MURRAY COUNTY
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Quarterly Newsletter **Director's Report** **Summer 2026**

Hello from the Murray County Historical Society. It has been a fast year and I am having trouble believing that it is already July. It feels like just yesterday I was preparing the Dinheart Holt House for the holiday season. We at the museum have been hard at work this summer on a number of projects. Ann has been updating several of the exhibits in the main exhibit floor. Exbhibits are getting cleaned up, artifacts are getting fresh labels, and walls are getting new coats of paint. I invite everyone to come check out the work we are doing!

In some administrative news, we have several grant projects ongoing. Our National Park Service grant for repairing the End-O-Line turntable is chugging right along. We sent out an RFP to hire an architect qualified in historic preservation, and we selected Mike Lovato from LHB, an archtiecture and engineering firm who we have worked with in the past. As stipulated in the grant agreement, the National Park Service must approve of any architects hired, and I am pleased to say that they just approved our choice. We are on track to getting this project done this year. I also want to give a big "Thank You" to Nobles Cooperative Electric for awarding us $646 through their Operation Round Up Program to purchase a series of upgraded data loggers so that we can digitally track temperature and humidity in the collection storage areas. Their Operation Round Up program is a great program that countless organizations from the area can take advantage of. There are many projects that couldn't get done or are made much better due to them. We are also in the middle of applying for a large grant from the Minnesota Historical Society Cultural Heritage grant program to repair the windows on the Dinehart Holt House. This is a project that has been in the works for several years. This is the third time that we have applied for this grant to fix the windows, so hopefully the third time is the charm. The windows are getting to the point where work really needs to be done on them, so if we do not get this grant, we will need to explore other alternatives for funding their restoration.

In May staff took the time to attend the Minnesota Alliance of Local History Museums conference in Mankato. I quite enjoy attending the conference each year for several reasons. The first is that there are tons of learning opportunities! This year I attended education sessions on website design, grants management, digital exhibits, and much more. Second, there are always new connections made and new ideas exchanged with other small museum professionals from across Minnesota. Each year we come away from away from the conference with new ideas, knowledge, connections that help us improve Murray County's museums. Sometimes I get wrapped up in the small details of grants and other management projects that I forget to look at the larger picture. Each year at the conference I see the enthusiasm for preserving local history and am reminded of the impact and importance that local history has for building community and providing a sense of place.

We've also had success with our first ever documentary night program. As part of our America 250th celebrations we screened all 6 episodes of Ken Burn's *The American Revolution.* While we maybe should have scheduled it in a way where we did not compete with the Slayton City Band, we still had a few people join us for the screenings.

Lookimng ahead, we have lots of great fun planned this summer. We have the Dinehart Holt House Front Porch Concert Series, the summer raffle, and the Murray County Fair to look forward to. You will find information about all those later in the newsletter. We hope see you this summer!

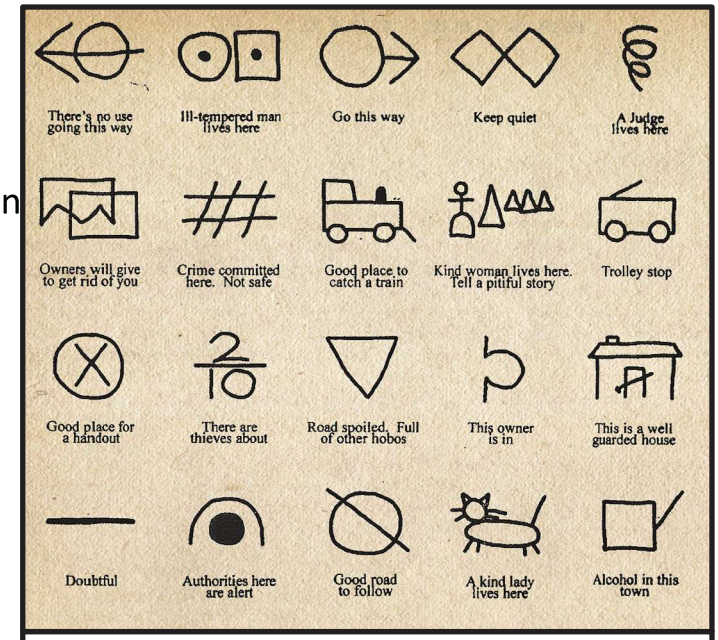
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Hobos and Their Code

