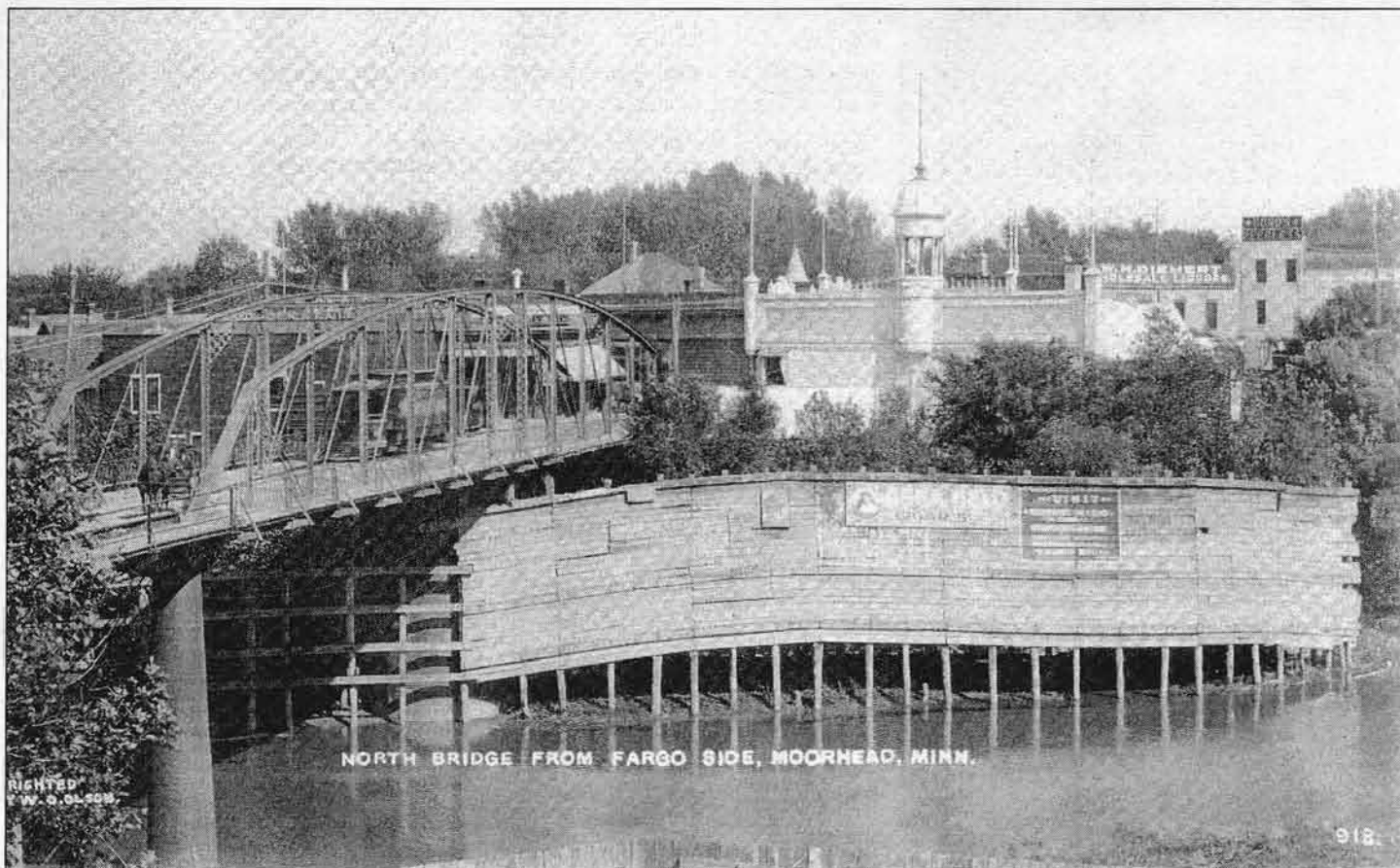


# Clay County Historical Society

Volume XXXI No. 1

Clay County Historical Society Newsletter

January/February 2008



North Bridge from Fargo, about 1910. The use of this bridge by the Fargo Moorhead Electric Street Railway Company caused controversy one hundred years ago. Note the streetcar and the horse and wagon on the bridge and the concrete-filled steel pier supporting the bridge. The wall-like construction at right was to protect the pier from steamboats and ice breaking up in the spring. CCHS Collections.

