MURRAY COUNTY
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Quarterly Newsletter

Fall 2025

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Happy Fall Greetings from the Murray County Historical Society! Our summer has been eventful. We've had many exciting projects here at the museum this summer and have more to look forward to this fall.

Some of what we have been working on have been more "behind the scenes." For example, we secured a grant from the Minnesota Historical Society to improve our Collection Management Software. We have successfully transferred the data and photographs from our old software to the new software and are looking forward to finally being able to access our collection from anywhere!

And speaking of access our collection from anywhere, we are pleased to announce that the first phase of our newspaper digitization project is complete. The public will now be able to access several early newspapers online completely free. Specifics about how to access the issues later in this newsletter.

It was also a busy summer for applying for grants. July 15th was the deadline for the National Park Service Disaster Recovery Grant Program, designed to repair listings on the National Register of Historic Places that have been damaged in recent years by storms or other weather events. We applied to fix up the Turntable at End O Line, which has been affected by the repeat flood events in recent years. If we were awarded that grant, we should hear back in October. Also in July we applied for a Minnesota Historical and Cultural Heritage Grant to rehab the storm windows at the Dinehart Holt House. We had applied for this project previously, but were not awarded the funds. Taking in their feedback, we applied again and hopefully will be awarded the funds this go around.



Pictured here is the Route 68 Big Band performing on July 24th.

Our summer was very busy. Our two big summer events, the Murray County Fair and the Dinehart Holt House Front Porch concert series were very successful. We had a the CarKnees, The Route 68 Big Band, and Tony Moger perform, and had excellent turn outs for each artist. For the Murray County Fair, we had 850 people visit the various museum sites, including the Sierk Building, Dinehart Holt House, Wornson Cabin, and the main museum building. Our summer exhibit on racing and outdoor recreation in Murray County was well received by fairgoers and the public. It is currently in the process of being taken down to make room for the next exhibit, which will be a travelling exhibit from the Minnesota Historical Society.

What Led to the Lake Shetek Massacre?

By Seasonal Museum Assistant Logan Steinle

The Dakota War of 1862 (or Sioux Uprising) was a devastating series of attacks and battles fought in Minnesota from middle August to late September, leading to the mass hanging of 38 Dakota men in Mankato in December. Led by Mdewakanton Sioux Chief Little Crow, the Dakota attacked the Sioux Agencies and military forts along the Minnesota River and various settlements throughout southwestern Minnesota and beyond, targeting white settlers and conforming/mixed-blood Dakota. Stories of the war ring familiar to many Minnesota natives, as it is common curriculum in Minnesota history classrooms.

One such story is the attack on Lake Shetek, often referred to as the "Lake Shetek Massacre," when Sisseton Dakota bands killed 14 settlers and captured 11 women and children. Many Murray County residents are familiar with the tragic events that occurred along the east side of Shetek due to numerous accounts from surviving settlers, cited in many written histories, dominating our traditional perception of the event. Because of this, little is known or questioned about the events preceding the tragic morning–the decision by certain Dakota bands to attack the settlers of Lake Shetek specifically and what motivated them to do so. Why and how did the Dakota come to Lake Shetek to attack the settlers?

Important to answering this question is understanding the primary cause of the uprising; namely, unfulfilled promises of white settlers resulting in the Dakota people's starvation and distrust.

The treaties of Traverse des Sioux and Mendota, both signed during the summer of 1851, ceded nearly 24 million acres of Dakota land to white settlers in exchange for a total of over $3 million cash and annuities to be distributed throughout the next 50 years. This left around seven thousand Dakota people with two thin reservations along the Minnesota River, the Yellow Medicine (Upper) reserve and Redwood (Lower) reserve. The federal government then established agencies for each reservation: the Upper Sioux Agency near present-day Granite Falls and the Lower Sioux Agency near present-day Morton. The Dakota did not receive the promised cash and annuities as consistently or directly as agreed. Some Dakota leaders claimed they signed a deceitful "traders' paper," which allocated much of the funds for the Dakota to white traders to pay off the Dakota's past debts.

