


# Clay County Historical Society

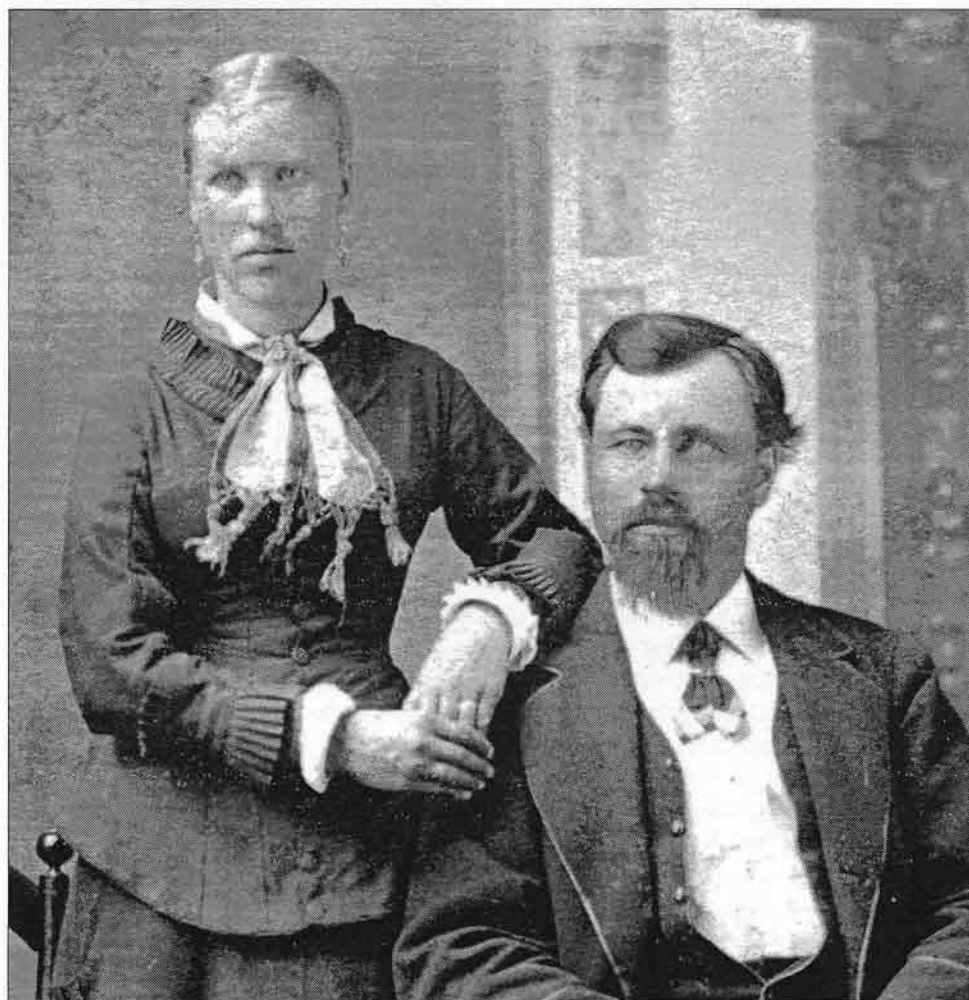
Volume XXX No. 1

Clay County Historical Society Newsletter

January/February 2007

*Celebrating*  
**75**  
  
**Clay County  
 Historical  
 Society**  
**1932-2007**

## ***Antiques Appraisal Clinic by expert Harry Rinker March 23, 24 & 25!***



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Signe Storaasli died in childbirth in Moland Township December 29, 1893. Rural women were three times as likely to die giving birth than their urban sisters. See the story about 19th Century Life on page 8. Thortvedt Family Papers.

## CLAY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



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# President's Message

By Darren Leno, CCHS President



## Clay County Historical Society Welcomes Radio Host Harry Rinker

If you are an antique aficionado, you probably listen to Harry Rinker's national radio show "Whatcha Got?" on KFGO. We will welcome Harry to Clay County the weekend of March 23-25, and we want you to take part in the fun that our staff has organized, including a Members Only Reception with Harry Rinker, an Antiques Appraisal Clinic, and even the chance to watch Harry do his radio show, live and on the air, from the Clay County Museum! For details and ticket information, see page 3.

### A Summer Wish

It's minus 10 degrees outside as I write this, so that's probably why my thoughts are on Summer things.

Last Summer, I had the good fortune to accidentally lock myself out of my office. Everything was inside: my wallet, my car keys, money and cell phone. I called the super from a neighboring office, and learned it would be at least 90 minutes before they could come by and let me in. It was a beautiful day, so rather than stay at the building wandering the halls, I set out on an adventure down Moorhead's 9<sup>th</sup> Street, on my way to wander through the Prairie Home Cemetery, made famous by Garrison Keillor's borrowing the name for his Prairie Home Companion radio show. I had never visited Prairie Home before, but I had heard it is where some of Moorhead's most prominent and earliest citizens are at rest.

I set out from my office at Townsite Center, walking south down 9<sup>th</sup> Street. On foot, I was impressed with how nice the neighborhood was, and I noticed the interesting architectural and decorative details of the older homes. People in this neighborhood are clearly taking an interest in the history of their homes, and many of them were displaying number plates that said, "Historic Comstock Neighborhood." [note to self: make sure that the people who live in this neighborhood are given the opportunity to join CCHS].

At the Prairie Home Cemetery I set out in search of the Solomon Comstock's grave. A former U.S. and state legislator, Mr. Comstock's grave was easy to find. It's situated prominently on the high ground, with a large marker attesting

to his prominence in the community. How interesting that a man who worked so hard to establish Minnesota State Moorhead, should spend eternity looking out at Concordia College.

Next, I started wandering the older parts of the cemetery in search of the oldest gravestone I could find. A well-worn marker from 1874 for a man named Gumer was the earliest I could find. [note to self: see what Mark Peihl can discover in the Archives about Mr. Gumer].

Continued on page 10....

**Clay County Museum Hours: 10-5 Monday-Saturday, 10-9 Tuesday, 12-5 Sunday**  
**Hjemkomst Center, 202 1st Avenue North, Moorhead, MN ♦ FREE ADMISSION**



# CCHS Hosts Appraisal Clinic with Harry Rinker March 23-25!

CCHS is pleased to announce a weekend with Harry Rinker, national antiques and collectibles expert and host of the popular nationally syndicated antiques and collectibles radio call-in show "Whatcha Got," airing Sundays, 7:00-9:00 am, locally on KFGO!



