

## AITKIN COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

### DEPOT HIGHLIGHTS NEWSLETTER

Fall 2013 – Volume 18, Issue 3

#### ACHS Web Site Lost

On June 28<sup>th</sup> we lost our website when the Aitkin Chamber activated their new site. We were not aware that we would be losing our site until that day. The person at Mille Lacs who takes care of the site was unavailable on Friday. I was finally contacted on Monday afternoon and told we would not be able to keep our domain of [www.aitkin.com/achs](http://www.aitkin.com/achs). We would have to pick a new domain name. They were doubtful if we would be able to transfer the information from our old site because it was no longer an active site. **Hence a little notice from the chamber would have been nice.** Fortunately Jennie Hakes, who takes care of our site, had all of the information on her computer and was able to upload the information to our new site [www.aitkincohs.org](http://www.aitkincohs.org). Our new site will be serviced by GoDaddy.com. Jennie spent days working on getting our new site up and running. Our web presence did not return until July 9th. Twelve days lost internet presence. Some issues with the site still need to be worked out. The unfortunate issue that has arisen is that all of our literature, promotional items and letter head have our old site listed. It will all work out in the end.

This year's County Fair display was all about Aitkin County Restaurants. A big **thank you** goes out to the Liljenquest family who shared the Ziskie sign, the Sugar Bowl sign, the Olympia Café sign, and the Hill Restaurant sign, all of which helped to make our display fun and interesting for everyone. Pictures of restaurants from Aitkin, Hill City, McGrath and McGregor were featured along with various menus. Stools from the Sugar Bowl and Ziskies were on display. Our new prize spinning wheel was a big hit with the visitors to our Log Building. 1500 people visited our building. We sold 10-Heritage books, 15-Aitkin Centennial books, 9-Aitkin County naturally books, 2-Train Whistle, 4-Train Banks, and 4-AHS All-class Reunion papers. For everyone who staffed our building, thank you.

On Sunday July 14<sup>th</sup> we participated in the non-profit expo held in the space that used to be the Opera house. It was my first time in the space. A beautiful job was done restoring the room. The attendance was light, but it was worth the time to visit with people about our upcoming Garage Sale and the "Barns of Aitkin County" book.

Then on Tuesday July 16<sup>th</sup> we started to set up at the County fair grounds for our annual garage sale by setting up all of the tables and display cases. On the 17<sup>th</sup> with the help of STS and numerous volunteers we hauled all the merchandise that had been donated for our sale to the fairgrounds. Then we began a two week period of hard work processing the merchandise by sorting, displaying and marking everything. Two of the large fairground buildings are bursting at the seams with merchandise. Remember that our garage sale will be held on August 2<sup>nd</sup> (9am to 4pm) and August 3<sup>rd</sup> (9am to 3pm). Everything is sold for half price on Saturday and from 1pm to 3pm we hold a box sale for \$3.00 a box. When the sale is over everything will be donated to the Disabled American Veterans (DAV). Only items that are broken will be thrown away. Then we start collecting merchandise for next year's sale.

An early-bird raffle drawing will take place the week after our garage sale for all tickets that have been turned in. All tickets are also good for our final drawing held during our Annual Open House/Cookie Walk held on December 7<sup>th</sup>. We will continue to sell tickets until that final drawing. This year we have a total of 89 prizes to give away. (21 for the early-bird drawing and 68 for the final drawing). Tickets can be purchased at the Depot Museum, Members Credit Union, KKIN radio and from ACHS members. Our raffle is our second biggest fundraiser of the year.