No event epitomized the tensions between the Dakota and white settlers more than the insult of trader Andrew Myrick, who owned stores at both the Upper and Lower Sioux Agencies. Through June and July of 1862, the Dakota never received the cash and annuities due to them, typically given during June. They also faced major starvation due to a lack of wild game and a meager harvest the previous fall. August 4, hundreds of Dakota, led by Chief Little Crow of the Lower reserve, broke into the Upper Agency warehouse to retrieve overdue provisions. Galbraith allowed the Dakota to take food as long as they agreed to wait peacefully for the money and more food to arrive.

Galbraith convened a meeting at the Lower Agency over a week later with Little Crow, store clerks, missionaries, other Dakota, and white trader Andrew Myrick present. Once it was made clear that the Dakota would not receive the annuities Galbraith promised them, Little Crow demanded that the Agency make something work, as starving men will always find a way to take what they need. In reply, Andrew Myrick stated something along the lines of, "As far as I am concerned, if they are hungry, let them eat grass." Once missionary John P. Williamson hesitantly translated the statement, the present Dakota arose, shouting "weird and savage war-whoops." While small-scale skirmishes and tension between the Dakota and whites were fairly common since 1851, Myrick's statement truly set the stage for whatever incident that happened next to be critical.

That critical incident occurred a fateful morning just days later. August 17, 1862, four Dakota men killed five white settlers in Acton township of Meeker County, near present-day Grove City. The four Dakota natives, members of an infamous Rice Creek band of the Yellow Medicine reserve, were hunting in the area and came upon a farm. Hungry, one of the men picked up some eggs from a nest along the fence. Another advised him not to steal, angering the first man. The first man accused the second of fear of the white man, provoking the second man to challenge the first in killing the man who owned the farm. Up to the challenge, the Dakota men appeared friendly to the whites present at the farm, but eventually turned on them with their rifles. Afraid of the consequences for what they had just done, the Dakota men

stole a few horses and rode back to their village. They informed their chief, Little Six (or Little Shakopee, son of Shakopee II), a man unafraid of waging war with the white settlers, about what happened. Recognizing that Rice Creek was far too small to spark an uprising alone, Little Six and other Upper Dakota chiefs agreed to meet with Little Crow that night for a council.

Chief Little Six, along with other Dakota leaders and soldiers, awoke Little Crow at his house near the Lower Agency. Little Crow, who displayed mostly friendly relations with white settlers most of his life, was reluctant to agree with the hostile band, calling them foolish for even considering attacking the whites. He claimed that the Dakota were no match for the whites, who carry much more powerful fighting equipment and severely outnumber the Dakota.

After Little Crow refused to fight, one young brave called him a coward. In response, Little Crow doubled down on his claim that an uprising would prove an unsuccessful affair. However, acknowledging that his visitors would attack with or without him, Little Crow pledged that he would die alongside them. That night, he ordered an attack on the Lower Agency to be carried out the next morning, August 18.

The Dakota's attack on the Lower Sioux Agency was successful. Around half of the settlers present at the Agency were either killed or captured, including Andrew Myrick, and the other half escaped. Hearing of the attack the same day, Captain John S. Marsh of the Fifth Minnesota Regiment led 46 soldiers from Fort Ridgely to the Lower Agency to put down the hostile bands. Unprepared and unaware of the Dakota's fighting abilities, most of Marsh's men were killed by the Dakota warriors at Redwood Ferry, the rest fleeing. This event proved the outbreaking Dakota had momentum, sparking confidence in them to expand their attack toward outer settlements.

The bands that attacked the Lake Shetek settlement the morning of August 20 were identified as those of White Lodge, Lean Grizzly Bear, and Old Pawn. Most popular sources, including testimonies of Dakota leaders and modern secondary narratives, attest to White Lodge's and Lean Grizzly Bear's presence at the Shetek conflict, but only the Shetek survivors' narratives regularly mention Old Pawn.