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

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# From the Director

By Lisa Vedaa, CCHS Director

## 75th Anniversary Celebration Review



On behalf of the Board of Directors and Staff of CCHS, I would like to thank YOU for helping to make our 75th Anniversary celebration a success! It seems we are always thanking our members and supporters for something in our newsletter, which is great because it means you are supporting the work we do here for you—preserving the history of Clay County, creating educational exhibits, and providing interesting and informative programs.

I'd like to provide a review of our 75th Anniversary Celebration here to let you know how we did. We began the year-long celebration of CCHS' 75th Anniversary on October 5, 2006 with a great crowd at our Kickoff Reception and Grand Opening of the *Celebrating 75 Years of Collecting* exhibit. We continued with our Diamond Jubilee Fund Drive and Raffle, hosted expert Harry Rinker for an Antiques Appraisal Clinic, participated in summer community events, and held our own events such as our annual Bergquist Cabin Open House, the Old-Fashioned Ice Cream Social at the Clay County Fair, the Spelling Bee at the District 3 School Reunion, our Clay County History Bus Tour, and our final celebration event, the Diamond Jubilee Gala and Silent Auction October 6, 2007.

The Diamond Jubilee Fund Drive as a whole fell short of our \$75,000 goal, but this was the first major fund drive of this type that we have done and we did come out ahead overall of our expenses for the celebration events and got a modest start for all of the collections funds we set out to establish. The fund drive was composed of several fundraisers: the donation form in the September/October 2006 Diamond Jubilee kickoff newsletter, the change-collecting campaign, the fund drive for the Buffalo Fire Engine, the Diamond Jubilee Raffle, the fall 2007 donation request, and the Silent Auction at the Diamond Jubilee Gala. A total of over \$15,400 was raised in the fund drive, \$3,870 of which was cash sponsorships from businesses and individuals for anniversary events, \$2,245 from new memberships (not including almost \$1,500 from nearly 100 new members during the Harry

Rinker Appraisal Clinic!), over \$5,000 for general support, \$2,940 for the Buffalo Fire Engine and a total of \$725 for the other collections funds: Bergquist Cabin, District 3 School, Yankee Cemetery, and Collections and Archives. We may have fallen short of our monetary goal, but we gained so much more in building capacity for support with public relations and visibility for CCHS, and most of all, celebrating this important milestone, our 75th Anniversary!

Help us continue to improve our work in the next 75 years - We look forward to seeing you at our upcoming events: our *Keep in Touch* Exhibit Grand Opening, 2008 Annual Meeting, Bergquist Cabin Open House and more!

Note: I personally apologize for the delay in the distribution of our January/February Newsletter. We will try harder for the March/April!

**Clay County Museum Hours: 10-5 Monday-Saturday, 10-9 Tuesday, 12-5 Sunday**

**Archives Hours: 10-5 Monday-Friday, 10-9 Tuesday**

**Hjemkomst Center, 202 1st Avenue North, Moorhead, MN ♦ FREE ADMISSION**

# Keep In Touch exhibit examines communications technologies

CCHS Staffers have been working on a brand new exhibit set to open March 14! *Keep in Touch*, an exhibit about the changes in communications technologies, will replace the *Celebrating 75 Years of Collecting* exhibit. *Keeping in Touch: 125 Years of Communication* was the title of an earlier exhibit displayed in the hall cases across from the Clay County Museum in 2000.

Major changes in how we "keep in touch" have occurred in the last century with telephone, radio and television, but advances in communications technologies have really exploded in the last 25 years with digital technology. *Keep in Touch* expands on the topics such as postal service, newspapers, telegraph, telephone, radio, and television, and brings the examination of communications technologies up to how the iPhone and other current top-of-the-line cell phones are combining the variety of methods for communicating into one tool.

From handwritten messages and the letters from the KVOX radio station sign...to a Commodore computer and a television antenna from the rooftop of a Moorhead home, *Keep in Touch* has artifacts from every generation of communications advancements. See how residents of Clay County have adjusted to shifts in communications trends and spark your memories viewing communications-related artifacts from the Clay County Historical Society's collections.

You can get your "hands on" technology in the interactive sections of the exhibit! Try your fingers on the manual typewriter, hear vintage radio broadcasts of international events, tell us what you think needs to be the next hot item in communications trends!

*Keep in Touch* will run through February 2009.

See the *Keep in Touch* exhibit to see what this photo is all about!