Our "Barns of Aitkin County" book will be published later this fall. The current plan is to give copies of the book to all schools, libraries, senior care centers and nursing homes located in Aitkin County. When the book is published it will be available for purchase at the Depot Museum, our web site, and possibly through the McGregor and McGrath historical organizations. The book will be a hard cover book, landscape format, in full color. Watch our web site and the Aitkin Independent Age for when the book will be available. Over 800 photos of barns and many histories of those barns will be included in the book. Work has begun on collecting information and photos of all the country schools that were located in Aitkin County for a second book. A third book in the series will be about Churches of Aitkin County. A fourth will be about the Riverboats that ran from Aitkin to Grand Rapids from 1871 to 1921. The other project that I am working on is the Historical Map of Aitkin County which when printed will be made available throughout Aitkin County. The map will feature 80 to 100 historic sites located in Aitkin County with information about each site.

**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 – 28, Senior Members – 103, Family Members – 207,  
Life Members – 17, Perpetuity Members – 2

**TOTAL MEMBERSHIP – 393**

**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 Bowling Lanes  
Aitkin Dairy Queen  
Aitkin EZ Stop  
Aitkin Flowers & Gifts  
Aitkin Furniture  
Aitkin Glass  
Aitkin Independent Age  
Aitkin McDonalds  
Aitkin Pet & Farm  
Aitkin Rental  
Bare's Bootery  
Bill's Sportsmans Service  
Birchwood Cafe  
Brandl Motors  
Bremer Bank  
Cedarbrook Lumber  
Coombs Cuts  
Cross Woods Golf Course  
Cuyuna County Auto  
Cuyuna Lanes  
Cycle, Path & Paddle  
Deep Systems  
Duane's Photography  
Emily Greens Golf Course  
Enberg TV  
Farm Island Repair & Marine  
Farm Island Store  
40 Club/Players  
Freedom Gas Station  
Garrison Disposal  
Grand Casino Mille Lacs  
Gravelle Plumbing & Heating  
Grandmas Pantry  
Hawkeyes Inc.

**SUPPORTING BUSINESSES**

Healthy Connections  
Hometown Building Supply  
Hot Stuff Foods  
Hyytinen Hardware  
KKIN AM & FM Radio  
Kosie's Café  
Lake Country Auto & Tire Center  
Lightning Motorsports  
Lorries Hair Studio  
Lundberg Plumbing  
Mille Lacs Energy  
MN Gold Buyers  
Nordlake Reflections  
Northern Air Heating & Plumbing  
Northland Equipment  
Northland Subway Inc.  
The Office Shop  
Paulbecks County Market  
Rasley Oil  
RDJ Products  
Rialto Movie Theater  
Ripple River Motel  
Roadside Restaurant  
Salon Inspire  
Security State Bank  
Security State Insurance  
Sew Much & More  
Shipero Games  
Simply Chic  
Thrifty White Pharmacy  
Tire Barn  
Traditions Mini Golf  
Unclaimed Freight North  
Whistling Wolf Mini Golf

**SUPPORTING TOWNSHIPS**

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

**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!

**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

### Members Lost During 2013

Ray Morris –  
8/30/1930 - 1/12/2013  
Kern Ridlington –  
9/25/1926 – 3/23/2013  
Marilyn Kullhem  
7/15/1933 – 5/24/2013

### New Members

Allen & Sonja Hakes  
Larry & Carolyn Kuechle  
Anne Marcotte  
Ann Schwartz

### **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!

### Memberships

**Senior - \$7.50**

**Individual - \$15.00**

**Family - \$20.00**

**Business - \$30.00**

### 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 have been 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)

### 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

### 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.

### 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.

### 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. Outboard motors put on display.
14. Log cabin display in Depot doubled in size.
15. Walls in Log Cabin display finished.
16. Shadow box for trains built and installed in railroad room.
17. Trains displayed on window sills, shadow box and glass cases.
18. Water sealer put on lumber wagon.
19. Aluminum paint put on deck of small railroad speeder.
20. Green bench on north side of depot repaired and painted.
21. New web site up and running.  
[www.aitkincohs.org](http://www.aitkincohs.org)
22. Railroad luggage wagon painted.

