



AITKIN COUNTY HISTORY & ANECDOTES



In- Person Annual Meeting

“History, despite its wrenching pain, cannot be unlived, but if faced with courage, need not be lived again.”

~Maya Angelou

We have loved opening our doors to visitors again, and thank you for following mask mandates and safety protocols, so that everyone can continue to enjoy our museum.

While last year’s Annual Meeting was cancelled for safety, this year it’s on again. Seating will be social distanced and masks will be required.

After a brief discussion of the ACHS business and where we stand, Walt Ford of the Rice Lake National Wildlife Refuge will give a presentation on the Refuge and some of the stuff they are doing.

The meeting will also allow many of you the chance to see the revamped and updated displays, hear about the Collections Inventory that is ongoing, learn about building restoration work, and more.

The ACHS is also in desperate need of new Board of Trustees members and new volunteers. Not sure if you are the right fit for the ACHS? Take time during the Board meeting to talk with Administrator Heidi and current Board members and volunteers.

See you Wednesday, June 23 at 10am!

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OPEN HOURS

October-April
Tuesday-Friday
10am-4pm

May-September
Tuesday-Friday
10am-4pm

Saturday 10am-2pm



We depend on the support of people like you!

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COLLECTIONS INVENTORY

The Collections Inventory project is moving along. If you are followers on Facebook, each week we are highlighting something from the collections, and discussing the work happening. For example, we unluckily found some old ledgers with mold. We found a freezer someone could donate which will kill the mold spores, and the ledgers will be moved into new archival boxes and a new location in storage.

Artifacts are being rehoused as need with archival materials to ensure their longevity. And our new database is being updated with the location and history of, detailed images of, and what condition the artifact is in. This will allow staff and volunteers to work proactively in the future to prevent damage to collections and use images to note changes to artifacts as they age, actively fill gaps in collections, and more easily locate items and their history for research and exhibit purposes.



FROM THE COLLECTIONS

Dr. Benjamin Kelly used this medical bag (see opposite page) circa 1930s-1940s. Dr. Kelly operated his practice out of Aitkin, but often answered ‘country calls’ in the vicinity for additional fees. Fees included \$13 for traveling a distance of 15 miles and an additional 50 cents per mile beyond that.

Dr. Kelly offered general family medicine and obstetrics. Many of the objects in his bag may look familiar—a tongue depressor, a prescription pad, various pills he prescribed. Dr. Kelly’s medical bag also reveals his connections to state and national medical networks. He served as a local health officer with monitored Public Health. Using items like a Minnesota Dept. of Health postcard, he tracked data on vaccinations for diseases like smallpox, diseases now eradicated thanks to these vaccine campaigns. He also helped track and report cases and outbreaks of dangerous infectious diseases like diphtheria, tuberculosis, and typhoid fever to the state.

However, Dr. Kelly also worked within a growing pharmaceutical industry, which promoted its products with marketing campaigns. Dr. Kelly’s kit included physician’s samples of new, increasingly popular medications like Benzedrine sulfate tablets. This was a type of amphetamine pushed by drug companies in the 1930s. It boomed in popularity in the 1940s when the US Army used it to treat symptoms of trauma and fatigue in American soldiers. Again in the 1950s, as American housewives took “bennies” as their “little helpers” for energy and mental health.

Protracted use of these amphetamines pushed by doctors created a drug epidemic that caused devastating health problems with protracted use. This bag is an important artifact that teaches us about medical care in Aitkin County in the 1930s and reveals connections between the county and larger national trends in the history of medicine.

~Written and researched by Collections Specialist Sarah Junod

—Kaelynn Anderson, "Benzedrine Sulfate: From Military Stimulant to Weight Management," June 14, 2020, <https://museumofhealthcare.blog/2020/06/14/benzedrine-sulfate-from-military-stimulant-to-weight-management/>

—Alan Jacobs, "The Lost World of Benzedrine," The Atlantic April 15, 2012, <https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2012/04/the-lost-world-of-benzedrine/255904/>

—Nicolas Rasmussen, "America's First Amphetamine Epidemic 1929-1971: A Quantitative and Qualitative Retrospective With Implications for the Present," American Journal of Public Health 98 (2008), 974-985

SEEKING BOARD OF TRUSTEES APPLICANTS

Looking to serve a worthy cause? Interested in history? Have a skill to share? Consider joining the Board of Trustees of the Aitkin County Historical Society.



