

# The Hourglass



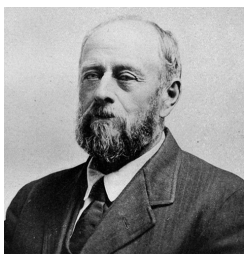
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## HCSCC Prepares for German Kulturfest!

By Davin Wait

### Remembering Our German Past

As many HCSCC members already know, German heritage has had a strong presence in Clay County since settlement in the late 19th century. In 1872 Wulf Krabbenhoft acquired land along the south branch of the Buffalo River after immigrating from Schleswig-Holstein on the German-Danish border and living briefly in Davenport, Iowa. He started sending the good word about the area back to his fellow Germans almost immediately and soon others followed in his path. By 1900, at least 15 families from Schleswig-Holstein had joined Wulf along the south branch of the Buffalo River, in Elmwood and Alliance Townships.



Wulf Krabbenhoft, an early German pioneer

Elsewhere around the county, particularly in Georgetown and Barnesville, other German immigrants settled shortly thereafter. These groups were mainly Catholic and many of them came from southern regions like Bavaria and Baden/Württemberg. Early settlers Adam Stein and Randolph Probstfield

likely drew other Germans to Georgetown, too.

By the 1890s, these new Americans and other groups, like the Mennonites in Hagen and Keene

Townships, constituted a group of German-born and their descendants that amounted to almost 11% of the Clay County population. According to the 1910 US Census, this number had risen: an estimated 11.7% of Clay County residents were born in Germany or had at least one parent born in Germany, and this placed them third among immigrant nationalities in the county behind Norwegians (38.9%) and Swedes (13.5%). In total, immigrants and their children made up 80% of Clay County's population at that time and began shaping the traditions of the area we now know so well.

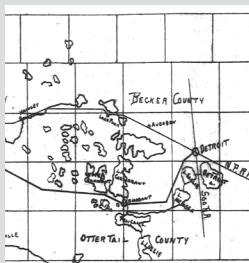
### Celebrating German Culture Today

With this history in mind, and fresh off the heels of the Midwest Viking and Scandinavian Hjemkomst Festival, we're happy to celebrate the heritage and breathe new life into the traditions of both these German immigrants and others at German Kulturfest!

### On the Main Stage

The main stage will be full all day, and the music will be starting promptly at 10:00AM with Brian Brueggen and the Mississippi Valley Dutchmen, a six-piece polka band from Wisconsin who have been continuing one of the most recognizable German traditions in the United States. Playing three 45-minute sets, they'll be

*(continued on page 5)*



NWIE Railway (pg 7)

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Our thanks to the Moorhead City Council  
and Clay County Commission for their  
continued support.

# HCSCC News

## President's Message From John Dobmeier

Greetings once again,



Summer is in its twilight season here in western Minnesota and arguably my favorite season is upon us. Fall in this part of the country is beautiful, from changing foliage to our weekend love affair with football teams around the area.

Fall also spells a reunion with my paternal ancestors ~ the Germans. On September 17 we will celebrate German Kulturfest at the Hjemkomst

Center celebrating all things German. Bring the family and take part in German foods, arts and crafts, activities that celebrate German culture and history, and if you're so inclined ~ beer.

Please do not hesitate to go to our website for the many events and celebrations that are scheduled this fall. As we plan German Kulturfest and our great celebration in November, Pangea, please remember our current exhibits: *Wet and Dry: Alcohol in Clay County 1871-1937*; the FMVA Constraint Show, *Touchable*; and *Child in a Strange Country: Helen Keller and the History of Educating People Who Are Blind or Visually Impaired*.

As I look at our current exhibits and our fall celebrations, I am reminded of our exceptional staff that work diligently to bring this rich history to our community. We are indeed very fortunate and I would ask you to show your appreciation through your support and attendance.

As always, I thank you for your support of this fine organization and I am honored to be associated with it.

~ John Dobmeier, HCSCC Board President

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## Please Send Us Your Addresses!

Are you going away for the winter or coming back for the summer? Please send your alternate address to [Kate.Savageau@hcsmuseum.org](mailto:Kate.Savageau@hcsmuseum.org) to make sure you receive all the up-to-date information from us!



[www.facebook.com/hcsc](http://www.facebook.com/hcsc)



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# HCSCC News

## International Holiday Table Tour and Luncheon (November 16)

Join us on Wednesday, November 16, from 11:00am to 1:00pm for a unique way to launch the holiday season and support a worthy cause.

Our first-ever International Holiday Table Tour will showcase the way families in many different cultures set their tables for holiday celebrations. We'll take a little trip around the world, enjoying a tasty luncheon while learning something about our global community. Programming director Markus Krueger will be discussing unique Christmas characters found worldwide and attendees will also receive admission to museum exhibits. All proceeds will go to support a 2017 HCSCC exhibition of ORIGINAL pages from *The Saint John's Bible* at the Hjemkomst Center.

Treat yourself and your friends to something out of the ordinary. Space is limited, so reserve with payment today. Mail in \$25 per person to hold your seat, reserve a spot from the Shop Online tab at the HCSCC website, or call us with your credit card information: (218) 299-5511. Make checks out to HCS and send to 202 1st Ave. N., Moorhead, MN 56560.

Be sure to specify reservations for the International Holiday Table Tour and Luncheon!

## Are You Planning Ahead? (October 4)

Please join us for "A Plan For All Seasons," a seminar focusing on financial planning for your current life cycle and how your plan can incorporate your legacy with the Historical and Cultural Society of Clay County.

Hosted by representatives from Wadell and Reed, two sessions are offered: 4pm and 7pm on Tuesday, October 4. This discussion is FREE, but please contact Maureen to register at (218) 299-5511, ext. 6732, or [maureen.jonason@HCSmuseum.org](mailto:maureen.jonason@HCSmuseum.org).

## Give to the Max Day (November 17)

Like to donate online? Here's another chance!

Go to <https://www.givemn.org/donate> and type in Historical and Cultural Society of Clay County. Just click on our logo and you'll be able to choose your donation amount. GiveMN provides a safe, reliable way to donate to your favorite charities in Minnesota.

## Newsletter Archives Online

Want to check out our archives? You can, and it's easy!

Go to our website, [www.hcscconline.org](http://www.hcscconline.org), and use the research link to find the newsletter archive.



# GERMAN KULTURFEST

**SEPTEMBER 17, 2016**

10am-5pm | \$5 admission | 12 & under free

**HJEMKOMST CENTER**

202 First Avenue North | Moorhead, MN 56560  
[www.hcscconline.org](http://www.hcscconline.org) | (218) 299-5511

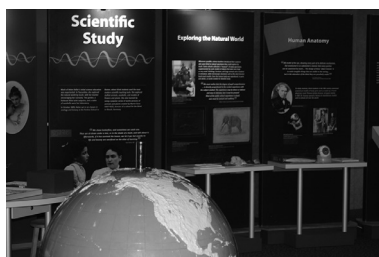
This activity is funded in part by a grant from the Lake Region Arts Council through a Minnesota State Legislative appropriation.



