



AITKIN COUNTY HISTORY & ANECDOTES



DEPOT ROOF/PAVERS CONSTRUCTION DRAWING GRANT

A people without the knowledge of their past history, origin and culture is like a tree without roots.
~Marcus Garvey

The ACHS has received its first grant in the long process of rehabilitating our historic 1916 Depot. In 2020, a Conditions Assessment of the structure was done, and the architects provided a list of prioritized projects to be completed.

Amongst this long list of projects, it was deemed that issues with ice build-up, roof leaks, and water pooling on-site were of the most immediate concern, not only for the safety of our collection but to ensure the safety of our visitors.

As all of these are inter-related, pertaining to water drainage on-site, a consolidated project was conceived. Repair of the roof, followed by installation of gutters and downspouts, and the regrading and relaying of the entire outdoor paver surface to provide efficient drainage.

This grant will be the completion of architectural drawings for the work to be done, a required first step for a National Register property. Once complete, we will apply for a second grant, one much larger, for the actual work to be completed.

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This project has been financed with funds provided by the State of Minnesota from the Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund through the Minnesota Historical Society.



OPEN HOURS

October-April
Wednesday-Friday
10am-4pm

May-September
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COLLECTIONS INVENTORY

With projected completion in the first week of May 2022, our Collection Inventory Specialists are in the home stretch of this inventory. Having completed a majority of the smaller items in archival boxes, they are now working on larger pieces. Amongst those pieces are: a settee, the Sugar Bowl stools, depot benches, an organ, a steamboat piano, a teacher’s desk, a desk and bed from Beecroft Hospital, and a massive movie theater projector.



All inventoried items have a current condition listing so staff can monitor damaged items for further deterioration. Metadata also includes an updated description and home location to more readily locate artifacts, photographs, donor details and notes on associated artifacts. This updated information will provide better intellectual control of the collection. It will also help us to fill gaps in the collection, compare duplicates and decide which to deaccession and create much needed space, and more quickly assess new donations– do we have something similar already? Is this one in better overall condition than something we already have?

What’s next after the inventory? Updating exhibits on a more regular basis, creating outreach and on-site programs (as the pandemic allows, of course), and rehabilitating the building, among other things. The inventory got our “ducks in a row”, so we can now move on to bigger and better things. Keep an eye out for what comes next!

A big thank you to our Collections Specialists Sarah Junod and Aurora Schuety for their hard work and enthusiasm over the 64 weeks of this project. We wish you the best of luck in your future museum endeavors!

thank you!



WHY COLLECTIONS AND MUSEUMS MATTER

As the ACHS hits it's winter slump in visitors and our donations for the year wind down, it sometimes seems that to many, the Depot is forgotten. Just an old relic filled with a bunch of "old stuff". As a lifelong museum professional, this is baffling to me. One of the favorite topics of discussion in my museum courses was just "why" museums were so important and protecting artifacts so key. I wrote grad school papers on the topic. Now, I could give my own reasons of why museums are important. But, why not use the reasons so many others see in the value of museums?