By Nick Demuth

There is a common belief out there among pop history enthusiasts that hobos had their own secret code that all the hobos knew, and used that code to leave messages for each other when arriving at a town. Allegedly the next hobo would see a sign written on the ground or on a fence and know if they could get a meal at a house or know to avoid a house because it belonged to the sheriff. Even today when giving tours at End O Line we often hear the common refrain “oh my mother or grandmother must have had a sign on her fence, all the hobos came to her house for a handout.”



This infographic is a demonstration of the alledged hobo codes used for secret communication.

Unfortunately, the existence of “hobo hieroglyphics” as a secret communicative language is almost certainly a fabrication. As early as the 1870s newspapers across the country started reporting on the doings of hobos and tramps. With the growing network of railroads crisscrossing the country after the Civil War, iterant travelers were beginning to visit many more small towns all over the country, making the hobo lifestyle all the more visible to the public engendering a romantic view of the hobo lifestyle.



This carving from Iona, on display at End O Line, has the initials AES, and the date as 5/2/1916.

Leon Ray Livingston, better known by his moniker A No. 1, was one of the most famous hobos of his day. He played a big role in perpetuating the myth of hobo signs. He gave many interviews to various newspapers throughout the US and in his book attesting to the existence of the hobo codes. However, Livingston was a verified teller of tall tales, and most likely would have been paid for his . The more outlandish and sensational his stories, the more money he would make from his books and interviews. To this day no existing hobo code signs have been found or documented. During the heyday of hobo travel, many people went undercover to write pieces on the hobo lifestyle, and they say that while the idea of hobo signs is exciting it was not a reality. Josiah Flynt, a sociologist and author, took to the road, posing as a hobo in order

to study the sociology of the tramp and hobo. In 1895 he began publishing is findings over several volumes. In his *Notes of an Itinerant Policeman* (1900), Flynt writes that: "…hoboes do not make use of the marks and signs with which the popular fancy has credited them…" Many subsequent historians and sociologists have agreed that hobo signs were fabrications



This door, on display at End-O-Line, has the inscription "Tex - K.T." The door comes from one of the outbuildings in the Currie railyard.

Why then did the idea of a secret hobo code catch on in popular imagination? Part of the reason, besides being exciting, was that hobos were well known for leaving graffiti! However, the graffiti that hobos left was not hard to read, nor was it mysterious. Hobos were quite well known for leaving their “moniker” (assume name for travel, ie Tennessee Slim), direction of travel, and the date. They did this so that they could leave a record of their travel and meet up with friends and other hobos further down the line. Most of these would have been done in chalk or ink, but the more industrious among them would carve their monikers in wood. We have several examples of actual carved monikers from the area at End O Line Railroad Park and Museum. These prolific examples of railroad graffiti primed the public into believing that the railroad goers had their own secret system of signs and codes.

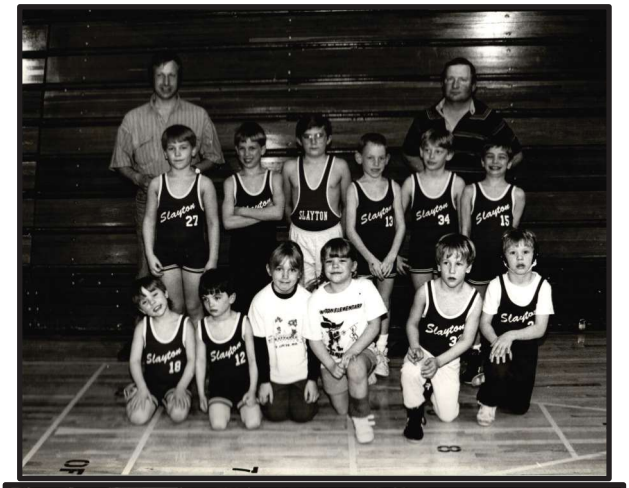
Pictured here are some boards of wood featuring hobo monikers. When the town of Iona was preparing for their centennial in 1996, dilapidated buildings in their railroad yards were being taken down. These wood pieces with hobo carvings were found and donated to the park.

