

**AITKIN COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY**  
**DEPOT HIGHLIGHTS NEWLETTER**  
**SUMMER 2013 – Volume 18, Issue 2**

Volunteers have repaired a Cedar Strip boat built by Arnold Westling during the 1950's and it is currently on display in building #2 with several outboard motors. We are looking for a pair of old boat oars, fishing tackle and a cane pole to add to the display. If you have any of these items that could be added to the boat display, please contact Greg at the depot.

Our busy season is closing in fast, starting with our annual 6<sup>th</sup> grade tours on May 8<sup>th</sup>. Membership notices will go out to members the first week of May along with this newsletter. Raffle tickets will be printed and sent out with a list of Raffle prizes the first week in June. Last year we gave away 51 prizes in our raffle. A list of prizes that have been collected so far can be found in this newsletter. Next we have the Aitkin County fair. We will have a display in our log cabin on the fairgrounds. The week after the fair we will start to set up for our Annual Garage sale which will take place on August 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> at the fairgrounds. Many items have already been donated for our sale. On August 5<sup>th</sup> we will hold our early-bird drawing for our raffle on KKIN radio.

**VOLUNTEERS NEEDED**

Looking for volunteers to help accession artifacts into our collection, archive photos, organize our files and map collection, enter items into our computer, staff our front desk, work on building new displays, seek out new members, organize our research library and help with our fundraisers. What are your interests? Do you have a couple of hours of free time a week or month that you could help us in one or more of the above areas? Do you know how to write grants? Whatever your talent is, I am sure that we would be able to use it to make the museum better and more efficient.

At the end of May I will have been with the Aitkin County Historical Society for four and a half years. Where does the time go? Thanks to all of our **great volunteers** we have been able to accomplish so much during that time. Membership is up, people visiting the museum is up, our fundraisers are bringing in more funds and more and more people are volunteering to work on projects at the museum. Check out the projects already completed this year. We still have a lot of work to do at the museum but I am very proud of everything that we have been able to accomplish.

During 2008 we worked out an agreement with the railroad, where we would receive the land under our buildings for free if we could get the city to close the crossing at 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Pacific Street. The city has now agreed to close that crossing and Pacific street down to the land that we lease. The railroad has decided not to honor that agreement with us and now we need to pay for our land. Currently, we lease the land under our building for \$100.00 a year. During our meeting with the railroad they indicated that we had a sweet heart deal and that our lease payment could go up to a minimum of \$1,800.00 a year. Now our dilemma is, do we continue to lease the property under our buildings, or do we try to buy it? The price could be as much at \$70,000.00. We would be buying a 50' X 450' strip of land with a permanent lease on an additional 30' X 450' strip. The land needs to be surveyed and then a commercial appraisal done. After the appraisal is done we would use that as a starting point with negotiating a price with the railroad. What are your ideas and thoughts? If we owned the land it would be easier to add onto building #2. Our next lease payment is due in December and we will not know the amount until November. It could be \$103.00, \$1800.00 or more. If they continue to raise the lease payment by 3% a year, is it worth buying, but if it goes to \$1800.00 a year that is a different story. We are currently talking to the Community relations department of the railroad about our situation and there is a chance we can work something out. We are probably going to have to get an appraisal of the property and get it surveyed so when the city blocks off Pacific Street the fence is not on our leased property.

**Greg Leach (Administrator)**

**Board of Directors:** Darlene Maciej (President), Cheryl Meld (Vice-President), Lorraine Liljenquest (Secretary), Jon Jacobson, Alice Dotzler, Connie Pettersen, Pat Williams, Arlene McNevin, Susan Benson, Carol Bailey, Ron Kemmett, John Hendrickson, Bob Lake, Colleen Bremner, Mark Wedel (County Commissioner), Sherry Arvidson (Accountant), Greg Leach (Administrator)

**AITKIN COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP**

Business Members – 36, Individual Members – 27, Senior Members – 107, Family Members – 201,  
Life Members – 17, Perpetuity Members – 2