- Museums possess what the classroom may not: the materials and information that enrich and create an experience that is memorable. [. . .] To see it with your own eyes will create a lifetime memory that studying and memorizing information will not. The experiences someone may have in a museum can shape who they are and who they will be. (Exhibit Concepts blog, "Community Treasures: Why Museums are Important", April 30, 2019)
- In his fascinating Ted Talk "Weaving Narratives in Museum Galleries," Metropolitan Museum of Art president, Thomas Campbell says "Nothing replaces the authenticity of the object presented with passionate scholarship. Bringing people face-to-face with our objects is a way of bringing them face-to-face with people across time, across space, whose lives may have been different from our own but who, like us, have hopes and dreams, frustrations and achievements in their lives." (www.huffpost.com, "Why Museums are Important", 12/19/2014)
- Museums ensure understanding and appreciation for various groups and cultures. They promote better understanding of our collective heritage and foster dialogue, curiosity and self-reflection . Further, they serve to help future generations comprehend their history and recognize the achievements of those who came before them. (www.huffpost.com, "Why Museums are Important", 12/19/2014)
- Museums have the power to create unity on both a social and political level, but also on a local one. Local museums are able to provide a sense of community and place by celebrating a collective heritage, offering a great way to get to know the history of a particular area. (MuseumNext blog, "Why we need museums now more than ever", August 09 2021)
- Local museums are invaluable as they offer a glimpse into the history of a specific location, and help us to honor our communal cultures, customs, heritage, and legacy. (ArtSentry Blog, Why Museums Matter, "Museums Matter for Their Cultural and Historical Benefits", September 30, 2020)
- At that point, I was challenged to articulate why museums matter. I immediately recalled the days following 9/11, when art museums became a place of solace and reflection. When art museums reasserted their ability to provide hope and wonder, celebrating humankind's greatest artistic treasures and challenging us to see the world in a vision unobstructed by rhetoric. In presenting our collections, exhibitions, and programs we reaffirm what it means to be human, creating an enduring sense of understanding, appreciation and empathy in our communities for all those that participate. (aamd.org, From the Field, "Why Museums Matter", June 2, 2016)
- Museums represent humanity in all of its breadth, wonder, rawness and beauty. A world without museums would be less human. Simple as that. - Respondent, 2018 Annual Survey of Museum-Goers (<http://www.wilkeningconsulting.com/datamuseum/impact-2018-why-do-museums-matter-introduction>)
- <https://www.nationalmuseums.org.uk/what-we-do/museums-matter/>
- <https://www.theguardian.com/culture-professionals-network/culture-professionals-blog/2014/mar/26/museums-matter-special-museum-week>

Image source, opposite: Wilkening Consulsting

FROM THE COLLECTIONS

The steamer *Andy Gibson* was built by Captain Fred Bonness and piloted by John Lyon. The steamer began river service in the spring of 1884. The largest of the local riverboats, the *Andy Gibson* measured in at 140 feet long, with the ability to carry up to 100 tons of freight as well as up to 150 passengers. The steamer was purchased by the Potter Co. in 1891 and was used in logging operations.

Andy Gibson remained in service until 1892, when it was retired and moored at Potter's Landing. While many retired boats had their wood repurposed, only small sections and parts of the *Gibson* were removed to be reused. For example, the boiler was used in the heating system of the Potter-Casey store.

The rest of the *Andy Gibson* slowly rotted away. What is left of the boat is now on the National Register of Historic Places, added in 2012. The boat is noted for being:

"Rare and well-preserved remains of a Mississippi River steamboat, launched in 1884 to serve the headwaters region. Unique among U.S. shipwrecks for still resting on its drydock cradle."