One of the more famous monikers was Tex KT, or Tex King of the Tramps. Tex was a tramp who was quite well travelled and was liberal with his moniker. In Murray County alone there are at least two surviving examples of his name, one in Currie, and one in Fulda. However, his name has been found all over the US. In almost every railroad town he visited he allegedly left his name. According to the man himself, he left over 7,300 signatures over 15 years. It is hard to veryify of course, being that his markings were often temporary and that buildings have fallen into disrepair, but his story may well be true, as his moniker has been found all over the North America.

Wheel Herald Photos Update by Colleen Gengler

If you have visited the museum anytime in the last couple of years, you likely know about the many Wheel-Herald photos that were donated. Volunteers have really helped to identify people, places and things for many photos, but there are still hundreds that need identification. It can be daunting to take on a whole stack of photos from different time periods and news events. To make it easier, volunteers have sorted many of the photos by subject. There are all kinds of topics; high school sports, community organizations, buildings, parades, weddings, engagements, band, choir, businesses and more. So if you know something about girl's basketball or boy's track, elementary school events, scouting, agriculture, pageants, proms, homecoming and more, stop in and work on the topics you know about. There is also a pile of photos with most of the people and places identified. All those need is just one more person to look at them and ID that one last piece. The photos cover subjects throughout Murray County including the different school districts. Your help will be greatly appreciated! The photos below are some examples of the wonderful photos that need identification.









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.



Collection Spotlight

Pictured here Pictured below are some photos of the Bicentennial Flag Presentation Ceremony at End O Line Railroad Park and Museum on June 16th 1975. Earlier, the town of Currie had applied to the Minnesota American Revolution Bicentennial Commission to be recognized as an official Bicentennial Community. The chair of the Minnesota commission, Lieutenant Governor Rudy Perpich came to End O Line to present the town of Currie with the official bicentennial flag. During the ceremony Perpich remarked that “more people turned out for the bicentennial presentation in Currie than did in four similar presentations in the Metro.” After Perpich presented the flag to Mayor Donahue, the Tracy High School pep band played America The Beautiful and the flag was ran up the newly installed flag pole. Perpich also got a free spin on the turntable after the event.







New Post Cards

Did you know that the Murray County Historical Society has several new post cards for sale featuring iconic views of the county? Have a friend who moved away? Visiting the museum from out of town? Want to get back in touch with a class member? Consider sending them a post card featuring a historic view of one of Murray County's towns! Pictured below are just a few of the many post card designs available.









Updates From End O Line Railraod Park and Museum

By: Jake Halverson, Site Supervisor

Summer has arrived at End-O-Line Railroad Park and Museum -and a very muggy Summer it is. What was once a nice, cool, and dry couple of months has been replaced with sweaty, humid tropics. But who is complaining? We have been doing very well out at the Park in Currie this year.

I should first like to mention the summer help that we have at EOL this season. Nancy Moberg and Anna Johnston have returned -this being Nancy's sixth year in a row and Anna's second. Nancy and Anna are joined this year by Mr. Denny Stubbs, who comes to us from Moville, Iowa, via a summer house on Lake Shetek. While Nancy has been diligently looking to the needs of the front counter, Anna and Denny have been providing terrific, guided tours for our visitors. When we are without visitors (which often happens for a couple of hours around midday), Anna has been working on inventorying and cleaning items that will be returned to display in the General Store. During these off-hours, Denny has been doing excellent work making much needed repairs, touch-ups, and all-around general fixes to the infrastructure on the grounds. In short, we have an excellent team this year -and I couldn't be happier with all of their great work and determination in bringing a unique and positive experience to each visitor.

