



AITKIN COUNTY HISTORY & ANECDOTES

Annual Meeting June 24th

As well as the updates on ACHS business, Administrator Heidi will do a short presentation on what we do on a day to day basis. How do we care for collections and archives? What materials are used to preserve them? How do we safely share these artifacts and stories in exhibits?

While the meeting is tentatively scheduled for the of 24th of June, this day cannot be confirmed at this time. With the uncertainty due to Covid-19 and possible extension of the current stay-at-home order and non-essential business closings, no dates can be finalized.

Please continue to stay up-to-date on ACHS news by following us on Facebook. We will let you know as soon as possible when our doors are once again open, and when a date for the meeting is confirmed.

We are not makers of history. We are made by history.
~Martin Luther King, Jr.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:	
History Articles	2-3
President's Corner	4
Memberships	5

We depend on the support of people like you!

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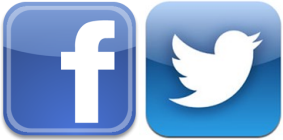
OPEN HOURS
 October-April
 Wednesday-Friday
 10am-4pm
 May-September
 Wednesday-Saturday
 10am-4pm

WE NEED YOUR HELP: SEEKING VOLUNTEERS

Interested in photography? Want to learn more local history? The ACHS needs dedicated volunteers! Potential projects include manning the front desk, working with collections, digitizing photographs, organizing and inventorying storage areas, and lawn/garden care in the summer.

From teens to seniors, if you know someone looking for a great place to volunteer, send them our way!

Contact Heidi Gould, Administrator, at (218)927-3348 or achs@aitkincohs.org to set up a time to come in and talk volunteering after stay-at-home ends!



A VANDUSE VALENTINE STORY

“O Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou?”

There are dozens of Minnesota Lakes named Long, Clear, Loon, Fish and Mud, but only one named after Romance King-- Charles VanDusen.

In 1887 a surveyor, penciled “Pine Knoll” on a plat map known today as the north bay of Vanduse Lake. The rest of the lake was about double in size as it appears on current maps. There were no roads or culverts then, and Ole Evinrude, the Norwegian American that invented the first gas powered outboard motor in 1907 was only 10 years old.

Jacobson’s early 1900 pioneers followed steam boats and rails, settling on land to forge new beginnings. They earned their keep, working at farming, on steamships, railroads, logging camps, and the area’s potato warehouse that was a dropping off site for boxcars of spuds. The region’s abundant hunting, trapping and fishing resources also helped supplement their larders.

On the east side of the lake were the Lundeen’s. At Ellis Island, when Peter Lundeen, entered America from Sweden, he was handed papers and new surname, Lundin. According to a grandchild’s story, passed on by her father Robert Lundin, Peter was respectfully referred to as “Hobo”, due to his railroading and hopping trains before staking out a plot on the lake’s east side. The word Hobo comes from “Hoe” as many travelled with their “bindle” (backpack on a stick or hoe). In northern Minnesota they helped farm, did odd jobs, even harvested and unloaded potatoes.

So, forget Pine Knoll Lake—those that lived then wrote their own history—dubbing the water for years as Hobo Lake.

That was until bachelor Charles VanDusen put the lake name back in play. He was “a very nice man”, according to his neighbors. Charles lived on the west side of the lake, fell in love and married. Shortly thereafter, the lake was known as VanDusen by all of Charlie’s single friends to honor him for taking a small step for man and a giant step for all of the women and children that would enjoy the lake for future generations. Charles and his Valentine reared five children, including a young Charles Jr. Eventually, the Aitkin county plat maps and state of Minnesota truncated the name from VanDusen to Vanduse as it has been named for 80 years.



Lake Vanduse, 1916 plat map, at left

MN DNR Stats on Lake Vanduse

ID: 01005800

County: Aitkin

Near: Jacobson

Border Water: No

Sentinel Lake: No

Size and Depth

Area: 239.51 acres

Littoral Area: 189 acres

Shore Length: 5.71 miles

Mean Depth: 8.2 feet

Maximum Depth: 27 feet

Fish Species: black bullhead, black crappie, bluegill, brown bullhead, hybrid sunfish, largemouth bass, northern pike, pumpkinseed, rock bass, walleye, yellow bullhead, yellow perch, white sucker, golden shiner, Iowa darter, Johnny darter



CLEAN WATER LAND & LEGACY AMENDMENT Beginning in April, the ACHS will be working with LHB, a historic architecture firm, to conduct a building conditions assessment for the historic Northern Pacific Depot. As the building is on the National Register of Historic Places, there are steps to follow to preserve and protect the building.