**TOTAL MEMBERSHIP - 390**

**BUSINESS MEMBERS**

Aicota Health Care Center  
Aitkin Body Shop  
Aitkin Chamber of Commerce  
Aitkin County Abstract Company  
Aitkin Family Chiropractic Center  
Aitkin Flowers & Gifts  
Aitkin Furniture & Carpet  
Aitkin Independent Age  
Aitkin Iron Works  
Aitkin Lodge #164 IOOF  
Aitkin Motor Company  
American Legion Post 86  
Arvidson Tax & Accounting  
Blakesly Appliance Service & Repair  
Christensen Law Office  
Enberg TV  
Eyecare Center of Aitkin & McGregor  
Garrison Disposal  
Gobles Sewer Service  
Gravelle Plumbing & Heating  
Hasskamp Brox. Well Drilling  
Hometown Building Supply  
Hudrlik Carpet  
K & J C-Stores, Inc.  
KKIN-KEZZ Radio  
Lundberg Plumbing & Heating  
Members Coop Credit Union  
Mille Lacs Energy Cooperative  
Paulbeck's County Market  
Peoples National Bank  
Jerome D. Poland, MD., LTD.  
Red Door Resort & Motel  
R & K Cabinets  
Security State Bank  
Sunset Bay Resort  
Tidholm Productions

**SUPPORTING BUSINESSES**

Aitkin Furniture  
Aitkin Independent Age  
Bremer Bank  
Cross Woods Golf Course  
Cuyuna County Auto  
Cuyuna Lanes  
Cycle, Path & Paddle  
Deep Systems  
Emily Greens Golf Course  
Enberg TV  
Garrison Disposal  
Grand Casino Mille Lacs  
Hawkeyes Inc.  
Hyytinen Hardware  
KKIN AM & FM Radio  
Kosie's Café  
Lightning Motorsports  
Lorries Hair Studio  
Northland Subway Inc.  
The Office Shop  
RDJ Products  
Rialto Movie Theater  
Ripple River Motel  
Security State Bank  
Security State Insurance  
Shiperio Games  
Thrifty White Pharmacy  
Tire Barn  
Traditions Mini Golf  
Unclaimed Freight North  
Whistling Wolf Mini Golf  
Wild Mountain

**2013 PROJECT LIST**

- Find a Caboose for display at the museum.
- 40' addition to second display building.
- Set up research area and library in Depot.
- Assemble photo albums for displays showing artifacts in use.
- Clean out building #4
- Cut down trees south of building #3.
- Fill low area south of building #3 with dirt.
- Replace Hot Water Heater
- Transfer videos to DVD
- Create more hands on displays for children.
- Purchase good set of International Flags.
- More information in displays.
- Walking tour of the city of Aitkin (GPS)
- Publish "Barns of Aitkin County" book.
- Print Historical Map of Aitkin County.
- Create more displays with local interest.
- Collect info and photos for three other books. (Schools, Churches and Riverboats.)
- Work with local business leaders to create more interest in the museum.
- Purchase land under our Depot building
- Develop parking area for Depot museum.
- Create some new fund-raising events.

**MOVING!**

Are you going to be moving soon?  
Have you changed your phone number? If you have, please send all of your new information to the Depot Museum.

**SUPPORTING TOWNSHIPS**

**FARM ISLAND TOWNSHIP**  
**IDUN TOWNSHIP**  
**LAKESIDE TOWNSHIP**  
**CLARK TOWNSHIP**  
**LIBBY TOWNSHIP**  
**NORDLAND TOWNSHIP**  
**RICE RIVER TOWNSHIP**  
**LOGAN COMMUNITY FUND**  
**AITKIN COUNTY**

### 2013 COMPLETED PROJECTS

1. Repairs of Cedar strip boat completed and placed on display in building #2
2. Wheels attached under glass cases
3. Shelf for supplies built/installed.
4. Shelf built in Military display for flag
5. Swing from porch re-stained/Painted
6. Photo album for R/R room completed
7. Thermostat moved in building #3
8. Light switches added in building #3
9. Wicker furniture repaired and painted.
10. Drawing barrel for raffle constructed
11. Prize spinning wheel constructed.
12. Outboard motor display stand built.
13. Log cabin display in Depot doubled in size.
14. Walls in Log Cabin display finished.

### BUSINESS MEMBERSHIPS

1. Cost only \$30.00 a year.
2. Businesses are listed in our quarterly newsletter for other members to support.
3. Businesses are listed on our web site with links to their web site or email.
4. ACHS uses our business members first.