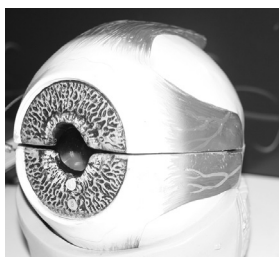
## Message from Executive Director Maureen Kelly Jonason

As I reflect upon another busy summer flying by, I can't help but be grateful. As you probably know, road construction has surrounded the museum and made it more challenging for visitors to find us. We are fortunate to live in a community that can afford to make so many improvements to our roads all at the same time, don't you think? However, in spite of our leaving maps at the Visitor Centers and placing ads encouraging locals to Conquer the Cone Zone and Embrace Your Inner Viking, I have to confess that our attendance numbers have been lower than expected over the summer. Some folks just simply give up trying to get here!

That is why I was so grateful to all of the members and donors who responded to our request for support at the end of July. We asked and you answered with many generous gifts to help us through this temporary shortfall. Donations, particularly for general operating, not only help us keep the doors of the museum open but also make it possible for us to bring in extra special exhibitions such as *Child in a Strange Country: Helen Keller and the History of Educating People who Are Blind or Visually Impaired*.



Tactile replicas from *Child in a Strange Country*



While we normally try to keep the cost of our traveling exhibits' rental fees under \$3000, we went ahead and booked this extremely interesting hands-on exhibit for about twice that amount. We wanted it to run through part of the summer season and into the beginning of the school year. We were fortunate that a number of local Lions clubs also generously supported the exhibit: Dilworth, Hawley, Horace, Moorhead, Fargo and Fargo Gateway. Thanks to all who have answered the call!

We look forward to our 4th annual German Kulturfest on Sept. 17. Notice the new name. And there will be no home Bison game that day either – I checked! So there is no good reason not to come and enjoy some fine oompa music, some great German-import beers, and some great German-American cuisine. Admission is only \$5 for 13 and older, free to 12 and under. It is important to make sure the next generation knows about the rich cultural tapestry that makes America great. The youth of today are our culture bearers of the future.

And so it bears mentioning that Pangea—Cultivate Our Cultures will celebrate its 11th year at the Hjemkomst Center on November 19 (also no Bison home game!). While that festival remains free of charge, good will donations will be collected to help pay the expenses. Come and taste the diversity of sights, sounds, and flavors in our ever-growing community. We all have so much to be grateful for, living in this great country; so come and celebrate!

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## Be a Part of Our Community

Are you a member of the Historical and Cultural Society of Clay County? Sign up or renew your membership today! We have several membership levels to choose from:

- Basic – \$40
- Basic+ – \$60
- Booster – \$85
- Patron – \$125
- Heritage – \$250
- Benefactor – \$500

To sign up or to learn more about what each membership level offers, visit our website at [www.hcscconline.org/join-support/](http://www.hcscconline.org/join-support/) to download a membership form or pay online. For more information, you can also contact HCSCC Executive Director Maureen Kelly Jonason at 218.299.5511 Ext. 6732 or by email at [maureen.jonason@hcsmuseum.org](mailto:maureen.jonason@hcsmuseum.org). Thank you for your support!



(German Kulturfest, continued from front page)

alternating stage time with Gasper's School of Dance and the FM Ballet's Storybook Ballet, featuring selections from the Brothers' Grimm classic, *Hansel and Gretel*.

Following a brief intermission, Doug Hoverson--a brewer, historian, and St. Thomas Academy social studies teacher--will be ready to go at 1:30PM with an hourlong presentation entitled "Western Suds: Moorhead's Place in Midwestern Brewing (and Consuming)." Not only does his presentation complement our exhibit *Wet and Dry: Alcohol in Clay County, 1871-1937* particularly well, but his discussion should continue some of the fascinating work he first shared with brewers and historians in *Land of Amber Waters: The History of Brewing in Minnesota* (University of Minnesota Press, 2007). His book has become the preeminent tome on Minnesota's beer culture and history, offering a survey of the subject from the first illegal brewery at Fort Snelling to the small breweries that became regional titans, like Hamm's, Grain Belt, and Schell's, to some of the most recent of the 300-something breweries in the state, including Surly, Summit, and Lake Superior Brewing.



Doug Hoverson, next to a Minnesota icon, the Hamm's Beer Bear

After Hoverson's presentation, which will include time for questions, we'll be starting the music again with several local musicians. The Fargo-Moorhead Opera will be sharing a collection of German songs, including some selections from their upcoming run of Mozart's *The Magic Flute*. Following the opera, Aimee Klein will be performing a variety of tunes on accordion, and the El Zagal Shrine German Band will be taking the stage to close out the day.

### In the Beer Hall

Right next to the main stage, our very own Kelly Wambach, of Rex Cafe fame, will be serving a hearty, delightful sampling of German and German-

American fare. The big spread on Saturday will include bratwurst, smoked pork loin, sauerkrauts, himmel und erde (heaven and earth: a German dish made with apples and potatoes), mashed potatoes, red cabbage salad, onion soup, and tomato and herring salad.

At the staff's request, Kelly will also be offering a trial run of some bolder flavors at the bar, so make sure you ask for pickled pig's feet loaf, beef tongue in raisin sauce, or currywurst! They'll be sold near the drinks, along with some Bavarian cheeses chosen specifically for the festival by another of our flavor gurus, Sam Wai. For those feeling the German spirit enough to imbibe, we'll be sharing wine and beer imported from Germany, as well as as several Fargo Brewing Company brews on tap.

Karen's Kuchens will be providing dessert for the sweet teeth at German Kulturfest, and she's promised several flavors of kuchen, in addition to German toffee cookies, maple sugar cookies, German chocolate cookies, and schlitiz kuechla, a German donut.

### Around the Ship (Vendors & Booths)

In addition to the excitement on the main stage, visitors are invited to explore the museum during German Kulturfest. All of our exhibits will be open to visitors during the festival, and the first floor of the museum will be filled with several dozen booths, showcasing local businesses and organizations, both promoting their work and sharing German and German-American culture. Among those vendors, the Brademeyers will once again be showing us some German painting and woodcarving; Evelyn's Bunzlau Polish Pottery will showcase some beautiful medieval German folk art; the Red River Volkswagen Club will be showing off and discussing some classic cars; Inspire Innovation Lab will be collaborating with the MSUM Physics Club to highlight some noted German contributions to science; and *HPR* editor and artist Sabrina Hornung will be there to show off her German paper-cutting art, *sherenschnitte*.