## Attend the Grand Opening!

**Thursday, March 13**  
**5:00–7:00pm**

**5:00–6:00 Special Postal Cancellations**  
**by a Moorhead Post Office Clerk**  
**5:30 Ribbon-cutting**  
**6:00 Guest Speaker Al Aamodt**

Light Hors d'oeuvres  
Coffee and punch

**Tickets: \$4 CCHS Members**  
**\$6 non-members**

Available Monday–Friday at CCHS Office,  
or at the door on March 13

## Philatelist Alert!

### Special Postal Cancellation for *Keep in Touch* exhibit

In honor of the *Keep in Touch* exhibit, a special cancellation stamp has been designed for use by the Moorhead Post Office on your special letter, package or postcard! A Moorhead Post Office clerk will be available at the *Keep in Touch* Grand Opening March 13, 5:00–6:00pm to stamp the cancellation on your postcards and letters, and the cancellation will be available until May 9 at the Moorhead Post Office.

Special postcards with the *Keep in Touch* logo for use with the cancellation will be available for \$1.00 at the Grand Opening, plus \$.24 for a postcard stamp. Get your special souvenir at the *Keep in Touch* Exhibit Grand Opening March 13, or ask for this special cancellation at the Moorhead Post Office clerk windows starting March 14.

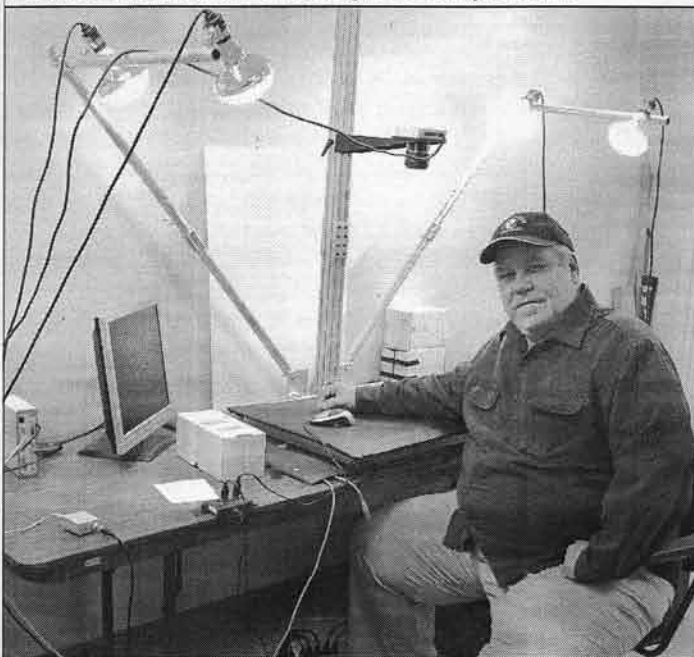


## Genealogical Society of Utah Digitizing Materials

About a year ago Michael Hanson of the Genealogical Society of Utah, an arm of the Latter Day Saints' Church, shot digital photos of several CCHS collections with genealogical value, including obituary and biography files, two series of World War II-vintage veterans' service cards, and Works Progress Administration (WPA) interviews done with early county residents in the 1930s. CCHS received DVDs containing the copies to do with as we wish. Copies are also available for use by researchers at the Church's massive genealogical library in Salt Lake City.

Mike is now back with his sophisticated camera apparatus to copy more materials. CCHS has served as an intermediary with the Clay County Auditor's Office to arrange copying of Clay County school census records dating from 1910 to the early 1960s. (Our thanks to Lori Johnson and Nanci Krenelka of the Auditor's Office for their help in making this possible!) He is also looking at shooting an unusual recent addition, a large group of newspaper clippings about clown and other circus performers compiled by the late Dr. Robert Loeffler. The retired Concordia Biology instructor and former director of the Comstock House state historic site was also a circus fan. His work documents a group of people who, because of their transient lifestyle are hard for genealogists to track. They will be an important addition to the Genealogical Society's collection.

Michael Hanson of the Genealogical Society of Utah.



## *Moving? Please let us know!*

Some of our members like to enjoy warmer weather in the commonly cold winter months by moving south during this time. Even if you are not a "snow bird" and are just moving to a different address, please include us in your change of address notifications.



Our newsletter is sent at a non-profit bulk rate, and cannot be forwarded, nor can it be held when you are temporarily away. You might have noticed a line above your address label that says "Address Service Requested." This is a service provided by the P.O. that helps us keep track of you if you move, but it is costly.

