

AITKIN COUNTY HISTORY & ANECDOTES



WELCOME NEW BOARD MEMBERS!

“History is a relentless master. It has no present, only the past rushing into the future.

To try to hold fast is to be swept aside.”

~John F. Kennedy

New to the Board of Trustees are:

- Lorraine Liljenquist
- Jenni Cline
- Randy Wall.



Current Board Members, Positions, and Terms:

- John Hendrickson, President, 2021-2022
- Roxy Appel Wigton, VP, 2020-2022
- Kirk Peysar, Treasurer, 2020-2022
- Laura Thornbloom, Secretary, 2021-2023
- Jeremy Goble, 2020-2022
- Lorraine Liljenquist, 2021-2023
- Jenni Cline, 2021-2023
- Randy Wall, 2021-2022
- Mark Wedel, County Commissioner Liaison

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

From the Collections 2

3

Memberships 5

OPEN HOURS

October-April
Tuesday-Friday
10am-4pm

May-September
Tuesday-Friday
10am-4pm
Saturday 10am-2pm

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COLLECTIONS INVENTORY

We are now 23 weeks into our 64 weeks of work. Not quite halfway, but more and more of the collections has been measured, photographed, assessed for damage, and rehoused if needed. As we move ahead with the inventory, we are noting artifacts which are outside our mission, such as ones rightfully belonging to Itasca or Crow Wing County. These will be deaccessioned and sent to the proper historical society.

As these items free up much needed shelf space, staff will begin to catalog and house the backlog of donated artifacts in our Collections office. We are also looking for donated used industrial shelving if anyone has some or knows someone who does, to add some much needed storage space.

Other collections needs include a working humidifier or two and a small vacuum such as the type used to clean computers or a Dustbuster. Help us continue to care for our collections to the best of our ability!

FROM THE COLLECTIONS

Hair wreaths gained popularity in the Victorian era, most predominantly as mourning wreaths or *memento mori*. While most were fashioned to remember a lost loved one, others featured the hair of many individuals in a family tree of sorts, or could be a keepsake or reminder of a friend or special achievement.

Why hair, one might ask? In the era before photography, what memorial of a loved one would stand the test of time? “A lock of hair, and it will keep its color for decades, even centuries. Thus, art crafted from hair—a 19th-century tradition in which tresses were braided into jewelry, looped to resemble flower petals, even ground up for use in pigments—remains frozen in time.” (Allison Meier). Using wire and adhesives, hair was made into elaborate shapes— from the flowers and leaves of hair wreaths to the fancy braiding and knot-work of bracelets and brooches.

An 1867 edition of a hair art guide by Mark Campbell affirms: “Persons wishing to preserve and weave into lasting mementos, the hair of a deceased father, mother, sister, brother, or child, can also enjoy the inexpressible advantage and satisfaction of knowing that the material of their own handiwork is the actual hair of the ‘loved and gone.’” Hair has been culturally important to many societies, and in the Victorian era, it was common practice to save hair after brushing hair or haircuts, and to cut locks from those who passed on.

To make a hair wreath, hair was collected from the deceased, formed into a shape (usually a flower), and added to a horseshoe-shaped wreath. This shape was important—the top was not connected, remaining open to symbolize moving heavenward. Usually, the hair in the center of the wreath belonged to the most recently deceased family member; it would remain until another family member died, then be pushed aside to make room for the hair of the newly deceased.

See some samples of various hair art styles on the opposite page. Below, find the one hair wreath belonging to the Forsberg family within the ACHS collections.

--<https://www.artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-curious-victorian-tradition-making-art-human-hair>, Alison Meier

--<https://antiques.lovetoknow.com/about-antiques/victorian-hair-wreaths-their-unique-history>



SEEKING MISSING YEARBOOKS ONLY LISTED YEARS NEEDED

Aitkin "A" Books:

- ⇒ 1972, 1979
- ⇒ 2010 forward



McGregor "Pine Log":

- ⇒ 1951, 1965, 1979, 1980, 1982, 1983, 1984
- ⇒ 2004 forward

Hill City "Stingers"

- ⇒ Pre-1976
- ⇒ 1980, 1985, 1987-1991, 1993-2000, 2002, 2004
- ⇒ 2006 forward



McGrath Memories:

- ⇒ All issues except 1954



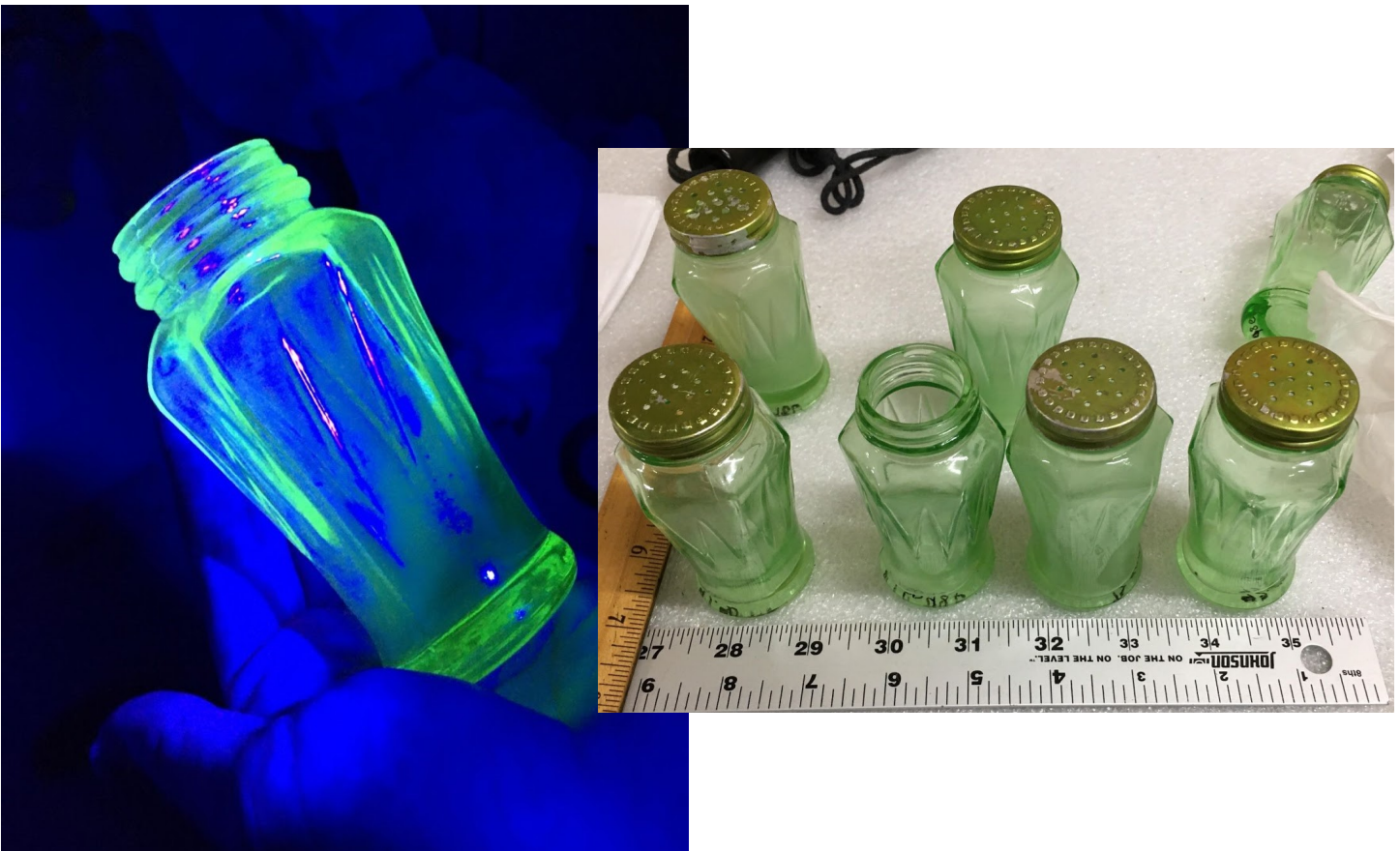
One of the most interesting objects we have come across during our inventory of the collection seems the most mundane but has an interesting background if you know how to find it. At first glance these salt and pepper shakers simply look as if they are regular glass dyed green, nothing super out of the ordinary. Although, once you hold a UV light up to the glass, they tell a different story.

These salt and pepper shakers are made using a unique technique. It goes by many names such as Canary glass, Uranium glass, or probably more commonly, Vaseline glass. It's known as Vaseline glass for one of its more popular everyday colors that mimicked petroleum jelly. Production of this glass began around the 1830s. This glass is created by adding uranium in a specific form into the silica mixture before melting it down and forming shapes. Prior to World War II, trace amounts of real uranium was used. After that, when production started back up again, a mixture of depleted uranium was used.

Most people assume it's the radioactivity that is causing the glass to glow. It's actually the properties of uranium itself that causes the glow under a UV light. The black light causes the electrons contained in the uranium compound to become just excited enough that they will produce a glowing effect. This is also visible during twilight hours for people that do not have a black light on hand. There are just enough UV rays that reach the surface compared to visible light that will cause the glass to glow. This is more than likely what made it popular in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Even though it is not necessarily being used for dinnerware anymore due to regulations, there were a few companies that still produced it as decorative pieces as late as 2004. Maybe next time you're in a secondhand store, you'll find one of these pieces that many people strive to collect hundreds of.

-Written by Collections Inventory Specialist Aurora Schuety



**Thank you to all ACHS Donors,
New and Renewing Members
May-July**

***New and Renewing
Members***

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Hawrysh in memory of
Donna Appel

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

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Senior (over 60)	\$7.50
Life	\$200.00
Business or Club	\$30.00

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 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

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 Jeremy Goble, Aitkin
 Lorraine Liljenquist, Aitkin
 Jenni Cline, Aitkin
 Randy Wall, Kimberly
 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.