### German Kulturfest. Kommen!

It will be a full day of fun at the Hjemkomst Center, and we'd love to see you there. Once again, shuttles will run to and from the Moorhead Center Mall all day and food will be served as long as it lasts. Admission is \$5 for 13 & older; free for everyone else.

We hope to see you there!

# Exhibits & Events at HCSCC

## ***Child in a Strange Country: Helen Keller and the History of Educating the Blind and Visually Impaired***

July 1- November 1

An exploration of language, education, access, and ability focused on the remarkable life of Helen Keller. Both artifacts and replicas illustrating the history of tactile communication accompany biographical details of the famed woman's life.

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## ***Touchable: Celebrate Your Senses***

July 1-October 31

An art and accessibility show presented by the Fargo-Moorhead Visual Artists challenging the limits of art appreciation. Join HCSCC in learning more about accessibility, particularly for people who are blind or visually impaired. *Touchable* offers a fun, engaging approach to the subject while highlighting several fascinating pieces from our local art community.

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## ***Wet & Dry: Alcohol in Clay County***

From the Wild West frontier days to just after Prohibition, alcohol had a profound and lasting effect on Clay County. It financed saloons and speakeasies, instigated shootings and bootlegging, and brought about a push for law enforcement and temperance societies to the area.

The exhibit is open in the second floor exhibit area through January 8, 2018.

## **Selections from the HCSCC Collection**

Third Floor Hallway, Ongoing

In addition to our assembly of local political pieces currently housed in our third floor hallway, we present several selections from our society collections: a textiles exhibit highlighting local dresses and domestic items from as far back as the 1870s; medical equipment from the early 20th century; and the George Kondos softball award collection.

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## **Pangea—Cultivate Our Cultures**

November 19, 2016

This event will be Fargo-Moorhead's 22nd annual celebration of cultures, taking place at the Hjemkomst Center. A free, fun, one-day family event, Pangea embraces the diverse cultures of our community and region, offering visitors a variety of cultural performances and delicious foods. The greatest appeal, though, is the opportunity to learn more about many of the cultures that shape our community.

We'd like to thank Sam's Club, Moorhead Public Service and Moorhead Rotary Club for their sponsorship of Pangea.

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## **Wine Classes at HCSCC, Fall & Winter**

Taught by Sam Wai, Ron Ellingson, and Randy Lewis, we will be offering another season of wine classes this fall and winter, beginning with "A Night in Tuscany" and continuing with a two-part history of viticulture in the United States. Regional foods will be paired with several wines during each class to constitute a light meal. To register, sign up for the HCSCC e-newsletter from our homepage.

### **"A Night in Tuscany"**

Wednesday, September 14, 6:30pm (registration closed)

### **"A History of Viticulture in America" (1of2)**

Thursday, November 3, 6:30pm (\$50)

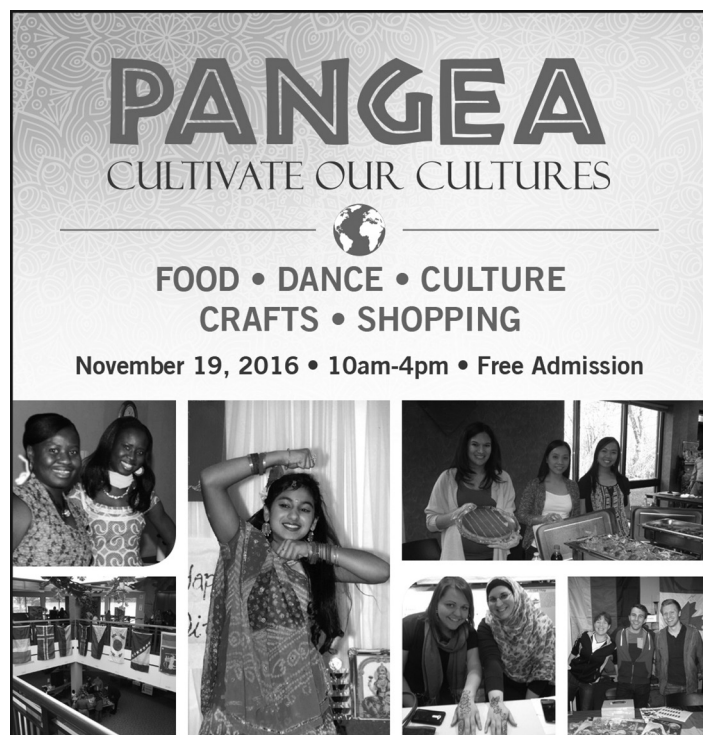
### **"Early Wine Industry in the United States" (2of2)**

Thursday, November 10, 6:30pm (\$50)

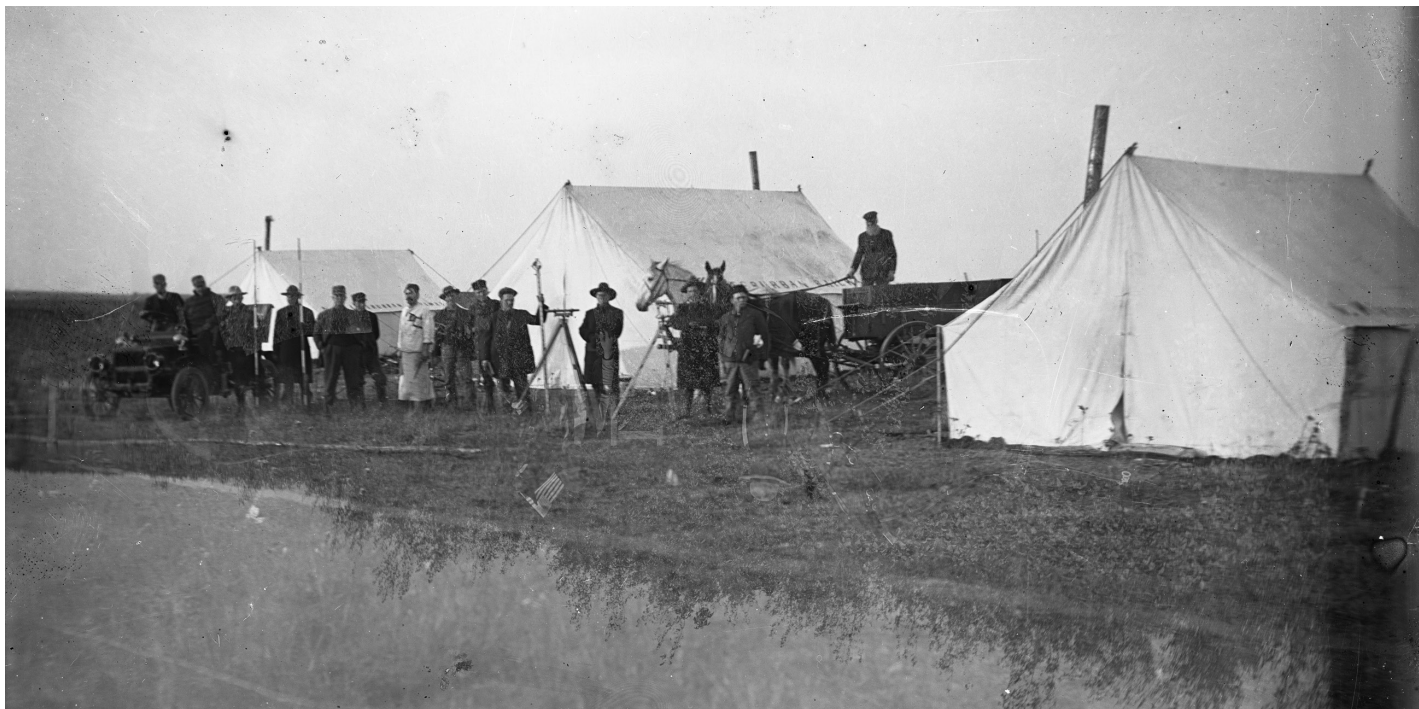
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## **Are you on Facebook?**