Lake Shetek served as a regular camping spot for Old Pawn. Through the recent years leading up to the massacre, Old Pawn established friendship with the incoming white settlers. He and his band were camping near the south end of the lake at the time of the attack (settlers lived on the north and east ends), supposedly unaware of the violence coming. When the massacre began, however, survivors testify of Old Pawn betraying the settlers, first assisting them in escaping, then participating in the violence.

White Lodge, a Sisseton chief living on Lake Shaokatan in present-day Lincoln County, led a hostile, migratory band of Dakota. Lean Grizzly Bear led a similar band that also camped at Lake Shetek regularly. He was killed during the raid, Old Pawn later taking over chieftainship of the band. Lean Grizzly Bear may have known Old Pawn and possibly convinced Old Pawn to turn on the settlers during the attack, though no sources describe such an event.

After the Redwood Dakota's attack on their agency the morning of August 18, Yellow Medicine Dakota leaders met near their agency with a few Redwood Dakota to discuss whether or not they should join in the uprising. Prior to the meeting, John Other Day, a Dakota Christian, led the white settlers of the area to escape any potential violence, especially knowing White Lodge would attend. Other Day listed Lean Grizzly Bear as another attendee. Some Christian Dakota and mixed-bloods stayed, such as Solomon Two Stars and Joseph LaFramboise Jr. LaFramboise Jr. witnessed the council and provided an account for it, highlighting conversation regarding how the hostiles ought to treat mixed-bloods. Both Two Stars and LaFramboise Jr. are cited by historian Doane Robinson, who personally interviewed both, as providing support to the point that the bands of White Lodge and Lean Grizzly Bear were "assigned" the task of assaulting the Lake Shetek settlement. While no written Dakota accounts mention any conversation about Lake Shetek at the August 18 council at Yellow Medicine, this does leave room for speculation that the Lake Shetek attack could have been coordinated then and there.

What Led to the Lake Shetek Massacre? (Continued)

It is unlikely that Chief Little Crow encouraged the bands to attack Lake Shetek. After the Dakota victory at Redwood Ferry August 18, many Dakota attacked isolated settlements in smaller, rather disorganized, and sometimes unidentifiable groups. These bands killed hundreds of settlers and captured hundreds more women and children in Renville and Brown counties. At a council the evening of August 19, Chief Little Crow expressed frustration with young braves for their reckless behavior in extending to these settlements. He emphasized that they should instead focus their violent efforts on white men, “those who have been robbing us for so long.”

The first settler killed at Lake Shetek was John Voigt, a man staying at the cabin of Phineas and Alomina Hurd while Phineas was away. While that group of Dakota raided the Hurd cabin, another group killed Andrew Koch at his home. Settler Charles Hatch discovered the two slain men, prompting him to alert the rest of the settlement as quickly as possible.

Most of the frantic settlers congregated in the Wright cabin, where Old Pawn would warn them that the Dakota would either force them to give up all their possessions or burn the cabin. The settlers, unsure of what to do, divided into groups–one staying, the other fleeing. When the fleeing party started away on a wagon, the Dakota began chasing on their horses. Around two miles east, the settlers arrived at a wetland, where the Dakota were so close behind that the settlers had to exit the wagon and continue their escape on foot. The Dakota opened fire on the men, women, and children. Some settlers were armed and returned fire, someone eventually killing Lean Grizzly Bear. As gunfire died down, those not killed in the wetland feigned death or managed to escape. The less fortunate women and children were taken captive by the Dakota. The wetland was eventually deemed “Slaughter Slough.”

Around three months later, the Lake Shetek captives were freed near present-day Mobridge, South Dakota, by a Teton Dakota group deemed the “Fool Soldiers” because of their extraordinary confidence in confronting the deadly White Lodge band.

In December 1862, the largest mass hanging in American history took place in Mankato, hanging the guilty Dakota of the outbreak for their violent. Though 303 were sentenced to death, President Abraham Lincoln whittled the guilty down to 38 through hasty trials held from late September to early November.