This Conditions Assessment will do a complete inventory and assessment of the structure as it currently is. From there, a document will be produced providing guidelines for preservation and maintenance, as well as a timeline to follow.

This timeline will allow ACHS to create a maintenance and repair plan, addressing any building issues before massive damage occurs, following historical methods and using appropriate materials. This will allow us to save time and money avoiding expensive repairs. With a 104 year old building, we will do what is needed to ensure its legacy for the next 104 years.

WHO WAS WILLIAM AITKEN?

William Aitken was born in Scotland in 1785. Little is known about his early life in his home country. The family emigrated to Canada sometime between 1815-1820. While there, Aitken decided his named would be better spelled with an “in”, not an “en”. For the rest of his days, he spelled his name “Aitkin”.

William Aitkin joined the fur trade business in the 1820s, and rose through the ranks. By 1830 he was running the Sandy Lake post, operated by the American Fur Company. He was in charge of their Fond du Lac department, which managed posts throughout northern Minnesota.

Rumor and history speculate about Aitkin’s private lives. Some sources claim he had at least 6 wives and 25 children. The true numbers and facts we may never know, along with what Aitkin looked like.

Aitkin managed the Fond du Lac department and Sandy Lake posts up until 1938. At that time, he had disagreements with others in the company. He was discharged (a.k.a. fired) for mismanagement. Leaving the fur trade behind, Aitkin took up farming in Benton County, which he continued until his death in 1851. William Alexander Aitkin is rumored to be buried at the mouth of the Swan River.

Epidemics and pandemics come and go. In looking through old Aitkin Age articles, I found many over the years. The grip and typhoid in 1893. Scarlet fever and measles in 1910. Influenza in 1918. And all the way in 2005 we get the bird flu. SARS, H1N1, swine flu.

While it’s not always that businesses and attractions like museums shut down during these outbreaks, ACHS Board and staff wants to thank our members and visitors for their patience while we were closed to help the “social distancing” effort.

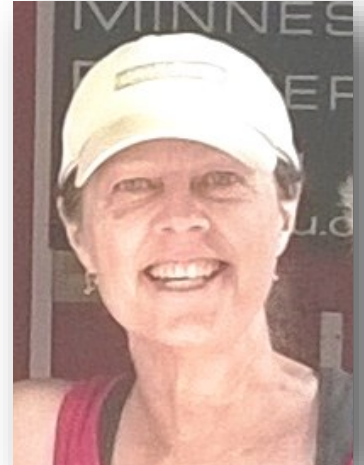


PRESIDENT'S CORNER

WHAT IS HISTORY?

- Jennie Hakes

I have always been curious about the etymology (origins) of words; my mother often pointed out the Latin origins of various words as she did the daily paper's crossword puzzle (why don't they teach Latin in school anymore?). The other day I was curious about the word "history" so I looked it up. It comes from the ancient Greek word "historia," meaning the act of seeking knowledge, plus the result of that search. Interestingly, the word "story" comes from the same Greek root and used to have the same meaning as "history." However, over time, the two words evolved until today we consider history as being **true** records of events and people, and stories as being accounts of **real or imaginary** events and people, told as entertainment.

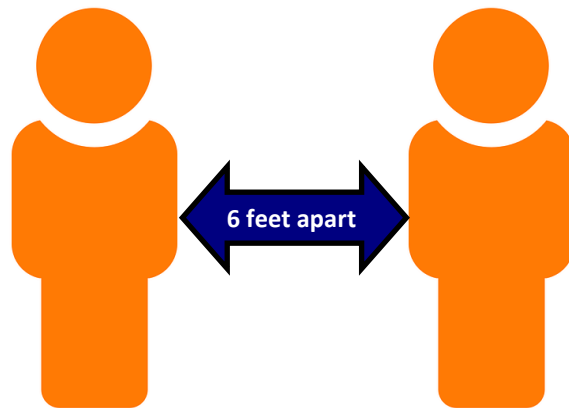


ACHS is the repository of Aitkin County history in many forms: obituaries, books, family trees, artifacts, maps, photographs and many more resources available to the public (once the public is again allowed in the Depot Museum). We also do research, so if you have a question please call us at 218-927-3328 and Heidi or a volunteer will do their best to answer it for you.