Please help the historical society reserve our funds for educational exhibits and programs, and assure that you get your CCHS newsletters, by notifying us of your new or winter address or letting us know to suspend mailing your newsletter if you are going to be away for a long period. Your help is appreciated!

## *Larry Jacobson Wins Hansel Art Print*

In 2006, CCHS took on a challenge to increase our membership from 500 to 750 in honor of our 75th Anniversary in 2007. Each new member and each current member who recruited a new member would have their name entered in a drawing for *Complete Serenity*, a Jim Hansel print. We were very close to reaching our goal, with almost 700 members by the end of December 2007!

Congratulations to Larry Jacobson of Hitterdal, the lucky winner of the Jim Hansel picture!

Membership dues are a vital source of our operating income. We will continue our effort to achieve the goal of increasing our membership, and once we achieve it, will set another goal. There is a saying—Don't give up the goal, just change the deadline! Thanks to all the new members and current members who helped us increase CCHS membership by over 35%!

## Minnesota celebrates 150th Anniversary of Statehood — Can you say Sesquicentennial?

On May 11, 2008, Minnesota will reach its 150th anniversary as the 32nd state in the United States of America. Beginning in January 2008, the Sesquicentennial will be a yearlong, statewide commemoration and a catalyst, to learn from our past and connect all of us as Minnesotans in creating a thriving, innovative future.

The Sesquicentennial Commission was created by legislation in 2005. Eight members are legislators, nine members from all over the State are appointed by the Governor. The Commission members were appointed in 2006 and work began in earnest in 2007. Representative Morrie Lanning from Moorhead is one of the Commission members.

The mission of the Minnesota Sesquicentennial Commission is to: Plan, promote, and oversee celebrations to recognize Minnesota's 150th anniversary of statehood. The Minnesota Sesquicentennial Commission is committed to raising awareness and educating Minnesotans about our past, recognizing the indigenous people of Minnesota, and learning from complex and diverse cultures that have come and continue to come to Minnesota.

Minnesota's Sesquicentennial is a once in a lifetime event. *The Star of the North Will Always Shine Brightly* is one of the



Sesquicentennial mottoes. As StarTribune columnist Lori Sturdevant wrote in October, 2007, "*There's likely no better opportunity for some serious truth-telling about early Minnesota than the yearlong history lesson this state is about to commence.*"

*"The lesson should reveal this truth: Minnesotans share a place, a climate, a government. But they do not share one culture. They never did. And this state's*

*success -- maybe now more than ever -- depends on its people's ability to respect cultures other than their own and peacefully resolve conflict between cultures."*

Statehood Week Festivities, May 11 – 18, include a Statehood Commemoration Ceremony in St. Paul May 11, Capital for a Day events in various communities across Minnesota, and the Statehood Festival & Expo on May 17 & 18 at the State Capital Grounds in St. Paul.

Representatives from history and culture-related organizations in Clay County have also been meeting to see how the Sesquicentennial can be celebrated in Clay County. A comprehensive calendar of these organizations' events will be coming out later this spring.

For more information about the Sesquicentennial visit the Sesquicentennial website at [www.mn150years.org](http://www.mn150years.org).

## CCHS Honors MN150 at Annual Meeting May 7

The Clay County Historical Society will honor Minnesota's 150th Anniversary of Statehood at our Annual Meeting at the Hjemkomst Center on the evening of Wednesday, May 7, by hosting Minnesota Historical Society Executive Director, Nina Archabal.

Archabal has been the Executive Director of the Minnesota Historical Society and State Historic Preservation Officer since 1987. She currently serves on a number of governing boards including the Smithsonian Council; the Hill Museum and Monastic Library at St. John's University; the St. Paul Riverfront Corporation; the Alliss Educational Foundation; and currently serves as vice-chair of the United States Committee of the International Council of Museums. She chairs the visiting committee for the Peabody Museum at Harvard University and the St. Anthony Falls Heritage Board, and serves on the visiting committees for Longwood Gardens and the Arnold Arboretum. Archabal served as an overseer of Harvard College, chair of the board of the American Association of Museums and has been a trustee of the American Folklife Center in the Library of Congress. She also served on the National Council on the Humanities.

In 1997, President Clinton awarded Archabal the National Humanities Medal. In 2001, she received the Outstanding Alumni Achievement Award from the University of Minnesota, and an Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters from Carleton College in 2002. In April 2006, she received the Colman Barry Award for distinguished contributions to religion and Society from St. John's University. In 2007, she received the President's Award from the National Trust for Historic Preservation for her leadership in the historic preservation movement.