Indeed, there have been quite a few visitors this year. This is, in no small way, due to a very unexpected request from Minnesota's local CBS affiliate out of my hometown, Minneapolis. Earlier, in the month of June, I had been contacted by WCCO's John Lauritsen to see if it would be alright to come down to Currie to do a news piece on End-O-Line. This piece would then be aired two weeks later during a 10:00 pm broadcast for the *Finding Minnesota* series. Naturally, I was happy to oblige. After welcoming John and his videographer, Mike Durenberger, to the Park, I showed them just what it was that made our museum so unique (hint: the turntable). It was a pleasure to meet John and Mike (I thank you, both, for your time) and to show off this little gem in Southwest Minnesota. For about a month after the piece on End-O-Line aired, we had visitors coming in from across the upper Midwest daily, saying that they had seen our museum on the news and wanted to come find us to experience it in person.

Also in June, End-O-Line held its Annual Open House. Aside from being very well attended on a day with terrific weather, we were honored to host our guest speaker for 2026, Teresa Peterson, Ed.D. Dr. Peterson is an author, storyteller, and gardener from the Upper Sioux Community. As a Sisseton Wahpeton Dakota, she was gracious enough to come and speak with us regarding our shared history in Southwest Minnesota. Dr. Peterson spoke to the Indigenous history that is often overlooked when discussing the events surrounding the outbreak of the US-Dakota War of 1862, specifically, the event which occurred here in Murray County, at what is now called, "Slaughter Slough." Thank you for relating to us our shared history, Dr. Peterson, and we look forward to your next book!

Lastly, I would like to mention EOL, itself. Above, I noted that Anna Johnston is doing inventory work with items from our General Store. Now that the Store, and the Grist Mill, have been moved, we are in the process of readying the displays so that they will be completed for next year's opening, Memorial Day Weekend, 2027. There are an awful lot of boxes that need to be moved, their contents cleaned and inventoried, and everything placed on the shelves. But we are well on the way to getting ready for the two buildings' grand reopenings. As stated, though, that is something to look forward to next year. Until this Fall, I wish you all a pleasant, non-tropical, end to your respective Summers. If you have the time, why not come out and visit us in Currie? You can even take a spin on our rentable e-bikes. All are welcome.

Fair Hours



Stop by the Museum During the Murray County Fair!

Special Museum Hours During the Fair:

August 12 - August 14: Noon to 7:00pm

August 16: Noon to 5:00pm

The Museum, the Sierk Agricultural Building, and the Wornson Cabin will be open during the above hours at the fair. In addition, the Dinehart Holt House will be open Thursday during the fair. A special exhibit featuring artifacts relating to the American Revolution will be on display.

Please Note: Due to increased foot traffic and decrease staff availability we will not be able to accept any new donations or accomodate in depth research requests during the week of the Murray County Fair. Staff may not always be around to assist with the donation process and we want to prevent items from being lost or misplaced during the chaotic time. We will be happy to accept your artifact donations and resesarch requests before or after the week of the Murray County Fair.

Updates From the Fulda Heritage Society

The major foundation project at the Fulda Depot was completed in June. Rotting foundation beams under the 1880 two-story Fulda Depot jeopardized the building's stability and caused its closure to the public. Final details completed this spring included site grading, paver replacement on the south side of the Depot, and ADA-compliant ramp construction. The Fulda Heritage Society opened the Depot for visitors on Saturday, June 20, during Fulda's summer Wood Duck Festival. The Depot was the gathering point for the annual Memorial Tractor Ride where community members met at the Depot with their classic tractors, drove through the town and countryside, and returned for a community meal hosted by the Fulda Heritage Society across the street. As community members toured the main floor of the Depot, guests could view a display of photos and milestone reports on the Depot foundation project. The Fulda Heritage Society meets the first Thursday of each month throughout the year. The meetings are at 7:00 PM at the Fulda Senior Center. All are welcome to attend!



