



MURRAY COUNTY  
— MINNESOTA —  
HISTORY MUSEUMS

Fall 2019



## Former Currie Native Colleen Illg Tollefson to speak for MCHS Annual Meeting

**Please Join Us!**

### **Murray County Historical Society Annual Meeting**

#### **Painted Prairie Vineyard and Winery**

1575 250th Ave. Currie, MN

**Sunday November 3  
2 PM**

**Presentation by Colleen Tollefson, co-founder of  
End O Line Railroad Park, Explore Minnesota  
Tourism staff member and  
Founder of Jobs and Journeys, LLC**

Back in 1972, when teenager Colleen Illg worked with her local 4-H group to clean out the Currie railyard's old turntable pit, she probably never expected it to be more than a one time, community pride project. Forty seven years later, Colleen will be back to speak at the Murray County Historical Society 2019 annual meeting. She will share insights into the origins of End O Line Park and her journey as a driving force for tourism in Minnesota.



*Piece of a silk baby quilt made  
by Josephine Lowe, circa 1900*

#### **INSIDE THIS ISSUE**

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#### **SPECIAL DATES TO REMEMBER**

- 9/11 Remember those who fell during the attacks.
- 10/14 Remember Native Americans on whose land we live and work.
- 11/11 Remember the Veterans who served, and continue to serve, our country honorably.
- 12/05–10-Noon Celebrating our Historical Society Volunteers with a Christmas Open House and Cocoa Bar.



## International Holiday Traditions Celebration at the Dinehart Holt House

**Open House**  
**Sunday November 10, 2019**  
**1-4 PM**

**Trees and decorations throughout the house**  
**Holiday treats, Cider, and Coffee**

**Free will donation**

**Holiday Music provided by Rebbly Lee**  
**musician from Dundee**

*"Why waste your money looking up your family tree? Just go into politics and your opponents will do it for you." — **Mark Twain***

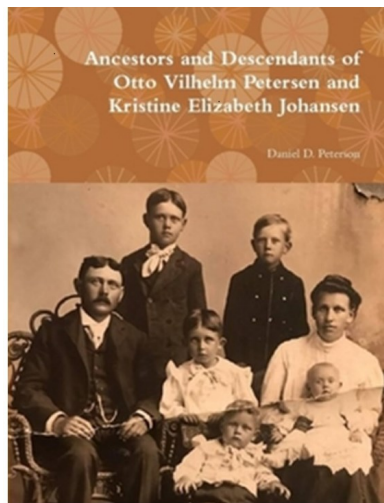
**Museum Assistant  
Karen Finne Receives  
Minnesota Genealogical  
Society Pioneer  
Explorer Award**



On October 5, Karen Finne received an honor from the Minnesota Genealogical Society for her contributions to the preservation of family and local history. Karen works at the museum digitizing and filing obituaries. She has digitized over 20,000 obituaries. Eventually these names will be placed on the website to increase access by researchers and genealogists.

## **GENEALOGY GROUP BEGINS TO FORM**

Since April, a group of beginning and more experienced genealogists have been meeting under the sponsorship of the Slayton and Fulda Public Libraries and the MC Historical Society to learn different aspects of preserving their family's histories. Topics that have been covered are genealogy 101 with how to get the whole process started, finding reliable sources on-line and discovering local sources by touring local historical societies. **Everyone is invited to the free upcoming presentation** on how to put what you have found into a narrative for your family or for publication. Let us know if you are coming.



**Family Ties: Writing Your Family History**

**Presented by**

**Daniel D. Peterson**

**Local historian, genealogist,  
and author of several books  
on Walnut Grove**

**Thursday  
October 17  
2 PM and 7 PM  
Dinehart Holt  
House**

**2812 Linden Ave. Slayton**

## VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Looking for something to help pass those Winter days? Well the museum has just the interesting projects to ward off winter blahs.