### 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. Complete set of AHS yearbooks.
9. Increasing membership. - **ongoing**
10. GPS Walking Tour of the City of Aitkin.
11. Developing research facility at Depot.
12. Obtaining title to land under Depot.
13. Increasing local interest in Museum.
14. Create photo albums for each display connecting artifacts to Aitkin County.
15. Create Administrator time-line book.
16. Water seal all of our picnic tables.
17. Seal storms on log cabin.
18. Seal doors on log cabin.

## SECOND QUARTER ACCESSION LIST

17	Dac Mart	Aitkin Coop Creamery Cheese Slicer
18	Gus Carlstrom	Framed map of Aitkin County
19	Gary & Johanna Reiter	1951 Johnson Sea Horse 5HP Outboard Motor
20	Bagdons	1963 Aitkin Tourism map
21	Darlene Maciej	Assorted School Histories
22	Elaine Hallbeck	Children's shoes, false teeth, gloves nylons, books, hanky's
23	Lou Anne Berndt	Records for Ball Bluff Young Peoples Group.
24	John Hendrickson	Hardware wooden nail barrel
25	St. Johns Lutheran	Pamphlets & building information
26	Gerald Hedberg	5-car N gauge train, Instamatic close-up lens, snuff can, typewriter ribbon can
27	Carlton Co. H.S.	Photo - Round Lake Presbyterian church
28	Greg Leach	21 - HO gauge train cars, engines & track
29	Everett Davies	7 - HO gauge train set with assorted accessory pieces
30	Janet Miller	Photographs
31	Terry Kullhem	1930 - 1 1/2 HP Johnson outboard motor, WWI Trench Art
32	Linda Peterson	Victorian Rose Wood Upright Piano
33	Sharon Cooper	46/47 McGrath yearbook, chain binder, McGrath Depot drawing, Music dictionary, Marie Nelson obit
34	Carol Bailey	Book - Malmo stories
35	Laura Thornbloom	Misc. Advertising items
36	Boyd Bremner	6 - HO gauge all metal train set from the 1950's
37	Darlene Maciej	2 - train plaques, Oakhill school info
38	John Hendrickson	Cemetery info, 5 cent stamps, NRA label, photo of Shovel Lake logging camp, 12/27/1897 NPR pry bar, metal stencils, metal ball /w ring to ground tie horse
39	Dave Hasskamp	30-MHS books, Information about Dam Lake
40	Jennie Hakes	Butt's School Dist. #2 Souvenir
41	Vonna Zamzo	WWII Ration book holder with ration books
42	John Furt	3 - photos of Mike Boyer and brother
43	Tom Fielder	Photo & misc. paper items
44	Ron & Carol Luoma	3 - AHS girls letter jackets
45	DAC Mart	Army Uniform
46	Marlys Knutson	Two eye glass cases with local Dr. names
47	Aitkin Doll Club	Scrap books
48	Chris Hastings	Military helmet from Vietnam war
49	J.J. Sullivan	Mary Hill Academy scrap books
50	Sharon Fortnak	2-photos, Prvt. Arthur Simonson, Lewis Simonson
51	Boucher	Ziske Estate
52	Carlton Co. H.S.	Real Estate Tax Statement
53	Doris Nordean	Photo - Wildwood School
54	Hallett Library	Lind-laine Timber Co. Advertising Item
55	Dick & Vi Levens	Pump Organ & Ornate Stool