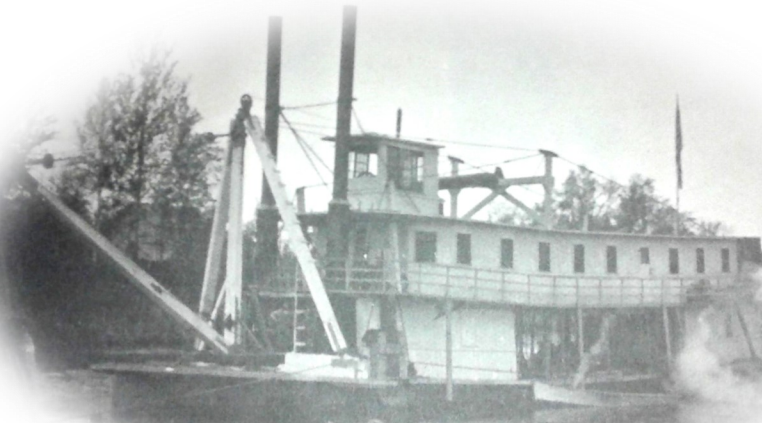
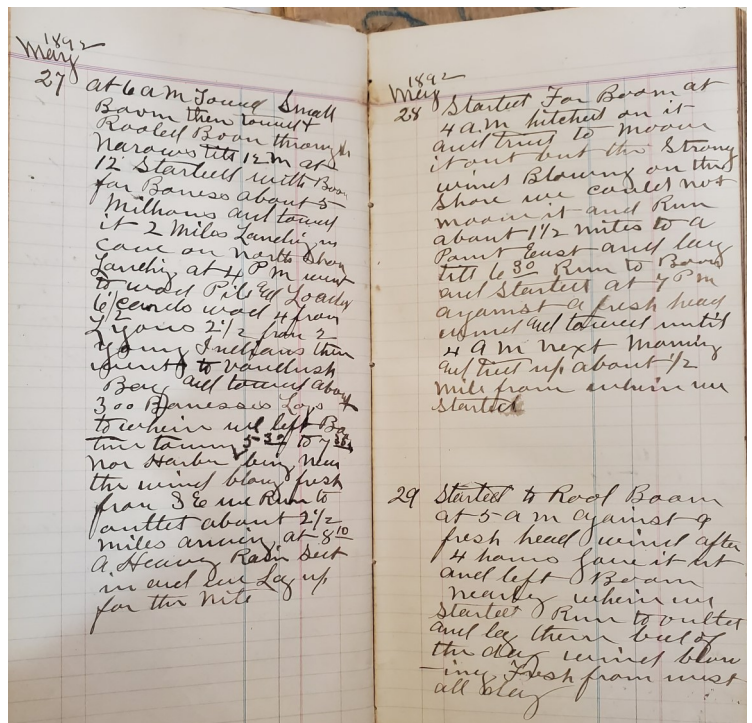
Andy Gibson also happens to be one of only two local steamboats we have paper records for. The other is the *Fawn*. For each of these steamboats, we have logbooks.

Both books of the *Andy Gibson* track the numbers and costs of passengers and freight. One of the books however, also features written accounts of trips.

One such entry from May 28, 1892 reads:

Started for Boom at 4 am hitched on it and tried to moove it out but the strong winds blowing on the shore we could no moove it and run about 1 1/2 miles to a part east and lay till 630 Run to Boom and started at 4pm against a fresh head wind and towed until 4am next morning up to about 1/2 mile from where we started

(This entry was copied as written. This includes any lack of punctuation and spelling mistakes. On a steamboat, a "boom" is a long pole, used to move heavy weights around the boat or between the boat and shore. A boom can also be used to help move the boat off an obstacle or the shore.)



