

# AITKIN COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## DEPOT HIGHLIGHTS NEWSLETTER

**Summer 2018 — Volume 25, Issue 3**

### FROM THE ADMINISTRATOR

It is hard to believe that I have now entered my 11th month here at ACHS. The time has flown by. I have enjoyed and have been challenged by the work of being administrator here at the Depot.

Our summer events have come to a close with the wrapping up of our ginormous garage sale. I was shocked by how many items were donated to the garage sale. I am thankful to all the folks who thought of us when downsizing. I am also overwhelmed by the amount of time invested by our volunteers. If you want to know more about the sale there is more information about it inside the newsletter. Many thanks to Colleen Bremner and Nancy Jacobson for heading up this big undertaking.

Our Aitkin County Fair display was also a success with over 1,200 visitors coming through our log building at the fairgrounds. We were able to showcase some WWI items from our collections as well as information and artefacts from the 1918 fire and flu. We also had special guests Midge Johnson demonstrating hide tanning techniques, Audrey Mate demonstrating wool spinning, and Steve Marudas displaying part of his collection of logging materials on display at the White Pine Logging and Threshing Show near McGrath, MN. Many thanks to Laura Thornbloom for taking on the responsibility of creating the display. Also big thanks to Christine Bailey and John Hendrickson for helping put the display up. John also loaned us a unique wool army blanket with hundreds of military insignia patches including many of the WWI divisions for our fair display. This blanket is on temporary display down at the Depot Museum so if you missed at the fair you can see it here.

In July we have also added a new employee to our ranks under the auspices of the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP). Lori is a great addition to our team. You can find more about her inside the newsletter.

In June we held our annual meeting and elected a new board of directors. Along with many returning members we welcomed Marcia Baer, Pixie Peterson, and Kirk Peysar as new board members. Our board president is now Jennie Hakes and Cheryl Meld is our new Vice President. Laura Thornbloom has continued on as our board secretary. Retiring board members are Lorrain Liljenquist, Nancy Jacobson, and Ron Kemmett. Many thanks to all the hours our board of directors invest into our organization.

One last note on what plans are for this Fall. As usual, we have reduced our museum operating hours down to three days per week after Labor Day. We are open Wednesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays 10:00 am—4:00 pm. We are also beginning work on the StEPS program. You can find more information about this program inside the newsletter. We will also be participating in a photo scanning clinic in partnership with the Aitkin Library on October 9th. Check out the Volunteer Opportunities section to find out how to be involved with this one day program.



# MEMBERSHIP NEWS

## NEW MEMBERS

Paul Anderson  
 Sara & Clint Beckstrand  
 Bill Bradlich  
 Kathryn Engdahl  
 Dean Frost  
 Maggie Mackaman  
 Mary Jean Peterson  
 Pixie Peterson  
 Bruce & Kathy Rehwaldt  
 Maryann Schwalenberg  
 Clyde Swanson



## Raffle Tickets

We are fast approaching our goal of 3,500 tickets sold this year! We currently have 2,466 tickets sold. We have sold out all of the tickets we have on hand at the museum. If you have tickets that we sent you that you don't intend to sell, please send them back to us so that we can sell them and reach our goal. Thanks!



Help us save money on postage by requesting your newsletter to be emailed to you. You can let us know by calling us at (218)927-3348 or by emailing us [achs3348@embarqmail.com](mailto:achs3348@embarqmail.com)

## ACHS Is Supported by These Local Governments

Aitkin County  
 Aitkin Township  
 Beaver Township  
 Farm Island Township  
 Idun Township  
 Lakeside Township  
 Libby Township  
 Nordland Township  
 City of Tamarack



***IF YOU DON'T SEE YOUR TOWNSHIP LISTED. PLEASE CONSIDER ASKING YOUR TOWNSHIP BOARD TO SUPPORT THE ACHS AT YOUR NEXT TOWNSHIP MEETING!***



**ACHS is still collecting your scrap copper. If you have bits laying around in your way bring them on down to the Depot Museum and we can use them!**



## BOARD MEMBERS

Jennie Hakes—President  
 Cheryl Meld—Vice-President  
 Laura Thornbloom—Secretary  
 Colleen Bremner—Treasurer  
 John Hendrickson  
 Bob Lake  
 Marcia Baer  
 Pixie Peterson  
 Kirk Peysar  
 Mark Wedel—Aitkin Co. Com.



