BOOZE
1880 to 1933

Turn out the lights...
The party's over!

“Turn out the lights...
The party’s over!”
- Will Shakesbeer

Clay County
1880 to 1933
Wet or Dry?

FREE COPY
Alcohol Issue In Clay County 1872-1937

By: Mark Peihl
HCSCC Archivist

People have enjoyed alcoholic beverages for thousands of years. Liquor can put people in a good mood. Drinking is an important part of the culture, fun and a multi-billion dollar industry.

Alcohol is also a dangerous, addictive drug that can lead to irresponsible and violent behavior, destroy lives and families. This exhibit looks at how Clay County residents have tried to resolve this disconnect, how to give the people what they want but still maintain social order.

Efforts between 1872 and 1937 are marked by extremes. In 1890 all North Dakota saloons closed. Just across the Red River, Moorhead soon became a booze boom town, with 45 saloons operating day and night with minimal attempts to enforce what few laws existed.

It didn’t work out. It resulted in crime, political corruption and disrespect for authority. In 1915 reformers reacted by succeeding in outlawing liquor completely. Prohibition also did not work out. People managed to find liquor and the result was, again, crime, political corruption and disrespect for authority.

Clay County allowed the sale of hard liquor to resume in 1937. Since then residents have continued to struggle with alcohol. Though there are now more reasonable laws and law enforcement. A 2011 survey by the Centers for Disease Control identified the Fargo Metropolitan Statistical Area of Cass and Clay Counties as having the highest rate of binge drinking and heavy drinking in the country. We clearly haven’t sorted this out yet.

BUILDING A NEW SOCIETY

The debates over alcohol began right at the county’s birth. Glyndon was founded as a temperance colony where alcohol was strongly discouraged. Ten miles west, Moorhead was gaining a reputation as a rough Wild West town.

“There were about 400 residents, all living in tents," recalled teetotaling Sheriff Jim Blanchard of Moorhead’s first year. “The population consisted chiefly of gamblers and saloon keepers.”

The land was settled chiefly by Northern European immigrants and New England Yankees. Each culture had long and complicated relationships with alcohol.

Each person had their own opinions, shaped by their own experiences. Some cherished traditions surrounding alcohol. Some feared its power over people.

There was much to decide as the settlers built a new society from scratch. Whether or not alcohol should be part of that society was hotly debated.

A CONTINUING PROBLEM

Just as in the past many social ills today are made worse by alcohol. Surveys indicate that 36 percent of those incarcerated in the US report that they were under the influence at the time of their offense. Among violent criminals it is 40 percent.

Each year some 13,000 people die in alcohol-related auto accidents. The economic costs associated with alcohol use in Minnesota total over $5 billion, $975 for every resident, 17 times the alcohol tax collected.

Clay County residents’ long history of alcohol use and abuse continues to this day. Though the majority of county residents who drink do so responsibly, a significant number either cannot or will not control their consumption. Cass and Clay Counties consistently ranks at or near the top in rates of binge drinking, heavy drinking and per capita consumption in the country.

Underage binge drinking is particularly high in the Red River Valley. Nearly 60 percent of locals between age 17 and 25 report binge drinking in the last month. Over 3,200 Clay Residents of the county...
Sad Day When All Saloons Shut Down

By: Gene Prim

The last legally operating saloon in Clay County was located in Barnesville at Loff and Stach’s Saloon which is pictured here. After prohibition was repealed, that building would spend most of the 20th century identified as the Shamrock Tavern. That old structure was torn down a dozen years ago to make way for the Fire Museum that now stands on that corner lot on Barnesville’s Front Street.

Loff and Stach’s Saloon closed at 11:00 p.m. on November 20, 1915, the last saloon in Clay County to close. It had been open for the preceding seven months only by a quirk in the law.

Clay County voters in May of 1915 voted to make the sale of liquor illegal in the county. Almost all of the numerous saloons across the county were forced to close shortly after that vote. Barnesville, however, wrote liquor licenses for a one-year term and several of the watering holes were able to continue selling liquor until their current licenses expired. This seven month extension made Barnesville saloons very popular if only for a short time.

Moorhead saloon business was hit hard by the May 1915 vote to outlaw liquor. Moorhead saloons had been doing a land office business for years serving customers from across the Red River since prohibition had been adopted in North Dakota several years before. There were over four dozen saloons operating in Moorhead alone before the “dry” vote. Many more saloons were scattered around the county. All Clay County saloons, except the Barnesville drinking establishments, closed on June 30, 1915.

One by one, from June to November of 1915, the Barnesville saloons closed. The first to shut down, when its license expired, was Peter Engels. Engels Saloon located where the present Barnesville VFW Post 4628 is now located. Former and future Barnesville Mayor Engels closed his doors at 11:00 p.m. on August 11, 1915.

Edward Sieber was operating the Olympia Saloon that he had purchased only a couple of years before from the Nelson Brothers. The Sieber Saloon was located on the south end of Front Street directly across the street from the railroad depots. Sieber’s license ran through October 31, 1915.

When the Engels Saloon closed on August 11, Sieber decided that Engel’s downtown location was better than his present one. He moved his Olympia Saloon operation to the vacated premises and applied for a transfer of the liquor license on August 17.

The move was reported to have been made on Monday, August 16, when Sieber’s south Front Street Olympia location closed. However, the move was not approved until September 3 when the Barnesville City Council granted the transfer. The saloon operated in somewhat of a gray area, probably with a wink and a nod, for a few days. On Halloween night, 1915, Sieber’s downtown location would close when his license expired.

That left only the Loff and Stach’s Saloon as the last legal outlet for liquor in the entire county. They did an incredible business for the next three weeks until their license also expired at 11:00 p.m. on November 20.

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Erdel Was An Early Successful Saloon Owner

By: Mark Peihl, HCSCC Archivist

Much of the Wet and Dry Liquor in Clay County, 1871-1937 exhibit deals with Moorhead being the booze capital of the area. Saloons and bars supplied alcohol for thirsty Fargoians. North Dakota was a dry state.

It was little known fact that liquor was supplied to many more remote places in North Dakota by Moorhead saloon owners.

One of the museum’s collections illuminates this part of the trade nicely.

The Charles Erdel Papers are a collection of letters, orders, bills and receipts from one of Moorhead’s many wholesale liquor dealers. These scraps of paper illustrate how Erdel and his contemporaries operated. It turns out that North Dakota was not exactly bone dry after all.

North Dakota entered the Union in November 1889. Statehood required Dakotans to vote on a proposed constitution. Citizens were split nearly evenly on the liquor issue. The constitution’s framers were concerned that a prohibition clause might sink the whole thing so they submitted a temperance amendment to be voted separately. It passed but just barely, by less than 1300 votes.

The amendment outlawed the sale of liquor but not buying or possessing it. Nothing barred North Dakotans from ordering as much booze as they wanted for personal consumption from Minnesota liquor dealers who shipped it out by rail. Just as long as they didn’t resell the stuff, it was ok. One of these Minnesota dealers was Charles Erdel.

Erdel was born 1878 to a Pennsylvania family of German immigrants. In 1880 Charles’ father, Bernard, was working in Philadelphia as a brewer. Later that year Bernard’s brother Tom arrived from Germany.

By 1885 Tom was also working in a brewery, in pre-prohibition Fargo, Dakota Territory. When North Dakota went dry in 1890 Tom moved to Moorhead and opened a bottling works and wholesale liquor business.

Soon after he built the fabulous House of Lords saloon on the corner of what was then First Avenue North and First Street. It was in a great location just kitty corner across the street from the north bridge to Fargo. Just southwest of where American Crystal Sugar’s downtown headquarters stands today.

Two years later 15 year-old Charles joined his uncle in Moorhead where he learned the liquor trade working for Tom and living in his house a half a block east of the bar.

In 1899 Tom built a new house a block north of his bar on First Street at the corner of Second Avenue North. Charles converted Tom’s old house into a saloon of his own.

In 1904 Tom built a new, even more fabulous bar, The Rathskeller Over the Rhine. He moved his new house 50 feet to the east and turned it so it faced north on Second Avenue North and built the Rathskeller on the old house site.

Tom built a famous tunnel to connect the basement of his new saloon with the basement of his home. Even today sinister rumors and dark stories about tunnels and hidden passageways haunt local history.

But basically the tunnel provided Tom Erdel indoor access to his business and carried pipes for a joint heating system for the two buildings.

In the 1960s the old Rathskeller building housed a small grocery and numerous apartments rented mostly to college students. Tenants and later owners of the building found boxes of paper records from Charles’ businesses stashed in his uncle’s old saloon.

Some made their way to the HCSCC and North Dakota State University (NDSU) Archives. The papers date from about 1905 through 1914. They provide a gold mine of information about the early liquor trade in Moorhead.

Charles Erdel ran his saloon at 110 First Avenue North continuously from 1899 to 1915. He also periodically operated a bottling plant, off-sale and wholesale liquor business. The records reflect all of these pursuits.

The bills and receipts provide insights into the minutia of day to day saloon work. Erdel kept an account with the Moorhead Ice Company. In the days before mechanical refrigeration, ice cut from the Red River the winter before kept his beer chilled for customers. In August 1914 alone he went through nearly 6,000 pounds of ice at $1.80 per ton.

Saloons offered workingmen a place to grab a quick meal. For the cost of an eight-ounce nickel beer a guy could take a pass through the “free lunch” counter. Loading up again without buying an additional beer was considered boorish and could get you thrown out.

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Many Hours Go Into Featured Exhibits

By: Karen Carpenter

The Wet and Dry exhibit that will soon be featured at the Historical and Cultural Society of Clay County (HCSCC) beginning in 2016 is a complicated and fascinating exhibit.

Exhibits to be featured are chosen by the HCSCC staff. Each individual is able to help with the brainstorming process of choosing a new exhibit. Input from each staff person is valued.

“The process of the team in deciding on an exhibit topic is largely democratic,” commented HCSCC Executive Director Maureen Kelly Jonason. “A couple of years back we brainstormed on potential topics for upcoming exhibits. “The WW II exhibit was ideal for 2014-2015 because of all the 70th anniversaries to be commemorated. When Dr. Angela Smith’s NDSU public history class worked with staff to create the Taboo exhibit in 2013, the public response was so positive that we selected Crime and Punishment as the next exhibit theme.”

The topic proved to be way too huge for one exhibit once the historians started researching. What they did discover, however, was that almost every crime was related in some way, to alcohol consumption.

“That led to narrowing down the topic to alcohol and then finally to concentrating on Clay County’s “battle over booze” – or the debate on the wet or dry question – which in Clay County ended up being way more complex than in a lot of places!” continued Jonason.

Wrestling with the alcohol issue began early and continued beyond national Prohibition. It should prove to be a fascinating local history story that people of all ages will enjoy.

HCSCC Education Coordinator Markus Krueger took the lead on the exhibit, including the design and making sure there are elements of interest to children as well as loads of information on businesses of that era. Some local spots today have historic roots that are quite fun to learn about.

Mark Peihl, archivist for HCSCC said, “the wet and dry issue is important because the Red River Valley has issues with alcohol.”

Surveys show that the whole Red River Valley, which includes portions of North Dakota and Minnesota, is an area of hard drinkers. Studies conclude that both binge drinking and over consumption are more prevalent in this area of the United States.

“Clearly we have not sorted this issue out in the Red River Valley,” continued Peihl. “I hope people will look more closely at the issue after viewing the Wet and Dry exhibit.”

People of Scandinavian and German decent have a history of drinking. They also have a history of strong temperance beliefs. The two extremes met and clashed during the Wet and

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Moorhead’s Brewery Colorful Chapter In History

By: Mark Peihl
HCSGC Archivist

A colorful chapter in the history of Clay County was Moorhead’s brewery. Using local barley, brewers were able to turn a nice profit. However, the business seemed destined to bring calamity to the three owners over the 26 years the brewery operated.

Many people have heard of Moorhead’s Great Saloon Era. North Dakota closed all its saloons in 1890. Liquor dealers flocked across the river and Moorhead became a boom ‘Boom Town.’

By 1893, two railroad car loads of beer passed through Moorhead every day. Many folks didn’t realize that at least some of that beer was produced locally from local products. From 1875 to 1901 Moorhead had its own brewery.

In Spring 1875 Canadian brothers, Joseph and George Larkin, moved their families from Winnipeg to Moorhead. They borrowed money and built a 56’ X 24’ brewery about where the Riverfront Park tennis courts now sit, north of the old Great Northern Railway tracks.

It seemed like a good idea. Beer was a very salable product in frontier Clay County. Local barley and water were plentiful and Moorhead was a long way from breweries in southern Minnesota. A locally made product might do well.

Their brewing equipment arrived via steamboat from Winnipeg and in late May the Larkins brewed their first batch. Soon they had orders “for a goodly quantity.” But the Larkins had several strikes against them.

In less than a year their creditors foreclosed on their mortgage. Moorhead businessman and politician, John Erickson, wound up with the property.

He produced his own brew off and on until 1895. Then Ole Aslesen bought the plant and ran it until 1901.

Brewing is a fairly simple process. The brewer extracts fermentable sugars from barley malt, flavors them with hops and adds yeast which converts the sugars into alcohol and carbon dioxide. Only five ingredients are necessary barley malt, water, hops and yeast.

Newspaper accounts indicate that the three local breweries, there were two in Fargo until prohibition shut them down, provided a market for area farmers’ barley.

Farmers raised the grain mainly for feed but brewers bought high-starch low-protein barley and malted it themselves. They first soaked the barley to make it germinate. This produced an enzyme which can convert starch into sugar.

Then they roasted the barley over a kiln to stop the germination and rough-ground the malt, perhaps at the Moorhead Flour Mill.

The brewer steeped the malt in a huge mash tub. The heat and water converted the starch to fermentable sugar and dissolved the sugar to form a syrupy sweet liquid called wort which is pronounced ‘wert’. The wort was drawn off and saved. Newspapers mention a pig yard in connection with the brewery. Erickson probably fattened pigs on the ‘spent’ left-over grain.

The brewer boiled the wort in a large copper kettle for a few hours then added buds from the hop plant. The hops’ bitter oils flavored the beer, gave it its distinctive aroma and served as

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This is an advertisement from 1899-1900 in the Fargo-Moorhead City Directory.
Crime And Liquor In Moorhead Researched

By: Mark Peihl
HCSCC Archivist

The correlation between crime and liquor use is quite evident in the following article. Mark Peihl used the computer to research and study life in Clay County’s past.

The results are interesting and evident that alcohol played a major role in crime in the then relatively small town of Moorhead. Peihl keyed in information from some of the Moorhead Police Department arrest registers and came up with some interesting results.

First, a little background. The museum archives hold three volumes listing arrests in Moorhead between 1901 and 1927. The information recorded includes the name of the person arrested, the date and cause of the arrest, the sentence the person received and which of the two municipal court judges presided over the case.

The search began with the number and causes of all arrests recorded between May 1901 and April 1902 and between May 1911 and April 1912. The search began in May because Moorhead held its municipal election in April. This often led to a change of administration and perhaps different ways of enforcing the law. Two twelve-month periods were studied without any changes in city hall.

The two years were in the middle. In 1900 Moorhead was home to 3,700 people and 45 saloons. That’s one saloon for every 82 men, women and children in the city. For every 82 men, women and children in the city. Of the 4,436 arrests in the two years, 43 percent occurred in August, September or October. This is undoubtedly a reflection of the large number of harvest hands who poured into the Red River Valley each year to work on threshing crews. Many of these men spent winters in northern Minnesota working as lumberjacks. December, January and February were quiet times for Moorhead’s saloons and jail. In spring many of these laborers began moving back into this area to find farm work and arrests begin to climb.

In 1898 citizens rebelled and a general cleanup of city government began. Spasms of saloon reform erupted periodically over the next 17 years until Moorhead, like the rest of Clay County, went dry in May 1915.

The span of 1901/02 was chosen because it was the first full year of records and was in the middle of the city clean-up effort. The time span of 1911/12 was chosen somewhat arbitrarily, it was ten years later. When the numbers were crunched, two factors immediately jumped out; the seasonal distribution of the arrests and the huge role alcohol played in local crime. A glance at the accompanying graphs (opposite page) makes this clear.

**SEASONALITY…**

Note the bell-like curves in the two graphs with their peaks in the middle. In 1900 Moorhead was home to 3,700 people and 45 saloons. That’s one saloon for every 82 men, women and children in the city. Agriculture in those days was very labor intensive. It could take 15 men to run a steam threshing rig. Of the 4,436 arrests in the two years, 43 percent occurred in August, September or October. This is undoubtedly a reflection of the large number of harvest hands who poured into the Red River Valley each year to work on threshing crews.

A Moorhead saloon about 1912. Alcohol abuse in bars like this one kept Moorhead cops busy in the early 1900s.

**ALCOHOL AS A FACTOR…**

Note that the top line on each graph indicates the total arrests during the period. The lower line shows the non-alcohol related arrests. Everything between the lines reflects arrests for drunkenness, vagrant and drunk, drunk and disorderly, etc. Fully 71.7 percent of arrests over the two years were alcohol related. Between August and October the percentage climbs to 83.3 percent. Over half of the violent or serious crimes were committed by drunken perpetrators. Two-thirds of disorderly conduct arrests were alcohol related.

In contrast, today the US Attorney General’s office CONTINUED TO PAGE 43
The Booths soon had thousands of volunteers and ministers working with them. In 1880, the SA spread to the United States and grew quickly. By the middle 1890s the SA was establishing missions in the upper Midwest. In most cases a Captain would visit a community and rent a large building as a combination meeting hall, barracks and homeless shelter. Soon after, a small crew of young officers would arrive to run day to day operations, conduct meetings and seek converts.

In January 1895, the Minneapolis Division Headquarters set up a barracks in Grand Forks, ND. The officer in charge was Captain Minnie Linderman. She had a cadet and two lieutenants working for her. Minnie was sixteen years old.

We know little about Minnie’s early years. She was born in 1878 in Kentucky, grew up in Cincinnati, OH and joined the SA Army in 1894. She rose through the ranks quickly and worked in Buffalo, MN before being stationed in Grand Forks.

Minnie was a talented musician and singer, a dynamic speaker and not above sensational promoting. Soon after arriving in Grand Forks she announced that “a baby would be given away” at an outdoor public meeting. Hundreds showed up and paid a ten cent admission.

The Grand Forks Herald reported that the baby given away was “given, or delivered, to the service of the Lord and all those who went there in hopes of being the recipient of the child were doomed to disappointment.”

Minnie used the proceeds to buy a large bass drum. Bass drums’ thumping carried widely and attracted a lot of attention to the SA’s street meetings and parades.

Minnie’s efforts had reportedly attracted 300 converts. But not everyone was pleased with the SA. Some people disliked the loud marches blocking the streets. Bands and drums scared horses. Saloon owners objected to the SA’s opposition to alcohol and the recruitment of their customers.

A few bullies did not take the SA Army seriously and tried to disrupt meetings. The Minneapolis Journal reported that in April that as a SA parade approached a busy intersection in downtown Grand Forks, “the driver of a fiery team attempted to urge his horses through the ranks. He would have succeeded in the effort but for the courage of the little Captain (Linderman) in throwing herself in front of the team and holding the fiery animals by the bits.”

A second team also made the attempt, but the Captain was ahead of the game in a trice and stopped the second intruder. The excitement over the incident ran high for a time and the plucky girl received round after round of cheers.”

A few days later the Herald reported a more serious incident. A group of rowdies invaded a meeting at the barracks and created disturbance. A lady fainted and while Minnie was attempting to get her outside the group pushed Minnie forcibly up against the door jam and reportedly struck her several times. Minnie was unconscious until the next day.

