has been working on organizing and digitizing our obituary files. This will make them searchable on line and much easier to access than looking through envelopes of , sometimes tiny and fragile, newspaper obituaries. One thing she is finding is several duplicate newspaper clippings as well as many family biography articles. So her first step is sorting through and removing the duplicates. All of the family biography clippings go in a different envelope for future processing. This will NOT effect researcher access to the records during the project.

We are thankful for her willingness to tackle this detailed job. Her desk is in the front gallery space so if you stop in, say hello and make her feel welcome.

A Tale of Ten Scythes: The Process of Deaccession

Spring is the traditional time for house cleaning. I look at items that I have kept over the years and scratch my head wondering why I still hold onto things. The reasons are many; it holds a memory, it might be useful in the future, it was pretty when I bought it, my kids might want it someday. The reasons are endless. Just like house cleaning at home, museums go through the same agonizing process. How do we decide what to keep and what no longer serves a purpose? When we accept items into the collection it is called an accession. There are criteria to guide us in that process. We ask; will it help us meet our mission? Will it help tell the history of Murray County and its people? Did it originate here in the area? Can we properly care for it though out the years?

When a museum has been in business as long as this one has, often the staff finds items that have no sign of having been officially collected, no processing papers, no collection numbers, in other words, no provenance. Or sometimes there will be several of the same item in varying conditions. The process of removing items from the collection is called deaccession. Over the next few months the museum staff will be going through an assessment of the collection in order to identify items that may no longer belong in the collection. As we do, we will continue to keep the membership informed on the process, ask for help in identification, and discuss what should be done with excess items. Stay tuned.

Hours:

T-F 10-5 and S 10-2PM

Contact us:

507-836-6533

museum@co.murray.mn.us

murraycountyhistoricalsociety.org

Find us on [facebook.com](https://www.facebook.com/murraycountyhistoricalsociety) too!

MCHS Board Members:

Brian Harmsen, pres.

Brad Bergerson, treas.

Christy Riley, sec.

Linda Wing

Dorothy Bloemendaal

Ruth Hoyme

Rachel Dreeson

Margaret Kluis

Dennis Anderson

Romane Dold

County Commissioner

representative: James Jens

Murray County Historical Society

PO Box 61

Slayton, MN

56172