# **2013 RAFFLE PRIZE LIST**

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

1. 18 holes of golf + cart at Emily Greens Golf Course – (\$152.00 value)
2. 18 holes of golf + cart at Emily Greens Golf Course – (\$152.00 value)
3. Custom mirror (up to 36" X 48") donated by Aitkin Glass – (\$96.00 value)
4. Old Log Theater tickets for two – donated by KKIN radio – (\$66.00 value)
5. Duane's Photography Portrait Sitting – (\$39.00 value)
6. Cuyuna Country Auto – Full Service Oil Change – (\$32.00 value)
7. Farm Island Repair & Marine \$30.00 Gift Certificate
8. Tea Light Center piece donated by Thrifty White Pharmacy - (\$23.00 value)
9. Bill's Sportsmans Service – (\$20.00 Gift Certificate)
10. BARE'S Bootery – (\$20.00 Gift Certificate)
11. ACHS Family Membership – (\$20.00 value)
12. Tire Rotation donated by Tire Barn – (\$19.00 value)
13. Gramma's Pantry – (\$15.00 Gift Certificate)
14. Thermo bag + 10% discount card donated by Lightning Motorsports – (\$12.00 value)
15. Aitkin Flowers & Gifts – (\$10.00 Gift Certificate)
16. 1 Large Take n Bake Pizza from Hot Stuff Foods – (\$10.00 value)
17. Aitkin Flowers & Gifts – (\$10.00 Gift Certificate)
18. 1 Large Take n Bake Pizza from Hot Stuff Foods – (\$10.00 value)
19. John Deere Baseball Cap donated by Northland Equipment – (\$7.00 value)
20. Pepsi Twelve pack cans – donated by Aitkin EZ-Stop(\$4.00 value)
21. Mountain Dew Twelve pack cans – donated by Aitkin EZ-Stop (\$4.00 value)

## **DECEMBER 7<sup>TH</sup> DRAWING**

1. Chanhassen Dinner Theater for two donated by KKIN radio – (\$150.00 value)
2. Grand Casino Mille Lacs Hotel/Buffer for two package – (\$125.00 value)
3. Night stay at the Ripple River Motel – (\$80.00 value)
4. 2 in 1 Smoke & Carbon Monoxide Alarm donated by Northern Air - (\$60.00 value)
5. Jeanie & Co. – (\$60.00 Gift Pack)
6. Burt's Bees Gift Basket donated by Lundberg Plumbing – (\$50.00 value)
7. Metal Fondue set – donated by Hawkeyes Inc. – (\$50.00 value)
8. Digital Thermostat donated by Gravelle Plumbing & Heating - (\$45.00 value)
9. 18" Rope STER Chain + Eagle donated by MN Gold Buyer – (\$45.00 value)
10. Digital Thermostat donated by Gravelle Plumbing & Heating - (\$45.00 value)
11. Cross Woods Golf Course – One round of golf /w shared cart – (\$45.00 value)
12. Camp Lantern 20 LED donated by Mille Lacs Energy Cooperative – (\$38.00 value)
13. Free Lube, Oil and Filter from Brandl motors – (38.00 value)
14. Lake Country Auto & Tire Center Oil Change – (\$37.00 value)
15. Squirrel Feeder donated by Hyytinen's Hardware - (\$35.00 value)
16. Subscription to the Aitkin Independent Age – (\$35.00 value)
17. Cuyuna Country Auto – Full Service Oil Change – (\$32.00 value)
18. Roadside Restaurant – (\$30.00 Gift Certificate)
19. Framed Eagle Print donated by Aitkin Furniture – (\$30.00 value)
20. Birchwood Café – (\$30.00 Gift Certificate)
21. Rialto Movie Theater – (\$25.00 Gift Certificate)
22. \$25.00 Pre-paid VISA card donated by Security State Bank
23. The Office Shop – (\$25.00 Gift Certificate)
24. Players or 40 Club – (\$25.00 Gift Certificate)
25. Freedom Gas Gift Card – (\$25.00 value)
26. Secret Hideaway framed print donated by Aitkin Rental Center – (\$25.00 value)
27. Fall Table Runner donated by Sew Much & More – (\$25.00 value)
28. Rialto Movie Theater – (\$25.00 Gift Certificate)
29. Hometown Building Supply – (\$25.00 Gift Certificate)
30. Simply Chic – (\$25.00 Gift Certificate)
31. Tea Light Centerpiece donated by Thrifty White Pharmacy – (\$23.00 value)
32. One 8" Dairy Queen Cake – (\$21.00 value)
33. County Market – (\$20.00 Gift Certificate)
34. The Beanery an Internet Café – (\$20.00 Gift Certificate)
35. Gift Certificate for 5 tans donated by Lorries Hair Studio – (\$20.00 value)
36. Framed Fishing print donated by Unclaimed Freight North – (\$20.00 value)
37. Universal Remote Control donated by Enberg TV – (\$20.00 value)
38. Tall Flower Vase donated by Giada's Boutique – (\$20.00 value)
39. County Market – (\$20.00 Gift Certificate)