Harry will conduct an Antiques and Collectibles Appraisal Clinic at the Hjemkomst Center, Saturday, March 24, 9:00 am to 5:00 pm, and Sunday, March 25, 12:00-4:00. Bring in your stuff and find out if it is treasure or junk! "America's attics, basements, closets, garages and sheds are full of stuff," says Harry. "People want to know what they have, how to take care of it, and most importantly what it is worth." Space is limited—a total of only 400 tickets will be sold, so get yours right away!

There will also be two other opportunities to see Harry! On Friday night, March 23, 7:00-9:00 at the Hjemkomst Center, Harry will present a talk about "How to Think Like a Collector" and will also autograph your copies of his books. Hors d'oeuvres will be served after the presentation, and a cash bar will be available.

Also, have breakfast with us 6:30-9:00 am on Sunday morning while Harry does his radio show live from the Hjemkomst Center!

Harry is the author of numerous books on antiques and collectibles, including *How To Think Like a Collector* and *The Official Guide to Flea Market Prices* as well as more than two dozen Warman's price guides. He will have a limited number of his books with him, so purchase yours ahead of time at local stores, including Zandbroz.

In *How to Think Like a Collector*, Harry answers important questions like: Is it antique, collectible or junk? What is the right price? How many are too many? Are collectibles your mistress? And so much more! By teaching collectors how to recognize what will become collectible, how to judge an item's value while learning to get the best price when selling and more, *How To Think Like a Collector* frees collectors from relying on price guides that outdate quickly.

All events will take place at the Hjemkomst Center. Ticket prices for all events are listed at right. Join us for this fun-filled weekend!

## Tickets

Tickets for all four events may be purchased at the Clay County Historical Society office in the Hjemkomst Center, 202 1st Avenue North, Moorhead, 9:00-5:00 Monday-Friday, and Tuesday 9:00 am to 9:00 pm, or by sending your request with check payable to CCHS, PO Box 501, Moorhead, MN 56561.

## Friday Reception

\$10 CCHS Members, \$25 Non-Members (includes one-year membership)

## Saturday and Sunday Appraisal Clinics

**General Admission** (if not bringing in items for appraisal): \$5 CCHS Member, \$10 Non-Member (\$20 maximum/family), ages 14 and under Free

## **Item Appraisal** (3 per person max):

CCHS Members: \$10 per item

Non-Members: \$25 first item (includes 1-year membership), \$10 each second and third items

## Sunday Radio Breakfast

\$10 CCHS Members, \$25 Non-Members (includes one-year membership)



Harry poses with a guest at an Appraisal Clinic.

*Thank you to our Sponsors: AmericInn of Moorhead, Don and Alvina Lein, Moorhead Antique Mall, Gio's at the AmericInn, Speak Easy Restaurant and Bar, and the Snap Dragon Restaurant.*

## May Day tentative date for Annual Meeting

The Clay County Historical Society's Annual Meeting date has been tentatively set for the evening of Tuesday, May 1, in Glyndon. One of CCHS' goals for the 75th Anniversary celebration is to have more events out in the county to emphasize our county-wide mission.

The event will include a dinner, business meeting and program. More information will be provided in the next newsletter, or can be obtained by calling the CCHS Office at 218-299-5520.

## Cash prizes set for Jubilee Raffle

You could win the Grand Prize of \$750 in the Diamond Jubilee Raffle, set as one of the fundraisers in the 75th Anniversary Fund Drive! Tickets for the raffle will go on sale soon, and will be available at the CCHS Office, CCHS-sponsored events, and at upcoming summertime community events where we will have a booth. Ten \$75 first prizes will also be awarded. Who can't use cold, hard cash?! 1,000 tickets will be sold at \$10.00 each. Make sure you get a chance!

## Member News and Congratulations

On October 7, 2006, the Heritage Education Commission at Minnesota State University Moorhead recognized Andrea Rootham of Glyndon with the Beverly M. Paulson Family History Award for her book entitled, "Poems and Stories of Two Sisters – Louisa and Leona Riley Moore," a fascinating chronicle of six generations of a pioneer Glyndon family. This award is designed to encourage local genealogists to submit printed or duplicated documents such as diaries, journals or memoirs. The Commission values such reminiscences since

these documents often comprise the first step in developing more extensive family histories, are useful to local and regional historians, and are sometimes of intrinsic literary value. The award was presented to Rootham in conjunction with the 31<sup>st</sup> Family History Workshop held annually on the MSUM campus.



## Recruit a New Member for CCHS and earn a chance to win a Framed Art Print!

(No purchase necessary)

### 75th Anniversary Membership Challenge!

That's right! You could win a framed art print just for introducing a friend or family member to the Clay County Historical Society!

CCHS has been challenged to increase its membership from 500 to 750 in honor of our 75th Anniversary in 2007. This means we would like to greet 250 new individuals, families and business to the Clay County Historical Society!

To meet this impressive goal, the historical society is entering the names of all new members through 2007 in a drawing for a framed art print! The print will be a nostalgic scene to reflect the rich history and heritage of this area that the historical society exists to

preserve.

CCHS would also like to give our current members the opportunity to be entered for this fabulous prize, so any CCHS member who recruits a new member will also have their name entered for each new member registered by them! To help us, please make sure that your name is included with the new members' registration.

We know that you will want to help CCHS achieve this goal of increasing our membership and becoming better able to preserve Clay County's history! Start now with the membership form on page 15 of this newsletter!



# The Randolph Probstfield Family Collection

By Pam Burkhardt, Collections Manager

*As part of our 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration, we are highlighting some of the larger collections we have acquired over the years. They will be featured alternately in the hall case across from our museum on level 3 in the Hjemkomst Center. Currently featured are items from the Probstfield Family, story this page, and the Shorty Kondos Baseball trophy collection, story on page 7. Parts of both stories have appeared in earlier newsletters.*

The Randolph Probstfield Family collection was acquired in 2001 and contains some of the earliest, county-related artifacts in CCHS' collection. The Probstfield family history spans the years from pre-settlement to the present.

Randolph M. Probstfield (RMP) left St. Paul for the Valley in 1859 with two companions, when rich lands in the Red River Valley attracted speculators in towns such as Layfayette and Sheyenne City in northwestern Clay County and Dakota City across the Red. They caught up with the Anson Northup expedition on their way to Layfayette with the disassembled "North Star" steamboat. The St. Paul Chamber of Commerce offered a bonus to the first one to put a steamboat on the Red to open trade with the Hudson's Bay Company in Canada. The Hudson's Bay Company established their southernmost site at Georgetown in 1859 along the ox cart trail between St. Paul and Winnipeg.