A jerk named Pat Purcell was found guilty of her assault and fined 10 dollars. The SA sent Minnie to Minneapolis for a few weeks rest and recuperation. By May 1 she was back on the job but soon received orders to start a new mission in Moorhead, MN. Grand Forks residents gave her a rousing send off to south to save souls here.

There was plenty of saving to be done. Five years earlier all North Dakota saloons had closed. Conveniently located just across the Red River from Fargo, Moorhead was fast becoming a booze boomtown for thirsty Dakotans. In 1895 the city was already home to thirty saloons and 3,300 people.

The SA first meetings in Moorhead attracted hundreds, and the usual trouble makers. The Moorhead Daily News reported on May 14 that a young man “tried to run the meeting” but was faced down by Minnie. A supportive crowd convinced the guy it was in his best interests to leave. Other trouble makers met the same fate.

Moorhead residents warmly to Minnie and her lieutenants.

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The brutal murder of Dr. Thrond S. Egge in 1909 shocked Clay County. The picture is from the Moorhead Independent Newspaper of December 6, 1909.

One block directly south on the southeast corner of Sixth Street and Third Avenue South, Petra Egge sat watching out the window for her husband, Dr. Thrond S. Egge. She saw a tall, thin man walking south down the west side of Sixth Street. He wore dark clothes and a white canvas cap.

The man suddenly turned and ran across the Street toward her front door. Alarmed, Petra turned on the porch light. She got a good look at him before he turned and ran back across the Street and headed north.

From the porch Lillian heard the family’s clock strike eleven. A few minutes later she saw a tall, thin man wearing a white cap across the street to the west, in front of the Swedish Lutheran Church. As she watched he passed up and down the street as if waiting for someone. When a streetcar from Moorhead State Normal School rumbled up Sixth Street, the man ran across the street, passed in front of the Wright’s home, not 15 or 20 feet from Lillian, and hid in some shadows. A streetlight in front of the church and a three-quarter moon gave her a well-lit look of the man. It was nearly 11:00 p.m. What led to the gruesome crime? Perhaps the fault was alcohol consumption play a part in the cruel turn of events that played out that fateful evening?

Eighteen-year-old Lillian Wright was nervous as she hurried home from visiting friends on Monday, September 6, 1909. It was nearly 11:00 p.m., late for a young woman to be out alone. Harvest was on and thousands of mostly young, unattached men were in the area looking for work threshing wheat. Many were undoubtedly connected to the fact that both Moorhead saloons when the alteration first began. Did alcohol consumption play a part in the cruel turn of events that played out that fateful evening?

As she watched he passed up and down the street as if waiting for someone. When a streetcar from Moorhead State Normal School rumbled up Sixth Street, the man ran across the street, passed in front of the Wright’s home, not 15 or 20 feet from Lillian, and hid in some shadows. A streetlight in front of the church and a three-quarter moon gave her a well-lit look at the man. When the streetcar passed, he walked north across Second Avenue and disappeared in the tree shadows on the east side of Sixth Street.

A. J. Wright left his store at 614 Center Avenue, at the time called Front Street, a bit after 11:00 p.m. Walking down Sixth Street he passed a tall man standing on the sidewalk. When he reached home he and Lillian sat on the porch comparing notes about the man she had seen and his actions. They heard a crash to the north followed by several dull thuds.

In the shadows across Second Avenue, the Wrights saw a figure rise from the ground. They watched the figure strike a couple of trees with an object, cross Sixth Street, strike some more trees and then disappear west down Second Avenue South. They dismissed his actions as the ravings of a drunk.

Minutes later two brothers named Larson, walking home on Sixth Street, stumbled upon a man lying on the sidewalk just north of Second Avenue South. One brother summoned Mr. Wright. The other, seeing a light on in the house of U.S. Weather Bureau Observer H. W. Grasse, asked Grasse to call the police. Officer William Crossman received the call at the Moorhead Police Station on Center Avenue and Third Street. Grasse just said a man was down. Crossman assumed it was yet another passed out drunk. He headed east down Center Avenue to investigate.

Just past Fourth Street, he encountered a man stumbling west with his hands over his face. Crossman asked what was wrong with him and pulled his hands down. He recognized the guy as Fargo carpenter Frank Kethman. His hands were covered with blood.

It was not unusual for Kethman to be in fights so it didn’t arouse Crossman’s suspicion. The carpenter said he was sick and needed a ride home. Crossman told him to sit down and he’d get him a hack when he got back.

Grasse found a flashlight and joined the others standing over the body in the dark. The man’s face was beaten to a pulp. Despite the injuries, Wright recognized the man as his neighbor, Dr. Thrond Egge.

He was lying next to his bicycle. His pockets were turned inside out, a pocket knife, glasses and a decorative badge lay on the ground beside him. His watch was missing.

About 11:30 p.m. Moorhead City Attorney and Clay County Court Commissioner James Withrow left his office and stopped to visit his friend, druggist William Nesheim. Nesheim related that he had witnessed a confrontation between Kethman and Dr. Egge in Hollie Walter’s saloon earlier that evening. Walter’s place was at 518 Center Avenue, about where Alan Evans Bridal shop now stands, north across from Scheels.

When Officer Crossman got a look at the corpse he quickly summoned Coroner C. G. Vincent, County Attorney N. I.
Local folklore is filled with colorful legends, oft-told fables and outright myths. Among the most popular in Clay County is the notion that Moorhead was once known as “the wickedest city in the world.” Or the U.S. Or...someplace.

The story often compares our county seat with “Port Said, Egypt; Marseilles, France or Shanghai, China.” I’ve wondered for years about the origins of this tale. We may have recently come up with an answer.

Most local histories published in the last 50 years include some mention of the more unsavory aspects of Moorhead’s past and often repeat the “wickedest city” phrase. The city definitely did go through two problem eras.

Moorhead popped into existence when the Northern Pacific Railway, building west from Duluth, reached the Red River in Fall 1871. The railroad stopped construction for the winter.

Moorhead, like Brainerd before it in 1869 and Oak Lake in 1870, became the over-winter end of the line and a magnet for legitimate businessmen and settlers as well as gamblers, prostitutes, thieves and various other ne’er-do-wells.

Like many other towns, Moorhead went through a frontier period when lack of law enforcement and established civil society made life pretty hairy for local residents. As in many other towns, this period only lasted a few months.

A series of shootings early in 1872 induced law-abiding citizens to petition the governor to appoint a county government - and a sheriff. By 1873 things had settled down in Moorhead. But the stories of the wild days of 1871-1872 lingered.

Moorhead’s other “colorful” period began June 30, 1890 when, by constitutional mandate, all the saloons in North Dakota closed. Fargo liquor dealers moved across the Red River. On July 1, Moorhead added a vanguard of five new saloons. Many more followed. Through the 1890s, alcohol became a huge part of the local economy.

In 1900, the number of saloons peaked at 45 in a city of about 3,700 people. But wet interests in Moorhead proved too strong.

In 1915, the Minnesota state legislature passed a county option bill. On May 17, Clay County voters decided to close all county saloons. On June 30, 1915, exactly 25 years to the day after North Dakota’s bars closed, Moorhead’s saloons shut down as well.

Local historians have often lumped both of these two, distinct periods together. Stories of violence and lax law enforcement during the 1870s and 1890s are often mixed together.

Moorhead’s north bridge saloon district 1902. The view is to the east across the Red River from Fargo’s Case Plaza. Nearly all the buildings on the Moorhead side of this photo are saloons. The liquor dealers tended to congregate around the Moorhead ends of the two bridges to be as close to dry North Dakota as they could. The north bridge is visible at right. Flaten/Wange Collection.
Archivist Piehl In 30th Year For HCSCC

By: Karen Carpenter

As an archivist Mark Peihl’s duties include assessing, collecting, organizing, preserving, maintaining control over, and providing access to records and archives determined to have long-term value.

He helps people who come to the Historical and Cultural Society of Clay County (HCSCC) in Moorhead with research. They might be searching for birth or death records, residence or a myriad of other facts about ancestors or friends.

Peihl stressed that the Wet and Dry exhibit is important because Clay County and indeed the whole Red River Valley has a history of being hard drinking people.

It is hoped that the exhibit will cause people of the area to look more closely at the issue of drinking.

His father, Lon Peihl lived near Hunter, ND and consumed alcohol in moderation during the Prohibition Era. “My father was 28 years old before he drank his first LEGAL alcoholic drink,” exclaimed Peihl.

Back in Lon’s youth there would be a man who may have illegal liquor to sell. If one was interested in purchasing such liquid indulgence one would kick the man in the leg. If the man said “ouch” it meant he had no liquor to sell that evening. If the man said nothing one followed him around back of the school for the purchase.

Peihl has been working for HCSCC for 30 years.

Peihl began his career with HCSCC as a volunteer. He then was hired part-time and finally full-time. Most of the seven HCSCC employees started that way.

“I have always loved history,” commented Peihl. “My parents were great story tellers.” The couple lived in rural North Dakota.

Growing up Peihl heard many stories about the history of North Dakota. His mom shared stories of her life during 1930s and 40s. His dad, a little older, born in 1908, shared life stories from the 1920s. “Those stories from the past just came alive for me,” he said. The stories fostered Peihl’s life-long love of history.

Prior to being hired at the museum, Peihl worked for the Rochester Armored Car Company for seven years.

In his free time Peihl enjoys camping, hiking, fishing and canoeing. “I like to get outside when I can,” quipped Peihl. “I work in a basement after all.”

Peihl also finds time to read a lot, mostly nonfiction.

Some of Peihl’s time at HCSCC is spent presenting programs out in the community. He gives slide shows on local history to service clubs, church groups, school classes, senior centers and nursing homes. Peihl gives 75 to 100 such public programs each year.

There is no charge for such interesting presentations but free-will offerings toward HCSCC are always welcome.

“We really want to invite folks to come in and see what we have at the museum.” There is lots and lots of family information about local residents living in the county in the past.

The museum is home to copies of death and marriage records, property deeds and tax lists. There are many ways to find maps and aerial photographs of property. All Clay County newspapers are on microfilm.

If Peihl is unable answer questions he tries to put those who make requests in contact with other agencies or people who may have the information.

“We have a tremendous amount of resources. We focus as much as we can on Clay County but we have resources for other parts of the region,” said Peihl.

“We can put people in touch with other agencies and resources that may help.”

Peihl suggests that people e-mail the museum, drop a note or make a phone call before coming in for research. With some forewarning Peihl and the other museum staff will be able to help visitors find the information that they request easier and quicker.

People should be specific about what information they are seeking. “Usually we have to go to different places to find pieces of information. One resource leads to another,” said Peihl.

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Jonason Serves As HCSCC Executive Director

By: Karen Carpenter

Growing up with a grandmother who was an antique collector is what spurred Maureen Kelly Jonason on to a life-long interest in history. She is the executive director of the Historical and Cultural Society of Clay County (HCSCC). As CEO of the organization, Jonason oversees all of the financial and programming operations, the staff in their separate departments, the projects the team works on together and all fundraising.

“My role in the process is primarily as fundraiser. Although we budget a certain amount for exhibits every year, I also write grants to help fund many of our projects,” said Jonason.

HCSCC was awarded a Minnesota Historical Society Legacy grant of $10,000 to create the type of quality exhibit that could hold up well for the two years it is up.

“My secondary role is to keep projects moving. Historians love to swim in all the fascinating details,” explained Jonason. “Their exhibit meetings can last for hours and hours.” At some point, and the grant deadlines help, we have to say enough researching; start writing! And then stop writing; start cutting.

“Way more is written than what can be put into signage for visitors. Fortunately, extra material can be used in newsletter articles or public presentations,” Jonason continued.

The museum staff plans on developing several new programs based on their research on the Wet and Dry exhibit.

According to Jonason the stories of Clay County during the Wet and Dry era are engaging, fascinating and need to be told.

“The fact is, Prohibition was a time of people behaving badly all around. Possibly the only good thing to come out of that period was Alcoholics Anonymous!” she stated.

Jonason is a local gal, born at St. Ansgar Hospital in Moorhead, she lived in Fargo as a child.

“My mother and her six children under eleven moved to Harvey, ND to live in the same house as her parents and our maternal great-grandmother,” stated Jonason. “We grew up in a multigenerational home where I developed an appreciation for history.”

In 1971, when Jonason’s mother decided to get a college degree at the age of 40-something and with three kids still at home, the family moved back to Fargo. Jonason earned a PhD in higher education teaching and learning at University of North Dakota in 2004, an MA in English literature at North Dakota State University in 1993, and a BA in English literature in 1988.

Starting in 2004 Jonason began at HCSCC as a board member of the Heritage Hjemkomst Interpretive Center (HHIC), the organization that used to run the main museum at the Hjemkomst Center.

She was on that board for four years and was active in the 18 months of discussion that took place prior to the merger with Clay County Historical Society.

She had just finished her 20th year of teaching college writing and humanities in May 2008. When the HHIC interim director resigned, Jonason stepped in to volunteer.

Within two weeks, Jonason said, “Nope! You have to pay me for this!”

“I remained the executive director of HHIC through the end of the year and then was appointed the interim executive director of the newly named Historical and Cultural Society of Clay County (HCSCC).

“I worked for 17 months as an interim before the board completed a national search and selected me as the permanent director in 2010,” remembered Jonason.

Jonason’s grandmother revered history and carefully documented photographs. As an antique collector she also listed who was with her when she bought such treasures. Jonason gained, from watching her grandmother, a sense that it was important to keep track of the details.

“I loved studying history in elementary and high school. Oddly, though, I never made room to take a history course in college,” stated Jonason.

“But all of my literature studies were done within the historical context of the writers so I did a lot of historical research. My master’s thesis was on the life and work of Lady Elizabeth Tanfield Cary, a woman who wrote plays at the same time as Shakespeare but whom very few people have ever heard of.”

She went on to say, “my doctoral dissertation was a complete 30-year history on the program at Minnesota State University Moorhead called The New Center which began in the early 1970s. So I ended up making history a big part of my education after all,” Jonason said.

Jonason is married to Fargo acting teacher Martin Jonason. They live in a lovely 1926 house in south Fargo, just the type of home you expect someone with a passion of history to enjoy.

One of the joys of her work at HCSCC is that no two days are ever the same. “I can come to work with a plan of what I will do, but that plan will soon fade into the reality of an actively changing organization in need of constant attention. I think most of the staff would say the same thing,” concluded Jonason.

Like many people, Jonason loved history in general, found it fascinating, stimulating and fun. “Not until I worked here did I really appreciate the importance of preserving local history so that future generations can learn the lessons history provides,” commented Jonason. “Skills to think critically about how the past informs the present and the appreciation for the challenges of the past compared to today. And the stimulation of the imagination that says ‘what about today should be preserved for tomorrow?’” Jonason explained.

Jonason concluded by saying, “I greatly appreciate the support we get from so many different sources. Those include the City of Moorhead, the Clay County Commission and taxpayers, over 600 members, donors, grants from private foundations and government grants.

“Another source is the admission revenue from the 25,000+ visitors a year who also shop in our gift shop and eat at Kelly’s Snack Shack!”
Eidem Works To Put Archives On Line

By: Karen Carpenter

A huge project for the Historical and Cultural Society of Clay County (HCSCC) staff is putting it all into a database. By doing it makes it possible for records to be available to the public online.

Heading up this project is Matt Eidem. He served as temporary project archivist for HCSCC. His new position is Director of Museum Operations. Eidem will play a key role in overseeing the day-to-day activities and event happenings at the museum, as well as the museum’s online presence.

“I began here on a grant-funded project through the Minnesota Historical Society,” explained Eidem. “My job, with the help of interns, was to arrange and describe over 400 feet of primary source material and create online catalog records for them.”

“The idea is that they will be more accessible for public research usage this way. The project will be finished by May of 2016 at the latest. #HireMatt,” he added. This comment was made prior to accepting his new position.

Eidem spent his temporary time training interns who are interested in archival work and he will train staff to continue the internship program after he begins his new staff position.

Although he has not worked directly with the Wet and Dry exhibit he will likely be called in to help during set up. He will have more hands-on work with the Wet and Dry exhibit in the position he now holds.

Hailing from Rochester, MN Eidem has two brothers, one in education working as an assistant principal at a school in Cottage Grove, MN and the other at home.

Like a lot of people in Rochester both of his parents work at Mayo Clinic. His mom is a nurse, and his dad as an electrician.

While growing up he lived in Minnesota, Milwaukee, WI, and Louisville, KY.

Eidem has two bachelor’s degrees: one in history with a minor in economics from Concordia College in Moorhead, and one in information science and technology from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. He also hold a Master’s in library and information science with a concentration in archival management.

Eidem spent three years serving as the first archivist in the 130+ year history of a public library in New Albany, IN. While there he was successful in starting a professional archives program by making the historical materials held by the library publically accessible for the first time.

Ever since leaving Concordia Eidem was looking for an opportunity to come back to the Moorhead area. Last March that opportunity presented itself and he jumped at it.

Eidem says his interest in history started in the sixth grade, “I had my first research assignment. It was a project on the 130+ year history of a public library in New Albany, IN. While there he was successful in starting a professional archives program by making the historical materials held by the library publically accessible for the first time.”

Eidem feels that preserving the past is important because it helps us as a society learn from past mistakes and move forward. Of his past role at the museum he said, “public accessibility to these records is especially important because it allows everyone to benefit from the answers.”

Lucky for all those searching out information from the historical archives it soon will be easier thanks to Matt Eidem.

As his new position at HCSCC begins, Eidem commented, “I couldn’t be more excited to help expand on the already incredible services being offered by the Historical and Cultural Society of Clay County.”

Matt Eidem began his association with HCSCC as a temporary archivist for the museum. He spent time inputting information into a database which allows the public to access the archives. He has now been hired as a permanent staff person. His title is Director of Museum Operations.

Matt Eidem began his association with HCSCC as a temporary archivist for the museum. He spent time inputting information into a database which allows the public to access the archives. He has now been hired as a permanent staff person. His title is Director of Museum Operations.

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These unidentified tipplers were clipped from a photo taken by Hawley photographer S. P. Wange in his studio in the mid to late 1890s.
Better Watch Who’s Coming Around The Corner…

Enforcement Of Local Prohibition Laws Was Half-Hearted By Police And Judges

By: Gene Prim

To say that enforcement of prohibition laws was half-hearted would be a generous statement.

Beginning in 1915 in Clay County and continuing nationally after the Volstead Act went into effect, law enforcement, by a huge majority, paid scant attention to a little local bootlegging. Was it because law enforcement officers were being paid off? Or, was it just a case of you can’t arrest everyone?

In the later years it became a matter of “If it’s a federal law, then let the G-Men enforce it.”

Enforcement of alcohol laws varied from precinct to precinct, county to county, city to rural, state to state and even cop to cop. Law enforcement, in general, took enforcing liquor laws with a large yawn.

Every state had to annually submit a report to the federal “Wickersham Commission” whose job it was to oversee liquor laws. Every county was “judged” as far as enforcement efforts and that report was sent on to the feds in Washington, D.C.

The Minnesota report concluded that Clay County enforcement efforts throughout the county were “bad.”

Clay County Sheriff Archie Whaley got only a slightly higher mark on his report card. The Minnesota report concluded that his efforts on behalf of liquor violations was “fair.” That was about as high a grade as any local Clay County law enforcement officer ever got with the Wickersham Commission of federal snoops.

In fact, one of the Clay County Deputy Sheriffs, Frank Racek, was tasked with arresting prohibition violators during prohibition. How well he did at that job is not recorded. But he left the sheriff’s department immediately after prohibition ended and became a beer distributor after repeal.

If enforcement at most local city, sheriff, and county levels was judged to be only fair to bad, it was downright glowing when compared to Barnesville. The city had always had a reputation for being a hard drinking railroad town. Thirsty Barnesvillians saw little reason to change because of some silly law that everyone was ignoring. The city police and local court system just did not have their hearts in enforcement.