## Business Members

Aitkin Flowers & Gifts  
 Aitkin Independent Age  
 Allen County Public Library  
 American Legion Post 86  
 Antoine Electric  
 Brands Small Engine Repair  
 Bremer Bank  
 Eyecare Centers of Aitkin & McGregor  
 Lundberg Plumbing & Heating  
 Security State Bank  
 Shirts Plus



***PLEASE SUPPORT OUR BUSINESS MEMBERS!***



# MUSEUM HAPPENINGS

## StEPs program

ACHS has received a grant through the Legacy Amendment which will cover the cost of doing a self-assessment project called Standards and Excellence Program for History Organizations (StEPS). This program will help us identify where ACHS measures up with other local history organizations in our policies, programs, and practices. The program will guide us in assessing six key areas of our organization (Collections, Management, Vision-Mission-Goals, Interpretation, Historic Structures, and Audience). We will tackle one section at a time beginning with Collections. Once StEPS is completed we will have a list of projects that will help us bring ACHS to the next level of excellence. These projects will give our board direction in creating a long-term strategic plan. If you are interested in being a part of assessing one of these areas of ACHS please let us know and we'll get in touch with you when we start to look at that portion of the assessment.

## A New Employee

If you have called the Depot Museum recently, you may have heard a new voice answer the phone. That is because we welcomed a new employee to our team in July. Lori comes from Pomona, California and is now residing as a neighbor to the Depot Museum at the Rivers Edge apartments located in the old Armory building. Lori is working with us through a program called SCSPI. She is our new front desk receptionist. She'll be welcoming our guests, answering phones, and helping with data entry as we digitize our collections records.



Come on by the museum and say hi to Lori. She is a delightful person to meet and you'll be glad that you took the time to visit!



A generous \$500.00 memorial honoring Melvin Gilmer's life was given to ACHS by his wife. Marion, thank you for your generosity!



## Garage Sale

Our 2018 annual garage sale was a huge success. The garage sale was held August 2-4 and then extended for a couple more days the following week. There were well over 1,000 volunteer hours invested into this event. We also received a \$500.00 grant from the Aitkin County Tourism Grant program to help with promotional expenses. The sale grossed over \$13,000.00 in sales! A huge thanks to all the members who contributed time and the businesses who donated advertising space and services, Garrison Disposal, Hyytenin's Hardware Hank, KKIN, MLEC, Paulbeck's County Market, and Security State Bank.

# VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

**The Aitkin County Historical Society is looking for volunteers and you may be able to help!**

## **Maintainer/Builder:**

ACHS has a talented group of young men who fix, repair and move many items on an almost weekly basis. This group is what keeps our museum in tip top shape and our warehouse in proper order. They are looking for a few more folks to help out occasionally around our facilities with basic building repairs, small construction projects, and moving items. Qualifications include but are not limited to:

- Ability to lift a fair amount of stuff
- Knowledge in how to build or fix stuff
- Experience in drinking coffee at a table while talking about stuff

If this sounds like something you might be interested in doing please let us know!

## **Landscaper/Gardener:**

Our volunteer landscaper/gardener has moved away from our fair city and we will soon be in need of someone to help put our perennial beds to rest for the season. If you like to work with lilacs and enjoy cultivating echinacea let us know and we'll set you loose in our gardens!