Probstfield set up his residence close to the Company site and was one of the carpenters hired in 1860 to build the warehouse. He was in charge of operations there in the mid-1860s. In the fall of 1868, he established his farm along the Red River, south of Old Georgetown on the ox cart trail and stage line. Later, steamboats would stop at one of two landings on the farm to buy vegetables and wood.

In 1861, he went to South Bend, Indiana and married Catherine Goodman (b. 1839 in Ohio). They had eleven children: Mary Ann (1862), Alexander (1865), Justus (1866), Edmund (1868), Cornelia (1869) and Susan (1870) born in Georgetown. Daughter Dorothea (1872) was born at the site of present-day East Grand Forks. Emilie (1874), Walter (1877), Arthur (1879) and Josephine (1882) were born at the Oakport farm. RMP had received a formal education in

## Preserving the Past

Moorhead State University [now MSUM] Archeology Department completed a dig at the Probstfield farm site in 1997. The results were published in the booklet *Archaeological Testing at the Historic Probstfield Farm* (21 CY 67) MSU Michlovic & Kitch. The artifacts from this dig were donated to CCHS as part of the collection.

June Probstfield Dobervich and her sister Evie Gesell collected and researched family history for years. They displayed most of the family's historic items in one room in the house that they called "the museum." June shared her knowledge by taking photos and artifacts into the schools, resulting in a number of well-organized binders covering subjects such as correspondence with relatives, operation of the Probstfield Living History Farm, excerpts from books, newspaper clippings, photos, and, as they say, other items too numerous to mention. These educational materials were also included in the donation.

The Probstfield Living History Farm Foundation was formed "to conserve and interpret the heritage of the R. M. Probstfield Family Farm and promote education of it for the public." Their projects include the Probstfield Organic Community Garden, development of a hiking trail, identification of the Red River ox cart trail through the farm, tree identification, and learning projects with Moorhead elementary and secondary students. Artifacts and information from the Probstfield collection are available for educational activities.



The Probstfield family 1890. Back row, l to r: Justus, Susan, Dorothea, Edmund, Cornelia, Emily. Front row, l to r: Walter, Mary, R. M. Probstfield, Josephine, Catherine Goodman Probstfield, Arthur and Alexander.

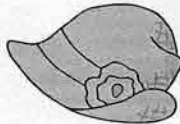
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## Outreach Displays

|                            | <u>Open</u>        | <u>Close</u> |
|----------------------------|--------------------|--------------|
| Hawley Public Library      | February           | April        |
| Moorhead Public Library    | February           | April        |
| Barnesville Public Library | February           | April        |
| Fargo CVB                  | On winter vacation |              |

The Hawley Public Library honors hometown photographer S. P. Wange with series of photographs taken in October of 1917.

HATS on display at the Moorhead Public Library. You will find hats, caps and bonnets from the 1880s to the 1960s. Find the one worn at the Minnesota State Fair, one worn on a downhill trip and one associated with music.



The Barnesville Public Library honors those men and women who served in the military. HAT'S OFF has artifacts dating from the Civil War to Desert Storm as well as some interesting facts about Decoration Day, our nation's flag, the GAR and other organizations.

The display at the CVB (Convention and Visitors' Bureau) in Fargo has closed, but will return in May.

The Fargo Dome has a temporary display on the Hjemkomst Center in a small case shared with the Heritage Hjemkomst Interpretive Center.

## IN-HOUSE DISPLAYS

The CCHS hall case is now featuring some of our special collections as part of the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration. Two of the collections are on view through February: The Probstfield Collection and the George "Shorty" Kondos Collection. See stories on each on pages 5 and 7.

## Artifacts & Donors

### November and December 2006

#### Donors:

Moorhead: Dave Anderson, Eddie Gudmundson, Bob Backman

Barnesville: Barnesville Area Heritage Society

Glyndon: Sherry Watt

Hawley: Stanley Sandman, Mel Ristvedt

Fargo, ND: Norman Kuehl, Phyllis Thysell, Joyce Pettinger, Paul Harvey Rustad

Gary, MN: Roland Carpenter

Waubun, MN: Marlene Kjelland

Anonymous

**Artifacts:** (3) letters (one to a Mr. Anderson of Hawley) in Swedish (1889-1892) with translations by Edna Rude and (3) empty envelopes and a postcard addressed to Carl Peterson of Hawley; (1) box of records for Dale Covenant Church, 1886-1990; (1) volume City Charter of the City of Barnesville, Minnesota, adopted October 24, 1961, (1) binder City Charter of the City of Barnesville, (1) volume 1985 Atlas of Clay County, Minnesota; (3) volumes plat books: 1991 Atlas of Wilkin County; 1974 Pictorial Atlas of Otter Tail County, 1949 Plat Book of Wilkin County; (1) volume "Post Office Souvenir, Moorhead, Minnesota, February 12, 1915;" (1) photocopy of a January 1946 newspaper clipping showing Norman Kuehl with four other Clay County soldiers in Japan; photo of Dr. Fred Thysell & Family; Campfire items and copies of photos of Lincoln School children and activities at the Moorhead ski jump; a wooden plaque carved by German POW Heinz Kehrer\* in Moorhead in WWII; 1930s official Boy Scout hat; booklet: "Sally" a Queen Holden paper doll; a homemade tobacco cutter; a political card "vote for Paul Euren for Clay County Treasurer" and two Fairmont Creamery envelopes; copy of a manuscript for the Dale Store reunion, book: *Simple Construction in Paper and Cardboard* from the District 89 school, a checkbook cover from "Ma's Store" [Ma was Doloris Busby] in Hitterdal, Mabel Rustad's membership card for the 1966-67 Hitterdal PTA, a personal card with the 1976 Minnesota Vikings football schedule and photo of Hubert and Muriel Humphrey.

\*We have two other plaques carved by Heinz Kehrer in our collections.



# Softball in Clay County: The Shorty Kondos Collection

By Pam Burkhardt, Collections Manager

Softball began in Clay County in 1927 with the Fargo-Moorhead Softball League. There were three teams from Fargo and the Hilde Grocery team in Moorhead. The smaller towns of Sabin, Rustad, Comstock, Kragnes, and Dilworth soon fielded teams. In August of 1927, the first annual Red River Valley Diamondball Tournament was held in Fargo. The Fargo Armour's defeated the Hilde Grocery team in the first game, and the Crookston All-Stars beat Elks Dentals in the second. However, the Armour's beat Crookston to take the Red River Championship.