What would serving on the Board entail exactly?

- Monthly Board meeting the 4th Wednesday of every month (except November-February) at 10am- no need to give up your evenings!
- Serving on a Board Committee, such as Collections, Fundraising, Garage Sale, etc.
- Participation in ACHS events, such as Garage Sale, Fair, and Cookie walk– help recruit volunteers, do set-up and prep, or serve as help during the event.
- Willing to give of their time as a volunteer– with limited staff, we rely on the aid of volunteers to share their time and expertise to complete various projects at the ACHS!

If you are interested, or simply want to learn more about what it means to be a Board member, please call or email:

Heidi Gould

ACHS Administrator

(218)927-3348 achs@aitkincohs.org



Spring Greetings to our ACHS Membership!

The progress on multiple projects at the Depot Museum and other ACHS buildings is exciting. It will be great to have a thorough inventory of artifacts and the assurance that each item is clean and stored appropriately. Our county residents and others from near and far have been generous with donations of historical pieces. Many relate directly to Aitkin County and help us tell the story of its development and growth. Others may find new homes in their counties of origin.

Assessment of the Depot building has been completed and we can take action to preserve and maintain this beautiful asset as a community showpiece, from pavers to rooftop. Thank you, Administrator, Heidi Gould for your work in bringing our historical society to a higher level of organizational capacity!

Along with the growth and changes in the ACHS facilities and inventory, another opportunity is being presented to you, the membership. After many years of service, and with a treasure chest of memories, I am announcing my resignation from the ACHS Board. I can't do justice to the value of the experience in this short letter, but I can tell you that the volunteers I've worked alongside are the greatest you can find; dedicated, smart, encouraging and inspiring. The resources at hand to our membership and the community at large are amazing and out-shine many similar small town historical societies, from documents and photos to household, farm and business memorabilia, and souvenirs of historic events. We have it all!

The opportunity now, is to find among our membership, a leader with an interest in supporting the organization in maintaining its quality, expanding exhibits and educational programming and provide fresh ideas to our board and administrator. Are you that person? Help keep this resource moving forward long into the future, Contact Heidi at the Depot Museum to offer yourself to take a seat on the board.

Thank you for your support of the ACHS and Depot Museum!

Sincerely,

Cheryl Meld



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

New and Renewing Members

Bonnie Graff
Marty Tolvanen
Gary Reiter
Robert & Sharon Lake
Ken & Charlotte Johnson
Sally Prill
Mary & Gary Larson
Gordon & Jean Prickett
Zola Thompson
Bill Bradlich
Ross & Vicki Wagner
Rev. Alan Hazelton
Fay Morris
Clear Lake Grange

Donors

Sally Prill
Pliny Township
Libby Township
City of Aitkin
City of Tamarack
Lakeside Township
Farm Island Township
Jennie Hakes & Steve
Hawrysh
Nordland Township
Robert Cox

**WATCH THIS
MONTHS MAIL
FOR MEMBER
RENEWALS
AND ANNUAL
FUND DRIVE
LETTERS!**

**2021 Memorial Donations
February-April**

- LaDonna Larson, in memory of Myron Larson
- Lorraine Liljenquist, in memory of Rich Liljenquist



Items needed at ACHS:

Seeking items needed for collections care and other various projects. If anyone has some of these things just laying around, please consider donating.

- A small vacuum, such as a Dustbuster or one used to clean computers
- Working humidifier or two
- Sturdy shelving units

Plus Volunteers and Board Members to help us!

Contact Heidi at (218)927-3348 or achs@aitkincohs.org to donate items!

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:

Cheryl Meld, Tamarack, *Acting Pres.*

Laura Thornbloom, Aitkin, *Secretary*

Kirk Peysar, Aitkin, *Treasurer*

John Hendrickson, Aitkin

Roxy Wigton, Aitkin

Jeremy Goble, Aitkin

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.

If you are unsure of your member renewal date, please call (218)927-3348 or email achs@aitkincohs.org before renewing.