We are looking for volunteers for three specific tasks:

1. **Collections Committee Member:** The Collection Committee meets on average twice per year, February and July, from 5:00 pm to 7:00 pm to review all incoming donations to see if they meet the criteria to become an official part of the collection. Be one of the first to see the new and exciting donations that are being brought into the museum by joining this committee! We currently have members from Lake Wilson, Currie, and Hadley—we are hoping to get three new members from different areas in order to have well rounded committee of Murray County citizens.
2. **Clipping Aides:** For decades volunteers have clipped articles from local papers and added them to an extensive collection. This project aims to take the clippings and organize them into topical categories to make them accessible to researchers. We are forming a Clipping Aide group that will meet twice per month, the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays from 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm, to sort through the clippings. Enjoy looking through historic articles that will surely spark your memories! We are looking for 2 to 4 volunteers who enjoy detail-oriented projects.
3. **Country School Records Inventory Aide:** Many times, when researchers contact the museum it is about country schools. At the museum we have many great research materials on country schools but no structured way to find the information. This volunteer would go through our files on country schools-sort the documents by district and create a list of the materials which will be used to develop a finding aid.

If you would like to volunteer for any of these tasks or would like more information call (507) 836-6533, email [museum@co.murray.mn.us](mailto:museum@co.murray.mn.us), or stop into the museum!

### THANK YOU FOR THESE DONATIONS

#### Donors to the 2019 Summer Fundraiser

Hadley Buttermakers

Hadley Steel, Inc.

Brian Harmsen

Anonymous

#### Donors for the Front Porch Music Series

Minnwest Bank

Currie State Bank

State Bank of Chandler

First National Bank

#### Donations to Purchase the Dinehart Historic-Bears

Pat Weber Memorial

Rick and Luanne

Parker

Tammy Mahon

Brent and Diann

Johnson

Janet Timmerman

Nancy and Rich

Vanderziel





## VICTORIAN FLASHLIGHT TOUR

### Take an unusual tour of the Dinehart Holt House: By Flashlight

Saturday, October 12

Starting at 6PM at the Museum

Tour times at 6:30, 7:30, and 8:30 PM

Cider and treats at the museum before and after the tours

Have your palm read

See what the future holds with the Ouija board

Learn fascinating facts about the Dinehart Family and  
Victorian Era superstitions



## LUNCHBOX LECTURES TAKE A TURN TOWARD THE TWENTIES FOR SEASON SIX

The 2019-2020 Lunchbox Lecture Series will feature many topics relevant to discovering the 1920's in Murray County, the SW Region, and Minnesota. All lectures will be at Noon at the 4-H building unless otherwise noted. Bring your lunch. MEMBERS FREE, non-members \$3.00.

Thurs. November 14, 2019- Life at a Small Town Paper —Kathy Miller Brandt, Windom

Thurs. December 12, 2019- The Sara Wakefield Story of 1862 —Phyllis Cole-Dai, Brookings, SD

Thurs. January 9, 2020- Women's Suffrage: From Seneca Falls to Slayton —Rose Schmit, MCHS

Thurs. Feb. 13, 2020– Ardent Spirits: The Women's Christian Temperance Union—Janet Timmerman, MCHS

Thurs. March 12– The [not so] Invisible Nation: The KKK in SW Minnesota, Dr. Anita Talsma Gaul, Minnesota West College

Tues. April 7-Minnesota's Wild and Woolly Prohibition Days, Arn Kind with Historical Experiences.

*Note date change. Collaboration with the Slayton Public Library.*



# THE GIFT OF REMEMBRANCE

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*Memory is owned, history is interpreted.*

*Kevin M. Levine*

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I wrote this note on the 18th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks on New York, Washington, and Pennsylvania. Those of us old enough, remember the day, where we were, what we were doing, and how we first heard about the attacks, or worse yet, watched as it unfolded before our eyes. Then we watched it happen over and over again in the following days on the news until we turned away. It was sorrow felt collectively through a nation.

The children who graduate from high school this year have no living memory of the event, just like I have no living memory of the attack on Pearl Harbor. I have a 96 year old uncle who recalled his Navy experiences during Pearl Harbor, D-Day and more. Through his memories, I experienced World War II. Though I consider myself a historian, relying on the written word

and objectivity to drive research, I also believe that our memories are an important factor in holding the truth of our times. It is a perspective from ground level. Memories give us a glimpse of the real past as it is lived. The museum treasures the gift of diaries, personal photos and oral histories. They are prized collections.