By 1937, all of the county teams found sponsors and joined the Fargo-Moorhead Softball Association. Team managers or sponsors for the smaller towns were:

Sabin: Gus's Place

Comstock: Montplasier

Rustad: Dan Reitan & Walt Bye

Kragnes: Milt Gee & Arlan Stangland

Georgetown: Ole Kjonaas

Hawley: McDonald & Hendrickson

Dilworth: Venice Gardens & Silver Star Lounge, among others

Moorhead sponsors were many and included: Fairmont Creamery, S. S. Food Market, Country Press, Blue Bird Café, Pioneer Coffee, C. & H. Hamburger Shop and Shorty's Shoe Shop.

In Moorhead, teams played at the Junior High field, Woodlawn Park, and the Moorhead baseball park located on 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue North and 17<sup>th</sup> Street. The Moorhead Chamber of Commerce owned the site. They later sold it to the Minn-Kota Manufacturing Co. of Fargo who built a plant there. D-S Beverages, Inc. currently occupies the former ball park site.

Although both rural and metro teams played through the 1941 season, virtually all disbanded when players entered the service. In 1942, the league only had two teams

from Fargo and one from Moorhead. The Moorhead team was sponsored by Shorty's Shoe Shop and was coached and managed by George "Shorty" Kondos.

After World War II, softball was divided into two classes. Class A represented the Fargo-Moorhead teams and Class B consisted of towns of 2,500 population or less. During the 1950s and 1960s there were usually between 24 and 50 Class A teams.

Shorty's team retired in 1970 after 30 years of success. The team won 30 Championships and 18 Runner-up or second place trophies. Starting in the 1950s, Shorty sponsored off-season teams for bowling and basketball and earned trophies in those sports as well.

Continued on page 10...

## 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Displays

As part of our 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration, we are highlighting a few of our large and small collections. Because we are limited by the size of the original collections, artifact sizes, space restrictions and time commitments, we won't be able to show every item in each collection. Here is a tentative schedule with a brief description of the contents. Programming is subject to change.

### January – March 2007

Probstfield Collection: early county history, multigenerational with education as a feature.

George "Shorty" Kondos Collection: trophies from a long and successful history in softball.

### April - May 2007

Walter Manning Collection: a personal military collection of great depth

Elsie Lee Collection: personal collectibles and items with children as the focus

Barnesville Area Heritage Society: Barnesville-area items

Carlson & Gunderson Collections: immigrant items from Sweden & Norway

### August - October 2007

Elsie Welter Collection: Elsie made her own hats!

Olin Collection: hundreds of advertising collectibles, and growing!

Thortvedt Collections: Levi Thortvedt was an early settler and daughter Orabel focused on county history

Clay Co. Extension Office Collections: providing a vital service in education

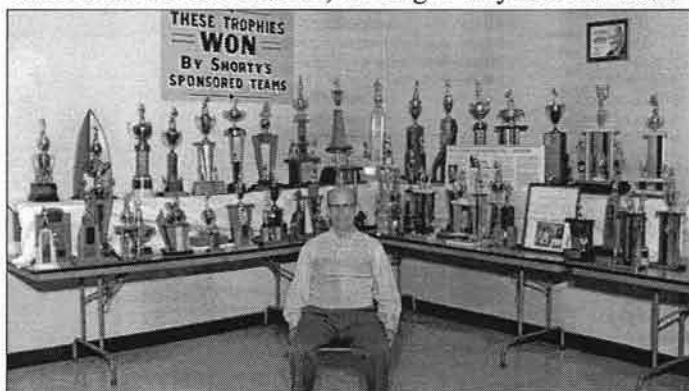
### November 2007 – January 2008

Heifort Folk Art Doll Collection: the early ones are part of the story of Red River Land

Knutson Collections: paper dolls and wonderful toys for boys

Campfire Office Collections: hundreds of items highlighting the organization.

Eastman Collection: Do you remember the area celebrity named "Buckskin" Harry Parnell?



Shorty with his trophies, undated photo.

# (Another) Sobering Look

By Mark Peihl, Archivist

Back in 1999, I keyed information from our Register of Moorhead Deaths, 1872-1899 into a database, crunched the numbers, and came up with some startling and rather disturbing findings about Moorhead in the late 1800s. (See "A Sobering Look at 19<sup>th</sup> Century Life," *CCHS Newsletter*, March/April 1999.) Particularly striking were the causes of death and the ages of those dying. They reflected the primitive state of medical care and the ghastly sanitary conditions of the time.

According to the Minnesota Department of Health, heart attacks, cancer and strokes were the state's most common causes of death in 2004. These are "old people" diseases. Nineteenth century Moorhead residents weren't living long enough to develop these ailments. They died young from infectious diseases we can treat easily today with antibiotics or that have disappeared with better sanitation.

In the 1800s, tuberculosis killed more Moorheadites than any other cause. "Unknown" was second. The diagnostic ability of doctors was such that they often could not come up with a cause of death. Typhoid fever was third. Caused by bacteria found in feces, it is spread through bad water or food contaminated by dirty hands or flies. Today, it's found primarily in the tropics. "Cholera Infantum," was fourth. It was a non-communicable intestinal disorder contracted by small children during the summer months. Spoiled food and bad water probably caused most cases. Kids had a hard time in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Half of Moorhead's recorded deaths were those of children age 12 and younger.

We were curious to see how the situation in Clay County's largest city compared to that in rural areas. Presumably, factors such as distance from medical care (such as it was), isolation from neighbors and different (though not necessarily better) water sources might make a difference. We were right.

We did a similar study of deaths recorded in three rural townships: Moland, Parke and Hawley. I chose these because they seemed fairly complete and included deaths recorded from the 1870s to 1899, similar to Moorhead's records. (Hawley's records are not purely rural, they include deaths in the village of Hawley.) The 321 deaths were spread out fairly evenly between the three townships. (Moorhead recorded 1,120 deaths during the period. To compare them properly, I looked at the ratio of deaths from a given cause to the total number of deaths recorded.)

Some rural results were very similar to those reported in Moorhead. For instance, the percentages of deaths from liver disease were virtually identical. Accidental deaths

were only slightly more common in rural areas than in town. And sadly, half of the rural deaths were of children 12 and younger, just as in Moorhead.