40. Shakespeare Fishing set – donated by Greg Leach (\$20.00 value)
41. ACHS Family Membership – (\$20.00 value)
42. Free Hair cut at Coombs Cuts – (\$18.00 value)
43. Salon Inspire – Free Haircut – (\$18.00 value)
44. 25 Piece Tool Kit with Flashlight – donated by RDJ Specialties
45. 12 Suet cakes & holder donated by Aitkin Pet & Farm Supply – (\$16.29 value)
46. Cedarbrook Lumber Company – (\$15.00 Gift Certificate)
47. Free Large Farm Island Store Pizza – (\$15.00 value)
48. Healthy Connections – (\$15.00 Gift Certificate)
49. Stars & Stripes Windsock donated by Nord Lake Reflections – (\$14.00 value)
50. Whistling Wolf Mini golf – One adult/one child – (\$14.00 value)
51. Two rounds Mini –Golf – Traditions in Deerwood – (\$12.50 value)
52. Stereo Headset donated by Deepsystems – (\$12.00 value)
53. McDonalds – (\$10.00 Gift Certificate)
54. Rasley Oil Co. – (\$10.00 Gift Certificate)
55. Aitkin Bowling Lanes – (\$10.00 Gift Certificate)
56. McDonalds – (\$10.00 Gift Certificate)
57. Sports bag donated by Bremer Bank – (\$10.00 value)
58. Road Atlas & mug donated by Security State Ins. – (\$10.00 value)
59. T-shirt – “Buffalo Trace” – (\$8.00 value)
60. Shiperio Card Game of Golf donated by Shiperio games Chanhassen – (\$8.00 value)
61. Shiperio Card Game of Golf donated by Shiperio games Chanhassen – (\$8.00 value)
62. John Deere Baseball Cap donated by Northland Equipment – (\$7.00 value)
63. John Deere Baseball Cap donated by Northland Equipment – (\$7.00 value)
64. John Deere Baseball Cap donated by Northland Equipment – (\$7.00 value)
65. Aitkin County Naturally – (\$5.00 value)
66. Rand McNally 2013 Road Atlas
67. Rand McNally 2013 Road Atlas
68. Rand McNally 2013 Road Atlas

This year’s raffle features a total of 89 prizes donated from local businesses collected by Boyd Bremner. When you see Boyd, please thank him for all the time and effort he put into collecting prizes for this project. Also, please thank all of the businesses that so generously donated items for our raffle by supporting them. We are currently on track to have our best raffle ever. I would like to thank everyone who has supported this event by collecting prizes, selling tickets and buying tickets.

### Events to raise funds for the Museum

Currently we have three fundraisers for the museum. (Garage sale, Raffle & Cookie Walk) The three events raise around \$10,000.00 a year. We had a fourth event which was running a food booth at Aitkin Rendezvous. The Rendezvous raised around \$2,000.00 a year. That event has moved out of the area so we need a new event to raise funds. We need to come up with a new fund raiser that is both profitable and less strenuous. I do not know about anyone else but, after each day working on the garage sale I am exhausted. We need everyone to think about a new fundraiser for the museum.