While there were numerous arrests with a subsequent night or two in the Barnesville Jail for being drunk and disorderly, nobody seemed too much care how the suspect got into such a condition in the first place.

As a side note, Barnesville’s brick jail still stands and is on the National Register of Historic Sites. It is open each year over Potato Days the last weekend in August.

During the period of time from 1930 until liquor became legal in Clay County again in 1937, there were exactly six arrests in the City of Barnesville for selling or possessing alcohol. That works out to not quite one arrest per year for bootlegging.

Those who did get arrested for illegal liquor sales could expect to find a sympathetic judge to hear their case. In Moorhead bootleggers could expect to pay a fine of at least a hundred dollars. Repeat offenders could expect a higher fine and even a little jail time.

Those who appeared before Judge Thomas F. Collins in Barnesville got off quite a bit easier. Collins was a former saloon owner himself and apparently held the federal law in rather low regard. The highest fine he ever imposed on a liquor law violator was $50. The rest of the half dozen or so violators who appeared before him in those seven years he was on the bench in Barnesville were usually fined $10 and $4 court costs.

There are similar stories in every township and city in Clay County. The general population of those communities was made up of farmers who wanted to have a little fun when they came to town on Saturday night. Nearly all of the small communities in Clay County were also there because of the railroads and those workers liked to have a nightcap or six after a day working on the tracks.

During the Prohibition Era, there was just a total and complete general lack of interest in enforcement of a law that was unpopular across the entire 48 states of the USA when it came to prohibition.
Krueger enjoys All Aspects Of His Position

Markus Krueger recently assumed a new role as Programming Director with the Historical and Cultural Society of Clay County (HCSSC). His responsibilities include development of exhibits and events, as well as educational materials for school tours and for increasing accessibility for all museum visitors. He enjoys helping teachers any way that he can in instilling a love of history in their students. In his former position as the Education Coordinator at HCSSC he spent many hours giving tours to students and their teachers.

Visitors to the museum will be able to find out the answer to that question. Museum archivists researched and wrote a section about how people got help with addiction before AA. The first chapter of AA was not established in Moorhead until sometime in the 1940s.

Krueger was born in Minneapolis. His dad is a pastor so he spent his childhood in little towns in the Red River Valley on both sides of the river. He lived in Pembina, Grand Forks, Norman County and as far west as Steele County.

“As soon as I moved to Moorhead, though, I stuck. That was in junior high back in 1997,” said Krueger. He graduated from Moorhead High School and Minnesota State University Moorhead. He received a bachelor’s degree in art history with a minor in history.

“I took a bunch of studio art classes, too,” recalls Krueger. “I still make woodcut prints as a hobby.”

Krueger has been married for 10 years to his wife, Megan, a Moorhead native. The couple has three cats. Megan is the director of the Moorhead Public Library and supervises library branches from Ada down to Breckenridge and east to Rothsay.

Krueger’s mom lives in Moorhead and teaches in a daycare. His dad is a pastor outside of Spokane, WA.

In college, Krueger was most interested in medieval art and architecture. He started volunteering as a stave church tour guide in college because he thought “how many Minnesotans studying medieval art have a medieval church in their town? I better have something to do with that.”

Krueger claims he never had any interest in Vikings or Scandinavia before that. “I took it for granted,” he said. “I grew up in the most heavily Norwegian communities in the world outside of Norway, the son of a Lutheran pastor, so I took all this for granted.

“It was only when I started hanging out at the Hjemkomst Center that I gained an appreciation for how unique we are around here,” continued Krueger.

Three years later, Krueger was still volunteering. “I had graduated and was working at some pretty uninteresting temp jobs. Reading about Vikings fed my brain, so I really loved my time at the Hjemkomst Center,” remembered Krueger.

A job opened up in September of 2007 and Krueger says, “they plugged me into it. I never expected to work in museums, but Robert Asp’s dream is catchy. I caught it, and I’ve been here ever since.”

Krueger shared that his grandma was a great storyteller which spurred his interest in history. “My sister and I would sit on the floor by her chair for hours listening to her tell stories about growing up in the railroad town of Proctor, just outside Duluth, MN during the Great Depression.”

Both of his parents were also great storytellers with a love of history. “Family was so important to them and we lived so far away,” reminisced Krueger. “Five hour car rides to see grandma and grandpa in St. Paul or at the lake happened a couple times a month.”

“The car rides were opportunities for me to hear stories, about medieval legends from my mom or about World War II or the Roman Empire from my dad.”

As programming director, Krueger is responsible for development of exhibits and events. His position also extends to providing educational materials for school tours and for increasing accessibility for all museum visitors.

Krueger gives history presentations throughout the community and helps teachers in any way that he can.

“We have a small staff who does a lot, so we all do whatever needs doing,” shared Krueger. “I’m also often a waiter and a historic furniture mover.”

When asked what he liked best about working for HCSCC Krueger responded this way.

“This is a dream job so it is hard to pick, but I suppose it has to be the people. We have so many absolutely fascinating people living in this community. There are too many to mention!

“In studying the World War II exhibit, Lefty Johnson from Hawley told me a funny story about how he cussed out General Eisenhower and General Montgomery for getting in the way of his truck on the beach in Africa. Our volunteer Mel Johnson used to be in charge of General Patton’s maps.

“I’ve met a lot of people who came here as refugees fleeing war and oppression, who fought for simple things I take for granted as an American.

“As I’ve become an adult here, so many of the volunteers at the Hjemkomst Center have been role models of mine, teaching me the importance of being kind and the importance of service. The finest people I’ve met in my life I’ve met through this job,” summed up Krueger.

One reason why Krueger’s preservation of the past is important is that history is just plain interesting. “History is the collection of all the best stories that ever happened,” said Krueger. “All the stories that people made sure they remembered because they are interesting, dramatic, funny or important – we call it ‘history.’”

“History is the reason why everything is the way it is,” continued Krueger.

“Why is there war in the Middle East? Why is there a busted cement pillar in the Red River between Center and First Avenue? How come good Italian restaurants come out of Dillworth? For those who are curious about things, the answer usually lies in history.”

By: Karen Carpenter
Prohibition In Clay County-Wet Or Dry?

Clay County Dry Spell Ended In 1937…

By: Gene Prim

When Clay County voted to “go dry” in May of 1915, nearly every saloon in the county was forced to shut down. For the over 40 saloons in Moorhead and all of the others in smaller towns around the area, that meant as of June 30, 1915 there was no more beer or booze available.

The exception to that law was the City of Barnesville. The city issued liquor licenses on an annual basis. Each of the saloons in town was allowed to operate until their licenses officially expired rather than being forced to close on June 30.

The sale of liquor did not become legal again until national Prohibition was eliminated across the United States by a constitutional amendment in 1933. Barnesville did not allow legal liquor sales again until four years later, 1937, and then mostly for 3.2 beer licenses.

The accompanying photo was taken shortly after liquor again became available in 1937 in Barnesville. At that time there were four taverns and cafes serving beer on one downtown block. Grand total for the city was about 15 beer, club and setup licenses scattered around the town serving residents and thirsty railroaders.

The Peter Engels Saloon, on the far left in this photo, with the Hamm’s Beer sign, was the first of Barnesville’s major saloons to close after Clay County went dry in 1915. That building is where the members of Barnesville’s VFW Post 4628 have called home for over 60 years.

The Engels Saloon closed at 11:00 p.m. on August 11, 1915 when their liquor license expired. Edward Sieber immediately took advantage of the vacancy and moved his Olympia Saloon from the south end of town to the Engel’s location until Halloween night, October 31, 1915 when his license also ran out.

The building was then used for a variety of purposes over the next 22 years when it was illegal to sell booze in the county. Most of the time the structure served as an automobile repair garage.

When prohibition officially ended in Barnesville in 1937 the bar became the Windsor Club. Over the next decade and a half it was owned and operated primarily by Gus Seefeldt and later by Joe Hawla until it was sold to VFW Post 4628 for their post headquarters in the early 1950s.

The building on the far right in this photo is a view of the front of the Loff and Stach’s Saloon, the last legally operating saloon in Clay County. When that bar closed at 11:00 p.m. on November 20, 1915, the entire Clay County was “dry” with no more liquor being sold.

Fat chance!

What the law did do was drive the demand for booze underground, relieve all of the pressure on selling to minors, eliminate any kind of quality control or inspection and cut off the flow of dollars to the various governments where the booze was taxed.

Following the closure of Loff and Stach’s, the building served many purposes over the next 22 years. Primarily it served as the Williams Harness Shop.

When liquor sales were allowed again beginning in 1937, much of the traffic was only for 3.2 beer. The corner bar returned to its former life and became the Shamrock Tavern. That business was operated mostly by Joe and Irene Lapos from the 1950s into the 1960s. Various owners operated it after the 1960s and the purpose changed several times.

Its last life was as a fried chicken and beer establishment operated by Dave and Leonard Holland. The old structure was torn down in 2003 and a Fire Hall Museum was built on the site.

In the middle of the block you can see the Grain Belt Beer sign that graced the front entrance to the original Eagle Cafe. At this point in time the cafe was probably owned and operated by Gus Seefeldt. He would eventually sell the business in 1946 to Tillie Desing-Furst. She and her husband Tudy operated the popular cafe into the 1960s before selling it. A grandson and now a great-grandson of the Furst’s have operated the “new” Eagle Cafe on Barnesville’s Front Street since 1983.

A fourth establishment selling beer in this one block was the pool hall owned by the Lynch, Seefeldt and Nicklay families at various times.

The residents of Barnesville and the railroaders that passed through and stayed here obviously had a powerful thirst three quarters of a century ago.

Wet and Dry: Alcohol in Clay County 1871-1937 is the theme of a new exhibit that has been assembled by the Heritage and Cultural Society of Clay County at the Hjemkomst Center in Moorhead. That exhibit is slated to open in February of 2016.
Meet The HCSCC Board Members...

MARK ALTENBURG

Mark Altenburg serves as the development director for the Minnesota Community and Technical College known as MN State. He lives in Moorhead with his wife Susan and his two children. His avid interest in history, particularly of Pierre Bottineau and his role in the development of the Red River Valley, brought him to the HCSCC board.

JADE ROSENFELDT

Jade Rosenfeldt serves as HCSCC’s secretary. Jade grew up in Moorhead, graduated from Concordia College and then graduated from the University of North Dakota School of Law. Jade currently works as an attorney for the Vogel Law Firm in Moorhead, Minnesota. She works primarily in the areas of criminal defense, guardianship/ conservatorships, and liquor license law.

JADE ROSENFELDT

Jade is very active in the community. She currently serves on the Clay County Law Library Board and the Advisory Council to Lutheran Social Services Youth Court. Jade and her husband, Steve, along with their sons, Weston and Henrik, reside in Moorhead. For relaxation, Jade enjoys spending time at the lake with her family.

JOHN DOBMEIER

John Dobmeier was raised in Barnesville, Minnesota where he graduated from high school. After four years active duty with the US Navy, he attended college seeking a degree from the University of Minnesota in Mortuary Science. He spent 30 years in the funeral industry, 22 of them as owner/operator of the funeral home in Barnesville, a business he purchased from his father.

He presently teaches AP European History and Comparative Government at Moorhead Senior High School after completing a degree in Social Studies from MSUM in 2005.

He has also been an active member of the Barnesville Area Fire Department for the past 25 years. His wife, Terry, and he have two adult children who live in the Fargo - Moorhead area. He enjoys reading, fishing, hunting and time in the BWCAW.

He says, “It is my honor to serve on this board and help support and preserve history in my county.” He currently serves as HCSCC vice-president.

DR. VIJAY GABA

Dr. Vijay Gaba is an anesthesiologist with Sanford Health Systems. Originally from India, Dr. Gaba has called Fargo his home since 2004.

He is very active in the community, volunteering as a 4-H leader, teaching wood working and pottery, and serving as an officer of the Indian American Association of the Great Plains and a board member of the Prairie Nordic Skiing club.

He enjoys spending time with his wife and two daughters, running marathons and traveling. His family participates actively in the annual Pangea—Cultivate Our Cultures festival produced by HCSCC each November.

GAIL BLAIR

Gail Blair grew up on the family farm near Hitterdal. A graduate of Concordia College, Gail works in the Wealth Management Division of Bell State Bank & Trust. She has a life-long interest in history and genealogy. Gail enjoys spending time at the golf course with her husband and daughter. Gail is the HCS board treasurer.

MONICA MILLETTE

Monica Millette was elected to the board at the annual meeting in 2014. She grew up in Glyndon and now resides in Moorhead so has been a Clay County resident all her life. Monica is employed at Heartland Trust Company as Vice President Retirement Services Division Manager. She has served on a number of area boards.

In her spare time, Monica enjoys reading, working out, painting, and spending time with family and friends.

JENNIFER TJADEN

Jennifer Tjaden teaches social studies and language arts in Hawley, Minnesota. Jennifer is a graduate of Concordia College and has a master’s degree in education.

As a teacher, Jennifer is able to share her love of history with her students and has been very involved in the National History Day Program. She has also spent the last two summers participating in teachers’ fellowships at Ford’s Theater in Washington, D.C and Colonial Williamsburg.

A mother of two teenagers, Jennifer’s time is spent at many Hawley High School sporting and music events as well as volunteering at her church. Jennifer has lived in Hawley with her husband, Brian, and her children Parker, 16 and Emily, 14 for the past 18 years.

GENE PRIM

Gene Prim is the owner and publisher of Hawley, Barnesville, Rothsay and Lake Park area newspapers and currently the mayor of Barnesville. Gene has served on a number of civic and church organizations, such as the Barnesville Jaycees, Barnesville Chamber of Commerce, Barnesville Main Street Program and Rod and Gun Clubs. He enjoys hunting and traveling with his family and wife Karen.

DALE WHITE

Dale White is a Hitterdal area native and a retired counselor and registrar at Minnesota State Community and Technical College in Moorhead. He earned his B.S. and M.S. at North Dakota State, taught English in Minnesota schools for several years, and served as registrar at Dakota College at Bottineau, ND.

He has three adult children and is a widower. Dale is a long-time member of Vikingland Kiwanis, and was a former CCHS president and treasurer.
Dahlquist Serves As Administrative Assistant

By: Karen Carpenter

Administrative assistant at the Historical and Cultural Society of Clay County (HCSCC), Linnea Dahlquist, solidified her love of history through books. “I’ve kind of always been curious about what life was like in the past,” commented Dahlquist. “I think it really solidified though when I got an ‘American Girl Doll’ and started reading the associated book series.”

Dahlquist will assist in setting up the Wet and Dry exhibit. She feels the subject is important to share. “I think it’s important to acknowledge history, even if the subject is taboo,” she commented.

An only child Dahlquist was born and raised in St. Paul, MN. She came to Moorhead to attend Minnesota State University Moorhead (MSUM).

“I graduated in December of 2015 from MSUM with a Bachelor of Arts in anthropology with a cultural emphasis and a minor in art history,” Dahlquist supplied.

As the administrative assistant Dahlquist handles memberships and donations. She schedules volunteers and is the weekend manager.

Looking for a job to supplement college expenses Dahlquist decided she wanted museum experience. “I wanted museum experience and remembered my great-grandmother worked in the Heritage Gift Shop when I was in elementary school so I thought, ‘why not?’”

Her great-grandmother’s name was Phyllis Lee. “I remember coming to the Hjemkomst Center a few times as a child while she was working. I think that was sometime between 1999 and 2000. I was in second grade at Probstfield for part of that year,” Dahlquist said.

She interviewed at the museum in September 2011. “I discovered that I could use my work study, a financial aid award, from college,” stated Dahlquist. She has been working at the museum since.

Dahlquist likes working at the museum because it is a small enough that she can try her hand at many things. Like the rest of the staff at HCSCC, she is called upon to fill various roles at the museum.

“I’ve had retail experience from the gift shop, customer service experience from working admissions, docent/public speaking experience from doing tours and some collections and research experience.

“I also enjoy the fact that I know pretty much everyone here, this makes coming to work more fun because I actually get to interact and bond with the people I work with.”

Dahlquist has other connections to the region. Her mom grew up in the area and attended Moorhead High School. Dahlquist’s maternal grandfather taught in the Moorhead school system for 37 years. She has other extended family living in the area.

“History helps us understand where we came from and how things have changed,” concluded Dahlquist. “By preserving the past, and even the present, we will help future generations in that endeavor.”

Administrative Assistant Linnea Dahlquist wears many hats at the museum. She is the weekend manager for the facility.
By: Karen Carpenter
There are many things to see at the Historical and Cultural Society of Clay County (HCSCC). A couple of important places not to miss would be the Rex Café and the gift shop.

Managing both of these important stops is Kelly Wambach. His official title is retail/food services manager. He began his position of gift shop manager in May 2012.

Seeing the potential for food sales Wambach opened the Heritage Snack Shack in 2013. The café has recently gone through a name change and is now known as the Rex Café. Wearing both hats gets a little hectic at times.

Wambach is looking forward to the opening of the Wet & Dry exhibit because his family owned local saloons and then were involved in a little bootlegging in the 1920s.

German born Jacob Wambach was one of the earliest settlers of the area. He was a great-great-grandfather to Kelly.

Matthew Wambach, great grandfather owned the Rex Saloon located in Moorhead and the Palm Saloon in Georgetown. Other members of the Wambach family also owned a bar in Sabin. Kelly’s grandfather, Roland, was born above the Palm Saloon.

Kelly remembered his father Allen Wambach reported that when he was little he was posted to watch for the “Feds” while adults were busy with deliveries.

Growing up in Georgetown, Kelly spent time picking up bottles along the steam boat landing at the edge of town. The Hudson Bay Company used the landing to ferry products up the Red River.

Stories from his grandma, who lived to be 96, heightened Wambach’s love of history. She worked for the Adam Stein family, a founding family of Clay County. One of their nine children Annie Stein became a well known area artist.

Wambach is proud and willingly shares his family history as well as Georgetown’s history, loaning some of his personal artifacts to the museum.

After graduating from Moorhead High School Wambach attended Moorhead State Community and Technical College receiving a degree in restaurant management.

He served as chef for several local restaurants including the exclusive Tree Top Restaurant in Moorhead. Wambach gained a reputation as a great cook through the restaurants patrons and also by cooking for fundraisers in Georgetown.

The Rex Café serves lunches for tourists passing through the museum, sometimes by the bus load. The rest of the clientele are staff and local people working in or near the building.

The chamber of commerce is housed in the museum building and senior citizens groups meet there.

“There are card groups who meet here for lunch, business people and a few seniors,” commented Wambach.

The love of cooking was a trait passed on to Wambach from his dad and mom. “My dad is 88, lives in Borup and still cooks and cans,” mused Wambach.

Wambach caters the festivals that are held at HCSCC. The Viking Festival held each June and the German Festival in September. “I have a lot of good volunteers to help,” Wambach said.

The other hat that Kelly Wambach wears is as manager of the gift shop. “I like nice things,” he commented. “I like retail work and I finding people so interesting.”

The gift shop will be handling products that tie into the Wet and Dry exhibit which will run for two years beginning in 2016.

Patrons will likely be able to purchase a “bootlegger” special at the Rex Café.
Taylor Helps In Gift Shop, Admissions

By: Karen Carpenter

When visiting the Historical and Cultural Society of Clay County (HCSCC) gift shop there are many interesting items to see. While shopping one may encounter the friendly hospitality of Rose Marie Taylor.

Most days Taylor can be found behind the counter or rearranging items in the gift shop. She works there four days a week. As with most staff of HCSCC she wears many hats and can also be found at the admission desk on other days.