But some differences were quite apparent. Rural women were three times as likely to die in childbirth as their urban sisters. Farm women were much less likely to have a doctor, midwife or anyone present to help them through their delivery.

Moorhead residents had a five-fold greater chance of dying from alcohol, drugs or venereal diseases than rural residents, and were seven times more likely to be victims of murder or suicide. (The townships recorded no murders and only one suicide.)

Communicable diseases were also more deadly in town than among isolated farmers. The ratio of Moorhead deaths from flu was 3.7 times the number of rural cases; measles 2.6 times.

Typhoid fever and Cholera Infantum were both 70% more likely in Moorhead, probably because of the city's polluted water source, the Red River.

Rural deaths were more likely to be attributed to vague or ambiguous causes. (The leading cause of rural deaths was

|            |          |                |          |                |
|------------|----------|----------------|----------|----------------|
| Georgetown | Viding   | Felton         | Hagen    | Ulen           |
| Kragnes    | Morken   | Flowing        | Keene    | Goose Prairie  |
| Oakport    | Moland   | Spring Prairie | Cronwell | Highland Grove |
| Moorhead   | Glyndon  | Riverton       | Hawley   | Egdon          |
| Kurtz      | Elmwood  | Elkton         | Skree    | Parke          |
| Holy Cross | Alliance | Barnesville    | Humboldt | Tansem         |

We looked at deaths in the rural townships of Hawley, Parke and Moland (highlighted in gray).



# at 19th Century Life

110

REGISTER OF DEATHS, TOWN OF *Parke*

COUNTY OF CLAY, STATE OF MINNESOTA.

| No. 1         |       |      |                       |     |       |                            |      |       |        |                                  |                              |      | 2    |                           |                                  |            |                                  |                 |                 |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|---------------|-------|------|-----------------------|-----|-------|----------------------------|------|-------|--------|----------------------------------|------------------------------|------|------|---------------------------|----------------------------------|------------|----------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| DATE OF DEATH |       |      | FULL NAME OF DECEASED | SEX | COLOR | MARRIED, SINGLE OR WIDOWED | AGE  |       |        | PLACE OF BIRTH (COUNTRY OR CITY) | DATE OF ARRIVAL IN MINNESOTA |      |      | DISEASE OR CAUSE OF DEATH | PLACE OF DEATH (COUNTRY OR CITY) | OCCUPATION | NAMES AND BIRTH-PLACE OF PARENTS |                 | When Registered |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Mo.           | Day   | Year |                       |     |       |                            | Tot. | Years | Months |                                  | Mo.                          | Day  | Year |                           |                                  |            | Names                            | Birth-Place     |                 |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 1             | Jan   | 1882 | Anne Maria Thompson   | F   | White |                            | 1    |       |        | Parke                            |                              |      |      | Scarlet fever             | Parke                            |            | Nils & Maria Thompson            | Norway          | Jan 18 1882     |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 2             | Feb   | 1882 | Mary Anne Rugg        | F   |       | Single                     | 27   | 1     | 18     | England                          | June                         | 1877 |      | Diphtheria                |                                  |            | Charles & Mary Rugg              | England         | Jan 18 1882     |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 3             | Feb   | 1882 | Lucia Ann Horn        | F   |       |                            | 3    | 1     | 18     | Parke                            |                              |      |      |                           |                                  |            | William & Mary Horn              | Illinois        | Feb 18 1882     |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 4             | Mar   | 1882 | Mary Alice Thom       | F   |       |                            | 11   | 5     | 22     |                                  |                              |      |      |                           |                                  |            | William & Mary Thom              | Illinois        | Mar 18 1882     |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 5             | Mar   | 1882 | Charles Ann Sellen    | F   |       |                            | 8    | 12    |        |                                  |                              |      |      |                           |                                  |            | George & M. Sellen               | N. Y. & Indiana | Mar 18 1882     |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 6             | April | 1882 | Frederick Ann Sellen  | F   |       |                            | 1    | 5     | 28     |                                  |                              |      |      |                           |                                  |            | George & M. Sellen               |                 | Apr 18 1882     |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 7             | May   | 1882 | David Leroy Sellen    | M   |       |                            | 3    | 11    | 18     |                                  |                              |      |      |                           |                                  |            | George & M. Sellen               |                 | May 18 1882     |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 8             | May   | 1882 | Johnnie Lige          | F   |       |                            |      |       | 3      |                                  |                              |      |      | Scarlet fever             |                                  |            | John & Lige                      | Norway          | May 18 1882     |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 9             | May   | 1882 | Beck Lige             | F   |       | Married                    | 28   |       |        | Norway                           |                              |      |      | Scarlet fever             |                                  |            |                                  |                 | May 18 1882     |  |  |  |  |  |  |

Page from the Register of Parke Township Deaths, 1880s. Sixteen Parke residents, including 15 kids age 14 or younger, died in the 1882-1883 diphtheria epidemic. The outbreak hit southeastern Clay County especially hard.

Page from the Register of Parke Township Deaths, 1880s. Sixteen Parke residents, including 15 kids age 14 or younger, died in the 1882-1883 diphtheria epidemic. The outbreak hit southeastern Clay County especially hard.

"unknown," 80% more than the Moorhead reporting.) "Diarrhea" and "weakness" were twice as common in the rural townships as was "lung fever." The later could be either pneumonia or tuberculosis, both of which were somewhat less reported in rural areas. Meningitis or "brain fever" was quite common in Moorhead but almost unknown in the townships. It, too, may have been misdiagnosed. This was probably the result of a lack of attending physicians and trained clerks in the county. (Elected township and village clerks recorded deaths until the 1940s.)

The townships also reported a disproportionate number of deaths of aged people. Rural residents were nearly three times as likely to die from "old age" as their urban counterparts. (However, these included a 67-year old, a 64-year old and one guy who died at 59!) In Moorhead, only 4.5% of the deaths were of those 65 and older. In the rural areas it was 11.2%. This is still pretty low compared to today. In 2005, 77.9% of Minnesota deaths were of folks 65 and older.

Deaths in 19<sup>th</sup> century Moorhead reached a peak between 1882 and 1884. We're still not sure just why that was but, interestingly, the same held true for the rural townships. One reason might be a disease outbreak.