Our **Annual Garage Sale**, which is our biggest fundraiser of the year, is only three months away. (August 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup>) Consider donating those extra or unwanted items to the Historical Society and take a tax break. We are looking for: tools, toys, books, holiday decorations, furniture (inside and outside), sporting goods, (fishing, camping, hunting, games, etc.), linens, jewelry, movies, and music. The only items that we do not accept are: clothes, TV's, hide-a-beds, computers, and some large appliances. While doing your spring cleaning (garage, sheds, basement or closets), moving to a smaller place to live, having a garage sale, or buying new furniture please consider donating the unwanted items to the historical society. Items can be dropped off at the Depot Museum in Aitkin. Open on Wed, Fri & Sat. 9am to 4pm until June and then we are open Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday from 9am to 4pm. If you need us to pick up your donated items give us a call at:

**218-927-3348**

If you have no items to donate for our sale, consider helping with the marking of merchandise, setting up the sale, working the days of the sale or staffing the museum during the sale.

### MUSEUM VISITORS

	<u>2009</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>2011</u>	<u>2012</u>	<u>2013</u>
January	30	24	40	40	44
February	18	22	22	55	29
March	30	61	23	187	99
April	28	36	48	153	34
May	77	72	50	100	
6 <sup>th</sup> Graders	84	109	101	91	
June	84	157	472	183	
July	149	229	266	356	
County Fair	1331	1441	1171	0	
August	202	201	214	202	
Garage Sale	0	0	0	1814	
September	42	68	128	118	
Rendezvous	0	0	0	1077	
October	77	141	75	72	
November	30	43	93	41	
Open House	77	60	83	71	
December	13	23	48	50	0
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>2322</b>	<b>2687</b>	<b>2834</b>	<b>4610</b>	<b>206</b>

### CURRENT PROJECTS

1. Completing Obituary files.
2. Assembling Barns of Aitkin County book.
3. Assembling Historical Map of Aitkin County.
4. Schools of Aitkin County book.
5. Churches of Aitkin County book.
6. Riverboats of Aitkin County book.
7. Adding additional information on WEB site.
8. Repairing lapboard red cedar boat for display. (Strip, repair, paint, stain, clear coat) -**DONE**
9. Complete set of AHS yearbooks.
10. Increasing membership. - **ongoing**
11. GPS Walking Tour of the City of Aitkin.
12. Developing research facility at Depot.
13. Obtaining title to land under Depot.
14. Increasing local interest in Museum.
15. Create photo albums for each display connecting artifacts to Aitkin County.
16. Create Administrator time-line book.

### 2013 GOALS

1. Membership over 420 members.
2. Complete Obituary files.
3. Visitor count surpasses 5000.
4. Raffle ticket sales reach 2500.
5. Garage sales surpass 6500 again.
6. Increase number of displays in museum. - **done**
7. Lending library set up and running.
8. Clean up museum files.
9. Organize museum supply areas. - **done**
10. Complete research on book projects.
11. Find a Caboose.
12. More grant money to promote museum.

### 2013 MEMORIALS

Helen Liljenquist - \$10.00

### Members lost in 2013

Ray Morris –  
8/30/1930-1/12/2013  
Kern Ridlington –  
3/23/2013

### 2012 Website Visit Statistics For January & February

1. Page Loads – 3,242  
Average per month – **249**
2. Unique Visits – 2,133  
Average per month – **164**
3. First Time Visits – 1,820  
Average per month – **140**
4. Returning Visits – 313  
Average per month - **24**

### New Books in Our Gift Shop

Minnesota's Outdoor Wonders  
Birds of the Midwest (Quick Guide)  
Fly-Fishing the North Country  
Minnesota Railroads  
Missabe Road  
Seven Iron Men  
Vikings in the Attic

### Museum Needs

White Copy Paper  
Paper Towels  
Toilet Paper  
Tickets for Garbage Pickup  
Bottles of Drinking Water  
Wrapped Candy  
Folgers Coffee (Regular or Decaf)  
Coffee Filters  
Garbage bags  
Copier ink #564

### Museum Wish List

2 – Half Barrel Planters  
6' Folding Tables  
Railroad Artifacts  
Old Plat Books 1916 to 1969  
Old Maps of Aitkin County  
Old City Plat maps  
Family Histories  
Riverboat photos/histories  
Minnesota History books  
Native American History books

### SOMETHING TO PONDER: George Carlin

George Carlin's wife died early in 2008 and George followed her, dying in July 2008. It is ironic George Carlin – comedian of the 70's and 90's – could write something so very eloquent and so very appropriate. An observation by George Carlin:

The paradox of our time in history is that we have taller buildings but shorter tempers, wider freeways, but narrower viewpoints. We spend more, but have less, we buy more, but enjoy less. We have bigger houses and smaller families, more conveniences, but less time. We have more degrees but less sense, more knowledge, but less judgment, more experts, yet more problems, more medicine, but less wellness.