If you'd like to be the first to hear about HCSCC news, including events, discounts, and announcements, follow us on Facebook: [www.facebook.com/hcsc](http://www.facebook.com/hcsc)



The poster for Pangea Cultivate Our Cultures features a large, stylized title "PANGEA" at the top, with "CULTIVATE OUR CULTURES" underneath. A small globe icon is centered below the title. Below the globe, the text "FOOD • DANCE • CULTURE" and "CRAFTS • SHOPPING" is displayed. At the bottom, it says "November 19, 2016 • 10am-4pm • Free Admission". The bottom half of the poster is a collage of six black and white photographs showing people at various cultural events, including a woman in a sari, a group of women, and people at a table.



Northwestern Interurban Electric Railway Company's surveyor's camp, near Rollag, fall 1907. (Flaten/Wange Collection)

# The Northwestern Interurban Electric Railway

By Mark Peihl

Imagine it's a Sunday evening in summer 1909. You and your family are standing on a railway platform at Detroit Lakes, tired and sunburned from a delightful day on an area lake. Soon an electrically powered train pulls up, its six cars emblazoned on the sides with "Northwestern Interurban Electric Railway." You and a host of others climb aboard and are whisked through lakes country. Ahead a farmer stands by the track. The motorman stops, and cans of cream are loaded aboard bound for a creamery in Moorhead. In moments, you are away again, the train topping fifty miles per hours across the Clay County prairies. In a couple of hours, you are home in Moorhead. The ride has been fast, clean, quiet and cheap.

It all sounds pretty sweet. Unfortunately, the Northwestern Interurban Electric Railway Company came to a sudden end the year before, leaving behind broken dreams and dismayed investors, bilked out of tens of thousands of dollars.

Steam-powered railroads built the Red River Valley. The railways made it possible for farmers to ship

surplus crops to distant markets. The railroads assumed six miles was the maximum they could expect farmers to haul a load of wheat with horses. By the time local rail construction ceased in the late 1880s nearly every square inch of Clay County was within six miles of a railroad line except in the county's southeast corner. No rails lay in the area from Barnesville to Detroit Lakes and Hawley to Pelican Rapids. Enter the electric interurban railroad.

By the late 1890s dramatic improvements in the power and efficiency of electric motors and transmission made electricity a practical motive power for railroads. Hundreds of street railways popped up in urban areas, including Fargo-Moorhead. (We wrote about our local system in our November/December 1994 Newsletter.) A thick copper wire suspended above the tracks distributed the juice to the cars via a spring-loaded arm on each car's roof. A wheel attached to the end of the arm rolled along the cable bringing electricity to the cars' motors.

Entrepreneurs saw electricity as a way to bring rail



service to underserved rural areas, link cities and connect isolated railroad lines. These short lines required less substantial ballasting beneath the rails. Electric motors' greater torque made steeper grades possible. Cheaper operating costs offset the building of power facilities. In some places, like Indiana and Ohio, dozens of short 30-to-60-mile lines successfully competed with and, in some cases, complimented, steam railroads.

Between 1900 and 1915, thousands of such rail lines were contemplated around the country. According to one account, nearly 90% failed. Many were not well thought out, inspired more by local pride than practical business plans. Most were undercapitalized, relying on local stock sales which fizzled before construction began. Others were promoted by flim flam men, more interested in turning a quick buck than building something. The Northwestern Interurban Railway Company was plagued by a combination of all three.

In summer 1907, former Minneapolis insurance agent James J. Lambrecht proposed an interurban between Grand Forks and Carrington, North Dakota. His New Jersey-chartered company, Northwestern Interurban Railway Company (NWIU) sought a franchise from Grand Forks to use its city streets for its rails. Unable to reach an agreement, Lambrecht moved south to Moorhead that fall.

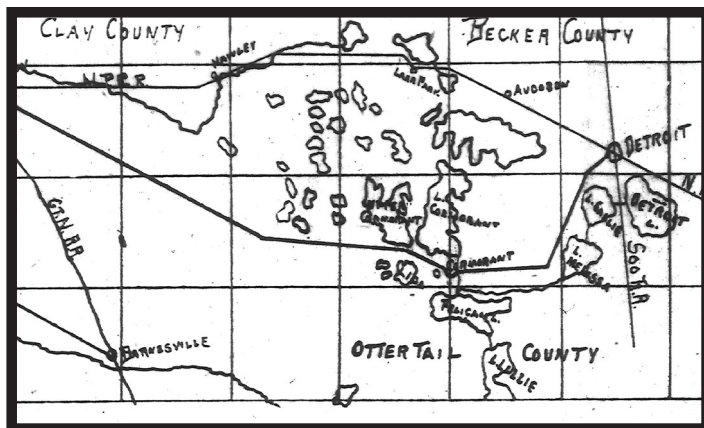
Armed with a slickly produced prospectus and a fist full of fancy new stock certificates, he proposed a fifty-mile electric line to connect Moorhead with the Soo Line railroad at Detroit Lakes. This line would provide Moorhead with connections to a third national steam line in addition to the Northern Pacific and Great Northern Railways. The route would run to Dilworth and Glyndon then turn southeast to Rollag and east through Becker County past Cormorant and Shoreham to DL. The company would carry both passengers and freight. The latter could include hay from Elkton and Skree Townships, potatoes from Glyndon Township, hardwood for fuel from Detroit Lakes and water and ice from the crystal-clear Big Cormorant Lake to Moorheadites tired of Red River mud.