In 1999, I mentioned an apparent diphtheria epidemic in Moorhead which killed 12 people in 1882-1883. Though Hawley and Moland listed only one diphtheria death those two years, Parke Township recorded 16. They made up over 59% of the total deaths in Parke during the period. All except one were kids 14 or younger. Based on estimates from the 1880 and 1885 census returns, Parke may have lost 11% of its children under 14 to diphtheria in those two years. That's one kid out of 9.

This was clearly a serious situation. I checked all the other county townships for diphtheria deaths in 1882-83. Tansem (just south of Parke, see the map) recorded 17; Eglon, 6. Skree recorded only one, but Humboldt and

Barnesville listed 8 and 5 respectively. The other townships recorded 2 or less.

This suggests a devastating outbreak localized in the southeast part of the county. (It may have been the county's worst epidemic aside from the 1918 Spanish Influenza pandemic. See our last newsletter.) It would be interesting to see similar research on adjacent areas of Becker, Otter Tail and Wilkin Counties.

I also reported in 1999 on Moorhead's disturbingly high Infant Mortality Rate (IMR). The World Health Organization uses the IMR (figured from the number of deaths of children under 1 year of age per every 1,000 live births) as a way of measuring quality of life in countries around the globe. In 1999, Clay County's IMR was 5.8. The U.S. average was 6.4; India's was 63.1, Haiti's 98.9. Afghanistan had the world's highest rate at 143.6. I figured the Moorhead average through the 19<sup>th</sup> century at an astonishing 175.1. That seemed extremely high, but I reported it nonetheless.

I began thinking the rate might have been skewed by a large number of unreported live births. I spot-checked the names of infants who had died with birth records to see if their arrival had been recorded. Sure enough, about 20% of births were not to be found. But that still leaves us with a frightening 19<sup>th</sup> century average IMR of 160.4, much higher than the worst third world country today.

A 1920 U.S. Census Bureau report estimated the nation's IMR in 1901 (just after the tail end of our period) at 124.5. The report indicated that the disproportionately high number of infant births made coming up with an average life expectancy difficult, but that if a child born in 1888 survived to age 12, he or she could expect to reach age 62. In contrast, a child born in 2004 can expect to reach age 77.8.

All of this gives us (and especially our children) another reason to be glad we live where and when we do!

## President's Message, cont. from page 2

Finally, and all too quickly, my watch told me I needed to get back to my office to meet the building superintendent. My visit was over, but I felt relaxed, and pleased that I had been able to indulge myself a bit on such a beautiful day.

Visiting Prairie Home had been something that I had wanted to do for many years. In our lives, it's just too easy to put those interesting things off for all of the "important" things that endlessly demand our time.

So my wish for you this Summer is that you will find opportunities to indulge your interest in local history. If you should encounter such good fortune as to lock yourself out of your home or office, my advice to you is not to get upset. Just take a stroll to the quiet place that inspired Garrison Keillor.

## Probstfield Collection, cont. from page 5

Germany and could read, write and speak five languages. He held classes for his five oldest children at home before helping to build the first rural schoolhouse in Oakport Township in 1881. Probstfield was also active in civic affairs. He served as postmaster, assessor, treasurer, clerk, school director, Clay County Commissioner (one of the first three) and was a member of the Minnesota Senate from 1891 to 1893.

On the farm, Probstfield conducted experiments for both the U.S. and Minnesota Bureaus of Agriculture. His crops were exhibited at the state and county fairs. Not only was RMP one of the first vegetable farmers in the area, but he also experimented with crops considered unusual at that time such as tobacco, celery, peanuts and sugar beets.

## Kondos Collection, cont. from page 7

In 1968, George "Shorty" Kondos was elected to the North Dakota Softball Hall of Fame. Shorty died in 1990. His obituary read in part:

*A fixture for more than 40 years at area softball events as a player, manager and sponsor, Kondos was named Mr. Softball in North Dakota from 1932 to 1957 and was inducted into the North Dakota Softball Hall of Fame in 1963. He was a life member of the Hall of Fame Council.*

*From 1930 when he began pitching for [sponsor] Master Barbers, until 1971, the year he last sponsored the Shorty's Shoe Shop team in the Fargo-Moorhead association, he was a highly visible figure. His teams*

## The Gift of Membership

Many members have shared the gift of membership in the Clay County Historical Society, and our membership has now climbed to the highest levels in recent memory.

A gift membership is a great way to share your interest in Clay County history with the people you care about. It's a thoughtful gift that gives the entire year. It's a fun gift, because it "plugs them in" to all the Society's activities and the benefits of membership. A gift membership also doubles your good intentions: the recipient appreciates it, and the Society benefits as well.

The next time you want to send a gift for an important birthday, anniversary or special event, think about sharing a gift membership in Clay County Historical Society.

RMP's wife, Catherine enjoyed gardening, and with eleven children, she was kept busy. She and her husband were accustomed to visitors, and at one time entertained 28 unexpected guests. Cribbage was one of her passions. A family story says Catherine would take her cribbage board and "head into the woods looking for a game."

RMP's grandson, Raymond Gesell, (son of Cornelia and Charles Gesell) moved from Wisconsin to learn farming, and was known nationally for his experiments in color breeding and genetics in poultry, an interest shared by Cornelia's sister Emilie. Gesell's political service ranged from the Township Board to the County Planning Commission to the Minnesota State Legislature. He operated the farm into the 1970s.

Catherine died in 1899 in St. Paul. Randolph died September 11, 1911 in Moorhead. Both are buried in Prairie Home Cemetery in Moorhead.

*won state championships in 1951, 1952 and 1955 and also won five Red River Valley Tournament titles.*

The Clay County Historical Society is honored to have the large collection of Shorty's softball, basketball and bowling trophies as well as clothing, scrapbooks, documents, photos and other items from his long sponsorship of sports. Included in the collection are player Tom "Bus" Carney's pitcher's shoes (currently displayed in the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary exhibit), a catcher's mask and a rail made of crack [cracked] bats. Carney's shoes were mended many times by Shorty himself.

Sources include: short softball history by George "Shorty" Kondos - January 1986, *Sabin Minnesota Centennial*, 1981; *50 Years of Softball, A History of the Red River Softball Tournament*, 1977; Clay County newspapers.