We drink too much, smoke too much, spend too recklessly, laugh too little, drive too fast, get too angry, stay up too late, get up too tired, read too little, watch TV too much, and pray too seldom.

We have multiplied our possessions, but reduced our values. We talk too much, love too seldom, and hate too often.

We've learned how to make a living, but not a life. We've added years to life not life to years. We've been all the way to the moon and back, but have trouble crossing the street to meet a new neighbor. We conquered outer space but not inner space. We've done larger things, but not better things.

We've cleaned up the air, but polluted the soul. We've conquered the atom, but not our prejudice. We write more, but learn less. We plan more, but accomplish less. We've learned to rush, but not to wait. We build more computers to hold more information, to produce more copies than ever, but we communicate less and less.

These are times of fast foods and slow digestion, big men and small character, steep profits and shallow relationships. These are the days of two incomes but more divorce, fancier houses, but broken homes. These are days of quick trips, disposable diapers, throwaway morality, one night stands, overweight bodies, and pills that do everything from cheer, to quiet, to kill. It is a time when there is much in the showroom window and nothing in the stockroom. A time when technology can bring this letter to you, and a time when you can choose either to share this insight, or to just hit delete.

Remember to spend more time with your loved ones, because they are not going to be around forever.

Remember, say a kind word to someone who looks up to you in awe, because that little person soon will grow up and leave your side.

Remember, to give a warm hug to the one next to you, because that is the only treasure you can give with your heart and it doesn't cost a cent.

Remember, to say, "I love you" to your partner and your loved ones, but most of all mean it. A kiss and an embrace will mend hurt when it comes from deep inside you.

Remember to hold hands and cherish the moment for someday that person will not be there again.

Give time to love, give time to speak! And give time to share the precious thoughts in your mind.

And always remember, life is not measured by the number of breaths we take, but by those moments that take our breaths away.

~George Carlin

### **Leave a Precious Legacy, Record your Life Story!**

#### **Have you ever thought...?**

- I wish my grandparents had written down the stories of their lives.
- I'd like to write my own life story but I don't know how to begin
- What gift can I give my parents/grandparents? They just don't need any more things!

Leaving a life story recording to your family and friends may be the most precious legacy you can give them. And making it possible for parents or grandparents to leave their stories to their family is a wonderful gift that benefits both them and you!

“What day is it?”  
Asked Pooh  
“It’s today”  
Squeaked Piglet  
“My favorite day.”  
Said Pooh

Peace is the result of retraining your mind to process life as it is, rather than as you think it should be.  
~Wayne W. Dyer

**Has this happened to you?**  
That awkward moment when you spell a common word correctly, but it just looks so wrong that you stare at it forever, questioning its existence.

**NEW MEMBERS**

Lenore Closuit  
Thomas L. Fielder  
Val Toivonen

**GRANT WRITER NEEDED!**

Need grants for the following:

- Purchase land under depot.
- Publishing books about Aitkin County barns.
- Purchase Armory building.
- Publish Historical map of Aitkin County.
- Purchase Caboose for Depot.
- Purchase scanner for negatives.
- Move log cabin from Stark Lake.
- Promote ACHS Museum
- Research Aitkin Co. Schools
- Research Aitkin Co. Churches.
- Research Riverboats of Aitkin

**HISTORIC MAP OF AITKIN COUNTY**

We will be printing a Historical Map of Aitkin County. Other than the twelve sites that are on the National Register of Historic places what sites should be listed? There will be 80 – 100 sites listed on this map with a short history of each site. I was not raised in Aitkin County so I could use some help with this one. THANKS!