Today, a monument stands where the Lake Shetek victims were given a proper burial. The Koch cabin is now remodeled and relocated, open for public visitation. Slaughter Slough is now marked as a waterfowl production area in the National Wildlife Refuge System on a plaque in a boulder nearby.

When tragedy strikes, especially of the Lake Shetek Massacre’s magnitude, those connected to it often have little to ask except, “why?” Regarding this event, most only know *what* happened without knowing where exactly the violent bands came from. Though it is true that available sources do not provide every single answer we may desire, we can speculate and reflect on why the narratives that saturate our current knowledge have survived and the perspectives we aren’t aware of have not.

Volunteers Wanted

Do you have some free time and are you looking for something fulfilling to do? We are looking for volunteers to help with various tasks around the museum! Call or stop by the museum if you are interested in helping out with any of the projects listed below. Even a few hours a month would go a long way!

- Sorting and filing newspaper and obituary clippings.
- Adding clippings to the topical binders.
- Leading or assisting with field trips or adult tours.
- Cleaning at the museum.
- Identifying photos from the Wheel Herald Collection.



Parade of Trees



Your group, organization, or business is invited to participate in the Murray County Historical Society's 2025 Holiday Open House at the Dinehart Holt House! This year the holiday open house will be December 6th.

This year the theme is “Hunting!” We encourage you to decorate a tree, area of the home, or even a whole room. Use your imagination to come up with something fun using recycled materials.

The trees will be provided by the Murray County Museum. You will be responsible for lights, tree skirts, and all the decorations for your tree. Trees will be set up and ready to decorate by November 18 and must be completely decorated by December 3.

The last day to register to decorate a tree will be Monday, November 18. To let us know you would like to decorate a tree, email the Museum at musum@murraycountymn.gov or call 507-836–6533.

While organizations, workplaces, and families are hopefully reading this, we will also mention that the Dinehart Holt House is available for rentals. Enjoy the historic venue that’s beautifully decorated for the holidays by yourselves and others! Contact the museum to reserve!

Collections Committee Members Needed



This window from Saint Columba Church was one of the items that our collections committee discussed at their most recent meeting.

Did you know that there is a committee of people who decide what artifacts are and aren’t accepted to the museum? The main responsibilities of the Collections Committee include approving or disapproving of donations, approve or disapprove of artifacts offered up for leaving the museum, and to advise staff on policies and criteria concerning accepting donations. The committee is made up of board members, historical society members, and members of the public.

Right now, we are looking for new members for the Collections Committee. If you are interested in getting involved with the museum, joining the collections committee would be a wonderful way to get involved. The time commitment is low, as the committee meets just a few times a year, yet the impact is big. Preserving the history of Murray County is one of the core missions of the MCHS and volunteering on the Collections Committee is a direct way to take action towards that goal. If you’re interested in volunteering on the Collections Committee, please contact the museum at 307-836-6533 or museum@murraycountymn.gov.

Updates from End-O-Line Railroad Park and Museum

By: Jake Halverson, Site Supervisor

In theory, Fall has come to End-O-Line. Despite the effects of climate change, which are bringing us these miserable 80-plus degree September days, we are now operating on reduced hours until mid-October. Overall, it is agreed that we had a busier summer at EOL than last year -averaging around 40 visitors a day. Indeed, after tallying weekly totals later this fall, I will make available the official counts in the next newsletter.

Although two thirds of our summer staff have hung up their red shirts for the season (after a job well done), we are fortunate to have Anna Johnston still on staff. Despite only being open to the public on Fridays, Anna is here every day, evaluating and streamlining our collection data in our antiquated collection software. Anna has done terrific work, and it is a pleasure to have her continue these extra couple of months. It should also be said that, in addition to Anna, we had excellent support out here at EOL this summer in the form of Nancy Moberg and Lisa Siverson. Nancy's steadfast approach to the register and the needs of the giftshop, as well as Lisa's unwavering dedication to the beautification and maintenance of the buildings and grounds were invaluable services that contributed to the ongoing excellence of this establishment.