A section of the gift shop will be carved out to hold items relative to the new Wet and Dry exhibit. That exhibit will be part of the museum for the next two years beginning in February of 2016.

During the two year exhibit about World War II the gift shop stocked books and other memorabilia pertaining to that era of history.

Taylor was raised in Fort Totten, ND. She feels the Wet and Dry exhibit will help people understand the problems faced by their forefathers.

An Army medic, Taylor was stationed in Germany and then San Francisco. After her discharge from service Taylor stayed in San Francisco.

She attended college and received a degree in accounting. Taylor worked in that field for 15 years.

Taylor then chose a new path and moved into the area of helping others succeed in business and personal lives. She has written two books, “Jump Start Your Creative Process” and “Your Conflict Your Resolution”. They are practical help guides. Along those lines she presented seminars and lectures for businesses and groups.

Three years ago Taylor retired and moved to Moorhead.

“I wanted to be closer to my family,” commented Taylor. “My siblings are all in Minnesota and North Dakota.” She enjoys time spent with family.

After a few months of retirement, Taylor decided she needed to have something more to occupy her time and attention. She began her involvement with a program called Experience Works. The group places senior citizens in different job situations.

About two years ago Taylor was placed by the agency with HCSCC. “I knew right away that this was a job that I would really like,” she said. “And it is within walking distance from my home!” After a few months Taylor was hired by HCSCC to fill her current position.

“I have gained so much from this job,” explained Taylor. “The staff at the museum is wonderful. They are so passionate about preserving and sharing the area’s history. They are all genuinely nice people.

Keeping abreast of what exhibits are offered and what is available to visitors is part of Taylor’s responsibilities. “I need to be able to share with visitors about the museum and the church. I want to be able to tell them a little about the exhibits that they will see.”

“I love meeting the people that visit,” Taylor said. “We get a lot of people from all over the world, many from Canada.

“The festivals that we hold bring in people who enjoy the culture that is being represented.”

Rose Marie Taylor is part of the staff of the Historical and Cultural Society of Clay County and spends most of her time in the museum gift shop. Other duties include working at the admitting desk and other tasks she may be assigned.

One of Taylor’s hobbies is creating Chippewa bead work bracelets. The beautiful jewelry is available at the museum gift shop. Artwork and crafts from many of the area cultures can be seen in the shop.

“My heart is with my heritage,” commented Taylor. One only has to see her beading to know that.

The Wet and Dry exhibit will be one that should not be missed. Add the gift shop in as a stop not to be missed either.

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Midway Saloon Was A Spectacular Site

By: Mark Peihl
HCSCC Archivist

The Midway Saloon and Restaurant building was so ornate as to be considered a palace in the early 1900s. Built along the bridge to North Dakota it was quite a site to behold whether you saw it from the Minnesota or North Dakota side of the Red River.

Many alcohol establishments sprang up along the river, making it easy for dry North Dakota drinkers to stop and hoist a few, and for the Moorhead businessmen to releave them of their cash.

The Midway Saloon and Restaurant was one of many such establishments crowded around the Moorhead approach to the bridge.

North Dakota entered the union in 1889 with a prohibition provision in their constitution. On June 30, 1890 all of the saloons in North Dakota closed. But they could stay open in Minnesota. Fargo saloon owners and others poured into Moorhead to set up shop.

In 1900, the number of Moorhead saloons peaked at 45. There were about 3,700 people in town at that time, or about one saloon for every 82 residents. That would be like Dilworth today with 37 bars. The business brought money into the city, but tremendous problems as well.

Obviously it wasn’t Moorheadites supporting these businesses. Their customers were coming from dry North Dakota, especially in the fall when thousands of harvest hands flooded the Red River Valley. The best locations for saloons tended to be around the Moorhead ends of the two bridges, the South, Main Avenue, and North Bridges. Think “first chance, last chance.”

The Midway was the first on your right as you crossed the North Bridge. Two days before North Dakota went “dry,” the Moorhead City Council met to act on 23 applications for saloon licenses. Only one was for a saloon near the north bridge.

Andrew Thompson had built a new building on the north side of Ridge Avenue where the bridge abutted in Moorhead. Thompson’s would become the first saloon on the left.

Thirty First Ward residents turned in a petition arguing against allowing this bar in their neighborhood. The First Ward included Moorhead north of the NP Railway tracks and west of Fifth Street. The Council granted all 23 licenses, including Thompson’s.

The First Ward residents had reason to be concerned. By 1900, their neighborhood was home to over half of Moorhead’s 45 saloons.

The Midway was the second

CONTINUED ON PAGE 23

It’s a shame the barroom photo is so unclear. Note, however, the arched, frescoed dome in the ceiling and the length of the mahogany bar - 36 feet!
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 22

Haas spent over $5000 on this 8 by 12 foot mechanical band. That's more like $125,000 today.

Midway Saloon Was A Spectacular Site

Haas had been a successful Fargo businessman, owning a saloon, restaurant and hotel. His Moorhead establishment was 64 by 70 feet, two-stories, including a full basement. He did a good business and in 1897 refurbished the place into what was, perhaps, the gaudiest of Moorhead’s saloons.

The city may have had something of a reputation for fancy bars. In Sinclair Lewis’ 1925 novel, Babbitt, the title character, recently graduated from medical school in 1908, approaches his father-in-law for a loan to furnish an office for his practice. The old man says, “...you can look at a fellow’s sore throat or prescribe for an ear-ache just as well in a nice simple little office as in some fool place all fixed up like a Moorhead saloon.”

The September 18, 1897 Moorhead Daily News described the joint’s renovations: “The west front facing the river is in imitation of cut stone. A tower, 80 feet high from the ground, of Moorish and Corinthian design, rises out of the central portion. From the top of this tower a tall flagstaff ascends heavenward, having a golden eagle at its apex, and flying the American flag always. There are four other flag staffs along the western roof which will float streamers. The dome is supported by eight columns, having carved capitals. Beneath the dome is a place for a brass band.

Along the facade is the sign’ JOHNNIE HAAS, THE MIDWAY CAFE’ in lead art glass, in two plates four and one half feet wide by 26 feet long on either side of the dome. The sign will be illuminated at night by electric lights behind, which will give a bright and flashing effect. At the top of the dome will be an electric sign which will spell the owner’s name in alternating colors of red and gold. The north elevation is in imitation of brick, has iron cornice and is artistically painted.

The first story of the building on north and west fronts is of fine plate glass from floor to ceiling. Guard rails of polished brass to protect these.”

Henry Johnson, a Normal School teacher and Moorhead City Council member in the late 1890s, later wrote in his autobiography, The Other Side of Main Street, of the Midway: “At one of the bridges was Johnnie Haas’ place, said to be the most palatial saloon on the continent between New York and San Francisco. I never saw...
Midway Saloon Was A Spectacular Site

Continued from Page 23

the interior but the report that within its precincts four-hundred electric lights were nightly gleaming suggested that there was something to see.”

Indeed there was, The Moorhead Daily News continued: “In entering the room next to the bridge the visitor passes through a handsome vestibule, then by a heavy mahogany door, having a carved glass panel, into the lobby. It is finished in solid mahogany, with octagon columns extending from floor to ceiling, filled in between with brass grill work.

“Passing though the lobby the visitor enters the bar room, which is 22 by 45 feet. It is almost dazzling in magnificence.

Extending its entire length is an arched dome, frescoed on steel, and dotted all along the beams supporting the dome are numerous incandescent lamps.

All around the room are mirrors. Those behind the bar are 11 feet deep and extend 32 feet in length. The bar is 36 feet long, exquisitely carved in front, smooth as glass on top. The top is one piece of mahogany and is the largest single piece of mahogany, it is claimed, ever put into a bar in the United States.

“Behind the bar is a dazzling array of glassware. One of the punch bowls, it is stated, cost $200. The room is illuminated with an immense number of electric lamps and three chandeliers. A wide stair case descends from the west side of the bar room to the parlors below.

The News goes on to describe the smoking room, club room and private dining rooms. Even the bathrooms: “Passing from the ballroom toward the east the visitor enters the lavatories of which there are two. They have marble floors, walls in imitation of marble tiling and are equipped with the latest modern plumbing, with nickel trimmings.”

Also on the east side was the public restaurant, office and kitchen “equipped with steel ranges of the most improved pattern, and with all the various utensils for the best style of cooking. Nick Markov of Fargo will manage the restaurant.

“Behind the kitchen is the musical garden. This is suitably furnished, and here is the large pipe organ, eight by 12 feet, which is chock full of music and plays all the latest and most popular airs.” This nickelodeon reported cost Haas over $5000.

That’s more like $125,000 today. The News article claimed “there are 363 electric lights in the building, with handsome globes.” Apparently Haas added more later. A News advertisement from January 1898 claimed 400, corroborating Johnson’s account.

The electric lights caused something of a stir later that year. Council member Johnson headed up a committee to investigate management of the city owned power plant and found that Haas, along with several other saloon owners, had never paid to have his power hooked up or paid his bills.

Haas soon installed his own light plant in the basement to power his 400 electric lamps.

In all Haas’ improvements...
Midway Saloon Was A Spectacular Site

The former palace disappeared, either burned or torn down, sometime between 1924 and 1927. The “Dutch Prince” had retired early to Detroit Lakes. He lost both legs to diabetes, moved back to Fargo and died there in 1918. He was only 55 years old.

Cost $15,000, maybe $375,000 today. It was likely money well spent.

In 1902 he turned the saloon over to Norman Young who ran it for several years with a succession of partners. Young built a “New Midway” down the street in 1910 and sold the operation to J. E. Johnson. Charles Nelson ran it as the “Old Midway Buffet” from 1913 until Clay County went dry in July 1915.

The old building sat empty for some time. By 1922 it was home to a pool hall.

This is how the Midway looked in about 1912. Haas’ glass sign is gone as are the brass rails protecting the plate glass windows out front. Note the streetcar tracks in the street in the foreground.
Alcohol May Be Reason For Glyndon Arson

By: Mark Peihl
HCSSC Archivists

The city of Glyndon is now an up and growing place. Glyndon's past was not always so bright. The village, it would seem, was a victim of the wet and dry issue that plagued Clay County before and during the prohibition era.

It was never proven but there was much speculation that the many fires in Glyndon in the late 1800s were in retaliation of the wet versus dry alcohol issue that was on Glyndon's ballot in each election.

Those fires eventually led to several residents and business owners moving away from Glyndon leaving the population of the village sparse.

As it approaches its 143rd anniversary next spring, Glyndon is a city on the move. The Minnesota State Demographer estimates the city's 2013 population at 1,397, up a whopping 33.2% in the last 15 years. During the 1990s Glyndon grew by 21.7%, making it by far the fastest growing city in Clay County.

But Glyndon's fortunes were not always so bright. In the 19th century Glyndon rose, fell, then stagnated. Some of the best farm land in the area. Sections on the northern outskirts of town were part of a division over the liquor question. Some suggest the loss of the Great Northern roundhouse and Winnipeg. Glyndon again seemed poised for success.

Businessmen and settlers flocked to the townsite. Among them was another Civil War veteran, Captain Luther Osborn. A New York native, Osborn had enlisted in the Union Army, served as a private, mustered out, reenlisted and commanded Company H, 22nd U.S. Colored Troops.

After the war he lived in Minneapolis for a time, then hauled a small printing outfit overland to Glyndon and started the Red River Valley News in 1878. As an editor, Osborn was self-deprecating, remarkably funny, pious, deeply opposed to liquor in any form and absolutely convinced of the rightousness of his beliefs. Much of what we know about Glyndon's problems comes from his newspaper files.

Glyndon was a dry community when Osborn arrived. The townsite had not yet been incorporated as a village. Glyndon Township was the governing authority. Each March township residents voted for a board of supervisors, officers and a constable to administer township affairs.

In 1878, a citizens’ petition added to the ballot the question of whether or not to license saloons in the township. This would become an annual event for the next decade. The township voted dry, against license, by 17 votes.

The following March the issue again appeared on the ballot. Osborn reported that “after a year of comparative freedom...from disorder and insecurity” the town had again voted dry, but by only one vote. 59 to 60. Glyndon was somewhat unique that spring. Barnsville voted wet 21 to 3, Hawley went for saloons 89 to 11. Osborn also reported that though observers contested some voters’ residency “nearly every voter was sworn in...and no bad blood was engineered.” That would change in following years.

Outlawing saloons did not eliminate liquor. Illegal sales went on through 1879 and at least one resident was arrested and convicted.

By March 1880, the divide between the wets and dries had widened and deepened. It became the only real issue in the election. Citizens held two separate caucuses, each nominating a slate of candidates. In the end, the Glyndon Township voted down license 76 to 69. Dries also won most of the board seats.

Many votes were challenged and Osborn reported that “influential citizens” freely declared that illegal voting was so patent as to leave no doubt that the election might be involved in the courts.” However, no one bothered to pursue the matter.

Evidence of citizen apathy surfaced when only one bothered to pursue the matter.

In February 1880. His will left an entire block “to the people of Glyndon” forever for park purposes. But, as Osborn reported, “the transfer of real estate lacked the important element of a grantee, there being no corporate body legally competent to hold such legal property.”

Three meetings called in November to discuss the issue “were very slimly attended.” A Glyndonite appointed to form a Glyndon Village Improvement Society submitted a proposal to accept the property until

CONTINUED ON PAGE 27
Alcohol May Be Reason For Glyndon Arson

Glyndon could formally incorporate as a village. Osborn reported that the plan had “thus far failed to enlist the body of our people either in cooperation or opposition to the improvement society scheme. More than this, it has not even caused the people to divide amongst themselves on any or all the questions involved. An apathetic condition would seem to have supervened.”

In December, accidental fires burned the Glyndon House Hotel and a livery barn. Several concerned citizens formed a committee to investigate measures to protect against fire. They never reported back and Glyndon was without fire protection through the 19th century.

It is not hard to understand citizens’ reluctance toward civic improvements. Most of these folks were very recent arrivals. They were gamblers, betting on the railroad crossing to bring them prosperity. If it did not, they were prepared to pull up stakes and try somewhere else.

The Improvement Society did manage to raise money to dig a well on the corner of Partridge and Pleasant Streets.

This location was convenient for householders but too far from the business district to be of help fighting fires there. They also petitioned the state legislature to approve incorporation of Glyndon as a village.

The legislature acceded and in March 1881, Glyndon voters approved a charter copied from the Moorhead village charter of 1875. Most people, including Osborn, expected the new village to vote wet. Many dry votes had come from the rural township. But the Sunday before the election, a party at an illegal saloon got out of hand. Shots were fired, fights broke out, drunks were rounded up and, although no one was injured, it shocked the village. Dries won 71 to 2.

Voting dry did not mean a dry village. For the next year illegal liquor was easy to get in Glyndon. Local authorities did little about it. In November 1881, a Clay County grand jury had to step in, indicting three Glyndon men.

After a year of illegal saloons, the village voted wet 55 to 24 in 1882. Even Osborn admitted the dries had little chance of winning. Jacob Unger, James Shea and John Mason of Moorhead each paid $200 for a liquor license.

Osborn and other dries chaffed under the new arrangement for a year. The next spring, they tried a new tactic, challenging illegal voters. In an aggressive newspaper campaign, Osborn tried to convince dries they had a chance to win a fair election. He published the village personal property tax list identifying each as wet, dry or undecided. It’s an extraordinary document. Osborn listed 53 dries, 22 wets and 19 undecided.

On election day 1883, the wets won 54 to 17 but dries contested 17 votes.

Local authorities arrested four men for illegal non-resident voting and Cornelius Friezen, owner of the hotel where Unger’s saloon was located, for providing the men with free room and board in exchange for wet votes.

One of the “migratory electors,” Frank Sheppard, was something continued from page 26

The Union Depot in Glyndon served both the Great Northern and Northern Pacific Railways. It was destroyed by a suspicious fire in December 1888.

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Alcohol May Be Reason For Glyndon Arson

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 27 of a poet. His ode “The Bumper’s Retreat” was read at his arraignment. It reads in part.

“Come all ye bummars
In Glyndon does dwell
Oh list to my ditty
“I’ll sing it right well.”

Tis Friwen who told us
“By the book of an oath
“That he would give us free
lodging
“for the sake of our vote…”

The men were held over for trial at district court. Though they had lost the election, dries were elated that action was finally being taken.

Then the fires started.

On Sunday March 24, 1883, at 4:00 a.m., a passerby discovered the Park Hall ablaze. George S. Barnes, 4:00 a.m., a passerby discovered the

Nearby buildings escaped with a bad

arsonist torched this elevator in July 1886. The anti-saloon crowd in

Glyndon was remarkably quiet

fighting them was counted too great,

then put it, “our elections went against the

village voted wet but, as Osborn later

put it, “our elections went against the real sentiment of the people, quite as abruptly as in 1883, but the cost of fighting them was counted too great, and it was let pass.”

But in 1886, the dries fought back, and the fires returned with a vengeance.

The anti-saloon crowd in Glyndon was remarkably quiet after the Park Hall fire. Though wet interests won the annual village election on the liquor issue by only five votes in 1884, even the vitriolic publisher Luther Osborn couldn’t muster much enthusiasm for the

This is what the Northern Pacific Elevator, Glyndon looked like in 1876. An

arsonist torched this elevator in July 1886. Nearby buildings escaped with a bad

scorching, including the Bangs’ Store, partially visible at right.

Before the 1885 election, Osborn wrote, “The News will confine its

preaching this year to rejoicings or lamentations, as the case may be, after the fact. Our sentiments are the

same as usual.” The wets again won by five votes.

It took an outsider to rouse the Glyndon dries. In December 1885 parishioners dedicated a new

Congregational Church in Barnesville. Soon after, Rev. William H. Kaufman arrived to take the pulpit, Almost immediately he launched a campaign against saloons.

On January 30, 1886, Rev. Kaufman delivered a fiery speech on “License verses Prohibition” in the new church. The Barnesville Times reported “the subject, to say the least, was a novel one in Barnesville.” Indeed, the new railroad town was home to 11 saloons as well as the headquarters for the railroad. It was a tough, colorful city to

say the least.

But locals filled the new church to hear the preacher. Two days later Rev. Kaufman organized the Barnesville Prohibition Club. On February 7, Kaufman spoke at

Glyndon and organized the Glyndon Prohibition Club with 38 charter members.

Like the Barnesville group, the Glyndon club’s constitution named as its object, “the overthrow of the saloon system, and the manufacture and sale of alcoholic liquors as a beverage.”

A lofty goal, but club members understood the need to work locally. Both clubs sent delegations to a temperance convention in Fergus Falls on February 15.

The Glyndon club met weekly and held several special meetings with speakers from Ada, Fargo and Minneapolis. Alarmed by this activity before the coming March 16 village election, Glyndon wets offered a compromise.

Osborn reported the proposition called for “a union ticket for village trustees, composed of two no-license and one license man, and waive the issue of license for this time.” The energized dries rejected the idea and prepared their strategy.

The dries fully expected the wets to import illegal non-resident voters as charged in 1883. Illegal voting was notoriously difficult to prove in area courts. None of the four arrested in 1883 were ever convicted.

Osborn reported that this time the dries hired an attorney, W. F. Ball, of Fargo, to observe the election and “elucidate points of election law and the penalties for breaking the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 31
Curator Vedaa Oversees Care Of Artifacts

By: Karen Carpenter

Treasuring one’s possessions is a part of life. Careful preservation of items assures that they will be serviceable for many years. The same is true of items collected by museums.

The job of caring for and preserving items collected by the Historical and Cultural Society of Clay County (HCSCC) is the task that Collections Curator Lisa Vedaa performs.

Special handling of museum artifacts must be performed when exhibits are installed. Many are fragile and need particular positioning or lighting to keep them from aging.