**Donations**

2 cases drinking water –  
Greg Leach  
2 – XMAS Centerpieces –  
Marlene Kingsley

**FIRST QUARTER ACCESSIONS – 2013**

13-001	Gus Carlstrom	1900 Railroad Land map with display case
13-002	Shirley Davies	4 – piece commode set
13-003	Larry Hayes	Tool for putting clips in pigs ears
13-004	John Hendrickson	Book “Soldiering among the Indians in the Dakotas
13-005	Unknown	2 – photos 1932 if Dorothy Eller of Hill City
13-006	Aitkin Co. Hwy Dp.	Assortment of maps and bridge drawings
13-007	Lael Carlstrom	Music stand and Sheet music
13-008	Glen Township	Voting Ballot Box
13-009	Marlys Morris	Misc. paper items
13-010	Norma Lehmann	History of Aitkin County by A.C. Klee
13-011	Lori MacDonald	Assortment of school programs
13-012	Ron Keil	Antique Chair Maker’s wood frame saw
13-013	Jim & Eileen Eifert	Pratt Genealogy records
13-014	Barbara Monnier	1930 Aitkin Co. map, Cass Co. map, 4 MN 1915 Quadrangle maps
13-015	Lorraine Liljenquist	History of Rat Lake community
13-016	John Hendrickson	3 Tobacco cans, Lutefisk barrel

**MEMBERSHIP NOTICES**

Our year runs from June 1<sup>st</sup> to May 31<sup>st</sup>. Notices have been sent out to all members separate from this newsletter. Some members have paid for several years at a time so they will not receive a notice. Your membership fees help to pay all of our museum and society operating expenses. (Heating & Air Conditioning three buildings, Postage, Advertising, Security, office supplies, memberships, maintenance, telephone, janitorial services, rentals, displays, collections/archival, fire protection, accountant fees and wages.) As various events are cancelled or hampered by weather our memberships become a more important part of our continued survival. In 2009 our membership was at 246 members. Our current membership now stands at 390. My goal is to surpass 420 by the end of this year and 450 by the end of next year. Membership is the key to our continued survival.

## **2013 RAFFLE PRIZE LIST**

### **EARLY BIRD DRAWING – August 5<sup>th</sup>**

1. Ripple River Motel – Night Stay – (\$80.00 value)
2. Cuyuna Country Auto – Full service oil change – (\$32.00 value)
3. Tea Light Center Piece donated by Thrifty White Pharmacy – (\$23.00 value)
4. Shakespeare Fishing set – (\$20.00 value) – donated by Greg Leach
5. ACHS Family membership – (\$20.00 value)
6. Stainless Steel Multi-Function Tool – donated by RDJ Specialties – Cordova TN
7. Two rounds Mini-Golf – Traditions in Deerwood – (\$12.50 value)
8. Thermo bag + 10% discount – Lightning Motorsports – (\$12.00 value)
9. Sports bag donated by Bremer Bank – (\$10.00 value)
10. Shiperio Card game of Golf – (\$8.00 value) – donated by Shiperio games – Chanhassen
11. Aitkin County Naturally – (\$5.00 value)
12. Red Bandana – (\$3.00 value)

### **MAIN DRAWING – December 7<sup>th</sup>**

1. Grand Casino Mille Lacs Hotel/Buffer for two – (\$125.00 value)
2. Metal Fondue Set – donated by Hawkeyes Inc. – (\$50.00 value)
3. Squirrel Feeder donated by Hyytinen's Hardware – (\$35.00 value)
4. Cuyuna Country Auto – Full Service Oil Change – (\$32.00 value)
5. Framed Eagle Print donated by Aitkin Furniture – (\$30.00 value)
6. Rialto Movie Theater – (\$25.00 Gift Certificate)
7. \$25.00 pre-paid VISA donated by Security State Bank
8. The Office Shop – (\$25.00 Gift Certificate)
9. Rialto Movie Theater – (\$25.00 Gift Certificate)
10. Tea Light Center Piece donated by Thrifty White Pharmacy – (\$23.00 value)
11. Certificate for 5-tans donated by Lorries Hair Studio – (\$20.00 value)
12. Framed fishing print donated by Unclaimed Freight North – (\$20.00 value)
13. Universal Remote donated by Enberg TV – (\$20.00 value)
14. ACHS Family membership – (\$20.00 value)
15. Tire Barn – Tire Rotation – (\$19.00 value)
16. Bar-B-Q set with bag donated by Greg Leach
17. 25 Piece Tool Kit with Flashlight – donated by RDJ Specialties – Cordova TN
18. Hat & Booties made by Connie Pettersen
19. Stereo Head set donated by DeepSystems – (\$12.00 value)
20. Road Atlas & mug donated by Security State Ins. – (\$10.00 value)
21. T-Shirt "Buffalo Trace" – (\$8.00 value)
22. Shiperio Card Game of Golf – (\$8.00 value) – donated by Shiperio Games – Chanhassen
23. Aitkin County Naturally – (\$5.00 value)
24. Red Bandana – (\$3.00 value)