### What’s next for the Museum?

Will we ever find a Caboose to put on display? I hope so. Will we be able to purchase the land under our buildings from the Railroad? I hope so. Will we be able to add onto building #2 for additional displays? I hope so. Should we build a cold storage building next to building #3? I think so if we do not buy the Armory building. Should we try to find funds through grants to purchase and maintain the Armory building? I think so. For five reasons: 1). we would have parking for the museum. 2). we would be able to sell building #3 and move artifacts to new space. 3). Armory would give us more display space and eliminate the need to add onto building #2. 4). It would eliminate the need to build a cold storage building next to building #3. 5). with the proximity of the Armory next to the Depot would create a unique Aitkin County history complex. Should we set up a research room for visitors to use? I think so. Do we need to tie the artifacts on display better to Aitkin County? I think so. Should we list the donors name by some of the artifacts? I think so. Please give me a call or drop me an email: [achs3348@embarqmail.com](mailto:achs3348@embarqmail.com)

## **Blast Furnace by Fred Sutherland**

One hundred years ago the newspapers of Aitkin were buzzing with excitement about the opening of a new industry. For nearly two months an ambitious inventor and businessman named John T. Jones was looking for a site to build an experimental blast furnace to make iron and steel using the ore coming from recently opened mines of the Cuyuna Range. Quoting an author from the Aitkin Republican newspaper, "The Jones furnace will be located at Aitkin, which is the biggest bit of industrial news that was ever let loose in this bailiwick".<sup>1</sup> It was clear to people in Aitkin that having an iron furnace in their community could greatly change their economy. The papers claimed the furnace might "employ from 50 to 2000 men as capacity increased by the addition of units"<sup>2</sup> with even more jobs created in other businesses to support the furnace's operation. The excitement continued through August of 1913 with papers regularly reporting the progress of construction along the shores of the Mississippi River, "Teams of men were promptly employed; the excavation made, and by last Wednesday evening [August 20, 1913] the concrete foundation for the tube was in -ten feet in depth and sixteen feet in diameter".<sup>3</sup>

By the fall of 1913 the papers report there was some anxiety among the residents of Aitkin about when the furnace would open. The newspaper reports attempted to address the worries of Aitkin's residents by issuing statements from one of the managers, "we have been meeting with considerable delays from a number of quarters, especially the money line, but the tension is about to be relieved...the furnace will be up and making metal by Thanksgiving day".<sup>4</sup> However, even by May 1914 the situation had not changed with the papers reporting "before the steelwork was ready the company ran out of funds".<sup>5</sup> By the late-summer of 1914 the furnace is no longer talked about in the papers, having been replaced by news of war beginning to rage across Europe.

For nearly 100 years this interesting story of what might have been a defining moment in Aitkin's history seems to have been lost and forgotten. In early 2012, a graduate student named Fred Sutherland began exploring microfilm copies of historic local newspapers, which can be found in the Aitkin Historical Society's archives. Mr. Sutherland was reading those newspapers to learn about the development of iron mining in the Cuyuna Range for his doctoral dissertation. After careful research, Mr. Sutherland was able to determine where the old furnace might be located today. All of surviving historic sources leaves behind an incomplete story of the furnace. Studying the ruins of the furnace may answer some lingering questions. These questions include: Exactly what kind of furnace was it and how did it work? Was the furnace ever completed? Did the furnace ever operate? When was it torn down? Mr. Sutherland will be conducting investigations on the furnace ruins and in the archives of the Aitkin Historical society to uncover the answers to those questions.

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<sup>1</sup> Aitkin Republican, August 14, 1913. Page 1

<sup>1</sup> Aitkin Republican, August 21, 1913. Page 1

<sup>1</sup> Aitkin Independent, August 23, 1913. Page 1

<sup>1</sup> Aitkin Independent, September 27, 1913. Page 1

<sup>1</sup> Aitkin Republican, May 14, 1914. Page 1

## **From the Archives**

**By Jack Christensen**

School was taught in Aitkin Village in the winter of 1853-1854 with an enrollment of eight boys and seven girls. In the summer of 1854 the enrollment was increased to 15 boys and 10 girls.