The same is true when an exhibit is taken down and artifacts are put back into storage. Careful procedures must be followed when storing rare treasures.

That is part of the reason that it will take roughly a month to take down the World War II exhibit that has graced the museum for two years and put up the Wet and Dry exhibit. The new exhibit should be ready for viewing in February 2016.

“The story of the period of history when North Dakota was dry and Moorhead wet and prohibition is a big part of the story of alcohol usage,” commented Vedaa. “The Wet and Dry exhibit will tell that story and feature the Wet and Dry exhibit. People have individual struggles and we are trying to portray that side of the story of alcohol usage,” continued Vedaa.

Fargo and Moorhead has one of the highest rates of binge drinking in the United States. HCSCC thought it important to delve into alcohol usage in the area’s history. Maybe understanding the past can impact the present and future of alcohol use and abuse in the region.

Vedaa developed an interest in old things when she was young and visited her grandma’s house or went to garage sales. When in third grade Vedaa’s class went on a series of field trips to historical sights which strengthened her interest in history.

“My parents took us to the Heritage Museum in Bismarck and I thought that was awesome,” stated Vedaa. “My paternal grandma lived with us and I loved looking at National Geographic magazines with her.”

Part of the job for Vedaa is helping to make the history of Clay County interesting to museum visitors. She is part of the staff that changes the exhibits in the cases positioned along the walls of the museum.

“The ultimate reason to collect historical items,” commented Vedaa, “is to educate people.”

Learning the really interesting stories of the county’s history is the way the Vedaa views the world. “When I live somewhere I want to know the history,” she said. “I find that people are not so different in many ways, but the focus is on the uniqueness of the area.

“The study of history helps us understand how things have developed in our community. We can see why certain things are important. It brings to light why things are done in a certain way in the community, even among families,” Vedaa concluded.

Visitors to the museum will find a wealth of artifacts to enjoy in part because of the care given to them by Collections Curator Lisa Vedaa.
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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 28

same, for the benefit of the parties concerned.” They also acquired the services of the County Court Stenographer William Russell to take “down notes of the statements made upon oath by challenged voters.”

Surprised on election morning, the wets quickly summoned their own lawyer, J. B. Wellcome of Moorhead. Osborn reported, “voting began about 1:30...arrests began about 2:00.” By nightfall, license had passed by three votes, wets held two of three trustee positions and five men were in jail for illegal voting.

Later, saloon owner James Shea was arrested for procuring illegal votes. On Friday, July 9 a Grand July indicted Shea and the others. The fires began soon after.

On Tuesday July 13, at 1:00 a.m., Steven Parks, an employee of noted dry Charles B. Kittredge, found Mr. Kittredge’s barn ablaze. In his nightshirt, Parks managed to lead out a team of mules but all else was quickly consumed. The loss amounted to about $450, all covered by insurance.

The News reported, “There is no accounting for the fire, except as of incendiary origin. No smudges, artificial light or fire had been used about the building. Fresh tracks were found between the barn and railway tracks, through the grass and soft ground adjacent to the premises, but could not be traced after reaching the road-be...”

Then on Wednesday, at 2:00 a.m., James Shea’s son, John, discovered fire in the basement of the Northern Pacific Railway elevator. Pistol shots and the Union church bell roused the town, but the elevator was doomed. Residents scrambled to save surrounding properties.

The elevator stood northeast of the Great Northern/North Pacific Railway crossing (see map next page). An east-southeast wind protected most buildings on Main Street and Parke Avenue but the heat was intense.

Citizens hung wet blankets covered with salt from the eaves of some nearby businesses and formed a bucket brigade to wet down others. William H. Bang’s large store northeast of the elevator, Osborn’s print shop and the Andrews Brothers’ Lumber Company office were badly scorched but survived.

But the elevator and its contents, worth $9000, insured for $8000, and the Andrews’ stock of lumber worth $1400 and fully insured were gone.

Osborn reported “It is hard to reason out the motives of the fellow who fired the elevator. We are too tired to go into the guessing business, but it was no accident.”

Later in the day the Village Board posted a $500 reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the arsonist. They printed 100 handbills and published the offer in newspapers from Crookston to St. Paul, The Minnesota and Dakota Fire Insurance Underwriters’ Union matched the reward. The Board also hired a night temporary night watchman.

Meanwhile, Clay County District Court dropped charges against two of the alleged illegal voters. None of the others were convicted either.

After a quiet July and August, the firebug struck again. On September 9, again between 1:00 and 2:00 a.m., someone fired C. G. Tracy’s hardware store on the corner of Main and Partridge.

Residents narrowly succeeded in saving the store with $200 damages and went back home to bed only to be roused again just before 5:00 a.m. Andrews Brothers’ Lumber Company office and warehouse, which barely escaped destruction on July, was found, Osborn reported, “fired on the southside, on the outside, (Osborn’s emphasis) at almost daybreak.”

A south wind carried the blaze to E. P. Vincent’s meat market, just to the north. It was also leveled. The Andrews’ loss was reported at $1,250, Vincent’s $1,000 with $700 insured.

Osborn reported “nobody seems to question the incendiary origin of either fire. Suspicion attaches to Eugene Williams, one of the alleged illegal voters, who is known to have been about town during the last night, drunk and acting quarrelly.”

After being interviewed, however, authorities released Williams without charges.

Stike’s on early Friday morning, September 17 there were two separate attempts to burn Dame’s Carpentry Shop on Main Street, both discovered and extinguished by night watchman E. F. George.

The following Sunday, just at daybreak as George was going off duty, owners of businesses adjoining Dame’s again discovered it ablaze and put it out with about $50 damages.

After eight arson fires in three months, insurance companies began recalling their policies. Soon only a handful of Glyndon buildings were covered. Citizens outraged by the blazes could do little but scratch their heads and worry who might be victimized next.

About 1:00 a.m. on November 1, 1886, the worst fire broke out. Dame’s Carpentry Shop, now owned by W. H. Bangs, was torched. Former owner, Dame, had left town. The flames were not discovered immediately.

By the time the alarm went up, Snell Brothers’ machinery dealership, on the east, and Paige and Story’s dry goods store on the west were ablaze. Most of the rest of the block soon followed. J. Palmer’s barber shop and J. E. Stiles’ Drug Store to the west and C. G. Tracy’s Hardware Store, damaged in September, on the east end went up.

Only Bang’s big general store on the corner of Main and Parke survived. And only Tracy and Story’s still had insurance. Of the $15,000 in damages, barely $3,000 was covered. Insurance companies quickly cancelled all policies remaining in town.

The Moorhead Evening News reported, “It is a terrible thing to contemplate that a town is subjected to destruction by secret foes and law breakers, with no apparent power to stop it. The outraged people of the community are certainly justified in taking hard measures to prevent further loss.” They did. They left town in droves.

The News reported that barber Palmer “has removed to Lake Park and proposes to keep on shaving where they have more water to the acre, and less fire, than in Glyndon.” Within a month Bang’s, Stiles, Postmaster John W. Rodgers, and Bangs’ clerk B. K. Mumford all departed for the new village of Red Lake Falls. Many others left for parts unknown.

Glyndon’s population dropped 17 percent in the four years following the 1886 fires.

In December, the Clay County Commission added a reward of $1,000 to the village's offer. The village hired the G. H. Thiel and Pinkerton’s Detective Agencies to investigate the fires. But nothing came of the inquiries. No one was ever convicted of the crimes.

The fires apparently cowed Glyndon’s temperance community. In March 1887, in an astonishing turn about, Osborn published an editorial in which he embraced the idea of high license.

Instead of trying to drive the saloons out of business through the ballot box, Osborn threw in the towel, advocating instead the charging of high license fees for saloons to control their number and to raise revenue.

In the village election that spring, Glyndon voters agreed, approving liquor sales and a $500 fee.

It’s a challenge to puzzle out possible suspects and motives to these fires 120 years after the fact.
Les Bakke, retired computer director from MSUM, has a long interest in history and genealogy. Les started at MSUM as a history major, changed to mathematics and then to computer science receiving his bachelor’s degree in 1972. Les also has a master’s degree in counseling. Les is active on several boards including Heritage Education Commission and Moorhead Community Access TV. Les also manages web sites for several non-profit organizations. Les has lived in Moorhead since returning from service in the US Air Force in 1968.

Gloria Lee and her husband, David reside on the farm Gloria grew up on near Georgetown. Gloria is involved in community and church activities. She enjoys reading, gardening and spending time with grandchildren. She retired recently as a florist at Hornbacher’s Ogood, Fargo. Gloria and David have four grown children. Gloria was president of the HCS board for two years and now volunteers in collections work and gives guided tours of the Hopperstad Stave Church.

Jim Saueressig has been a marketing consultant in the F-M area for 30 years. He has been involved in scouting, sales and marketing executives, FM advertising federation, WE Fest productions, little people coaching and broadcast management. Jim has been married to Andrea for 47 years. The couple has four grown sons and eight grandchildren. His particular interest in is the Red River Valley history exhibit and he currently also volunteers with the Fargo Air Sho.

Frank Gross was elected to the Clay County Commission in 2013 in District 2. He is chair of the Commission and serves on 20 committees. Frank serves as the liaison for the county board to the historical society. Raised on a farm by Napoleon, ND, Frank received his high school education in a private Catholic school at the Assumption Abbey in Richardton, ND. He attended Interstate Business College in Fargo and then served in the US Army in 1963 to 1965. Frank worked for the US Postal Service for 36-1/2 years mostly in human resources and address management retiring in 2003.

Frank and his wife, LaVonne reside in Dilworth where he served on the Dilworth City Council from 1991 to 1999. The couple has two sons and one daughter, Kevin, Julie, Jason and four grandchildren. They are members of St. Elizabeth Catholic Church.

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Moorhead Labeled ‘Wickedest City’

Moorhead’s Center Avenue about 1872. The view is to the west from about Fifth Street. Moorhead’s earliest months were characterized by lawlessness and lack of civil society. A series of shootings early in 1872 led citizens to petition the governor to appoint a county government and a sheriff.

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enforcement in the early 1870s are told in the same breath as the tales of corruption and saloons from the 1890s.

This may make for a better story but gives the impression that throughout the 19th century Moorhead was wild, violent, corrupt and drunk. That story ignores the two decades in between of relatively normal life.

Until recently, the earliest reference to the “Wickedest City” story I could find came from Edith Moll’s 1957 NDAC master’s thesis, Moorhead, Minnesota: Frontier Town, 1871-1915. Edith never actually uses the phrase but titles a subchapter on the saloon era “The Most Wicked City.”

In 1966, Erling Rolsfsrud expanded on the story. In his Cobber Chronicles: an Informal History of Concordia College, he claims “Residents of present-day Moorhead may well be shocked to learn that once their home was called ‘The Wickedest City in the World.’” This reputation it earned shortly after its establishment in 1871, and kept it, with good reason, for nearly three decades.”

Rolsfsrud never mentions where he received his information but it’s tough to keep a good story down. The tale was subsequently repeated in numerous local histories.

So, did Moorhead deserve such a reputation? Not likely. The problems Moorhead faced in the 1870s and 1890s were not that much worse than other border or frontier towns. Dodge City, Kansas and East Grand Forks, Minnesota probably could give Moorhead a run for her money in the wicked department.

Dozens of towns have claimed the wickedest city moniker. A quick Google search on the internet revealed at least 40 such places.

Foremost may be the seventeenth century pirate haven Port Royal, Jamaica, described by an eye witness as “the wealthiest and wickedest city in the New World.” Port Royal’s reputation may have been enhanced by its spectacular demise. On June 7, 1692, a huge earthquake sent the city sliding into the sea, an end reminiscent of two other wicked cities, the Biblical towns of Sodom and Gomorrah.

There must be some basis for the Moorhead story. The most likely source we can find is 1930 Chicago Tribune reporter, war correspondent, international adventurer and savvy self-promoter Floyd Gibbons. Recently we came across an article about Gibbons in the Moorhead Country Press which may shed some light.

Raphael Floyd Phillips Gibbons was born July 16, 1887 in Washington D.C. His father, an egg and dairy salesman, moved the family to Des Moines, IA in 1898. There he started a successful trading stamp business. Three years later, they moved to Minneapolis, where, in 1906, Floyd took a job as police reporter with the Minneapolis Daily News. Always a bright kid, Gibbons quickly developed a clean and spare but personalized style which endeared him to readers.

This led to stints as crime reporter for the Milwaukee Free Press and the Minneapolis Tribune. By 1912, he was reporting for the Chicago Tribune. Gibbons covered Pancho Villa’s exploits on the U.S.-Mexican border, and later General John Pershing’s attempts to catch the bandit.

In 1917, while on the way to Europe to cover World War I, his ship, the S.S. Laconia, was sunk by a German submarine. Gibbons’ first hand account is still a classic in journalism. Gibbons followed the U.S. Marines through the Chateau-Thierry and Belleau Woods campaigns where he lost his left eye to machine gun fire. Thereafter Gibbons wore a white, hand-knit eye patch. It became his trademark.

After the war, the Tribune sent Gibbons to cover more conflicts. In the 1920s and 1930s, he reported on the Irish Revolution, Polish-Russian war, the conflict between the French and North African tribes, the Polish Revolution, the war between Japan and China over Manchuria, the Italian-Ethiopian war and the Spanish Civil War. He became the first American to cross the Sahara Desert and circled the globe twice.

In 1929, he began radio broadcasting for NBC. His distinctive style and fast talking, he could speak 217 words per minute, made him an instant success. Gibbons’ reporting, books, lecture series, syndicated columns and radio commenting made him a celebrity, and a wealthy one.

Early in 1937, he bought a private 75-foot yacht, the Adventurer, a rarity for a

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reporter! Gibbons entertained friends, other reporters and celebrities onboard.

Sometime that spring, visitors included Neal O’Hara, well-known writer and columnist for the brand new The Commentator magazine. O’Hara’s column for the monthly, called “He Wouldn’t Fool You,” featured short, pithy items of timely trivia.

Example: “Although Colonel Charles Lindbergh is a near-millionaire, he pays only from $60 to $75 for his suits... There’s no such thing as gray hair. It’s either the natural color of your locks or it’s white...Montana, Washington, North Carolina, and South Dakota are the only states in the Union that have never had a dreadnought named in their honor.”

In the April issue, O’Hara related, “We once spent a weekend on Floyd Gibbons’s yacht and counted 128 fresh eye-patches hanging on door-knobs, hooks, neck-tie racks, and the like.” Gibbons went through dozens of patches a day as they became soiled.

Then O’Hara went on to say, “And in a conversation with Floyd, who has knocked about in Port Said, Marseilles, Alexandria and Shanghai, we asked what was the toughest town he’d ever been in. He said it was Moorhead, Minnesota.”

Well. After the editor of the Detroit Lakes Record mentioned the piece, it generated considerable interest in Moorhead.

Country Press publisher John A. Whaley picked up the story: “Localites were more than a little bit amused at this somnibuet. ‘Perhaps,’ said one old-timer, ‘Mr. Gibbons hit town 25 years ago when this was the “jumping off” place for harvest labor in North Dakota and lumberjacks for the north woods. These laborers were none too handsome to look at,’ he said, ‘and a stranger who happened over in those days would get the impression the town was a tough one all right.’

“If Mr. Gibbons should happen in Moorhead today he would find an entirely different set-up from that of 25 years ago. The “toughest-town” crack is so ridiculous that we feel it too humorous to be suppressed from the people of this county.

“Letters of where do you get that stuff have evidently been forwarded to Mr. Gibbons from indignant citizens. A column by Floyd Gibbons entitled ‘Adventurers’ Club’ appears weekly in this newspaper.”

In his travels, Gibbons apparently did visit Moorhead and the experience stuck with him. Born in 1887, it clearly wasn’t during Moorhead’s frontier days of the early 1870s. It had to have been during the later stages of the city’s saloon era.

His biography, Your Headline Hunter, by his brother, Edward, mentions no specific Moorhead visits but suggests two times when he may have passed through. In 1906, before his employment at the Minneapolis Daily News, Gibbons spent “a few months” working in a lumberyard in the tiny town of Lucca, North Dakota. After hours he moon-lighted for the local newspaper, apparently the Lucca Ledger, published as part of the Fingal Herald during the time period.

Lucca sat where the Soo Line and Northern Pacific Railways crossed south of Valley City, Gibbons had two alternate routes to Lucca from Minneapolis, either on the Soo Line through Hankinson and Enderlin, ND or via the NPR through Moorhead.

He may also have made an occasional trip or two to Fargo-Moorhead. Either way, as an impressionable 19-year-old, the “old timer’s” none too pretty laborers may have affected Gibbons.

The other chance was as a crime reporter for the Twin Cities’ newspapers which occasionally sent scribes to cover Moorhead’s saloon problems.

Even so, was Moorhead the “toughest town” Gibbons had visited? Again, not likely. Gibbons, ever vigilant for a chance to self-promote, probably pulled a memory from his past and sprang Moorhead on O’Hara fully knowing that The Commentator columnist would quote him. And it worked.

And it may still be working. Of the recent local historians who have repeated the story, Gertrude Knutson, in her fine 1982 history of Trinity Lutheran Church, suggests it was aviator Wiley Post who came up with the line. It’s an understandable mix-up. Both 1930s adventuring celebrities wore a trademark eye patch. Indeed, in a 1962 episode of the TV show The Untouchables, crime-fighter Elliot Ness, played by Robert Stack, asks Floyd Gibbons, played by Scott Brady, how he managed to get a room in a swanky Chicago hotel. Gibbons replies that he let the manager believe he was Wiley Post!

Of the local histories which touch on the subject, perhaps Dr. Clarence “Soc” Glasrud’s “Saloons and Politics” chapter in A Century Together: A History of Fargo ND and Moorhead MN, 1875-1975, probably sums up the “Wickedest City” question the best.

Soc writes that even before “the drying up of Fargo concentrated the liquor business in Moorhead, the town had a ‘tough’ reputation, though perhaps no more than any semi frontier end-of-the-road railroad town.

There are legends of fathers refusing to give their daughters’ hands in marriage when the prospective son-in-law revealed his intention of moving to Moorhead. But the story is quite possibly apocryphal, and the title ‘Wickedest City’ in the state or nation is a boast that others have made.

Nevertheless, there are stories of the early-day wickedness, related to alcohol, that a candid history of Moorhead must not overlook.”

You’re Always Welcome At The...
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Erdel was an early successful saloon owner. His hard liquor trade involved whiskey.

Whiskey is alcohol distilled from fermented cereal grains, corn, rye or barley, then stored for years in charred oak barrels. The wood imparts flavor, aroma and color to the stuff. The longer it’s stored the better and smoother the taste.

Distillers could store their whiskey in government bonded warehouses subject to inspection by federal agents. This was to ensure the booze was actually as old as the distiller/bottler/retailer claimed it was. Whiskey with a government label “bottled in bond” was as good a guarantee of quality as one could get.

Erdel bought his whiskey in bulk, by the barrel from the distiller. Manufacturing inconsistencies meant barrels might hold between 31 and 53 gallons. Wholesale prices varied from 35 cents to a dollar or more per gallon, depending on the quality.

Other charges applied. For instance, in March 1909 Ferdinand Westheimer and Sons Distillery in Louisville, Kentucky sold Erdel a 49 gallon barrel of four-year-old “Dorchester Rye Whiskey” at 92 cents a gallon.

US government taxes added a whopping $1.10 per gallon. Bottling charges, in quart bottles, totaled about 50 cents per gallon. Government warehouse storage for 48 months came to $4.80 for the barrel or about 10 cents per gallon. A “regauging” fee added a few cents per gallon.

The alcohol content of the whiskey varied from barrel to barrel when it came from storage. If the alcohol content was too low the distiller would reguage the stuff by cutting it with water down to 90 proof, 45 percent alcohol, a standard, drinkable strength.