I encourage everyone to pass on their memories to family, or even strangers, in personal memoirs, diaries, and oral histories. Write them down, record them, or just tell them to someone else. In a digital age, we may find that our only memories live somewhere on outdated Facebook posts on some obscure cloud server in Nebraska! Keep them real.

*Janet T*

## Mysteries from the Museum

From time to time we come across items that we cannot identify. During the latest inventory project in the Sierk building Rose came across these items. Can you help us identify them? Call us at the museum or drop us an email.

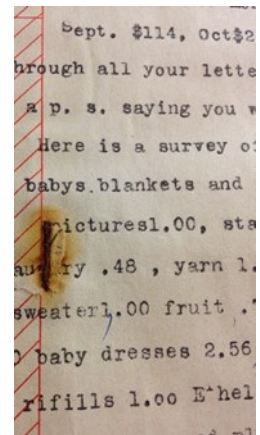
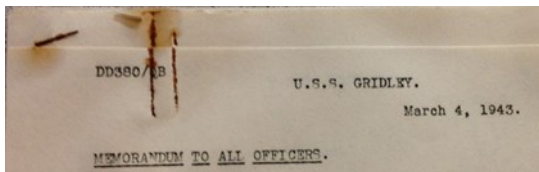


## Preservation Tips: Office Supply or Document Destroyer?

Paperclips and staples are two office supplies that are often used by businesses and individuals. Both fasteners make it easy to keep related documents together when being handled or stored. Most of the time using these supplies on “everyday documents” does not cause a problem—these documents are created without the intention of being saved in an archive type setting. However, when working with documents in a museum or archive the consequences of that simple -click, click- of a staple is revealed when the integrity of a documents comes under review.

The issue with these office supplies is corrosion and rust. Generally, paperclips and staples you buy from a store are made from metal that is easily corroded when it meets water and oxygen. While working on rehousing documents I came across several examples of this problem. These examples are from a collection of documents from Hugh Patterson who served as the County Coroner for over 30 years.

As you can see the corroded paperclip has left an irreversible mark on the paper (image one and two). Rust stains from clips can sometimes even “bleed” onto other documents (image three). The staple seen in image four was so corroded that it instantly fell apart when it was removed.



**What to take away:** By all means, continue using staples and paperclips on “everyday documents;” however, keep in mind that documents you create without the intent of being saved may someday be valued for their historic content. If you are making or come across a document of lasting historical value, consider alternative office supplies such as stainless-steel paperclips or staples and plastic or plastic-coated paperclips. You could also bypass a fastener all together by putting the document into a plastic sheet protector, hole punching and adding it to a three-ring binder, or slipping the document into a manila envelope. Think about historical family documents under your care and consider removing the fasteners to prevent new or further damage like seen in the photos. Preserving history is up to each of us!

Tune in next time for a discussion on boxes.

-Rose Schmit

Site Coordinator/Collections Manager

## Walt Benton: Dovray's Music Man

Walter Benton came to Dovray in 1930 to be the telegraph operator for the Chicago Northwestern Railroad Depot. Walt served the Chicago Northwestern for 42 years serving in 33 different depts, including Slayton, Currie, Dovray, Stordan, Jeffers, Hadley, Worthington, and Pipestone. He was the last station agent in Dovray when the depot closed.

In his other life, Walt was a musician, through the 1930's and into the 1960's, playing with several bands. He often played the banjo or the drums. One of his first bands was Walt Benton and the Hot Points made up of five members; Elmer Deutschman on Saxophone, Arvie Anderson on Trumpet, Margaret Paal on Piano, T.S. Omberson on Sousaphone and Benton on Drums. They played mostly waltzes and polkas. During the Dirty Thirties, the Hot Points put on benefit dances for drought relief.

By 1939 Benton led the Rainbow Valley Hillbilly Band along with sidemen Clarence Fowler, Lowry Anderson, Lillian Barstad, Glen Horseman and Harvey Peterson. The multi-talented group played dobro, banjo, accordion, saxophone, clarinet, rhythm guitar, trombone and drums. They played old time schottisches, polkas, and waltzes, but they also included the new country sound, with a modern electric sound system.