A capable school board and keenly interested parents ensured a good school, but there was a deplorable lack of uniformity in the second hand books which the children brought from their homes. A log school house was erected in 1874 (near where the Ryan, Ryan & Brucker law offices are now located). The winter of 1875-86 had an attendance of 12.

A frame school house, with "patent" seats and a generous supply of blackboards was ready for occupancy on Oct. 15, 1875, as by this time the log building had become too small. Aitkin had really started to grow as a big sawmill had been built and many families with children moved in, so another building had to be provided at once, and the frame structure was then erected a short distance north of the first log building.

At the time, under an experienced teacher, a nine-month school program was inaugurated. The Aitkin School District #1 created on Feb. 24, 1873 embraced the whole county and the Aitkin Village School was the only one in the county until the early 1880's.

### **AITKIN CONTINUES TO GROW**

**Aitkin Age – January 6, 1900**

BUILT DURING 1899

Record of building achievements in Aitkin for the Year Just Closed. By far the most notable building of the year is the Potter block, a three-story brick structure, thoroughly modern in every particular. The lower floor is being fitted for store purposes, while the second and third stories form an annex to the Willard Hotel, which will give that popular hostel, equipment's second to none in the state outside the Twin cities and Duluth.

In the way of residences, towns twice the size of Aitkin will have to skirmish to produce anything equal to the new residence of Mr. F.E. Dreck. Standing on an eminence overlooking the picturesque Ripple River and a good share of the business section, it is ideally located, and thoroughly equipped. Of course someone will probably outdo Mr. Krech within the next few years, but up to date he has the finest residence in the village, though there are many other beautiful homes in "Aitkin on the Mud".

### **WITH RIVERS TO CROSS**

**Aitkin Independent Age – April 27, 1929**

BIDS FOR NEW MISSISSIPPI BRIDGE AND REPLACING POTTER ST. BRIDGE

The State highway department has announced the construction of two new bridges for Aitkin County. On May 14 bids will be received on a 330-foot bridge over the Mississippi on Hwy. 35, near Waldeck, which is for the new route from Aitkin to Hill City. This will be three truss spans. On this route several small bridges and culverts will be let later or with the grading contracts.

The other bridge is a 30-foot concrete bridge to replace the Potter Bridge in the village of Aitkin in connection with the new grade and paving job. Bids for this will be received on the same day.

This gives assurance that the new Hill City road is to be under construction this year.

### **McGregor Struck by Heavy Fire loss and Dancing Party Narrowly Escapes**

**Aitkin Age – Jan. 1905**

McGregor has had a heavy fire loss, running into thousands of dollars.

Saturday night during the course of a dance in the hall over Clark's store fire broke out in the room below and was followed by an explosion of powder that blew out the front of the building and ignited the whole room so suddenly that the dancers barely escaped from the burning building and nothing was saved.

Jacob Leighty, building occupied by Clark store, stock of goods valued at \$5,000 with \$1,500 insurance. The post office was also located in this building and was burned.

The fire is supposed to have caught in the chimney as the chimney was burning out when first discovered. The alarm was given the party up stairs by hearing the discharge of loaded shells below, these being stored near the chimney.

## **TRAIN WRECKED THIS MORNING**

**Aitkin Age – Jan. 10, 1905**

FOURTEEN CARS OF WEST BOUND FREIGHT DITCHED AT POOR FARM CROSSING BY BROKEN RAIL. THE MORNING PASSENGER SAVED FROM AWFUL FATE BY BEING LATE.

A west bound freight went into the ditch at the poor farm crossing about six this morning and 14 cars were piled up in a tangled mass of debris.

The accident happened through a broken rail over which the engine and two cars passed in safety when the next 14 cars left the track as stated. There is a heavy curb at this point and the train must have been running at a good speed.