If it was too low he’d beef it up with 180 proof, 90 percent grain alcohol. Shipping cost about four bucks. Erdel’s cost came to nearly $3.50 per gallon. He retaliated Dorchester Rye bottled in quart bottles for $5.00 per gallon.

In the late 1880s brewers got into the retail business directly by buying or leasing saloons all over the country, thus vertically integrating the operation from manufacture to distribution to retailing.

Brewers paid liquor license fees, provided local owners/managers with furniture, glassware, etc. and made them loans. In return the saloon sold only the brewer’s products.

Erdel may have successfully remained an independent. He dealt with several different breweries including G. Heileman, Hamm’s and, especially, John Gund Brewing Company of LaCrosse, WI.

However, in 1908, 1909 and again in 1913 Erdel borrowed large sums of money at six percent interest from Gund. His promissory notes include the provision that if he “shall sell, handle and deal in, or use in his said business, beer of any other manufacturer than that of the
Murder Most Foul - Death Of Dr. Egge

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Johnson, Sheriff Archie Whaley, Witherow and other authorities. Once Vincent arrived, Egge’s body was conveyed to Wright’s undertaking.

No fingerprints or crime scene photos were taken. Night time photography was a tricky business.

Even though fingerprinting was over a decade old, small-town police forces adopted the technology slowly. The earliest area case found in which fingerprints helped secure a conviction occurred in Otter Tail County in 1934.

Officer Jalmer B. Erickson did a bit of sleuthing. Monday morning he noticed that the iron horse device was missing from his route and asked what had happened. Erickson woke the Carpenter’s Union President and was told, “I’m sorry, we’re not involved.”

Erickson went to the Fargo Police Station and picked up a new overalls and blouses with white hats.” They also each wore a celluloid and bunting canvas cap flecked with what they thought was blood.

Witherow reached the scene and conferred with Crossman and Erickson. Between Crossman’s run with Kethman, Erickson’s badge information and Neisheim’s barroom story, Witherow determined the authorities had probable cause to believe Kethman committed the crime. In his capacity as Court Commissioner, sort of an assistant judge, he issued a warrant for Kethman’s arrest.

The suspect was no longer sitting on Center Avenue, but the authorities did find a white canvas cap flecked with what appeared to be blood at the location.

Because Kethman lived in North Dakota, Witherow and Officer Erickson went to the Fargo Police Station and picked up two Fargo cops. They took a carriage to Kethman’s home at 736 Ninth Street North in Fargo. There they found Kethman in bed and arrested him. They took him and the clothes he had been wearing the day before to the Moorhead City Jail.

Kethman was a 44 year old Norwegian immigrant. He came to the U.S. at age 17, moved to Moorhead and took up carpentry. He married Clara Wheelwright in 1859. They lived in Moorhead about 10 years and then took a homestead claim in Wells County, ND. They successfully proved up spring of 1909, rented the land to a neighbor and moved to Fargo with their five children.

Frank was known to be violent, especially when he drank heavily. He owned a small, inoffensive dog. One day the dog snapped at Kethman. He picked up the animal, took out his pocket knife and killed the pup in a cruel and barbaric manner.

Soren S. Egge was born in Valdres, Norway, in 1859. He came to the U.S. in 1883 and attended school in Willmar, MN. In 1893 he graduated from the University of Minnesota Medical School and moved to Moorhead where he set up a practice. He studied medicine in Germany in 1900 and married Petra Anderson of Wild Rice, ND, in 1901. They had two young boys, aged six and two. He was a well respected member of the community. Mourners packed Moorhead’s Trinity Lutheran Church for his funeral.

After arresting Kethman, the intrepid Officer Erickson went back to the crime scene and found a blood trail running across Sixth Street. It followed it with a flashlight down the west side of Sixth Street, then west on Second Avenue South to Fifth Street where he lost it. The next morning authorities took Kethman to the Clay County Jail on 10th Street North to await formal charges. There, both Lillian Wright and Mrs. Anderson of Wild Rice, ND, looked at the body and concluded that the first blow had struck Egge across the bridge of the nose and his death was instantaneous.

Later descriptions suggest the wagon wrench was about 14 inches long and weighed about seven or eight pounds. It would have been a formidable weapon. Eight more blows crushed Egge’s facial bones. Dr. Hagen had tested samples from Kethman’s clothing and found blood.

Vincent also called saloon owner Hollie Walter. He testified that Egge had come into his bar about 8:30, had a drink with a friend.

Kethman came in a half hour later and announced “drinks all around – except the Doctor, not him.” There was bad blood between the two. Some eight years before Kethman had worked for the contractor who built Egge’s house. Egge complained to the contractor that Kethman spent all his time sharpening his saws and did no work.

Kethman agreed to buy the doctor a drink but then insulted him. Egge brought up the carpenter’s work ethic. Harsh words ensued until Walter and others calmed them down.

A bit later Kethman said Egge was a pretty good doctor for a horse doctor and then asked Egge how many cases of glanders are you treating now?” Glanders is an infectious horse disease. Egge pushed past Kethman who fell onto the floor.

Walter told Kethman to shut up or get thrown out. He did for a time but later yelled that someone had taken his pocketbook and insinuated the doctor had done it. Again, Walter told Kethman to pipe down.

Both men left at closing time a few minutes before 11:00, Walter said. In the 1890s many of Moorhead’s saloons operated 24/7 in violation of state law. By 1909 reform elements in the community had put a lid on things.

Egge headed east on Center Avenue. Kethman walked briskly to the west. Saloon patron Nesheim told a similar tale.

J. W. Bronson testified that about 11:30 he approached him at the Morrow Livery Stable near the north bridge and asked for a ride home. The north bridge is now gone. It ran from NP Avenue down northeast to where American Crystal Sugar now has their downtown headquarters.

About after 10 minutes of negotiations, Bronson agreed to take Kethman home for $1.00.

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Murder Most Foul - Death Of Dr. Egge

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Bronson drove the jag wagon for the Midway Saloon. Several barns and a partially paid-for house in north Fargo and a quarter section of land in North Dakota. His first sight of the area was well-to-do and gave the Kethmans financial and moral support throughout the ordeal. He was well represented. Frank had hired prominent Fargo attorney T. H. McEnroe to represent him. His wife hired former Moorhead mayor and well-respected lawyer Carroll Nye as his legal counsel.

The hearing began Thursday September 9 in Moorhead City Hall before Court Commissioner James Witherow. In the old television series, Perry Mason, the TV defense attorney played by Raymond Burr always managed to force a confession from the villain in a dramatic courtroom showdown. This almost always occurred during the preliminary hearing.

There were no such dramatics in Kethman's case. Johnson introduced his evidence, and witnesses added little to the testimony given during the Coroner's inquest.

But on Saturday morning Nye stunned the community by announcing he was also leaving the case. Witherow refused to agree to take on the case. Witherow quickly ruled that Kethman had retained Carroll Nye of Moorhead and C. H. McEnroe of Fargo as attorneys. County Attorney N. I. Johnson represented the State. Kethman pled not guilty to the charge. State law required Witherow to hold Kethman without bail.

This didn't mean the case was ready to go to trial. There were other steps to take. Kethman had a right to a preliminary or evidentiary hearing, a proceeding to determine if the state has sufficient evidence to justify further prosecution.

There is no jury, only a judge to make a decision. It's an adversarial procedure including the introduction of evidence, examination and cross-examination of witnesses by both sides.

Defendants often waive their right to a preliminary hearing but Kethman's attorneys elected to proceed, probably to force County Attorney Johnson to reveal just what evidence he had against the defendant and to tip off his prosecution strategy.

Nye and McEnroe were known as crack attorneys. Johnson was young and had only been in office a few months. There was a lot at stake.

In 1909 judges had little say in sentencing. The penalty for first degree murder was death by hanging. Capital cases were rare in Minnesota. Clay County's only first degree murder conviction had occurred in 1889 resulting in the hanging of Thomas Brown for the murder of Moorhead Police Officer Peter Poule. Another execution looked possible.

Kethman was not a poor man. He was a successful tradesman and owned a partially paid-for house in north Fargo and a

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in spring and the other in fall. Before Kethman went to trial he had to face a grand jury. Between 16 and 23 men, selected from the voter rolls, were called to decide which criminal cases presented by the County Attorney would be heard by the court.

Grand juries meet in secret. The prosecutor presents his evidence and calls witnesses. The jury can also call witnesses. If a majority of the jurors decide the accused is guilty and there is evidence to prove it, they bring a formal charge, an indictment, against him. The fall court session was scheduled to begin Monday, October 18.

In the meantime, Clara Kethman persuaded Carroll Nye to join Barnett in defending her husband. The two high-power attorneys worked in harmony on the case.

County Attorney Johnson also received some impressive backup. Minnesota Attorney General George Simpson sent his Assistant AG Lyndon Smith to help with the case. Johnson also enlisted Minnesota State Senator and noted Moorhead lawyer F. H. Peterson’s assistance.

Kethman’s case came up Wednesday, October 20 after all the other lesser cases were disposed of. Less than 24 hours later the grand jury returned two indictments against Kethman for first-degree murder. The two high-power attorneys worked in harmony on the case.

The prosecution contended Kethman turned south on Fifth Street, stopping briefly to pull the wrench from the coal wagon at Main Avenue, then continued south on Fifth Street to Third Avenue South where he turned east for a block to the Egge’s house. There Mrs. Egge spotted him.

It took another two or three minutes to trace his movements as described by Lillian Wright. If Kethman left the bar a few minutes before eleven and Dr. Egge spent some minutes visiting his drugstore, Kethman likely would have had enough time to commit the murder. It took less than five minutes to walk from the murder scene to where Kethman met Crossman. But none of the witnesses seemed to pay much attention shadows along Sixth Street as Kethman lay in wait there for Egge. He smashed his face with the wrench as he passed on his bicycle and brutally crushed the dead doctor’s face.

Out of curiosity Mark Peihl recently retraced Kethman’s path with a stop watch. It took five minutes and 20 seconds to walk “at a brisk pace” from the Walters’ saloon location down Fifth Street and Third Avenue to Egge’s house. Add a few moments for pulling the wagon pin and it’s still less than six minutes.

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Captain Linderman Led Area Salvation Army

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In mid-June the Moorhead Daily News reported “a successful SA meeting yesterday, seven or eight were unable to resist Captain Linderman’s appeal and were converted. The meetings are now conducted without interference. The ‘sports’ have decided the Salvation Army is here to stay and are staying away.”

Minnie kept up a furious speaking schedule. Newspapers indicate meetings were held every day and six on Sundays. The efforts had a profound impact on at least one young man.

The Moorhead Daily News reported that Richard Spaulding arrived in Moorhead in early summer with a plan to rob the First National Bank. “One evening… (he) listened to the exercises of the Salvation Army at their open air meeting on Sixth Street… and Spaulding was touched. He was unnerved and dissuaded from doing what he intended and finally gave up his revolver and tools to Captain Linderman. This man had only recently been liberated from Joliet prison…”

Minnie arranged for Spaulding to get a job on an area farm through harvest and later a more permanent position in town.

Still, not everyone appreciated her efforts. The SA barracks were located in a two-story hall on the north side of Main Avenue between Fourth and Fifth Streets. Just across the street lived Moorhead photographer O. E. Flaten and his family including his aged mother, sick with cancer.

In an August letter to the editor Flaten’s brother Gudmund wrote, “My mother is still very sick and we have repeatedly asked the Salvation Army to make as little noise as possible in the vicinity of the house. They promised they would not beat the drum on the south side of the Northern Pacific Railroad track. They kept still, it is true, going past the house but on returning the drum was distinctly heard at my mother’s bedside.

“I don’t like to complain or find fault with the army, but I wish to state through the News that the drum will have to be stopped… and if I cannot stop it one way I will resort to other means.”

After, Minnie was granted a well-deserved month long vacation with her family in Cincinnati. While she was gone the Moorhead City Council, under pressure from the Flatens and others, prepared a city ordinance banning or severely limiting parades, demonstrations or processions on downtown streets.

It included a section reading “No person shall deliver any speech, discourse, lecture, address or sermon anywhere downtown, nor upon any street or public ground within 500 feet of thereof.” The section was a pretty clear violation of residents’ Constitutional right to free speech.

Upon her return, Minnie was having none of this and planned acts of civil disobedience. The Moorhead Daily News reported that Minnie “when seen by a news representative this morning, seemed perfectly reconciled to her impending incarceration through failing to conform to the new city ordinance…to be submitted to the City Council next Monday… the Captain seems perfectly happy over the situation and says she hopes there will be no trouble, but if the proposed ordinance passes she doesn’t see how the army can obey it… It will be her first experience in jail.”

The ordinance passed unanimously.

The showdown began on Friday, October 11. The Moorhead Daily News reported “The Salvation Army held their usual parade last evening. They left the barracks about eight o’clock and marched along Main to Fourth and along Fourth to Front (Center Avenue). As they turned onto Front, Police Chief Sullivan stepped up to Captain Linderman and demanded the drums that were being carried by soldiers Neil Wilkinson and Harry Roberts.

The drums were taken and Wilkinson and Roberts were placed under arrest. The Army proceeded on their way and held their usual open air meeting without interference. The prisoners were released on their own recognizance to appear before Justice Michael Syron” the next day.

On Saturday Minnie and the soldiers appeared in a packed courtroom. Proceedings were delayed by the late arrival of one of the attorneys. Minnie, never one to waste a good crowd, took the opportunity to pass out some advertising hand bills and sell tickets to a fundraiser planned for that night.

The city attorney asked for a continuance until Wednesday. Judge Syron denied the motion and the City Attorney moved to dismiss the case. This was done and the defendants were released. But the ordinance still stood. That evening a large crowd gathered along the Army’s parade route “in sympathy of the second conflict between the authorities and the Salvation Army” wrote the Moorhead Daily News.

What was expected came to pass and the Captain and her two drummers were arrested. Minnie and the others were released on their own recognizance until their court appearance on Wednesday.

Minnie appeared before another packed courtroom. After hearing brief testimony Judge Syron ordered the ordinance “unreasonable and void,” and released Minnie and the others. Less than a month later the newspaper reported that “yes, before taking up the collection in the barracks, Captain Linderman announced that if she received a good collection she would reveal a secret. It was that she was to be recalled from Moorhead the next week.

Officers rarely remained in one mission for more than six months. Minnie and her lieutenants were headed for a new posting in Little Falls, MN.

Her huge send off meeting was too large for the barracks and was held in the Moorhead Opera House. Hundreds lined the railroad tracks when she left on the Great Northern on November 18, barely a month after her seventeenth birthday.

Newspapers continued to report her activities elsewhere. In June 1896, as she was about to be transferred again, a group of Grand Forks residents, including the current and two past mayors, the chief of police, editor of the Grand Forks Herald and others, circulated a petition asking the SA to install her as Captain of the new Grand Forks mission.

She was sent to Rochester, MN instead. In May 1897 Moorhead Daily News readers were shocked to hear of her expected death. The injuries she had sustained in the Grand Forks assault had reemerged. She had been sent home to Cincinnati where the best doctors available had performed surgery to repair a brain lesion. Her condition worsened and the prognosis was not good.

The Moorhead Daily News said “This is sad news. Captain Linderman served in Moorhead six months and captivated all by her sweet temper, earnest manner, bright ways and devotion to duty.”

The Grand Forks Herald reported she had won her way not only into the hearts of her soldiers, but of hundreds of others as well. She had a happy faculty of attracting people with her winsome ways and helped many a one in the upward way.” But she survived. In fall 1897 Minnie, now 19 years old and promised to Ensign, returned to the Red River Valley and held special meetings in Moorhead, Fargo and Grand Forks to great acclaim.

For some time she worked in the Division Headquarters in Minneapolis. Then in June 1901 she married Wallace G. McKinnon in a formal Salvation Army wedding. They moved to Superior, WI where Wallace managed a grain elevator.

She left the Salvation Army but stayed active in progressive activities. She delivered a series of lectures supporting women’s suffrage and was a founding member and president of the Superior East End Women’s Christian Temperance Society.

The couple raised several children and moved to Minneapolis where Wallace passed away in 1933. Minnie retired to Miami and died in 1959. She’s buried alongside Wallace in Superior’s Greenwood Cemetery.

In the 1890s the Moorhead Salvation Army barracks were located on the north side of Main Avenue between Fourth and Fifth Streets. Flaten/Wange Collection.

Prohibition In Clay County-Wet Or Dry? 39
to the time except Lillian. She based her estimates on the eleven o’clock chiming of her family’s clock.

Indeed, the “Fargo attorney”, said “I venture to say the night that Doctor Egge was killed there wasn’t any two watches that were looked at that showed exactly the same time.”

And there was the question of light. Was the scene bright enough for Lillian Wright to have seen what she claimed to see?

Moorhead Light Plant Superintendent A. J. Warner testified about the brightness of the street light across from the Wright house the night of the murder. U.S. Weather Observer H. W. Grasse described the phase and position of the moon and cloud cover.

The defense called Kethman family friend Mrs. E. M. Parmeter who, with others, visited the scene at night and found “they couldn’t recognize forms and figures.” Dr. Paul Clark and Lillian Wright’s older brother Lawrence testified that they, too, had visited the scene at night and could easily see individuals and “distinguished a cat at a distance of about 30 feet.”

On Monday, November 29, Lillian Wright repeated her testimony before another packed court room. She related how the man in the white cap had passed within 15 feet of her on the porch, how she first saw him about 11:04. She again positively stated the man she saw was Kethman.

Kethman himself took the stand, vehemently denying he had even been south of Center Avenue in Moorhead for years. He and Egge had been just joking in the saloon, and that he had laid down and passed out in some shadows along Center Avenue for a time before meeting Crossman.

The attorneys made their final statements on Wednesday, December 1. The jury took the case at 4:30 p.m. At 8:30 the next morning they reached a verdict. They found Kethman not guilty of first degree murder but found him guilty of murder in the second degree. A first-degree conviction would have meant the death penalty. The mandatory sentence for second-degree murder was life in prison.

The day after the verdict the Fargo Forum reported that “Two sharp ears at the hotel where the jurors stayed yesterday afternoon heard enough from a conversation between two members of the jury, who had become fast friends during their enforced confinement. The first ballot showed 10 for conviction and two for acquittal.

Those well familiar with the personnel of the jury say that the two ‘for acquittal’ were men rather opposed to capital punishment and that they would vote so in order to lay a foundation for a compromise.”

Before imposing sentence Judge Taylor offered Kethman a chance to speak. He said the saloon men lied about the time he left the bar in order to protect their liquor license. Kethman claimed he left the place at 11:07, after the legal closing hour, not five minutes to, and that he could not have reached the murder scene in time to commit the murder.

Judge Taylor sentenced Kethman to life in Stillwater Prison. The next day Sheriff Whaley escorted him to the pen where he became prisoner number 2060. Kethman remained at Stillwater until December 1938 when, enfeebled at age 73, he was transferred to the St. Cloud Reformatory. He died there March 19, 1945, still protesting his innocence.
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

County residents over age 18 or 7.2 percent suffer from Alcohol Abuse Disorder.

So why do people here drink so much? The answers are complicated and not altogether clear. Some suggest there is not much else to do in this rural area. Others note Scandinavian and German immigrants’ heavy drinking traditions. Still others blame the large number of bars per capita.

We may be influenced by North Dakota’s long history of prohibition. The state was dry from 1890 to 1936, 46 years. Drinking did not stop but went underground, creating a “forbidden fruit” effect and may have resulted in more binge and heavy drinking.

A similar situation existed between 1973 and 1984 when Minnesota lowered its drinking age to 18, then 19. At any rate, alcohol plays an important role in area culture. And changing culture is difficult.