### **LOOKING FOR TRAINS TO DISPLAY IN RAILROAD ROOM**

We would like to display a variety of HO and O gauge trains in our railroad room. But, any trains will do. Display cases will be built and the trains displayed on tracks. If you have any trains that you would be willing to donate for this display contact Greg at the depot. (218-927-3348)

### **MINNESOTA HOMEFRONT WWII, THE GREATEST GENERATION**

The McGregor Historical Society will host the above display from the Minnesota Historical Society for six weeks starting in November of this year. We are looking for stories about the time period of WWII from Aitkin County to add to the display. What are your memories of that time period?

## **Greetings;**

I would like to introduce myself. My name is Darlene Maciej and the time that I have spent in the history of my families has been since I was in my early 20's. Part of the family tracking started when I made a trip out to California and was informed to stop and visit with my Great Aunt. I had never met Great Auntie Margaret and she did not know who I was until I stopped and left a note at her place. Auntie Margaret called my Grandmother Sophie and asked her about me before I stopped back to hopefully catch her at home. We met and became very close. Then looking up family history became a interest for me. I feel that many people have a deep interest in the history of family, friend and events of the past. I know I have met many wonderful people involved in the history of the families and the area.

As members, you have noticed all the events that have been taking place and the list of projects to be done. I look forward to the research room that Greg has been mentioning. Since I have done some digging and know that there are a lot of resources to check out for family information, I look forward for this project to be completed. The artifacts that have been collected are fantastic and stories included with the items have made it more personal.

As a board member for the McGrath Historical Committee, Inc. I have noticed the abundance of information that is there to be collected. This is also information that will be shared with the Aitkin County Historical. I most recently stopped and snapped a photo of a tombstone that had written on it "Civil War Vet" "Drummer Boy". I was informed about the tombstone at a time when I was out with Carol taking photos of the barns for the book of Aitkin County Barns. To follow with the gathering of information I have learnt a lot about the school in the southern part of Aitkin County since mention of a book to be written. As a part of the historical society there are many fascinating tidbits that come to our attention. Let continue with the involvement we have with the history of Aitkin County.

**President,  
Darlene Maciej**

### **FIVE NEW OR INCREASED DISPLAYS AT THE DEPOT**

1. Cedar strip boat built by Arnold Westling in the 1950's and repaired in 2013 by ACHS Volunteers. The boat is currently on display in building #2 hanging from the ceiling. Polly paint had to be removed, the seats, transom and nose had to be replaced.
2. Outboard motor display (1920's Johnson Seahorse, 1951 Johnson Seahorse) and fishing tackle has been assembled below the boat.
3. Land-O-Lakes Creamery, Hatchery & Turkey Processing plant display
4. Music (record albums, 8-track, cassette, reel to reel) and musical instruments (100+ year old violin, oboe, and Guitar Zither)
5. Log Cabin display in our Depot building has been doubled in size to accommodate additional artifacts from our storage building.

## **Aitkin County Chamber of Commerce** ***1963 Minnesota's Aitkin County Lakeland***

### **Aitkin County – Its History –**

Long ago before there were fences or zoning ordinances or litter-bug laws, the area that is not Aitkin County was occupied by a primitive people who left evidences of their occupancy in the form of earth mounds and crude copper tools. Broken pottery scattered about ancient village sites would indicate they were a rather careless bunch and not noticeably involved in civic improvement projects.

Later the Dakota Indians (Sioux) held the area, but in the mid-eighteenth century certain progressive Chippewa tribes, acquired firearms and knives from French traders and drove the Sioux from their ancient hunting and fishing grounds. The Sioux acquired a few firearms and knives of their own and tried for a comeback. The Chippewa had more time for target practice and the bulk of Sioux tribes were forced to honor the eviction notice, permanently withdrawing to the Dakotas.