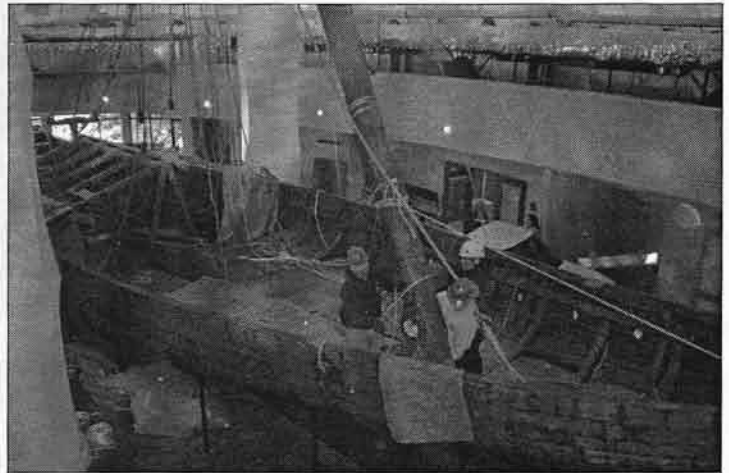


## Hjemkomst Center roof replacement construction completed: Ship Gallery reopens!

Replacement of the fabric roof at the City of Moorhead's Hjemkomst Center is now mostly complete! Only a few finishing touches remain, such as some painting and re-installation of interpretive display features, and the Hjemkomst Ship and gallery area surrounding it are again open for viewing and tours.

The enormous mast of the ship was raised January 29, and the sail will be raised May 11, in a fundraiser for the Heritage Hjemkomst Interpretive Center (HHIC). A special grand re-opening of the ship gallery for this spring is also being planned.

So, take advantage of your CCHS membership benefit of \$1 discount on HHIC admission to visit and see the fresh look of the new roof!



City of Moorhead staff work to put the Hjemkomst's mast in place

## Area students help to jump-start conservation at Probstfield Living History Farm

The Probstfield Farm Living History Foundation has made a determined effort this late autumn to make its mission of conserving and interpreting the heritage of the R.M. Probstfield family farm a permanent feature of the Fargo-Moorhead community. Not only did it hire an Executive Director, Larry Largent Jr., but also involved over 60 students from Concordia College in its efforts with the documentation and demolition of two dilapidated structures on the farm.

For the past 20 years the Probstfield Family Farm-house has been listed on the National Register of Historic Places. In order to ensure that the rest of the farm site is preserved for historic research and community enjoyment, the foundation is seeking Historic Landscape designation for the entire site. The foundation has contracted with a consultant to complete the registry application. A key step in doing so was to determine which buildings were no longer significant to the historical interpretation of the farm. Of the site's 15 buildings, three, including two poultry houses and a shed, were slated for demolition.



In two weekends, over 60 students from Concordia College took part in the demolition and cleanup at the farm. Two poultry houses on the farm presented the greatest opportunity for student involvement. Both structures were used to house poultry for the Probstfield family as late as the 1950s, but had come into such disrepair that they presented a hazard for site visitors. Jump-starting the Historic Landscape Application process, students documented the two poultry houses prior to demolition. Students also helped clear the farm site of debris, further facilitating the landscape registration. Such work is part of the foundation's long-term goal of making the site a publicly accessible Living History Farm.

Future restoration of the farm will enhance its capacity to serve as an extended classroom for area schools. A Historic Structures Report will be conducted on the site's largest barn which offers the greatest possibility for community programming at the site in the near future. The report will guide the foundation in the restoration and preservation of the barn. The project has been funded in part through the Minnesota Historical Society's Grants-in-Aid Program.

The Probstfield family farm offers the community a unique experience of area history. The help of area students and volunteers this past autumn has ensured that this history will be preserved for the rest of the community to appreciate. For more information on the efforts of the Probstfield Farm Living History Foundation or the farm site itself please contact Larry Largent Jr. at [lwlargen@cord.edu](mailto:lwlargen@cord.edu) or write us at PO Box 412, Moorhead MN 56561-0412.

## Heritage Members and Sponsors

Please help us thank these business members for supporting the Clay County Historical Society by patronizing them with your business:

### **PATRIARCH (\$500+)**

City of Barnesville  
CM Associates, Richard T. McMurray,  
Annandale, VA

### **SETTLER (\$200-\$499)**

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Veterans of Foreign War, Post 1223

The number of members in the following categories continues to grow! Thank you to all of our wonderful members for your tremendous support.

### **Individual Patron (\$500+)**

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### **Individual Settler (\$200-\$499)**

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Chris & Ellen Velline  
Dale D. White  
Dick & Kathy Zaylskie  
Dave & Carol Zielinski



## New and Renewed Memberships

CCHS extends a special thank you to the following individuals who renewed or upgraded their memberships or became new members in November and December:

### NEW MEMBERS

Greg & Sherrie Berg, Barnesville  
 \*Helen Brakke, Fargo  
 Nancy Johnson, Afton, MN  
 \*Shelley Maattala, Grand Forks, ND  
 \*James Odegaard, Hawley  
 Bob & Helen Olson, Hawley  
 \*James & Stephanie Quinnild, Prior Lake, MN  
 \*Paul & Carol Quinnild, Barnesville  
 \*Brian P. Thysell, Mill Valley, CA  
 \*John P. Thysell, Long Lake, MN  
 \*Steven V. Thysell, Plymouth, MN  
 Stephen Wold, Moorhead  
 \*Gift Memberships

### UPGRADES

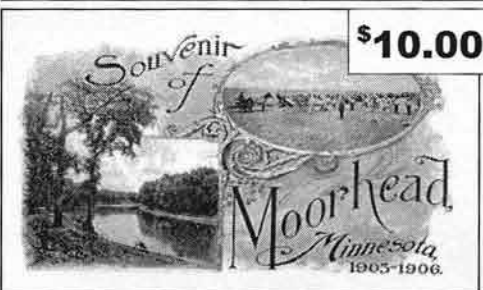
City of Barnesville  
 Eventide, Moorhead  
 Michael & Kathy Farrell, Barnesville  
 First National Bank of Hawley

Moorhead Midday Central Lions  
 Wright Funeral Home, Moorhead  
 Richard T. McMurray (C. M. Associates), Annandale, VA  
 Lloyd Gunderson, Moorhead

### RENEWALS

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 Rod & Audrey Angstman, Moorhead  
 Warren Brendemuhl, Moorhead  
 Keith & Michelle Coalwell, Dilworth  
 Vincent & Jean Dolva, Hawley  
 Donna Dosland, Ponsford, MN  
 John & Audrey Elton, Hawley  
 Burnice Everson, Hawley  
 Lori & Bob Feigum, Moorhead  
 Michael France, St. Pete Beach, FL  
 Ruth Franzen, Fargo  
 Marion Gee, Fargo  
 Hazel Haarstad, Detroit Lakes  
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 Waldo E. Hatledal, Hawley  
 Vincent & Shirley Haugen, Detroit Lakes