The morning passenger which connects between Staples and Duluth with the coast train was saved by being late. The meet between the freight and passenger would have been made at Aitkin but as the passenger was late, the freight left for Deerwood and ran into the break in the tracks which had the passenger reached first would undoubtedly have ditched the whole train. The passenger always runs fast between Brainerd and Aitkin and being late would be making up time and almost certainly must have gone into the ditch.

To think what the wrecking of the passenger would mean with its heavy load of human beings, its hot fires and burning lamps to add to the horror is too terrible to contemplate.

That only 14 freight cars were piled up is a providential stroke of good fortune.

## **AITKIN ARMORY**

**Aitkin Independent Age – March 2, 2005**

**From the Archives by Jack Christensen**

It's more than a shanty in ol' Aitkin town.  
The brick walls hold memories where history abounds.  
Its birth came about for the National Guard,  
Who needed drill space inside, not out in the yards?

The building was finished in 1922,  
In time for the county to make use of it too.  
And use it they did, for the need was so great  
For a building that size which afforded the space  
Where people could gather in one common place.

And gather they did, in winter, spring, summer and fall  
To enjoy big events, a bonus for all.  
A place near their home, to share with all others,  
Enjoying a time the Depression couldn't smother.

We who still live and enjoy today's blessings,  
Remember so well, the gigantic dressings,  
Of that building so large, in this town, oh, so small  
That it demands a remembrance and thanks for us all.

## EVENT SCHEDULE FOR THE REST OF 2013

### **Annual Open House – December 7<sup>th</sup>**

Visit the museum for free and check out our holiday displays. While you are visiting enjoy free Coffee, Apple Cider and Cookies. Open 9am to 4pm.

### **Annual Cookie Walk – December 7<sup>th</sup>**

9:30am until cookies are gone. Usually all cookies are gone by noon.

We ask all of our members to bake four dozen cookies for this event. We set up in our second display building and sell cookies for \$3.00 a dozen. Volunteers will help you select from a wide variety of cookies. If you are planning on having a holiday party or get together this would be a great way to get a variety of cookies.

### **Annual Raffle Drawing – December 7<sup>th</sup>**

At 2pm we will start to draw tickets for the 68 prizes on our raffle list. Tickets are available at the Depot Museum, KKIN radio and Members Credit Union. Check out the list of prizes to be given away earlier in this newsletter.

## NUMBER OF VISITORS TO MUSEUM DOWN

Compared to last year's visitor numbers, we are down. Last year there was no County Fair because it was flooded and this year we will not be involved in the Rendezvous. We had to pull our brochures from the Discover racks which covered areas South, West and North of us due to cuts in our budget. However, we have had visitors from 151 communities in Minnesota, (up from last year) 29 other States and 6 Foreign Countries (also up from last year). The six foreign countries are: Canada, Germany, Denmark, England, Shrilanka, and the Philippines. Everyone who visits the museum is surprised at the extent of our collection and how nice the displays are. Our newest displays which include: the Cedar strip boat built in the 1950's, Outboard Motor, Fishing, Land-O-Lakes, Music, train and extended log cabin displays have all been a big hit. If you have any ideas on how to increase the awareness of our museum and increase the number of visitors please let me know.

### MUSEUM VISITORS

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
January	30	24	40	40	44
February	18	22	22	55	29
March	30	61	23	187	99
April	28	36	48	153	48
May	77	72	50	100	110
6 <sup>th</sup> Graders	84	109	101	91	91
June	84	157	472	183	127
July	149	229	266	356	210
County Fair	1331	1441	1171	0	1500
August	202	201	214	202	
Garage Sale	0	0	0	1814	
September	42	68	128	118	
Rendezvous	0	0	0	1077	0
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>2188</b>

### 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 393. 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. **If you have not renewed your membership yet, please do so now! Our survival counts on it.**