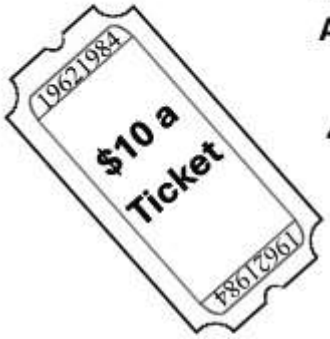
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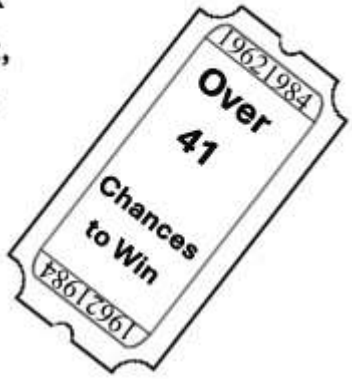
Purchase Tickets at the Museum or From MCHS Board Members

Drawing on August 15 at 5pm

Stays, Tickets, and Baskets:

Kid-Sized Handmade Picnic Table, One Night Hotel Stay at Grand Falls Casino Resort (Sunday Through Thursday), Autographed Twins Pitcher Cole Sands Photo, Minnesota Gophers Basket, Craftsman Tool Blade Set, NAPA Auto Parts Bucket with Supplies, 2x MCHS Shirt, Vikings Inner Tube, Thrifty White Basket, Auto Value Car Care Kit, Key Largo Shirt, End O Line Basket, Diane's Dockside T-Shirt 4 Tickets to any home Sioux Falls Stampede Game 2026-2027 season, Slayton Country Club 9-Hole Punch Card, 5 Culligan Waters





Gift Cards:

$30—Diane's Dockside $25—VIP Floral, $25—Painted Prairie, 2x $25-Hometown Meats, 4x$25—Jimmy's Pub 4x $10—Key Largo, 3x $20—The Hut, $10—Midwest Supply, 3x $10—Hub Drive In, 10x $10 Pelican Cove

History Hunt



The Murray County Historical Society has put together a county wide history scavenger hunt!

The goal of the history scavenger hunt is to encourage you to go out and visit parts of the county that you seldom or never encounter and learn a bit about them and their history. This hunt is sure to be educational and fun for families and other enjoyers of local history.

If you successfully complete the scavenger hunt you will be entered into a drawing for a grand prize! Visit the museum today to pick up a history hunt booklet and begin your search!

MURRAY COUNTY
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

PRESENTS

THE 2026 DINEHART HOLT HOUSE

FRONT PORCH CONCERT SERIES

Thursday July 23: Hope Welu - 7pm

Thursday July 30: The Double Down Daredevils - 7pm

Thursday August 6: Kindred Spirits - 7pm

Each concert is located the
Dinehart Holt House
2812 Linden Ave, Slayton, MN

This activity is funded in part with a grant from the Southwest Minnesota Arts Council made possible by an appropriation from the Minnesota State Legislature with money from the State's general fund.

Southwest Minnesota ARTS Council

WWW.MURRAYCOUNTYHISTORICALSOCIETY.COM

2026 Membership Renewal

Thank you to everyone who has already renewed your memberships! All **2025** Murray County Historical Society memberships expired as of **January 1, 2026**. Any membership renewals received before **October 1st of 2026** will go towards a **2027** 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
_____

Check One
☐ Annual Membership $15.00
☐ Family Membership $25.00
Life Member—Donation $_____

Method of Payment
☐ Cash ☐ Check

☐ Membership Card received

_____
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

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:

Corinne Marz, Nicholas and Korin Demuth



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

Creative Three Realty

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

NAPA ROWDY'S Radiator & Repair LLC. | Auto & Truck Parts LLC.

Chandler Co-Op

STATE BANK OF CHANDLER

Almich's Market where fresh is

Joe Shreier Construction

Hadley Steel, Inc.

Investors Choice Financial Services Inc.

Hoffmann Construction

CLEAR EYECARE + EYEWEAR

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End-O-Line Railroad Park and Museum
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You are invited to participate in MCHS's Summer History Hunt! Information Inside!

Museum Hours

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

MURRAY COUNTY
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

PO BOX 61
2480 29TH STREET
SLAYTON MINNESOTA 56172