Lambrecht rented office space in Moorhead and Fargo and convinced prominent local folks to serve as company officers. These included Moorhead Mayor and real estate developer Edwin J. Wheeler, Secretary; Fargo physician C. N. Carlander, Vice President;

and surveyor Samuel Crabbe, Consulting Engineer. Lambrecht served as President.

The group hired surveyors from Chicago and Sioux City, Iowa to locate the line. They began in mid-October. Within two weeks, the surveyors camped at Rollag. It, like Cormorant in Becker County, was an "inland town," without rail service. Excitement ran high in the communities. A Lake Park banker announced plans to build a bank in Cormorant. Plans for at least one new store and a hotel followed. Stocks sold quickly in the Rollag and Cormorant areas at \$42 per share. On November 1 the company announced that over 1200 shares had been sold.

The surveyors finished November 29. The line would connect with the Soo some four miles south of Detroit Lakes at a place named "Fargo Junction." The NWIU announced they had an agreement with the Soo Line for the use of four miles of Soo track to reach the rest of the way into DL.



Map showing the proposed route of the Northwest Interurban Electric Railway (*Moorhead Independent*, October 4, 1907)

Things started to unravel soon after. In mid-December, shocked Cormorant residents learned the line's route would bypass their town. The NWIU had platted a new town, Lake Center, on the southeast arm of Big Cormorant, a mile northeast of Cormorant. The company announced a December 14th lot sale. Despite newspaper assurances that promised "lively competition for the most promising business locations," not one Lake Center lot sold.

In early January rumors circulated about Lambrecht's lavish life style and inappropriate spending. He and his wife had taken up a suite of rooms in Fargo's swanky Waldorf Hotel. Moorhead attorney James Witherow publicly castigated Lambrecht for his reported 300-



dollar-per-month salary (five times what a skilled carpenter or railroad engineer might make) and the famous “Arcade Incident.” According to Witherow, Lambrecht, and “several lady friends” managed to drink up Moorhead’s Arcade restaurant’s entire champagne supply. They ordered all the bottles from two other saloons then put a dent in a wholesale dealer’s stock. Lambrecht paid for the booze with checks drawn on the NWIU account, several of which were returned for lack of funds.

That spring Moorhead saloon owner Tom Erdel bought \$1000 worth of NWIU stock. He paid \$400 in cash and covered the rest with a promissory note. Lambrecht tried to collect, Erdel refused and Lambrecht sued Erdel for lack of payment. Erdel claimed Lambrecht was blackmailing him and called his bluff. Erdel declared that when the case came to trial he’d expose all sorts of corruption in city government involving the NWIU. The City Council had recently taken the rare and drastic step of revoking Erdel’s liquor license for Sunday selling. The *Moorhead Independent* hinted darkly that Moorhead Mayor Wheeler or someone in his administration might have induced Erdel to buy the stock in exchange for reinstating his liquor license. When the license was not forthcoming, Erdel balked at paying. Lambrecht denied any knowledge of government corruption but quietly dropped the suit. Wheeler and other Moorheadites quickly severed all connections with the company.

On April 21 the Cass County Sheriff arrested Lambrecht at a Fargo railway depot just as he was boarding a train for parts unknown. The charge was taking money under false pretenses. Another Moorhead saloon owner, John Haas, had filed the complaint. Lambrecht had sold Haas NWIU stock which Haas now believed was worthless. The Court set bail at \$3500, which Lambrecht could not raise. He spent a week in the Cass County jail.

Eventually the court released him as the supposed crime occurred in Moorhead. Before he hit the street he was slapped with another warrant from Clay County on the same charge. The courts extradited Lambrecht, but he refused to go to Minnesota. He applied for a writ of habeas corpus from the North Dakota Supreme Court, claiming he was being held illegally. The Court agreed to let the case proceed in Judge Charles Templeton’s court in Grand Forks. The case created

quite a sensation in Grand Forks given Lambrecht’s past activities there. The Grand Forks Herald reported:

That the transaction with John Haas took place when both Haas and Lambrecht were under the influence of wine and other liquor was the contention of Lambrecht when called to the stand by his attorney. Lambrecht told of meeting Haas in his saloon in Moorhead, of hours of drinking wine, and of having been asked to shake dice. They shook and Lambrecht wagered \$25 worth of stock against \$20 put up by Haas. Haas won and Lambrecht transferred the stock. Lambrecht offered to shake \$50 worth of stock against \$25 but Haas declined and asked Lambrecht ‘How much of that junk have you got in your pocket?’

Lambrecht replied that he had 164 shares worth \$5000. Haas said he would give him \$500 for the bunch. Lambrecht declined the offer and left the Haas saloon, going to that of Norman Young. He went into a wine room and sat down. In a short time Haas appeared and said, ‘Don’t be a piker. Let go that stock.’

He repeated the injunction to not be a piker and offered \$1,250 for the stock. This offer was accepted.

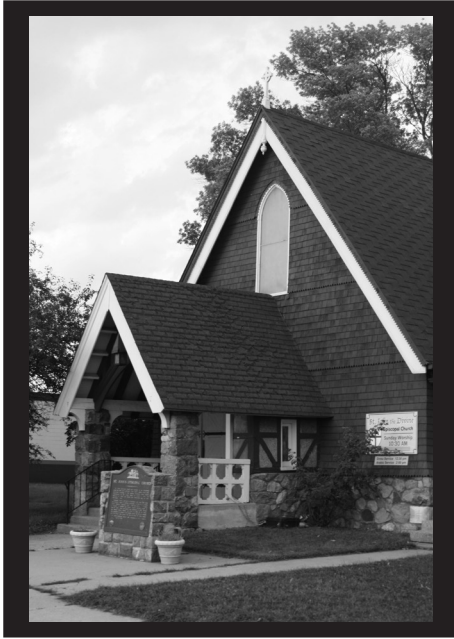
In making out the check Haas was not able to sign his name without assistance. Lambrecht’s signature to the stock was rather wobbly as he was very much drunk, too. Friends took him to the Waldorf on the Fargo side.”

Templeton denied the writ and Lambrecht was handed over to Clay County authorities. Much to the disgust of many locals he posted \$1000 bail and quickly boarded a train for Minneapolis. He was never seen in Clay County again.

No one knows how much money disappeared in the NWIU affair. Reports range from \$20,000 to \$120,000. Edwin Wheeler served out his term as Mayor but declined to run again. He went back to quietly buying and selling real estate until his death in 1934. James J. Lambrecht started a successful clothing manufacturing business in Minneapolis and died a wealthy man in southern California in 1932.