Of course, we are also still available to provide tours upon request, as well as able to provide our location for private events. As it is, we have already given several private tours this fall -in addition to lending out our facilities for school tours and gatherings. We will continue to be available for tours and events through 17 October.

In terms of big news, there are two items that need mentioning. At the very end of our regular season this summer, we were happy to at last offer our new e-bike fleet to the public. After a ribbon cutting ceremony and a few words shared with a small gathering, which included the individuals and organizations that made the fleet possible, the bikes were then made available to rent. In total, we have four machines, coming in two different colors and two different sizes. Although we are currently operating on reduced hours, these bikes will be available.



Two of the e-bikes that are available for rental at the park.

The second item which I would like to mention is one that has been discussed quite a bit in these newsletter pages already -and that is the long-awaited building move. As of right now, it is still the plan to move the buildings this fall. Nick Demuth has lined up a company that specializes in the moving of buildings, surveyors have marked out the spots where the two buildings will be moved to, we have cut the power to the buildings, and Nick and I are currently in the process of removing the boardwalk which sits in front of both structures (something that the building movers said they needed to have happen before they could get their equipment back there). All that remains now, prior to moving the buildings, is to have new foundations put in place. This is a task which we hope to have accomplished this October. If everything goes according to plan, we hope to have the buildings in place so that we may be able to start renovating and refilling them with their displays next spring.

Until then, I hope to have a splendid last few weeks out here at EOL before we close entirely for the season. Once mid-October rolls around, I will start the process of winterizing. After that, it won't be long before I move my office back to the museum in Slayton, where I will be until things start warming up again next Spring. But before all of that, I wish you all a very pleasant Autumn.

Board Members Needed!



Are you interested in doing more for your community? Do you have an interest in helping preserve, interpret and disseminate the history of Murray County?

The Murray County Historical Society will have a few openings in our Board of Directors come October. If you, dear reader, are interested in joining the board, please reach out to museum staff or any other member of the board. Directors terms are for three years beginning at the Annual Meeting in October. Board meetings are held every other month on the second Tuesday of the month. Board members are asked to assist with historical society events, fundraising, promotion and to generally help direct and lead the society. Feel free to attend a few meetings if you are hesitant or want to see if it is right for you.

If you have any questions or interest, please contact Nicholas Demuth at 507-836-6533 or npdemuth@murraycountymn.gov by October 8, 2025.

Lunchbox Lecture

All are invited to attend the 2024-2025 Lunchbox Lecture Series. All talks are presented at noon in the Murray County 4-H building on the county fairgrounds in Slayton. You are invited to bring your own lunch while you enjoy the presentations. The cost is $3.00 or free for Historical Society members.

October 9, 2025: Greg Gaut, “The War at Home: Minnesota during the Great War, 1914-1920”

November 13, 2025: Naomi Yaeger, “Blooming Hollyhocks: Tales of Joy during Hard Times”

December, 11, 2025: C.K. Van Dam, Women Who Tamed the Frontier

January 8, 2025: Nicholas Demuth, History of the Murray County Poor Farm

February 12, 2025: Jake Halverson, Topic TBD

March 12, 2025: Jay Grammond, Topic TBD



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!

MURRAY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY ANNUAL MEETING

Coffee and Bars Provided



SUNDAY, OCTOBER 12
AT KEY LARGO ON LAKE SHETEK
2PM

We will have a short business meeting followed by a presentation from Janet Timmerman on her latest book, *Halcyon Days: Leisure on Lake Shetek*.

Timmerman will be presenting new information about what wasn't able to make it in the book, so if you have heard her speak previously, you won't want to miss this!

MURRAY COUNTY
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

If you have any questions please reach out to the Murray County Museum.

https://murraycountyhistoricalsociety.org/

507-836-6533

This program has been financed in part with funds provided by the State of Minnesota through the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Fund, the Minnesota State Arts Board, the Southwest Minnesota Arts Council, and the Society for the Study of Local and Regional History.