A number of early tourists including Du Luht (Duluth), Father Hennepin, Zebulon Pike, David Thompson, Beltrami and Nicollet visited Aitkin County, most of them en route to somewhere else. William Alexander Aitkin, an early American Fur Company trader, arrived in our area in 1802, setting up a trading post at Sandy Lake, (general merchandise, firearms and knives). The village and county of Aitkin were subsequently given his name. A good thing as "Mud River" was seriously being considered as the official village name.

The first white settler to permanently stick it out in the Aitkin County area (1870) was an intrepid gentleman named Nathaniel Tibbits. The business of founding a brand new town was hard work and he persuaded more of his family to join him. A year later Mr. and Mrs. J.W. Tibbits arrived. Their daughter Bertha, (Mrs. Albert Zeese) was the first white child born in the county.

Forests of oak and white pine translated into board feet by early timber cruisers brought droves of lumbermen to Aitkin County in the late 1800's and when the first sawmill was put into operation the future of Aitkin was assured.

This particular phase of our development was known as "THE BIG BOOM". Big booms were a fairly common thing in the old days. Prosperity usually followed, with frantic construction of a minimum of sidewalks and a maximum of saloons. Local residents disagree on the precise number of sidewalks, but generally agree that 17 "we never close" type saloons were necessary to keep the lumberjacks off the streets . . . and the sidewalks. A \$500 license subsequently reduced the number and in 1910, before the thirsty lumberjacks knew what had hit them, the whole town went dry! With the drouth in effect a number of local citizens exercised their rights of free enterprise with ventures into the do-it-yourself-drinkables, but with the timber supply at a low ebb the majority of lumberjacks moved on to greener pastures, leaving the once forested lands here for the hardworking farmers who arrived in large numbers via rail and Mississippi riverboat to clear away the stumps and fight it out with the mosquitos.

Permanent homesteaders and farmers with cattle and horses settled Aitkin County, helping to build a "stable" population. Our first newspaper, the Aitkin Age, went to press in 1883. Aitkin was incorporated and a village band rounded up to greet ex-president Grant who stopped his special train in Aitkin for a brief inspection of the town.

In rapid succession Aitkin acquired a county courthouse, a jail and a waterworks. The Old Mississippi ferry boat service was replaced by a steel bridge, which swung on a central midstream column to permit the passage of highstacked steamboats. Hand cranked into position by a doughty bridgeman, the bridge had an unsettling tendency to stray occasionally from its alignment with the road approaches on either bank. Rescue parties were frequently recruited to fish out unwary horse and buggy combinations which had dropped, together with their startled passengers, into the damp depths of Ole Man Mississippi. Today we still cross our river into some of the finest farm and lake fishing country in the county. 1918 was a bad year. The Cloquet forest fires struck northeastern Aitkin County, taking lives and property and this tragedy was followed by the "flu" epidemic. Our school served as an emergency hospital during the crises.



Things happened in the eastern part of the county too. In 1903 the Village of McGregor was incorporated. Served by two railways, it established itself as an important link to the Sandy Lake Indian country. By 1915 McGregor boasted two railway depots, a telephone system, a good hotel with all the comforts including a gas illuminated lobby, and an assortment of general stores, livery stables and sawmills. Farming was excellent with a monthly 2000 gallons of cream shipped out of McGregor in 1915.

With beginnings as a logging supply center, McGregor rapidly came into its own as a permanent settlement. The year 1915 saw 14 freight cars of settler's goods arriving. Reclaimed meadows surrounding McGregor offered employment to over 150 men during the hay season when the American Grass Twine company provided a yearly cut of over 2000 tons of wire grass for the carpet and furniture industry. The mercantile company of McGregor offered a versatile collection of goods that would put any modern shopping center of today to shame, with groceries, boots, crockery, with patent medicines and hair restorer. McGregor today continues to offer a varied selection of goods and services to its local populace and the summer and winter visitors who enjoy the recreation and fishing provided by nearby lakes. Savanna Portage State Park, a true wilderness area, offers a heady atmosphere of pine and spruce shaded hills and lakes to the camper and hiker. It shelters within its border the ancient hunting trails of the Indians and the canoe portage routes of early white traders.