# The Divine Story of Cass Gilbert's Sudanese Church

By Markus Krueger



One Sunday about a dozen years ago, I was walking by Moorhead's Episcopal Church of St. John the Divine when I noticed that the service was about to begin. I had always wanted to see the inside of this strikingly beautiful church on the corner of 8th Street and 2nd Avenue South, so I stepped inside on a whim. I didn't know much about the church, but I knew it was important enough to have one of those bronze historical marker signs in front of it. Plus, it was finals week at MSUM and I had some praying to do that semester. When I walked in, I was taken aback by the magnificent architecture of the wooden interior. Then, as I looked around, I was at first surprised and then puzzled. I was one of only three Caucasians in a church full of people.

Thanks to a booming economy, our colleges, and our status as refugee resettlement communities, Fargo-Moorhead is much more multicultural than our national reputation might suggest; but to be perfectly honest, white guys like me rarely find themselves a racial minority in Moorhead, Minnesota. I was intrigued. What was going on here? As the service went on and the deacon began speaking in another language, I figured it out. The Episcopal Church is what Americans call the Church of England, and most everybody in the room was born in a part of Africa that was once part of the British Empire.

Our community gets more than our fair share of fascinating and inspiring stories, and the story of the Episcopal Church of St. John the Divine is one of them. It is a story of how a small prairie town commissioned a church from the greatest architect in Minnesota history, and how, a century later, the church was saved by Sudanese refugees. Today, New Americans who came here with very little beyond their minds and bodies are blessed with being the caretakers of one of western Minnesota's architectural gems and saddled with the cost of maintaining it.

## Builders of the Church

My pastor father likes to point out that the church is the people, not the building. So in that sense, the church of St. John the Divine began a few months after Moorhead was founded in 1872. Benjamin F. Mackall, a 21-year-old Baltimore native, was on his way to become a pharmacist in the new Wild West railroad town of Moorhead. When Mackall got off the train in St. Paul, he happened to witness Bishop Henry Whipple baptizing 25 Dakota men. It made a big impression on the young easterner who had never seen Native Americans before. After the ceremony, Mackall was introduced to the famous Episcopal bishop of the northwest frontier. Upon hearing Mackall was a lay reader back in Maryland and was on his way to Moorhead, Bishop Whipple said, "Give this young man

some prayer books and a book of sermons.” Mackall recalled that Bishop Whipple “spoke some earnest words about the work he wanted me to do . . . I was young and enthusiastic and a tenderfoot, so I accepted the charge.” Mackall became an early businessman and lay preacher in a town that he described as “wild and wooly, temptations alluring, and restraints few.” Both Fargo’s Gethsemane Episcopal Cathedral and Moorhead’s St. John the Divine congregations were born of Mackall’s pioneer ministry.

The Episcopal Church is the American version of the Church of England. Back east, where B. F. Mackall grew up, the Episcopal Church is quite common because English people settled the original 13 colonies. But there are only 102 Episcopal congregations in all of Minnesota -- fewer than half the number of ELCA Lutheran churches just in Minnesota’s Northwest Synod -- and only 20 Episcopal Churches in all of North Dakota. The Northern Plains were settled overwhelmingly by Northern European immigrants in the closing three decades of the 1800s. The Scandinavians, Germans, and German-Russians who made up the majority of our regional sodbusters ensured that our region is largely Lutheran and Catholic country. But although US-born easterners and immigrants from Great Britain and Canada only made up about 20% of Clay County’s population in 1900, they were at the top of the social hierarchy in the immigrant states of Minnesota and North Dakota. The faith communities that come out of the British Isles (including Episcopalians, Congregationalists, Methodists, and Presbyterians) have historically had an oversized influence in our communities.

The congregation of St. John the Divine has always been a fraction of the size of Trinity Lutheran across the street and St. Joseph’s Catholic Church two blocks down, but it counted among its members leaders of Moorhead’s business and political community. It was doing quite well as the 20th century approached, so in a meeting on May 1, 1898, Moorhead’s Episcopalians decided a new building was needed. They were optimistic about the future of their church and of their town. Pioneer businessmen William H. Davy and our old friend Benjamin F. Mackall approached a Saint Paul architect named Cass Gilbert to draw up plans for a new church.

Cass Gilbert is the most famous and most important architect in Minnesota history. When Cass Gilbert died

in 1934, the London Times wrote in his obituary that “[t]he list of his most important buildings would only be long enough to prove him the most remarkable architect of his generation in America.” That list of buildings is long, but among the highlights are the U.S. Supreme Court Building, the Woolworth Building in New York, and the state capitol buildings for Arkansas, West Virginia, and Minnesota. He also designed private homes, libraries, art museums, churches, banks, and railroad buildings, including Fargo’s Northern Pacific depot on Main Avenue.

There is talk that W. H. Davy and B. F. Mackall already had a friendship with Cass Gilbert, perhaps meeting him in 1897 when work on the Fargo railroad station began, and that their friendship is what convinced the sought-after architect to design a church for a little prairie town of 3,700 people for the tiny fee of \$175. In 1898 Cass Gilbert’s star was on the rise, but a few years before, there would have been no problem securing his talents. The economic meltdown of 1893 left little work for monument builders like Gilbert, and he was on the brink of bankruptcy. Then, in 1895, his design won the contest to build the Minnesota State Capitol building. It would be the finest American statehouse ever constructed at the time, built in a field near his home where Cass used to play as a young boy. The Minnesota Capitol building made Cass Gilbert’s career and launched him to stardom. In 1899, he moved to New York to build the U.S. Customs House, which led to a string of successful commissions that made him the most famous architect in America. But before he left for New York, while his masterpiece in St. Paul was being constructed, Cass Gilbert drew up the plans for an Elizabethan Gothic style church in Moorhead. Inspired by Gilbert’s studies of churches in England, St. John’s would be built of choice western timber and field stone gathered from nearby Minnesota lakes country and would seat 425 people. The congregation busted the sod and placed the cornerstone on a new lot donated by W.H. Davy on August 1, 1898. The first service was held in February, 1899.

#### FUN FACT:

Cass Gilbert was named after his famous great-uncle, general, and statesman Lewis Cass. Another nephew of Lewis Cass, president of the Northern Pacific Railway George Washington Cass, is the namesake of Cass County and Casselton, North Dakota. So when Cass Gilbert designed the Fargo NP depot, he was working in a county named after his cousin George.



The building served the congregation well through the next hundred years. A fire in 1946 caused a lot of damage, but the congregation spent the extra money to restore the church to Gilbert's original glory. While restoring the church, they took the opportunity to build a basement for fellowship and Sunday school classes. But the late 20th century has not been kind to mainline Protestant denominations and the 21st is looking even worse. When a 2015 Pew Research poll asked Americans about their religious affiliation, close to a quarter chose "none." The poll showed agnostics and atheists in our country outnumber Catholics and mainline Protestants (various denominations that include Episcopalians, Lutherans, and other "non-evangelical" Christians), and the younger people get, the lower the rate of church attendance. With congregations shrinking, there was talk of Moorhead's St. John's and North Fargo's St. Stephen's Episcopal churches combining some decades ago, but the Fargoans did not want to drive into Moorhead and the St. John's congregation would not give up their building. As the millennium turned, the congregation at St. John's, like many congregations throughout the country, was aging and shrinking. Then the Sudanese came.