## **Data Entry:**

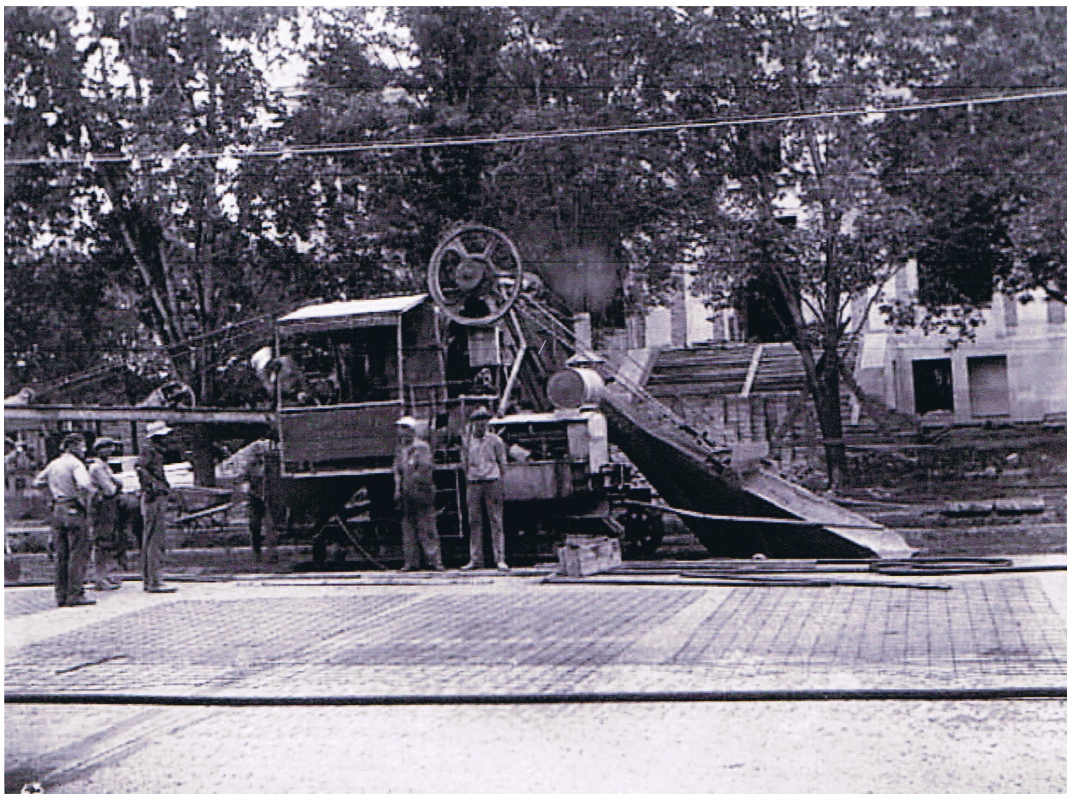
If you would like to work on the informational side of our collections we have work for you! We are in the process of digitizing our photo collection, our accession card catalog, and our people card catalog. You won't need any high end computer skills to help with this project. We'll train you in how to do the work. If you are interested let us know.

## **Photo Scanning Day at Aitkin Public Library:**

On October 1st, ACHS is partnering with Aitkin Public Library in a one day program hosted at the library called Scan for Keeps. This program allows people to bring in photographs that they would like digitized. There will be equipment available for multiple workstations where people will be instructed in how to scan their photos. ACHS will be providing volunteers to help with the program. At the end of the day ACHS will receive a flash drive of all the photos scanned that day for our collection. If you are interested in helping out for all or part of the day let us know!



## PHOTOS FROM OUR COLLECTION



With construction underway for the new county government building, this 90-year-old picture of construction happening of the current courthouse seemed apropos



We recently received a bundle of letters of H.C. Beecher from the City of Aitkin. He was the County Auditor for many years. Here he is pictured at his desk in the old courthouse in 1916 with an unidentified individual.