2025 Membership Renewal

Thank you to everyone who has already renewed your memberships! All **2024** Murray County Historical Society memberships expired as of **January 1, 2025**. Any membership renewals received before **October 1st of 2025** will go towards a **2025** membership. Please fill out the form below and return with payment. Renewals can be returned either in-person to the Historical Museum in Slayton or mailed to: PO Box 61, Slayton, MN 56172

Membership support allows us to develop new exhibits, host programs, and care for all the artifacts and archives in the Murray County Historical Society collection. We truly appreciate all renewing and new members. Memberships make great gifts for others too!

Reminder: Lifetime memberships are no longer offered. Existing lifetime members are grandfathered-in and may contribute a donation in lieu of annual membership dues. .

MURRAY COUNTY
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Murray County Historical Society
2848 29th Street
PO Box 61
Slayton, MN 56172
(507) 836-6533

Murray County Historical Society Membership

Name
_____
Address
_____
_____
_____
Phone
_____
Email
_____

☐ Membership Card received

Check One
☐ Annual Membership $15.00
☐ Family Membership $25.00

Life Member—Donation $_____

Method of Payment
☐ Cash ☐ Check

_____
Member Signature

Murray County Historical Society

Business Membership Form

Name of Business: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Primary Contact: _____ Phone: _____

Email: _____ Website: _____

Owner: _____ Number of Employees: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

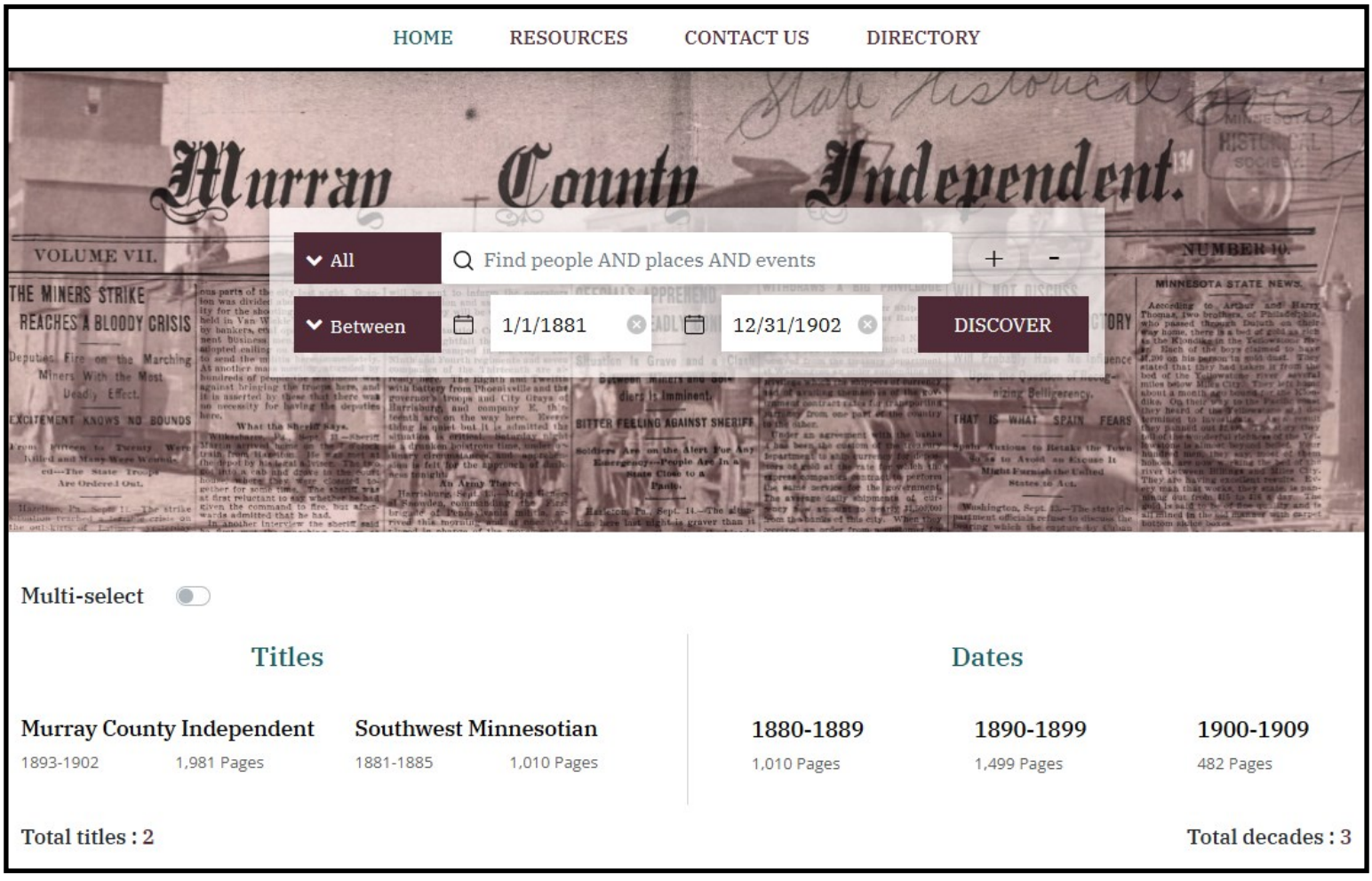
Circe one and send in payment with membership form: Large Business: $100 Small Business: $50