In the first half of 1946, Benton's band scheduled 48 appearances as far away as Spicer's Green Lake Pavilion and Sioux Falls, SD. They were booked at Sabin's Ballroom in Tracy, and the Walnut Ballroom in Walnut Grove hosted the band annually during their winter dance season. Since Walt was also the manager of the Rainbow Pavilion in Westbrook, they were the house band on Wednesday nights through the winters.

At the same time that they were on the road most weekends, the band hosted a live show on Marshall's KMHL radio station. It was called the Hillbilly Barn Dance Jamboree and came on every Monday night at 9:15 PM. Walt typed out their program line-up, occasionally adding another band like the Larson Sisters to the mix. He interspersed jokes and weather information to add some fun. People wrote or phoned in their requests and dedications for the band to play on air.

All through the 1930's and 1940's, while Benton was scheduling the band's appearances and hosting live radio shows, he also served as the talent scout and booking agent for the Westbrook Rainbow Pavilion dancehall, not to be confused with the Rainbow Club located at Teepeotah Resort on Lake Shetek. He was the dancehall manager from 1930 through 1952 when the building was sold. As a testament to the popularity of the dances the ballroom scheduled a dance every Saturday night and often additional Thursday night dances, throughout the year. Popular acts at the Rainbow Pavilion during the 1930's included Tiny Bostic, the Casino Boys, and the Royal Serenaders. Lawrence Welk and his orchestra were also on the roster of bands available for booking.

In the 1950's Benton hooked up with a smaller trio led by Lloyd Giersdorf, called the Westerners. Giersdorf and Clarence Fowler played guitar and Walt kept rhythm with drums and filled in on banjo. They had discarded the hillbilly outfits and music for cowboy hats and modern western shirts sporting embroidered horse heads and spinning ropes. Along with the favorite fox trots and waltzes, they played modern country favorites like "Yellow Rose of Texas," the "Wabash Cannonball," and "Sioux City Sioux." The band also headlined more obscure songs like "Divorce Me C.O.D." and "I'm Here to Get my Baby out of Jail."

In the later years of Walt's life, he remained a valuable part of Dovray's community serving as the city clerk and in 1983 he and Laura, his bride of 64 years, were chosen as Murray County's Outstanding Senior Citizens. Walt was a life long member of the Order of Railroad Telegraphers and the American Musician's Union. He lived according to the tagline on the band's advertising posters. "Don't miss one of these parties. If you can't dance, just vibrate, you'll like it!"

**2020 HISTORICAL SOCIETY**  
**MEMBERSHIPS ARE NOW AVAILABLE FOR PURCHASE.**  
**INDIVIDUAL \$15.00**  
**FAMILY \$25.00**

YOUR DOLLARS GO TO HELP FUND COLLECTIONS CARE, EXHIBITS, PROGRAMMING AND OUTREACH PROJECTS.

ARE YOU A LIFETIME MEMBER? PURCHASE A MEMBERSHIP FOR FAMILY OR FRIENDS AND ENCOURAGE THEM TO ENGAGE WITH OUR COUNTY'S HISTORY. CUT OUT AND RETURN THE SLIP WITH YOUR MEMBERSHIP DOLLARS. THANKS FOR YOUR HELP PRESERVING MURRAY COUNTY'S HISTORY. WE COULDN'T DO THIS WORK WITHOUT YOU!



**MURRAY COUNTY**  
—HISTORICAL SOCIETY—

Murray County Historical Society  
2480 29th Street  
PO Box 61  
Slayton, Minnesota 56172  
Phone: 507-836-6533

**2020 Murray County Historical Museum Membership**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Method of Payment

☐ Cash

☐ Check

Member Signature \_\_\_\_\_

**Types of Memberships - renew yearly (check one)**

☐ Annual Membership 15.00

☐ Family Membership (1 person and spouse) 25.00

☐ Life Member - Donation \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Murray County Historical  
Museum and Society  
2840 29th St. PO Box 61  
Slayton, MN  
56151

[museum@co.murray.mn.us](mailto:museum@co.murray.mn.us)  
[www.historicmurray.org](http://www.historicmurray.org)



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