## SPRING 2018 ACCESSIONS

|       |                     |                          |       |                  |                      |
|-------|---------------------|--------------------------|-------|------------------|----------------------|
| 18.9  | 1 Stop Realty, Inc  | Aitkin Plat Book         | 18.34 | Donald Marpe     | Personal memoirs     |
| 18.10 | Neigh. Bank         | Hospital Aux. Records    | 18.35 | John Howard      | Sports equipment     |
| 18.11 | Itasca Co H.S.      | Misc. paper items        | 18.36 | Judy Heitalahti  | Phone books          |
| 18.12 | Darlene Maciej      | McGrath related items    | 18.37 | Mike Wayrynen    | MHS yearbooks        |
| 18.13 | Sharon Gustin       | Aitkin teddy bears       | 18.38 | Alice Dotzler    | Photo, Bapt. dress   |
| 18.14 | Pat Killeen         | AHS 1942 information     | 18.39 | Lynn Futhey      | Family history books |
| 18.15 | Julie Hansen        | Aitkin Cookbooks         | 18.40 | Doris Nordean    | Photo                |
| 18.16 | Nancy Thompson      | Ingersoll Scrapbook      | 18.41 | Bunny Grolla     | R/R items            |
| 18.17 | JoAnn White         | Postcards, photo, map    | 18.42 | Gerald Fiedger   | Moccasins            |
| 18.18 | Janet Miller        | Photos                   | 18.43 | Heritage Grp N   | Misc. items          |
| 18.19 | Pat Killeen         | AHS '42 class info.      | 18.44 | Garage Sale      | Misc. items          |
| 18.20 | Sandy Lake          | Umb. & band cap          | 18.45 | Janet Miller     | MHS yearbooks        |
| 18.21 | Debbie Janzen       | Misc. Aitkin items       | 18.46 | Anne Adams       | Dress                |
| 18.22 | Janet Miller        | Photos                   | 18.47 | Adele MacDonnell | Oil Painting         |
| 18.23 | Mara M. Funk        | Misc. paper items        | 18.48 | Ted Landgren     | Book                 |
| 18.24 | Marlene Monse       | Scrapbook                | 18.49 | Elaine Halbeck   | Med. containers etc. |
| 18.25 | Janet Miller        | Misc. paper items        | 18.50 | Pamela Johnson   | Buttons              |
| 18.26 | Aitkin Pub. Schools | Rippleside yearbooks     | 18.51 | Moose Lake H.S.  | Negatives            |
| 18.27 | Alice Dotzler       | Violin, wood train, etc. | 18.52 | Margeret Mariel  | Misc. paper items    |
| 18.28 | James Zeese         | J.W. Tibbetts billfold   | 18.53 | Chuck & Jan T.   | Doll items, electric |
| 18.29 | Mike Wayrynen       | Misc. MHS yearbooks      | 18.54 | Cheryl Stauter   | Misc. paper items    |
| 18.30 | JoAnn White         | Several Misc. Items      | 18.55 | Maureen Dearing  | Mil. papers & photos |
| 18.31 | Katherine Hulien    | Coat, shoes              | 18.56 | Jim Kenning      | Family history book  |
| 18.32 | Paul Boucher        | Military papers          | 18.57 | Betty Spigarelli | Book                 |
| 18.33 | Ruth Putnam         | Recipe book              |       |                  |                      |

If you have high school year books you would like to donate we could use the following:

**Aitkin A books:** 1972, 1979, 2010—present

**Hill City Stinger:** all editions before 1976, 1980, 1985, 1987—1991, 1993—2000, 2002, 2006—present

**McGrath Memories:** all editions except 1954

**McGregor Pine Log:** 1934-1948, 1965, 1979, 1982—1984, 2003—present



# SNIPPETS FROM THE PAST

AITKIN COUNTY, MINNESOTA, THURSDAY, JANUARY 4, 1923.

## MR. BEIDLEMAN DOES NOT WANT NEW COURT HOUSE BUILT AT AITKIN

**He Gets Temporary Injunction Restraining Commissioners From Letting Contract For New Building  
---Hearing To Be Held At Brainerd, Saturday,  
January 6th**

The county commissioners held a meeting last Saturday at the court house, the principal purpose of which was to receive bids on the proposed new court house and to let a contract for its construction, but early in the day they were served by an order from Judge McClenahan, restraining them from letting the contract, but not from receiving the bids.

The order was asked for by Mr. Wm. Biedleman of McGregor, and he was represented by Attorneys M. E. and C. A. Ryan of Brainerd, the junior member of the firm being here to see that the judge's order was complied with.

Mr. Biedleman set out in his application for the order, that he is a taxpayer and brings this action in behalf of himself and of all other citizens and taxpayers of the county. That on June 16, 1920, the county board placed a resolution on the minutes of their meeting by the terms of which said board resolved to construct a court house. That at a regular meeting of said board on July 12, 1920, said board resolved to levy the sum of \$70,000 against the taxable property of said Aitkin county for the year 1920, for building purposes. That the assessed valuation of the county at the time of such levy was \$8,166,311.

That at a regular meeting Dec. 5, 1922, said board authorized and directed Auditor H. C. Beecher to issue a call for bids for the total construction of a new court house. That the board authorized W. W. Rabey to appoint a building committee, and that Mr. Rabey appointed C. A. Maddy, Andrew Larson and H. C. Beecher as such committee.

That the total funds available for construction of such court house amount to \$119,306.21, and that the architect's estimate of

|  |            |
|--|------------|
| Pfeffer Construction Co., Duluth         | 171,821.00 |
| Evenson & Utterberg, Minneapolis, Minn.  | 165,000.00 |
| Grahn & Bathurst Co., Minneapolis, Minn. | 179,000.00 |
| Louis Johnson & Co., Aitkin, Minn.       | 176,509.15 |

After the reading of the bids, the commissioners adjourned until 1 o'clock p. m., and at the afternoon meeting the matter was again taken up. After lengthy consideration, it was decided to ask bids for the main contract, so as to keep the cost of the building within the limit of the money now available. The bid of A. B. Drygas Co. of St. Cloud, \$138,881, being the lowest, the board accepted it and let the contract to that company, subject to the decision of Judge McClenahan next Saturday in the injunction proceeding.