NEW Historical Resource Alert: Digitized Newspapers

The Murray County Historical Society has digitized and made searchable early newspapers and made them freely available online for researchers. The setup and digitization of the initial batch of newspapers was made possible by an Operation Round Up grant from Nobles Cooperative Electric, whom we are greatly appreciative of!

We are very excited about making these early papers free to the public and hope that they get utilized. Staff have already found this resource very helpful, and we hope that you will as well.

As of right now we have *Murray County Independent* (1893-1902) and the *Southwest Minnesotian* (1881-1885) digitized. As we get funding, we will make available more editions of papers from around the county. If you wish to donate to the project, please let museum staff know or send a check with "digitizing newspapers" in the memo line. The archive can be found on our website under our "research tab." People can search names, businesses, towns, or anything else that comes to mind. Thank you to those who have already used it and given feedback.



Donations and Memorials

Thank you to all those who have sent financial contributions to the Murray County Historical Society since our last newsletter. Donations along with your membership help our society continue to preserve our collections, develop exhibits, and host special programs and events.

General Fund Donations:

Jean Pelikan David Engebretson Myron Gnadt for Hunt Plaque

Memorials:

Rosemary Carraway in Memory of Sylvia Knutson Lyons

Rosemary Carraway in Memory of Alice Scully Knutson

thank you

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. Donations may be dropped off at the museum or mailed to: **PO Box 61, Slayton, MN 56172**. We are deeply grateful for every donation and memorial!

We Thank Our Business Members!

Rooster's ON-OFF SALE LIQUOR

Shetek Dental Care

LEFT BANK ROASTERIE & CAFE "Coffee Lovers Dream Come True"

Creative Three Realty Everything We Touch Turns to Sold!

the Hut Gift Shoppe

Jimmy's Pub

SLAYTON BUILDING MATERIALS, INC.

Jerry V. Moline Certified Public Accountant

MURRAY COUNTY MEDICAL CENTER

Trails Edge General Store

Slayton YOU ARE HERE

Rowdy's Radiator and Repair

Chandler Co-Op

STATE BANK OF CHANDLER

Almich's Market where fresh is

Joe Shreier Construction

HADLEY Steel, Inc.

Hoffmann Construction

Investors Choice Financial Services Inc.

CLEAR EYECARE + EYEWEAR

Please consider a business membership. The sign up form is in the previous pages.

Murray County Historical Society
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Jake Halverson, *End-O-Line Supervisor*
End-O-Line Railroad Park and Museum
(507)-763-3708
Jacob.Halverson@murraycountymn.gov

Notice: You are invited to the MCHS Annual Meeting at Key Largo on October 12. More inside!

Museum Hours

Tuesday-Friday: 10am - 5pm
Saturday: 10am - 2pm

MURRAY COUNTY
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PO BOX 61
2480 29TH STREET
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