City of Hawley  
 Helen M. Hedelund, Moorhead  
 Evelyn Keeping Hansen, Hawley  
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 Gary & Yvonne Scheer, Saginaw, MN  
 Fern Schellack, Moorhead  
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 Barry & Renee Steen, Moorhead  
 Jim Steen, Moorhead  
 Shirley Stelter, Moorhead  
 Marge Stoa, Fargo  
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 Vivian Wensel, Moorhead  
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 Deloris Zwack-Mellon, Apple Valley



## Great Gifts at CCHS!

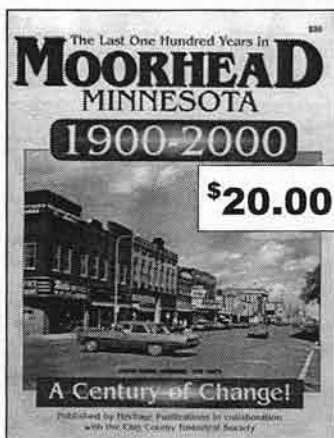
Remember to check the Clay County Historical Society for that special person on your gift list this year!

We have several great books plus acid-free supplies for protecting your treasured family heirlooms and documents.

Books include:

|   |         |
|---|---------|
| <i>Souvenir of Moorhead, 1905-1906, 52 p.</i>                                   | \$10.00 |
| <i>Moorhead, 1900-2000: A Century of Change, 184 p.</i>                         | \$20.00 |
| <i>Fargo, ND, From Frontier Village to All America City, 1875-2000, 168 pp.</i> | \$20.00 |

Shop today at the Clay County Museum & Archives in the Hjemkomst Center, 202 1st Avenue North, Moorhead, or send your check or money order with the order form below to CCHS, PO Box 501, Moorhead, MN 56561.



Ship To:

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# Annual Fund Drive Success!

Our third Annual Fund Drive was conducted in December, and we have many of you to thank! We have been holding annual fund drives to help with our general annual operating expenses, and you have all been very generous. We would like to recognize those who contributed to the success of the 2006 fund drive by listing your names below. Several donors wish to remain anonymous.

Throughout 2007 we will continue to collect contributions to meet the \$75,000 goal for our Diamond Jubilee Fund Drive! Donations may be made to any of the five collections funds (Collections & Archives, Buffalo Fire Engine, Bergquist Cabin, District 3 School, and Yankee Cemetery) and for 75th Anniversary events and projects.

## Annual Fund Drive Contributors

### Anonymous

Ken Skjegstad  
Mikkelsen Insurance  
Robert & Dorothy Belsly  
Mark Chekola  
Helen Danielson  
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the Jubilee  
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## Preserving our Past, Funding our Future Diamond Jubilee Fund Drive - \$75,000 for the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary!

### ***Become a Collections Steward!***

| Level          | Amount   | Benefits   |
|----------------|----------|--|
| Penny Campaign | \$7.50   | Vintage Photos of Rural Life Postcard Book       |
| Supporter      | \$75     | Souvenir of Moorhead 1905-1906 Book              |
| Donor          | \$250    | Frameable 8"x10" Historic Photo of CCHS Property |
| Sponsor        | \$1,000+ | Artist's Print of Clay County Landscape          |

*I wish my contribution to be dedicated toward a Collections Fund and/or 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Projects:*

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 75 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary Projects | <input type="checkbox"/> Collections: Archives & Artifacts   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1870s Pioneer Bergquist Cabin         | <input type="checkbox"/> 1895 District No. 3 Woodland School |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1936 Buffalo Fire Truck               | <input type="checkbox"/> 1875 Parke Township Yankee Cemetery |

### ***Become a Member/Renew Your Membership!***

| Level (please check one) | Amount  | Benefits   |
|--------------------------|---------|--|
| Pioneer Individual       | \$25    | Bi-Monthly Newsletter<br>Access to CCHS History Tours<br>Free/Discounted Admission to CCHS Programs/Events<br>50% Discount on \$20 Per Hour Archival Research Fee<br>\$1 Off Admission to Heritage Hjemkomst Interpretive Center |
| Pioneer Family           | \$40    | All of the Above   |
| Explorer                 | \$50    | All of the Above PLUS<br>25% Discount on Reproductions of Archival Photos<br>25% Discount on Acid-Free Supplies  |
| Trailblazer              | \$100   | All of the Above PLUS<br>Frameable Membership Certificate  |
| Settler                  | \$200   | All of the Above PLUS<br>Four Tickets to Heritage Hjemkomst Interpretive Center<br>One Hour of Free Archival Research  |
| Patriarch                | \$500   | All of the Above PLUS<br>Frameable 8"x10" reproduction of Historic Photo of Choice<br>Two Complimentary Tickets to the CCHS Annual Meeting   |
| Patron                   | \$5,000 | 10-Year Membership – All of the Above!   |

*Businesses are eligible for Explorer, Trailblazer, Settler, Patriarch and Patron Memberships*

### ***Contribute an Item for the Silent Auction October***

| Item | Value (\$25+) | Description |
|------|---------------|-------------|
|      |               |             |

### ***I will support Clay County Historical Society's \$75,000 Goal!***

*Please complete the following, enclose your check payable to "Clay County Historical Society", and send to: CCHS, PO Box 501, Moorhead MN 56561*

Amount \$ \_\_\_\_\_

*I wish my gift to be anonymous:* ☐ Yes

Name (for membership card) \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Name (for business) \_\_\_\_\_

Children's Names (for families) \_\_\_\_\_

Address/City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

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***Your generosity is greatly appreciated. Thank you for helping us to reach our \$75,000 Goal!***

The Clay County Historical Society is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization supported by members, the Clay County Commission, sponsors and grants. Contributions to the Clay County Historical Society are tax-deductible to the full extent of the law.

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HISTORICAL  
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Moorhead MN 56561  
Phone: 218-299-5520  
www.info.co.clay.mn.us/history



## Get your 75th Anniversary T-shirt!

Help promote the Clay County Historical Society and spread the word about our Diamond Jubilee with this attractive, 100% cotton white t-shirt!

The front design is a rich purple and gold screen print, and the back of the shirt sports our catch phrase, "What Is It?"

Only \$10 at the Clay County Museum!  
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Hjemkomst Center  
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