Captain Roderick F. McHugh, on behalf of Co. B, National Guards, tendered the armory for use of the county officials during the process of razing the old building and construction of the new, and the offer was accepted subject, also, to Judge McClenahan's decision.

The commissioners will be present at Brainerd Saturday, with County Attorney Scott and possibly other attorneys, while Mr. Biedleman is expected to be represented by Ryan & Ryan.

It is quite probable that the judge will make his decision as soon as possible, as it is a matter of much importance. If the restraining order is dissolved, the county board will no doubt want to start the making of arrangements so that the building can be completed before the cold weather next year; and if it be unfavorable, the sooner the people know about it the better, and we can then "pursue the even tenor of our way."

the cost is \$228,000, and that said court house cannot be constructed for less than \$228,000.

That defendant board of county commissioners intend to receive and accept bids and enter into a contract for the total construction of said court house, in accordance with notice published on Dec. 30, 1922. That unless restrained, the board will receive and accept bids and enter into a contract for building a new court house, thus creating an indebtedness much in excess of the funds available for such purpose, in violation of law and the rights of plaintiff and other taxpayers. That defendants C. A. Maddy, Andrew Larson and H. C. Beecher intend and will continue to act as a permanent building committee, supervising the erection of said court house, although the term of office of C. A. Maddy will expire on Dec. 31, 1922.

Wherefore, plaintiff demands judgment for a temporary injunction pending trial and determining of this action, and for a permanent injunction forever restraining the board from accepting any bids or entering into a contract for the construction of all or any part of said building, and from accepting any bids for the temporary housing of county officials and records, and restraining County Auditor Beecher, C. A. Maddy and Andrew Larson from performing any activities as a building committee.

The order was made returnable on Saturday, Jan. 6, when Judge McClenahan will hear the case in chambers at Brainerd.

After the shock had been absorbed by the commissioners they proceeded to open the bids, when it was found that the highest bid was \$179,000, and the lowest \$151,745. The bids were as follows:

|  |              |
|--|--------------|
| Carlsted Bros., Mpls., Minnesota         | \$151,745.00 |
| A. B. Drygas Co., St. Cloud, Minn.       | 154,780.00   |
| Bartleson & Ness, Minot, N. D.           | 168,676.00   |
| E. G. Evensta Co., Minneapolis           | 161,546.00   |
| Wm. Murphy & Son, St. Paul               | 160,248.00   |
| National Contracting Co., Mpls. Minn.    | 151,763.53   |
| J. H. Olson & Co., Willmar, Minn.        | 155,743.00   |
| J. A. McDonald Construction Co., Mpls.   | 173,595.00   |
| Bracker Construction Co., Mpls. Minn.    | 162,150.00   |
| Reliable Construction Co., Crosby, Minn. | 172,696.00   |
| Geo. J. Grant Construction Co., St. Paul | 173,790.00   |
| R. C. Elvin & Co., Mpls                  | 162,000.00   |

Some things will always be the same ... 95 years ago the County Board was stymied by disgruntled tax payers in building a new courthouse. Although Mr. Beidelman did his best to keep a contract from being awarded (he even invoked the aid of a supposed small pox outbreak in the MacGregor area) the injunction was eventually lifted. Yet some other reason prevented the county from building a new courthouse until 1928. Thankfully this latest building project has been moving along quite smoothly now that it has begun.



## **Aitkin County Historical Society**

**P.O. Box 215**

**Aitkin, MN, 56431**

We are located just 2 blocks south of the stop-lights in downtown Aitkin. Just south of the railroad tracks and west of highway 169 at 20 Pacific Street Southwest.

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Website: [www.aitkincohs.org](http://www.aitkincohs.org)

### CALENDAR OF EVENTS

#### BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

OCTOBER 24<sup>TH</sup>

#### COOKIE WALK & RAFFLE DRAWING

DECEMBER 1<sup>ST</sup>

### MUSEUM HOURS

#### **Labor Day to Memorial Day**

Wednesday,  
Friday, & Saturday  
10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

EDITOR:

**Mathew Nix**

Administrator  
Aitkin County Historical  
Society



*Norman Ostead's Boat on Big Sandy*