ALLIANCES AGAINST ALCOHOL

The opposition to alcohol united the radical right and the liberal left, the Ku Klux Klan and the Communist Party, our nation’s first feminists and conservative Christian fundamentalists. These groups had little in common, but they all had reasons to work together to fight alcohol’s control over the country and their loved ones.

DRY VICTORY IN NORTH DAKOTA

In 1889 North Dakota and South Dakota were created out of Dakota Territory. Representatives chosen by the people met in Bismarck, the new state capital, to write laws and a constitution. Alcohol was discussed.

Then as now, the population of North Dakota was dominated by the Red River Valley. Temperance was a common cause among the New England Yankees and Scandinavian immigrant population that made up the great majority of the Valley’s population.

Over the strong objections of the German and German-Russian settlers in central and western North Dakota, the Temperance alliance between Scandinavians, women, prairie populists, and the Yankee middle class made the sale of alcohol illegal in the new state’s constitution. On June 30, 1890, all saloons and breweries in North Dakota were closed by law.

North Dakotans who wanted a drink got around these laws by crossing the border. Overnight, Minnesota border towns like Moorhead, East Grand Forks, and Breckenridge found that helping North Dakotans get drunk was suddenly their biggest business draw, whether they liked it or not. Moorhead, situated across the river from North Dakota’s largest city, became infamous for being wild, wicked and very wet.

MOORHEAD’S SALOON

ERA 1890 – 1915

On June 30, 1890 all North Dakota saloons closed. This change presented Moorhead, located just across the Red River, with an opportunity to sell thirsty North Dakotans liquor. City officials and voters could have responsibly regulated and limited the influx of saloons, enforced the law and used the liquor license fees paid by the saloons wisely. But they didn’t.

Corruption, law breaking and bad financial decisions plagued Moorhead throughout the 1890s. By 1898 Moorhead, population 3,700, had 43 saloons. They ran open 24/7. Taxes were extremely high and rising, the city was deeply in debt. A red-light district flourished and many city authorities were taking bribes. Moorhead received an unsavory reputation as a corrupt town.

By the late 1890s Moorhead residents had enough. Voters elected a series of reform mayors who better managed the city’s finances. Within a decade Moorhead was basically out of debt. The new city administrations also tried, with varying degrees of success, to enforce the Sunday and 11:00 p.m. closing laws against the saloons, prostitution, gambling and other crimes.

These reforms were part of a larger Progressive movement sweeping the nation.

In the spring of 1904, Matthias Wambach and his brother-in-law Nick Zenk turned an old mechanic shop in Georgetown into the Palm Saloon. The sign on the right corner advertises Golden Grain Belt Beer made by the Minneapolis Brewing Company. Matt and Dora’s first children were born in their apartment upstairs from the saloon. Around 1910, the couple sold their bar and moved their family 13 miles south to Moorhead. This is the exterior of the Palm Saloon.

Progressives believed the country was dominated by large corporations at the expense of individuals. They sought relief through government action including anti-child labor laws, the right of women to vote, railroad regulation, anti-trust legislation and the prohibition of alcohol.

Since the 1880s Minnesota had a Local Option Law, giving the residents of villages and townships the right to vote whether or not to allow saloons in their community. Local chapters of the Women’s Christian Temperance Union, other local temperance societies and churches led rural Clay County residents in outlawing saloons in every village by 1914.

Only the cities of Moorhead and Barnesville remained Wet. Elections there failed to close the saloons.

The Anti-Saloon League succeeded in getting many prohibitionists elected to the Minnesota Legislature in 1914. Early in 1915 the legislature passed a County Option Law, giving residents of an entire county say over liquor sales.

Residents quickly formed the No License Law Enforcement League of Clay County, circulated a petition and got a county-wide vote on the liquor

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issue on May 17, 1915. Though Moorhead and Barnesville voted Wet, the rest of the county voted Dry.

On June 30, 1915, exactly 25 years after Fargo’s saloons shut down, Moorhead’s watering holes closed.

HOW WE WENT DRY
LOCAL OPTION
In 1883 Minnesota allowed villages and townships to decide by election whether or not saloons would be allowed in their village or township. Many Clay County towns voted each spring on the issue, often going back and forth each year. Ulen switched at least seven times between 1895 and 1911. Some towns, like Sabin and Comstock, never allowed saloons.

In 1899 Glyndon voted Dry after 17 straight years of license. Hawley also voted Dry and remained Dry in 1899.

Just four miles to Hawley’s east, however, the little hamlet of Georgetown was the last to go Dry in 1914. In 1913 the Minnesota Legislature allowed larger cities to vote on the issue. Dry advocates pushed for elections in Wet Barnesville and Moorhead, but in both cases the cities voted to keep their saloons.

PROHIBITION
In 1915 Clay County went from soaking wet to bone dry, legally at least. Perhaps weary of being known as the place where North Dakota went to get drunk and rowdy, the people of Clay County voted 2,586 to 1,527 to outlaw the sale and manufacture of alcohol.

Four years later, the rest of the country followed their lead by ratifying the 18th Amendment, making alcohol illegal in the United States’ Constitution.

The Volstead Act, named for Minnesota Representative Andrew Volstead, strictly spelled out exactly what was prohibited during Prohibition. The Dries had won!

But Americans did not stop drinking. “Rum-runners” smuggled in large shipments of alcohol from Canada or other parts of the USA. “Moonshiners” secretly made hard liquor in home distilleries. “Bootleggers” sold alcohol on the streets or in cafes. Scores of local businesses and private homes were “Blind Pigs” or “Speak Easies,” illegally selling alcohol under the table or even operating as not-so-secret illegal saloons.

Temperance advocates believed that outlawing alcohol would solve the nation’s most pressing problems: poverty, crime, violence. Prohibition ended up creating a nation-wide crime wave.

Millions of average Americans ignored the laws, and all the money that went into the nation’s largest pre-Prohibition domestic revenue source, alcohol sales, went into the hands of criminals who became more violent and more organized as the years went by.

REPEAL
As soon as the Dries succeeded in making alcohol illegal in America, Wets went to work trying to repeal, or overturn, Prohibition. The Repeal movement gained support as the American public saw that Prohibition was not working.

America was anything but Dry, and critics complained that laws against alcohol only enriched criminals and made us a nation of hypocrites as both citizens and authorities increasingly ignored the law.

The Repeal Movement really gained steam with the dawn of the Great Depression. In 1929 the Women’s Organization for National Prohibition Reform (WONPR) formed to work to end National Prohibition.

WONPR showed the nation that the Women’s Christian Temperance Union was not speaking for all women on the alcohol issue. With unemployment soaring, many saw that reviving the alcohol industry would put people back to work and bring needed revenue to the government through alcohol taxes. In the 1932 presidential race, candidate Franklin Delano Roosevelt promised to repeal Prohibition if elected. Beer mugs often accompanied him on his campaign posters and buttons read “For Roosevelt and Repeal.”

Political Wets won in a landslide, gaining the presidency and filling congress. On April 7, one month and three days after President Roosevelt was sworn in, beer was back on the shelves. National Prohibition died on December 5, 1933, when the 36th state ratified the 21st Amendment to the Constitution, which basically said “ignore the 18th Amendment.”

PROHIBITION ENDS IN CLAY COUNTY, FINALLY
By the time national Prohibition began in January 1920, Clay County had already been Dry for five years. Likewise, the return of hard liquor occurred in Clay County four years after national Prohibition ended.

In October 1933 Minnesotans voted to ratify the 21st Amendment to end national Prohibition. The amendment was ratified nation-wide in December. But as Clay County had voted Dry in the October election the county remained dry.

Neighboring counties were Wet, so smuggling was common. Court rulings and legislation in 1935 made liquor law enforcement more difficult. But Americans did not stop drinking. “Rum-runners” smuggled in large shipments of alcohol from Canada or other parts of the USA. “Moonshiners” secretly made hard liquor in home distilleries. “Bootleggers” sold alcohol on the streets or in cafes. Scores of local businesses and private homes were “Blind Pigs” or “Speak Easies,” illegally selling alcohol under the table or even operating as not-so-secret illegal saloons.

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Crime And Liquor In Moorhead Researched

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

reports that about 40 percent of inmates in the nation’s local jails had been drinking when they committed their crimes.

Again, it would be interesting to compare Moorhead’s records with those of supposedly dry Fargo’s for the same period. It would give a better handle on the real impact that saloons had on Moorhead’s crime.

1901 VERSUS 1911...

There are some differences between the two years. The number of saloons was roughly the same. There were 37 in 1901 and 41 in 1911. Their distribution around the city was very similar.

But Moorhead’s population had grown 30 percent between 1900 and 1910 from 3,738 to 4,841. The police force also grew from the Chief of Police and three patrolmen in 1901 to the Chief and five officers in 1911.

The number of arrests was also up dramatically from 1,345 in 1901/02 to 3,091 in 1911/12, a 130 percent increase. It isn’t known if this reflects more crime or better enforcement.

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81.9 percent in 1901/02 to 83.7 percent in 1911/12. In other words, there were relatively fewer arrests for booze violations in the later period but they were more concentrated in the harvest months.

Again, there is no way to know if this reflects a change in crime or the police shifting their enforcement efforts from one type of violation to another.

Except for one anomaly the seasonal rise and fall in number of arrests is roughly the same. The exception can be seen on the 1911/12 graph.

In July 1911 there is a large spike in the number of non-alcohol and total arrests. Newspapers from the period note that Moorhead was filled with hundreds of men looking for work, some more seriously than others.

The Chief of Police led sweeps of vagrants rounding up 165 in a two-week period. That’s 31 percent of the arrests for the whole month. Every vagrant received a suspended sentence and a warning to find a job or leave town.

GENDER…

Almost all of those arrested in the two years were men. Only 1.2 percent were women.

Among the few women arrested, however, there is an interesting shift between 1901/02 and 1911/12. In the earlier period 53.8 percent of women arrested were picked up for alcohol violations. In 1911/12 it had shrunk to 11.5 percent. Likewise, the percent of women among the total arrestees dropped by more than half from 1.9 percent to .8 percent.

Either women were drinking less or the police were ignoring it.

In the earlier period, women arrested for liquor crimes were treated more harshly than their male counterparts. Of males arrested for drunkenness 66.4 percent received suspended sentences. Only 20 percent of women did.

Fines ranged from $1.50 to $15.00. Males’ fines averaged $3.99, women’s $6.36. Of the five arrestees who were charged $10 or more, two were women.

ARRESTED FOR WHAT?!

Finally, the other causes of arrest make for interesting reading. Some of the city’s overnight visitors were downright rude. One fellow was run in for creating an “obscene and riotous disturbance” and two for “insulting ladies on the street.” Three, including two women, sold cigarettes to kids and two others let minors play billiards.

Two women were busted for being of “questionable character” and another for being a “nuisance.” Two people were caught “resorting to rooms” for immoral purposes and two kept a “disorderly house.”

In April 1912 a fellow received what may have been the county’s first “auto speeding” citation. No DWls as we know them but a couple were arrested for “drunk and fast driving” of horses. There were three arrests each for “bootlegging,” peddling without a license and “breaking quarantine.” And 43 people were run in for simply being “suspicious.”
Moorhead’s Brewery Colorful Chapter In History

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

a preservative.
Growers in Wisconsin and later, New York, picked the buds in late summer and shipped them by rail to local brewers in 180 pound bags. Hops cost John Erickson up to one dollar a pound, so in 1883 he experimented by planting three acres into hops near his brewery.
The brewery’s operations.

Once the wort cools, the yeast is added to ferment the sugar into alcohol and carbon dioxide. Up to this point all beer is made pretty much the same way. In the late 19th century America there were two major types of beer, lager and ale.

Lager beer is fermented and aged at very cold temperatures for up to six months. Ale ferments at room temperature for up to six months. Ale is ready in days, but it spoils rapidly. Americans brewed only ale until German immigrants introduced lager in the 1840s. It took the country by storm. By 1875, nearly all American beer was lager.

This may explain the Larkins’ problems. They made ale. They had to because they reached Moorhead in spring and were too late to cut the ice needed to make cold fermenting lager. Besides, it would have been fall by the time lager was consumer ready, past the prime beer drinking summer season.

They probably planned to make and sell ale quickly through summer, cut ice in winter and produce lager for the following summer. They never got the chance.

Ale’s short shelf life must have limited their market to the immediate area. Local consumers may not have appreciated ale and there might have been problems with quality.

Erickson’s Red River Star gave the brew a rather back handed compliment: “The Larkins’ beer by some is preferred to the impure article frequently shipped from St. Paul to country dealers. The pureness or genuineness of beer is not always to be found in its strength.”

Erickson learned from the Larkins’ mistakes. The first newspaper advertisement for his brew proclaims “Lager Beer - shipped to any point on the line of the N.P. Railroad.”

The Larkins fermented their ale a few days, skimmed off the yeast, transferred it into tightly closed storage casks. Impurities stuck to the chips. Impurities stuck to the chips. This left the beer clear, clean and flat. To add effervescence, brewers “Krausened” the beer, added still fermenting brew to the tightly closed storage casks. Fermentation continued and built up carbon dioxide bubbles.

When the market was ready workers “racked” the beer into kegs for saloons or bottles for home consumption.

The brewery’s maximum capacity was 4,000 31-gallon barrels per year. In 1881, Erickson’s brew master, German immigrant, Fred Wachsmuth, produced 1,835 barrels. This is equivalent to over 25,000 of today’s 24-can cases.

The business was seasonal at best. Six to 12 workmen prepared malt in late winter, brewed for the summer season and shut down in fall.

Wachsmuth committed suicide near the brewery in September 1884 after being laid off. Erickson later hired Joe Jennister as brew master.

Erickson’s financial problems also kept production inconsistent. One of Moorhead’s earliest residents, Swedish immigrant Erickson had many business interests. At one time or another he owned a large grocery, dry goods and furniture store, a meat market, several ice houses, the brewery, a saloon and two hotels, Erickson house and the Jay Cooke House. Erickson gained and lost fortunes as the local economy rose and fell.

During this aging process brewers often added beechwood chips. Impurities stuck to the chips. This left the beer clear, clean and flat. To add effervescence, brewers “Krausened” the beer, added still fermenting brew to the tightly closed storage casks. Fermentation continued and built up carbon dioxide bubbles.

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After Moorhead’s boom of 1882 collapsed, Erickson was in trouble. Creditors sold the brewery at sheriff’s sales at least twice in the 1880s. Finally, in 1895, First National Bank of Moorhead foreclosed and evicted Erickson. He died in 1919.

The brewery remained closed until spring of 1897 when Norwegian immigrant Ole Aslesen bought it from the bank. Aslesen was an experienced brewer.

In 1881, he and Charles Hult began a brewery near Second Street and Third Avenue North in Fargo. With prohibition in North Dakota Aslesen opened a saloon in Moorhead near the Main Avenue bridge.

Aslesen and his son, Albert, made improvements and kept the brewery running quite regularly until August, 1901. At 6:30 p.m. on August 30, Aslesen and his son locked the brewery for the night and went home. At 10:55 p.m. a Moorhead policeman found the building blazing.

By 11:30 p.m. Aslesen arrived to find his $10,000 business a crumbled ruin. His insurance covered only $3,000. Aslesen retired and commercial brewing in Moorhead came to an end.
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But it's clear from a variety of sources who Glyndon residents suspected at the time, saloon owner James Shea and his son John.

Glyndon area historian Orabel Thortvedt discusses the fires in one of a dozen detailed scrapbooks she created, now held by HCSCC. Though she carefully avoids mentioning the Sheas as perpetrators by name, she says that Norwegian settlers gave the "non-Scandinavian firebug" a pseudonym, "Kjetil Odden."

She goes on to write that "his father was a real devil, too" and that her grandmother Guro Muhle called James Shea "fanen shav," a Norwegian for the Devil himself.

"Some think tramps called James Shea "fanen shav," that her grandmother Guro Muhle gave the Sheas as perpetrators of the Devil himself..."

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The Kittredge family letters are part of the Kathleen Lopp-Smith Papers held by the University of Alaska-Fairbanks Library. We gratefully acknowledge their permission to quote from the letters here.

Late in 1888, Charles Kittredge wrote to his brother-in-law, Trow Forbes, a judge in Worcester County, Massachusetts, describing his suspicions that James Shea was the culprit in the Cardin hotel fire and the blazes of 1886. He asked Forbes' opinion about the efficacy of holding an inquest into the fires.

Forbes wrote back, advising against an inquest. "I have held a good many fire inquests but never ascertained the cause of the fire that way. If it could accomplish anything it would have to be by a careful tracing of the whereabouts of the saloon keeper at the time of the numerous fires in '86. If a detective could ascertain nothing an inquest could probably find out still less."

A few days later Mrs. Kittredge wrote her daughter again, saying that on December 5, just after midnight, she "glanced out of the window. It seemed the most natural thing in the world to see a house on fire. "It was the Union Depot at the crossing of the two railroads. Night baggage man Ed Duffy managed to get the mail bags out but"

\[\text{The Red River Valley News reported this in the paper on January 20, 1887. The village of Glyndon offered a $500 reward for the arsonist. This was matched by the Minnesota and Dakota Insurance Underwriters' Union. After the devastating fires of November 1886, the Clay County Commission added another $1,000.}\\
\text{freight and express materials went up with the depot.}\\
\text{Osborn wrote, "Most people hold to the incendiary theory of the origin of the fire. It was discovered several feet north of the parts of the building where fire or lights were in use."

\text{While Kittredge agreed. She wrote, "Most people think it is set by the same one or more, who we suppose set the others. If you do not come home pretty soon you'll hardly recognize Glyndon. I wish we could get out of this place."}\\
\text{After three weeks of intense community speculation, John Shea told Luther Osborn that he and night operator Peter Treanor had been "preparing a little lunch of liquids and solids" in the north part of the depot the night of the fire. They had a stove going to roast a stuffed turkey on a spit. The chimney overheated and ignited some curtains. Shea and Treanor pulled down the drapes and tossed them through a west window onto the platform outside.}\\
\text{According to Shea, sparks must have fallen down between the platform boards and started the depot afire.}\\
\text{Osborn wrote, "To the query why it should have been held back the time of the occurrence, the insufficient plea is made that friendliness to Treanor, as an employee of the company, prompted such a course. The object being to avoid his probable dismissal from service.}\\
\text{Certain unpleasant intimations having been made, here and elsewhere, that John had somewhat to do with the affair, and with some people the stories took a very ugly shape, the latter determined to carry the joint 'secret' no longer. The News believes this revelation dispels of the entire incendiary theory of the depot fire, however, it strikes somebody's wits have been set a vascinating from the start.}\\
\text{A week later, Osborn reported somewhat unconvincingly that "Mr. Treanor has gone to Canada recently for a time to see his mother. M. C. Wood has come from Brainerd to succeed him as night operator."}\\
\text{Charles Kittredge did not heed the advice of his brother-in-law about an inquest. In January 1889, a Grand Jury indicted John Shea for arson in the September 19, 1886 pre-dawn fire involving Deme's Carpentership Store. Once again, charges were later dropped. The depot fire is the last which might have had any connection to the earlier arson cases.}\\
\text{So assuming that Glyndonites' suspicions about James and/or John Shea's involvement with the fires were correct, what might have been the arsonists' motives?}\\
\text{Osborn clearly felt the fires were started to avenge attempts to stamp out the liquor trade and to stop corrupt practices. Many, but not all, of the arson victims were reportedly set on fire.}\\
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\text{Osborn clearly felt the fires were started to avenge attempts to stamp out the liquor trade and to stop corrupt practices. Many, but not all, of the arson victims were reportedly set on fire. However, there were other fires during the period which Osborn did not, at least in his paper, identify as arson. Most were, undoubtedly accidental.}\\
\text{The village was almost entirely built of wood frame structures just a few years old. With the fires and others with mental health problems started only 14 percent of those arson fires.}\\
\text{Osborn titled his obituary "Rest, Perturbed Spirit." He wrote, "John was double-lived, as it were. Mentally bright and quick, he had some of the weaknesses that attach to the kind-hearted. He was generous and sensitive, and had large capacity to feel hurt when other and different natures did not respond to his own. And when, as often he did, he gave free rein to his passions, he would commit wrongs which could not be undone, but were, repented of, and largely forgiven."}\\
\text{The early 1890s James Shea went through difficult times. His health deteriorated and he went through bankruptcy. His nephew, Glyndon community leader and businessman Patrick J. Shea, wrote to Orabel Thortvedt that "although he was in the saloon business he had some very good qualities. How often he told me he was sorry he ever got into the liquor business. And I advised him to get out of it. He always promised he would."}\\
\text{James Shea died at Glyndon, February 17, 1898. Though the arson cases hindered Glyndon through the 19th century, the village did bounce back. After World War II it became an important potato shipping center and grew back to its 1880 population of 400 by 1940.}\\
\text{Many community histories suggest later improvements in US Highway 10 made it so easy for folks to travel to Fargo-Moorhead for their needs, Glyndon stagnated again.}\\
\text{Ironically, good transportation has more lately been Glyndon’s boon. Many of today’s new residents work in the twin towns but prefer the small town life. Glyndon offers, making it Clay County’s fastest growing community.}
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

Dry era of 1871 to 1937.