### **Inheritors of St. John the Divine**

Sudan is a crossroad of cultures, with Egypt to the north, Ethiopia to the east, and Kenya to the south. It is where Sub-Saharan Africa meets Northern Africa, where the Christian world meets the Muslim world, where animal herders meet farmers. Although the lines are not clear cut, northern Sudan tends to be Muslim while southern Sudan tends to be Christian. Both Christianity and Islam have been in Sudan for centuries, but the Episcopalian/Anglican style of Christianity was popularized when Sudan came under control of the British Empire in 1898. After the people of Sudan declared their independence from Britain in 1956, the more numerous Muslim populations in the north took control and did not share power with the southerners. Two long periods of violence followed between 1955-72 and 1983-2005, leaving an estimated 2.5 million people dead, mostly from starvation. The world intervened to negotiate a ceasefire to the horrific Sudanese civil war in 2005. Then, in 2011, 98% the people of southern Sudan voted to secede from the rest of the country, creating the new country of South Sudan. South Sudan is a little smaller than Texas, completely landlocked, marshy,

and still, unfortunately, plagued by poverty and violence.

To find out more about why Moorhead has a Sudanese church, I called Darci Asche, the Director of Development for the New American Consortium for Wellness and Empowerment. Darci is a longtime friend of our Historical and Cultural Society, working with us for more than a decade on the planning committee for the multicultural festival Pangea – Cultivate Our Cultures. From the mid-1990s until recently, she worked in refugee resettlement for Lutheran Social Services of North Dakota. Asche says that while there may be elements of religious and ethnic division in this violence, people who live through these conflicts will tell you it is about resources. North Sudan has the political power, but South Sudan has oil. The people with power tried to eliminate the people with oil. She points out that this same government is responsible for genocide against the Muslim people of Darfur, a region of Sudan whose people are similarly cursed with land and oil.

According to Asche, about 90% of Sudanese people living in Fargo-Moorhead are Christians from what is now South Sudan. Most came between 1995 and 2002. Among them are the famous Lost Boys of Sudan. The Lost Boys were children who managed to escape massacres. Often they are the only survivors of their villages and families. Some wandering orphaned boys found each other and banded together in a community of roving refugees that numbered in the hundreds. The Lost Boys crossed Sudanese warzones to Ethiopia, where they were granted safety for a little while before being turned away. They crossed Sudan again to reach safety in the Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya. At Kakuma, their story caught the attention of the American media and they were granted asylum in the USA. About 40-50 Sudanese Lost Boys were resettled in Fargo-Moorhead.

Barbara Glasrud, Senior Warden of St. John the Divine, remembers when the Lost Boys came: "The Bishop told us about them and asked if we'd welcome them. There were only about 6 or 8 of them at first. They were young men. And they were just desperate. And it worked out very well because those in Sudan who were Christianized were Christianized by the English, which means they were Anglican. So they were very familiar with our ritual and they didn't have

to do any changes at all. After the lost boys started arriving, the Diocese sent us a Sudanese Priest, Father Alex Kenyi, who served as our pastor from 2000-2009 and is now retired."

Barbara Glasrud is an example of one of those community leaders who have filled the pews of the Episcopal church. She and her husband, Clarence "Soc" Glasrud, played active roles in St. John's congregation since 1950. An English professor at Minnesota State University Moorhead, Dr. Soc Glasrud was awarded the Clay County Heritage Award posthumously at our society's 2014 annual meeting. Barbara was an art history professor at Concordia College, longtime chair of the Art Department, and a curator for some of the earliest and most important fine art exhibitions in our regional art history. One could not find a more appropriate caretaker for Moorhead's Cass Gilbert church, but she is in her nineties now. The future of the church will be African. "The Anglo congregation did not grow," Glasrud told me in an interview now in the Clay County Archives. "I don't think it was any antagonism with the Sudanese. The people who had been active in the church grew older or died off or went somewhere else. So gradually it became almost entirely Sudanese."

Eventually, about 600 people from Sudan were resettled here by Lutheran Social Services of North Dakota (all to Fargo, but many moved to Moorhead). They found a spiritual home at the Episcopal Church of St. John the Divine. "The Episcopal Church, you know, is quite ritualistic and so that was one of the nice things for the Sudanese," Glasrud explained to me. "The Book of Common Prayer is the same for them as it is for us and you can go to the service and no matter where you came from, the moves are all the same so they had no problem. In fact it was probably very comforting to them that they were hearing the same words that they had been brought up with. And that's the same for me."

Many Sudanese people are multilingual. The languages vary from village to village, but most people from the rural areas speak the Dinka language. The language of the city and schools is Arabic. Because of their British colonial past, many older people already knew English before they got here. French, Spanish, and especially Swahili were commonly picked up in refugee camps. Today, in addition to a weekly English service at 10:30 for everyone, three weeks per month

St. John the Divine holds services in the Dinka language at 12:30pm and in Arabic at 2:00pm.

The Sudanese caretakers of this church find themselves with new challenges in their new land. People in small church congregations know that lawn care and building maintenance jobs usually fall to volunteers from the pews. The African immigrants learned how to work snow blowers. Even mowing the lawn was new -- Sudanese homes do not have large expanses of trimmed Kentucky bluegrass surrounding them. People literally born in houses made of grass learned to operate and maintain the heating, air conditioning, plumbing and electrical systems of the hundred year- old facility. But these are the small problems that the congregation overcomes.

Unfortunately, they also face big problems. Even the best buildings need an overhaul every century or so. The citizens of Minnesota are already familiar with a major restoration project of a Cass Gilbert masterpiece: our state capitol building is covered in scaffolding as it undergoes a \$309.674 million head-to-toe restoration. A recent report by architects from Moorhead's YHR firm, funded by a grant from the Minnesota Historical Society, says that the building is in need of a new roof estimated at \$150,000. Once it has the new roof, it will need \$3,000 to get new eaves and gutters and downspouts and \$25,000 to improve the drainage around the building.

On top of this, one of the construction projects that is plaguing the city as I write this is adding a turning lane to the busy 8th and Main intersection. Facing seizure by eminent domain, the congregation reluctantly accepted a city buyout of a chunk of their front yard that will be turned into a right turn lane. The City did compromise with the congregation to make the turning lane shorter than originally proposed and city engineers will try to save two of the three pink-blossoming crab apple trees. The day I spoke to Mrs. Glasrud, she was preoccupied with a sewage backup in the church basement. City engineers believe that it was caused by recent heavy rains overwhelming the wastewater system. The immediate concerns require all the energy that they would rather put toward the roof replacement project.