Thank you to all ACHS Donors, New and Renewing Members November-January

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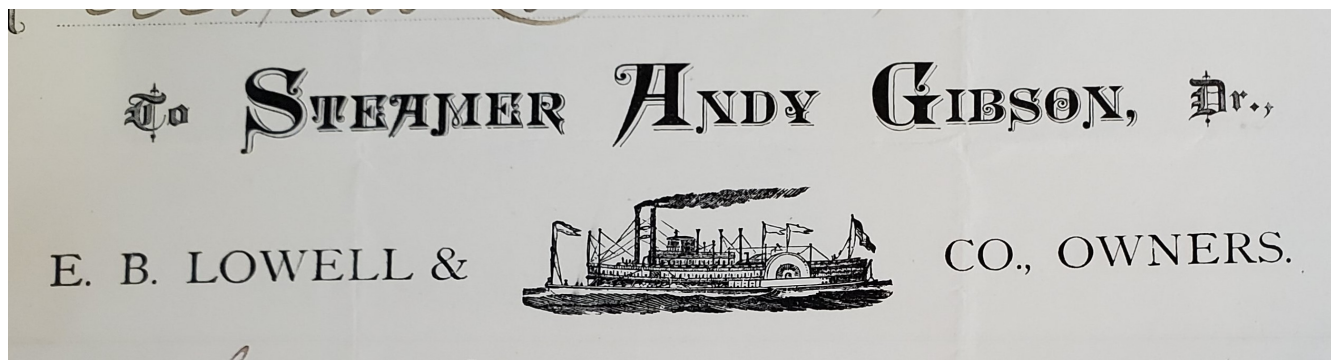
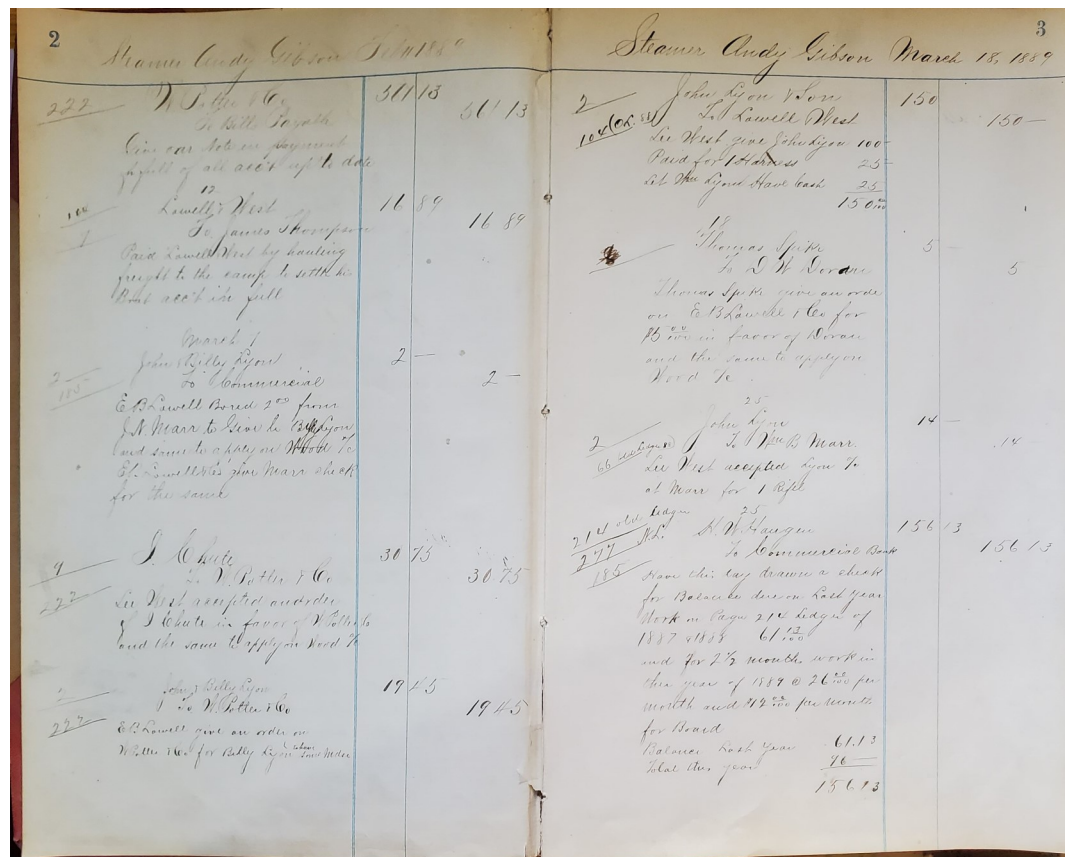
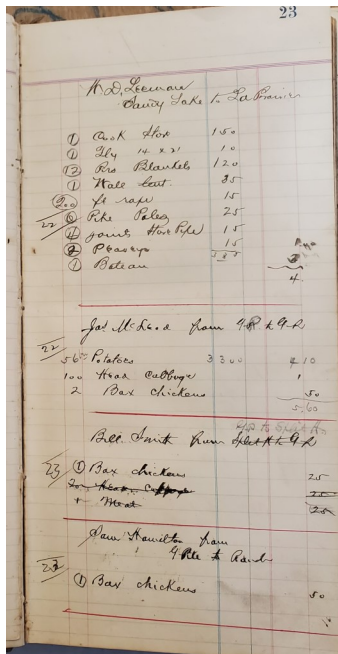
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