There was the added temptation for border communities such as Moorhead to make a profit off providing alcohol to their dry North Dakota neighbors.

The state of North Dakota was a dry state beginning in 1880 and finally ending in 1936 when they began to allow the sale of alcohol.

The two states differing stands on alcohol sale and consumption drove drinking underground. Drinking was a forbidden fruit.

Drinking was a forbidden fruit.

Vedaa, collections curator for HCSCC.

“IT was a big saloon period that people have found interesting. We are also trying not to glorify the saloons with this exhibit,” continued Vedaa.

Right after the 2016 New Year, the WW II exhibit will be taken down and most of the artifacts will be returned to storage.

“It is not good for historical artifacts, especially textiles, to be out in the light, humidity, and temperature fluctuations for so long,” stated Jonason.

East Otter Tail County Historical Society will be borrowing some components of the WW II exhibit and adapting them to their own local history to give the exhibit longer life. That also provides an opportunity for HCSCC to be a good neighbor.

Putting the many artifacts away in their rightful place is a long careful process. Prior to that, all the artifacts going into the new exhibit have to be brought out, cleaned, and prepared for display.

Labels have to be written, printed, and put on foam core and cut out for mounting. The text panels have to be edited, printed, foam-foamed, and cut out. The many photographs go through the same process.

"Installing the new exhibit takes time, the labor of lots of helpers, and a lot of energy and devotion," declared Jonason.

"The display has to be ready to open by 9:00 a.m. on the day of the opening reception – no ifs, ands, or buts about it.

"The opening reception and seeing everyone’s reaction is the fun part. Then hearing from visitors throughout the two-year display is wonderful too. The WW II exhibit was very popular and the WW II tabloid went like hotcakes. We hope the same for Wet and Dry," affirmed Jonason.

The stories of the people of Clay County are rich and engaging. “We don’t have enough time, space, or other resources to tell all the stories we would like to tell,” commented Jonason. “The ones our historians have narrowed this exhibit down to are remarkable, varied, and significant enough to touch most people of the County in some way.”

Visitors will see photos of people they have long heard about, and they will read about their lives and adventures.

Some will see humor in the criminal behavior of 100 years ago while others will be vindicated about their belief in the evils of alcohol. "We have tried to tell a balanced story from a time period when morals seemed more specifically black and white than they may now," Jonason said.

One reason that HCSCC has exhibits such as Wet and Dry up for a two-year run is to give teachers a chance to plan ahead. Staff of HCSCC learned by having the WW II exhibit up for two years that teachers appreciated having a second year to count on the exhibit to work well with their curriculum.

"That is the ideal situation for us," commented Jonason. "Another reason for the two-year time span is that the investment of staff, time, and money into this exhibit warrants a longer exhibit time."

HCSCC was awarded a Minnesota Historical Society Legacy grant of $10,000 to create a truly high quality exhibit that will hold up well for the two years it is up.

A year of research and a year of planning, building, editing, and then installing goes into the Clay County exhibit. "If we had the luxury of working only on this one exhibit for three months full time, that would be one thing, but we have a four-floor museum to operate," commented Jonason.

There are so many other duties that museum staff handle such as donations of artifacts every week, and researchers in the archives, newsletter articles to research and write, in addition to the 25,000+ visitors a year to serve.

Traveling exhibits and art exhibits are each changed out at least four times a year. Staff members also produce three cultural festivals each year.

“Everything we do takes research, writing, and physical labor – and we have a small staff that works very hard.

"Most important of all," concluded Jonason, “having the exhibit in place for two years makes it possible for more people overall to see it and learn about Clay County’s interesting past.”

The many Hours Go Into Featured Exhibits

The stories of the people of Clay County are rich and engaging.

One reason that HCSCC

HCSCC was awarded a

We are proud to be in the Clay County area...
Erdel Was An Early Successful Saloon Owner

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John Gund Brewing Company… then this note…shall…become due” immediately. Erdel continued to order beer from other breweries but he may have only sold it through his large off sale business, not in his on sale saloon.

Indeed, the bulk of the records are letters and orders from his off sale customers in North Dakota. As mentioned earlier, Dakotans could order as much as they wanted for personal consumption. Resale except by licensed pharmacists was forbidden.

Most of the orders seem pretty legitimate. For instance in February 1907 Jeremiah Crowley of Broncho, ND wrote Erdel, “I see by the Morning Call Newspaper Fargo that you are selling Old Crow Whiskey. Please inform me by return mail if you can furnish Old Crow in case goods. Bottled in bond. Age of goods, price, and c (etc). I want whiskey for my own use and want it good.”

In some cases customers’ writing skills were challenged. On June 29, 1907 John Dick of Engelvale, ND wrote “Dear Sirs please send me by express, one case of your beer bud wiser if have got it. Or anhizer bush. Send C. O. D. Yours Truly John Dick. Pleas send so I can hav it by next Wed. (the day before July 4) and oblige.”

Some customers had other more literate neighbors write out their orders. But in many cases it is obvious from the amounts ordered or the customer’s comments that the booze was headed for illegal resale.

North Dakota was hardly dry. The Anti-Saloon League’s annual report for 1915 included a chapter on conditions in the state. It claimed there was little enforcement in the western part of the state before 1909.

“Practically all the Slope country west of the Missouri river and including territory about Devil’s Lake, Minot and west was wide-open. I mean that there were saloons with bars and back bars, and in many instances the keepers were paying fines to the towns and in some cases grant to the officials. Carloads of intoxicating liquors were unloaded in broad day light in these places. There were from 80 to 100 saloons along the Northern Pacific Railway in the towns from Mandan to Beach.”

In October 1909 Grand Forks prohibitionist Baptist minister Rev. F. E. R. Miller attacked the liquor dealers’ press bureau for vastly over estimating the number of bootleggers in North Dakota. Reports suggested that 1791 “blind pigs” were operating in the state, one for every 244 residents.

The term blind pig goes back to mid-19th century New England where an enterprising liquor dealer tried to get around a law prohibiting liquor sales by charging patrons 10 cents to see a blind pig kept in a back room. The viewers also received a “free” drink. The number came from the volume of US liquor tax receipts issued to North Dakotans the previous year. The federal government required a $25 payment from booze dealers, legal or not, to sell. Presumably

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Erdel Was An Early Successful Saloon Owner

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many blind piggers paid the fee to stay out of federal prison. Rev. Miller claimed that the figure included the 470 licensed pharmacies in the state. The good Reverend indignantly contended that there couldn’t be more than 1,321 illegal drinking places, barely one for every 354 residents.

Either way, there was a lot of booze sloshing around the dry state. Erdel was glad to provide his share. Some of the orders were from folks who just worried about nosy neighbors.

In August 1906 R. E. Dresser of Spiritwood, ND wrote “Please send me by freight one case Hamm’s Velvet, have it come by no. (number) and not in my name. Too many rubber necks here.”

But others clearly had something going on. In one month in 1909 Magnolia, ND elevator manager Ed Hayford ordered five cases of beer, each containing 36 one-pint bottles; two eight gallon kegs of beer and a gallon of pure grain alcohol.

Ed might have just had a drinking problem but in December 1911 he wrote “I am not going to send you any more checks as I got word from my elevator co. that it was reported to one of their traveling men at Lisbon, N. D. that I was running a blind pig (his emphasis). So it stands me in hand to be careful… from now on I will order and… send money by someone going down or by M. O. (money order).”

He then goes on to order six gallons of grain alcohol to be sent to two different fellows in Buffalo, ND. Splitting shipments to avoid looking suspicious was a pretty common tactic.

In 1906 Erdel’s employee Ben Krebsbach sent Erdel a 15 gallon whiskey order from J. D. Sheep of Denhoff, ND with a note reading “Send 3/doz. 6 oz. beer glasses with handle on em and 3/doz. Whiskey glasses. Send this fellar good booze he is going to be a good customer. He is just starting out in the business and I would like to hold his trade so send these goods at once.”

Erdel also employed “salesmen” in the field to take orders, paying them a commission of 12 to 20 percent per sale. In early 1907 he found a loophole that cut out the middle man. Apparently unclaimed freight at a railroad depot could be reclaimed by the sender and disposed of at the depot.

In February Erdel wrote to Northern Pacific Railway depot agent at McHenry, ND asking if the C. O. D. shipment he sent to Pete Hanson had been picked up. If not he proposed that “I...
Erdel Was An Early Successful Saloon Owner

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days to dispose of the same.”
“Pete Hanson” likely did not exist. Erdel essentially wanted
to set up an off sale at the depot.
The agent forwarded the letter
to his superiors with the note
“Where can I find instructions
covering this case and do you
want us to deliver to any other
than Hanson? Erdel is slippery.”
It’s unclear if Erdel got away
with anything in this case but he
continued to try the dodge even
after North Dakota outlawed the
practice in March 1907.
That October Erdel visited
Lisbon, ND and unloaded a
bunch of booze. Sheriff Tim
Dwire issued a warrant for
his arrest. Erdel got word and
quietly boarded a train for Fargo.
A deputy searched the train at
Sheldon but missed Erdel. He
hopped off the train southwest
of Fargo, hitched a ride with
a farmer into town and took a
streetcar across the Red to safety
in Minnesota.

According to newspaper
accounts he then called the
deputy sheriff long distance and
“gave him the horse-laugh.”
Big mistake. Sheriff Dwive
contacted the North Dakota Governor who telegraphed the
Minnesota Governor who had
Erdel extradited to Lisbon. The
court slapped him with a $500
fine and three months in jail.
The penalty put a serious
crimp in his business. The years
of 1908 and 1909 were difficult
times for Erdel. The records are
filled with threatening letters
from creditors. Apparently
Sheriff Dwive, however, held
no hard feelings. In 1912 and
1913 Dwive placed a number of
large boozes orders with Erdel on
Sheriff’s Department stationary!
Erdel continued in the
business until 1915 when Clay
County voters banned liquor
sales countywide. He moved to
Minneapolis where he owned
another saloon until national
prohibition hit in 1920. Erdel
moved back to Moorhead.
Unlike other former
liquor dealers, Erdel avoided
bootlegging. He ran a tire repair
and sales shop in Moorhead for
many years. Once prohibition
was repealed he became a
bartender.
Charles Erdel died in 1956
and is buried with his wife
Caroline in Moorhead’s St.
Joseph’s Cemetery.

Archivist Piehl In 30th Year For HCSCC

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“It is a lot like detective work.
A few years ago the Moorhead Police Department contacted
Piehl. A head stone was found in a North Moorhead backyard.
Through research of birth and
death notices it was determined
that the headstone belonged in a
cemetery in Valley City, ND.
How it got to Moorhead is any
ones guess.
“That is the fun part of the
job,” stated Piehl. “The search
for information, you find out lots
of things.”
All of the paper documents
donated or discovered make
their way to Peihl’s desk for
categorizing.
Unsolicited donations is the
way most materials come to
be in the museum archives. If
the documents and/or stories
are directly connected to Clay
County they stay in the museum.
Materials not connected to the
county are passed on to other
organizations.
The Hjemkomst Viking Ship and the Hopperstad Stave Church are both such draws for
visitors to the museum that they
sometimes forget to stop by the
museum to see all of the exhibits
that are offered there.
According to Piehl there is a
lot more to view at the Historical and Cultural Society of Clay
County center than people
realize.
If one wants to use the
museum archives for research
there is no charge. However
for those who live a distance
away and require the research
completed by Piehl or another
staff member there is a small fee.
Archivist Mark Piehl is
a great resource for those
searching for information.” His
love for history makes him an
integral part of the HCSCC staff.
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

1915 leaving the entire Clay County “dry.”

There is a side note to the Barnesville saloon closings. The tin ceiling prominently displayed in the Loff and Stach’s Saloon picture featured here was salvaged when the Shamrock Tavern was torn down in 2003. The majority of the ceiling tin is now used above the needlepoint display area at the Clay County Fair Main Exhibit Building. There are still a few panels of the antique ceiling tin left that will be used at an appropriate place.

The first saloon to close in Barnesville was Peter Engels establishment that poured its last drink at 11:00 p.m. on August 11, 1915.

With the closing of the Engels Saloon, liquor retailer Edward Seiber decided that the downtown location was better than his south Front Street establishment across the street from the railroad depots. For years Sieber’s Olympia Saloon had been a hot spot for the railroad traffic. The establishment had beer and liquor on the main floor. The upstairs rooms were rented out by the hour or by the night, with or without companionship. But with the Great Northern Roundhouse now located at Dilworth instead of Barnesville, the railroad traffic had diminished.

The Seiber Olympia Saloon would move to the Engels Building and would operate until Halloween night, October 31, 1915 and would then close forever.

The last liquor business to operate legally in Clay County was Loff and Stach’s Saloon in what would become the Shamrock Tavern and is now the Barnesville Fire Museum. That saloon shut down at 11:00 p.m. on November 20, 1915 and Clay County was then officially dry. Well, maybe not, but at least booze was illegal after that point.

The building that Edward Sieber vacated on the south end of Front Street was promptly filled by another business.

The Record - Review newspaper moved in shortly after the saloon moved downtown and remodeling soon took place. The bar and furnishings were gutted out of the interior of the structure to make way for printing presses and typesetting drawers. An office area was set up on the Front Street entrance to the building. The structure has been the home of the Record-Review newspaper for the past century.

The local area was about five years ahead of the national prohibition of the sale of alcohol. The Volstead Act that brought nationwide prohibition to the entire USA became effective on October 28, 1919.

Never in the history of the world has there been a legal action that was such a complete and utter failure as prohibition.

The Volstead law put legal saloons and off-sale liquor stores that had controlled sale of liquor out of business. It was a situation made in heaven for those who scoffed at the law. Prohibition ushered in the most lawless period in the history of the United States.

Just because there was a law against liquor did not mean there was no demand, thirst or appetite for the product. Being illegal seemed to only intensify the thirst for liquor, any kind of liquor.

“Bootleggers,” those who...
Sad Day When All Saloons Shut Down

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chose to sell booze illegally, many with pints or half pints stuffed into the tops of their boots, were soon on every corner across the nation. Speak Easys or “membership only” clubs popped up everywhere. Few of the illicit liquor sellers saw no reason to check on the age of a potential customer and booze flowed freely into younger generations. Cash enough to pay for the product was the only ID needed and was the only regulation that was observed.

Feeding the thirst for liquor were the most unsavory characters in organized crime. The liquor trade was soon a big business, operating out of every port coming across the border. Rum runners ran the southern border bringing in from the north. Booze also flowed freely into younger potential customer and booze. Home brewed beer was a common substitute for the real thing. Home brewed beer was about as common as canning peaches during the summer. Moonshiners who had always known how to make their own whiskey from corn back in the mountains of the southeast, now had a ready market for their product and expanded their operations. There were absolutely no quality controls on these raw liquor supplies and some of the spirits proved deadly.

The one entity being really hurt by the situation was the federal government. Prior to prohibition they were taking in a healthy income from taxes on legally sold booze. There was no such tax being collected from the bootleggers who plied their wares openly on the streets. The “Prohibition Era” that made the sale of liquor illegal had almost the reverse effect of what the “drys,” such as the Women’s Christian Temperance Union and the Salvation Army, were hoping to accomplish at the ballot box. Making booze illegal seemed to only whet the appetite for liquor.

That “prohibition” period of time in Clay County lasted about 22 years locally. First Clay County banned booze in 1915. Then national prohibition, through the Volstead Act, made liquor sales illegal nationally through 1933 when the Volstead Amendment to the U.S. Constitution was repealed. It would be another four years until legal liquor sales were again allowed in Clay County in 1937. It was one heck of a party for those 22 years.

The illegal liquor trade flourished and the amount of spirits being consumed escalated sharply during the “Roaring 20s” when a nationwide party was being held. Pretty much everyone across the entire country thumbed their noses at the national prohibition laws. There is nothing like making a substance illegal to make everyone want it.

Oddly enough, in the earlier state and local prohibition and later national prohibition, it was not against the law to drink liquor. It was not even against the law to possess it. It was, however, against the law to sell the stuff or to transport it. Once you had it safely in your home, it was a legal product. Whoever got it to you and sold it to you was breaking a law. Those that purchased it probably were not exactly pure of heart or free from sin but they were in less legal trouble than the sellers.

The Prohibition Era probably produced more outlaws and corruption than any other single incident in history. Prohibition was virtually ignored by everyone, especially law enforcement, many of whom were well paid to “look the other way” at certain times and places. There would be a few raids each year by the “feds” who got their pictures in the paper smashing up a liquor outlet and its stock of booze. But there was little appetite in small towns to enforce what most considered a bad law.

If someone did, by some gigantic miscarriage of bad luck, get themselves arrested for selling liquor there was usually a sympathetic local judge that he would appear before. A $10 fine with $4 court costs assessed was the usual penalty for selling booze.

The enormous failure of the Volstead Act and prohibition ended on December 5, 1933 when Utah became the 36th state to ratify a constitutional amendment that would again allow the national sale of liquor.

States, counties, and municipalities would have the discretion of issuing varied licenses. Most immediately took advantage of the change in the law and started issuing liquor licenses. Clay County went “wet” again in 1937. Some government entities never did and there are still a few “dry” counties, mostly in the western and southern United States.

One example of an area town that stayed “dry” for years was Pelican Rapids. From 1933 until the late 1960s, the sale of liquor, either by the bottle or the drink, was illegal in Pelican Rapids.

While you couldn’t beg, buy or even steal a legal drink in Pelican, it did not mean that the community was dry. Roads were virtually worn out by thirsty Pelican Rapids customers traveling to either Rogers or Barnesville, both of which had municipal liquor stores.

Some of that illicit booze may have even been brought back to the straight-laced PR community for consumption. Consumers were often referred to as “closet” or “outhouse” drinkers although a more colorful term for outhouse was generally used.

When prohibition ended, organized crime would shift their attention from liquor to drugs, prostitution and white collar crime. Those illicit enterprises still thrive today as a direct result of the folly of trying to influence individual morals through well intentioned laws.

Wet and Dry: Alcohol in Clay County 1871-1937 is the topic of a special exhibition that is now open for the public to view. The exhibit will run for two years, until January of 2018, at the Heritage and Cultural Center of Clay County located at the Hjemkomst Center in Moorhead.
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