It all sounds daunting, but the story is too inspiring to allow pessimistic thoughts. People from Sudan who experienced horrors and hunger like I cannot

imagine were offered a safe haven among us. Rather unexpectedly, they find themselves as the heirs to an important piece of our entire community's local heritage, and they care for it on our entire community's behalf. One hundred and forty four years after B. F. Mackall arrived in Moorhead and 117 years after Cass Gilbert's building opened, the congregation of St. John the Divine still gathers in this church to worship, albeit in English, Dinka, and Arabic.

*We will keep you updated as the situation develops; but, in the meantime, our members can help by taking pride in the importance and beauty of Cass Gilbert's Moorhead church, sharing the story of it, and advocating for its protection whenever it needs it. When the time comes for the congregation to write a major restoration grant, HCSCC executive director Maureen Kelly Jonason has offered her assistance.*

*When I asked Barbara Glasrud how members of our historical society can help St. John the Divine, she*

*responded, "Well they should know that they would be so welcome to come themselves. And that once in a while we hear some interesting Sudanese music. Occasionally a hymn will be in Sudanese and they pass out little hymn books and I'm learning how to read the Dinka one. So it's quite a joyous service."*



Services in Dinka and Arabic at St. John the Divine highlight the church's evolution



### 1 Book, 1 Community: Pangea Series

Wednesdays, Moorhead Public Library, 6:30pm

Our local libraries are collaborating on a wonderful community project entitled "1 Book, 1 Community." The project aims to promote literacy, celebrate the diversity of our community, and share the stories of the varied paths we've taken to get here.

As such, part of the project's programming involves a speaker series primarily taking place at the Moorhead Public Library and leading up to our festival, Pangea.

Check them out Wednesday nights and learn about the project online at <https://1book1community.org>.

THROUGH JAN. 8, 2018

SALOON GUNFIGHTS • BEER PALACES  
SUFFRAGISTS • BOOTLEGGERS







## News from the Comstock House

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### **Women's Roles, Women's Fashions in 1900**

Thursday, September 22, 2016, 6:30pm-8:30pm

Explore how women's fashion at the turn of the 20th century reflected new roles for women in the political, educational, vocational and social spheres. We will discuss fashion from corsets and bloomers to skirts and sleeves between 1890 and 1920.

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### **Red Raven Tea at the Comstock House**

The Red Raven Espresso Parlor has generously offered to support the Comstock House with coffee and tea. Events and tours will now include local refreshments!

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### **Painting with Jane**

Saturday, September 24, 2016, 1:00pm-4:00pm

The Comstock House is hosting a new, one-day-only art class just for kids! Taking place on September 24 from 1-4 PM on the Comstock lawns, the class is designed for kids under 12 and will give them the opportunity to learn different water color techniques. Kids will paint landscapes and nature scenes, as well as the beautiful Comstock House itself. The goal of the class is to garner more community interest in the arts, while also making it more accessible. The teacher, Jane Stromberg, is currently an Art Education student from Minnesota State University Moorhead.

### **Amazon Smiles on HCSCC**

The Historical and Cultural Society of Clay County is now a part of the Amazon Smile Program. Instead of going to Amazon.com to do your regular online shopping, visit [Smile.Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com/smile), choose the Historical and Cultural Society of Clay County as your charity, and let Amazon donate 2% of every purchase!



### **Ghosts at the Comstock House?**

Friday, October 21, 2016, 6:30pm-8:30pm

A team of paranormal investigators will explore the historic home and nearby cemetery using eyewitness accounts and local legends to sort facts from rumors of haunted happenings. Join professional ghost hunter Matt Rasmussen as he presents the findings following the expedition. For skeptics and believers alike.

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### **Family Pumpkin Carving**

Saturday, October 15, 2016, 1:00pm-4:00pm

Come carve pumpkins and decorate the Comstock House! It's Free! Contact Matt Eidem at (218) 291-4211 or [matt.eidem@hcsmuseum.org](mailto:matt.eidem@hcsmuseum.org) to register.

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### **Have Victorian Christmas Ornaments?**

The Comstock House is already planning ahead for the holiday season and currently searching for Victorian Christmas ornaments to borrow.

Call us at (218) 291-4211 if you have one you'd like to share!



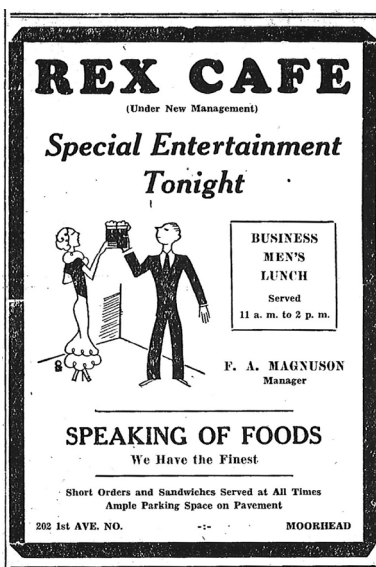
## Historical & Cultural Society of Clay County

PO Box 157 • 202 First Avenue North

Moorhead, MN 56561-0157



To collect, preserve, interpret and share the history and culture of Clay County, Minnesota.



Want to work or surf the web over lunch in a quiet cafe setting?

Eat lunch at the Rex!

We have strong coffee, delicious food, and wifi!

## REX CAFE

AT THE HJEMKOMST CENTER

### TIMELINE

**1910** — The Duluth Brewing and Malting Company builds a saloon and hotel at the same address as today's Hjemkomst Center – 202 1st Ave N. The building is named the Rex Hotel after their Rex brand beer.

**1913** — The Rex Hotel quickly gains a reputation for being a center of sin in a city known for sin. After the city shuts down the Rex for repeated liquor violations and prostitution, Matt Wambach is brought in to reopen and clean up the place. His great-grandson Kelly runs the Rex today.

**1920s** — Throughout Prohibition, the Rex's stores and upstairs rooms served as fronts for bootleggers. Owner Frank Magnuson is at the center of an illegal alcohol network that includes many buildings, family members and friends.

**1930s-50s** — After Prohibition, The Rex Cafe became a popular restaurant and bar. Owner Kenneth Seaburg turned it into one of the best restaurants in town in the 1950s.

**1961** — The Rex building burns down. Seaburg reopens the Rex Cafe on Center Avenue.

**1973** — The Rex Cafe is destroyed in Moorhead's Urban Renewal project.

**2016** — Kelly Wambach reopens the Rex Cafe at the Hjemkomst Center to give us a taste of local history.

The Rex Cafe is now open Saturdays 11:30am-1:30pm!