We are living in times of uncertainty right now. Many events and fundraisers are scheduled in the coming months, which may need to be cancelled and/or rescheduled due to Covid-19, the stay-at-home order and the 6 foot social distancing requirements.

As of the printing of this newsletter, this includes:

- June 24, Annual Meeting
- July 8, Aitkin County Fair
- Garage Sale
- July 31, Riverboat Days



The ACHS is doing its part to support social distancing and stay-at-home. Should these upcoming events be impacted, the ACHS will notify our membership and public via Facebook.

Be sure to like and follow our page to get the most up-to-date news on how Covid-19 is impacting the ACHS and its events.

Find us at: <https://www.facebook.com/AitkinCHS/>

STAY HOME



STAY SAFE

**Thank you to all ACHS Donors,
New and Renewing Members
January-April 2020**

New and Renewing Members

Paulette & James Anderson
Shirley Barber
Christine Bergman
Sally Bowser
Tim & Gretchen Catlin
Michael Elliot
Dorothy & Roger Glidden
Jeremy Goble
Kevin & Cheryl Gorsuch
Bonnie Graff
Clear Lake Grange
Diann Hendrickson
Ardis Ivory
Bob & Cheryl Kangas
Bryan & Marilyn Johnson
Doug & Carolyn Johnson
Larry & Carolyn Kuechle

Mary Larson
Myron & Donna Larson
Donald McKay
Priscilla “Pixie” Peterson
Scott Peterson
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Clyde Swanson
Marty Tolvanen
Virgie Van Horn
David & Victoria West
Pamela Landgren

John Hendrickson
Tamarack Township
Pliny Township
Farm Island Township

2020 Memorial Donations

Christine Bailey in memory of
Doris Nordean

Donors

Anonymous (Thank you Cash
Donors!!)
Boyd & Colleen Bremner



#GiveAtHomeMN is a virtual fundraising event taking place May 1 – 8 for nonprofits and schools all across Minnesota; it is hosted by [GiveMN](http://www.givemn.org). This weeklong focus on Minnesota organizations will coincide with GivingTuesdayNow, a special fundraiser for nonprofits all around the world put on by GivingTuesday on May 5. Learn more about #GiveAtHomeMN at:

<https://www.givemn.org/about/giveathomemn>

ACHS will be conducting our first Annual Fund Drive, and accepting online donations through MightyCause. If you can give, any little bit will support the ACHS and other non-profits through this trying time.

We appreciate your support!

Aitkin County Historical Society
20 Pacific St. SW
P.O. Box 215
Aitkin, MN 56431
www.aitkincohs.org
(218)927-3348

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

INDICATE YOUR LEVEL OF MEMBERSHIP _____ new _____ renewal

Individual	\$15.00
Family	\$20.00
Senior (over 60)	\$7.50
Life	\$200.00
Business or Club	\$30.00

Name: _____
Address: _____
City: _____ State _____ Zip _____
Phone: _____ Cell phone: _____
Email: _____

Membership Amount Enclosed: _____

I would like to receive the newsletter via email instead of US mail

I am interested in volunteering

Make checks payable to: AITKIN COUNTY HISTORICAL or ACHS

Mail check and application to: **Aitkin County Historical Society**
P.O. Box 215
Aitkin, MN 56431

Board of Directors:

Jennie Hakes, Aitkin, *President*

Cheryl Meld, Tamarack, *VP*

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John Hendrickson, Aitkin

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Mark Wedel, Aitkin,

County Commissioner Liaison

Staff

Heidi Gould, Aitkin

Administrator

achs@aitkincohs.org

If it's time to renew your yearly membership, or you know someone who should be a member, use this handy form.