1929 saw the installation of Aitkin's "Great White Way" in connection with 12 blocks of city paving and 80 concrete lamp Posts. The event was heralded as Aitkin's Three Million Dollar Year of Productions and Construction. Everyone was very impressed.

Diversified products of the Aitkin County of today include livestock and dairy herds, (more of our stable population), turkey farming, Christmas trees, Wild Rice and furs.

Small wonder the Chippewa decided to permanently pitch their wigwams in our county. We modestly commend their judgment. 365 maintenance-free outdoor swimming pools! They convert to skating rinks during the winter. You catch fish in them . . . from a boat in summer, a fish house in winter. Big fish - lots of fish.

The present natives of Aitkin County are friendly, informative and hospitable. They enjoy the visits of travelers from other climates, and have constructed scores of mosquito-free resorts and camping areas to make their guests comfortable. Most every Aitkin County native is a Guide-on-the-side. Do you wish to camp? He will direct you to the balsam scented forests of his land. Do you wish to fish and relax? He will extend to you colorful native maps written in his own quaint language of Hospitalitee, guiding you to the deep blue, fish-filled water found everywhere in his country. And should you desire to skim snow laden slopes in winter or green turfed territory of summer . . . he will show you the way to the ski slopes or the golfing greens, respectively. He can direct you also to the closest stamp vending machine or bait dispensary. Our native hospitality is extended to all who come to enjoy the Aitkin County of today.

Don't forget to ask about the kerosene famine of 1900.

## **SPORTS**

Out-door sports, both winter and summer, is a way of life in Aitkin County as indicated by the many supporting organizations listed at the left.

Over one half million acres of State and County forest land is available to the out-door enthusiast for hunting, fishing, hiking, skiing, snowmobiling, berry picking and scenic roadside driving.

Many of the county's State Forests and County Memorial Forests have picturesque logging roads, through primitive wilderness areas. Deer, bear and occasionally a moose can often be seen when driving these back wood roads. Some of the major logging roads are: the Jewett Memorial Forest Road, West White Pine truck trail to Porcupine Lake, West Snake River Road, Twin River Springs road in Cornish Township, 3<sup>rd</sup> Guide Lake Road, Shovel Lake M.F. road. Ask the local District Forester on road conditions before driving these roads.

# **CALENDAR OF EVENTS FOR 2013**

## **COLLECTIONS**

Committee meets the first Friday of every other month starting in January at 9:30am. We discuss donations that we have received and the donation of larger items that have been offered to us.

## **6<sup>TH</sup> GRADE TOUR**

This event will take place on Wednesday May 8<sup>th</sup>. All sixth graders are welcome to attend. We offer a morning and afternoon tour. Children get a good taste of what the museum is all about. They visit the following areas: research, railroad, riverboat, heritage room and logging camp kitchen.

## **AITKIN COUNTY FAIR**

This year's County Fair will take place on July 10<sup>th</sup> thru 13<sup>th</sup>. Our Log Cabin will be open for this event and we will need volunteers to staff the building.

## **ANNUAL GARAGE SALE**

August 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>

For the third year in a row we plan on filling two buildings at the County Fairgrounds. Last year was our largest sale in the history of the Historical Society. Saturday will be half price day at our sale. Last year everything that was left was donated to the DAV (Disabled American Veterans). We have already started to collect for our sale. When cleaning out your garage, basement or sheds please consider donating those unwanted items to us. If you are remodeling your kitchen or bath consider donating the old cabinets and counters to the sale. **All donations are tax deductible.** Items can be dropped off at the Depot or call us for a pickup.

## **EARLY-BIRD RAFFLE DRAWING**

August 5<sup>th</sup>

This is held for all raffle tickets that have been returned to the museum. All tickets turned in early are also in our final drawing held during our Annual Open House in December. Fifteen prizes will be given away at this drawing.

## **AITKIN RENDEVOUS**

September 20<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup> & 22<sup>nd</sup>

At this time the event appears to be canceled.

## **ANNUAL OPEN HOUSE/COOKIE WALK/RAFFLE DRAWING**

December 7<sup>th</sup>

Our Open House runs from 9am to 4pm. Visitors receive free entrance to the museum, free coffee, apple cider and cookies. Cookie Walk starts at 9:30am and runs until all of the cookies are gone. (Usually before noon) At 2pm we will hold our Annual Raffle drawing. Last year 41 prizes were given away at this drawing.