Archabal holds a bachelor's degree cum laude and a master of arts in teaching from Harvard University. She holds a Ph.D. from the University of Minnesota.

More information about the 2007 Annual Meeting will be available in the March/April issue of the Newsletter.



Nina Archabal

## Outreach Displays

	<u>Open</u>	<u>Close</u>
Barnesville Public Library	March	May
Hawley Public Library	March	May
Moorhead Public Library	March	May
Fargo CVB	May	October

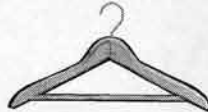
Celebrate the MINNESOTA STATE SESQUICENTENNIAL at the Hawley Public Library. Our state celebrated its centennial 1958. See some souvenirs of the celebrations plus a few fun facts from that event. The official date for statehood was May 11, 1858.



The Moorhead Public Library displays what was HIDDEN FROM VIEW. Come and see items from a variety of time capsules: Clay County Courthouse vault, Hawley 1919 High School cornerstone, Bethesda Church (Moorhead) cornerstone, and the Glyndon Bicentennial. The items have an interesting story. How and when were they discovered? See also a few items from two

"behind-the wall" collections from the Keeping/Dock house in Hawley and the former Stahl house in Barnesville. What was hidden there? Dates in the display range from the late 1880s to the 1970s.

Barnesville Public Library has COAT HANGERS: THE GOOD, THE BAD & THE REASONS. Patrons get the inside story on coat hangers in this display. Learn about the history of the wire hanger. Find out what is a "good" hanger and why there are "bad" ones.



Convention and Visitors' Bureau display case by I-94 in Fargo is closed until May. The theme for the summer 2008 display honors the Minnesota State Sesquicentennial.

## IN-HOUSE DISPLAYS

The east hall case will feature flags from different countries until replaced by a display for the Celtic Festival March 15. Currently, the case is used for an Open Storage display of new acquisitions.

\*Dates and topics are subject to change

## Artifacts & Donors

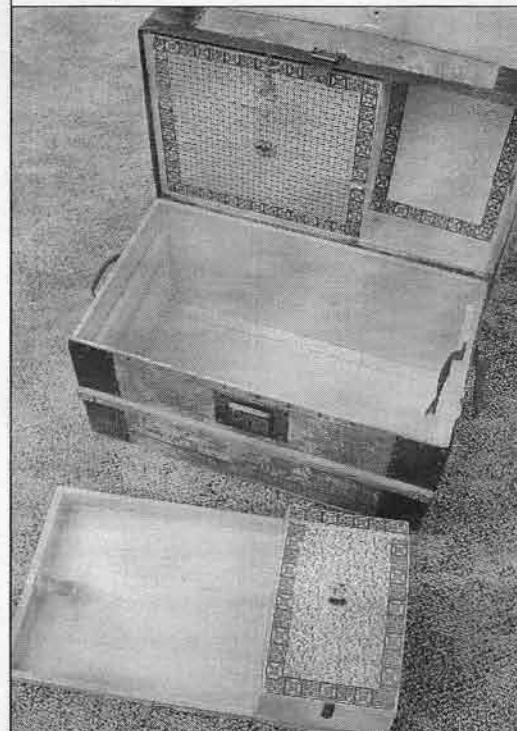
### November and December 2007

#### Donors:

Moorhead: Bruce & Kathy Carlson, Cassandra Gilbert Braseth, Alvin Swanson  
 Fargo, ND: Gloria Peihl  
 Bellingham, WA: Burton Grover  
 Milwaukee, WI: Milwaukee Public Library

**Artifacts:** a photo of the Great Northern Railroad single track, swing bridge between Moorhead and Fargo, post-construction in 1896; an envelope with contents marked "save till after the war for charles:" re: Charles Gilbert of Dilworth with draft board service docs and photos; one bound 3-ring volume "Oakmound Church Secretary's Book" circa 1977-2002; a Crystal Sugar 2007 Harvest Employee Handbook, Beet Harvest Information recording card, Trader & Trapper matchbook; a cast iron door stop with molded figure of a clown [resembles Tonio of Pagliacci] made at the Moorhead foundry's second location; Evelyn Grover's doll trunk,\* four (4) doll quilts, pillow case & one carved piece of jade.

\*The doll trunk belonged to Evelyn Grover (1896 - 1975) who assembled a collection of objects during her childhood.



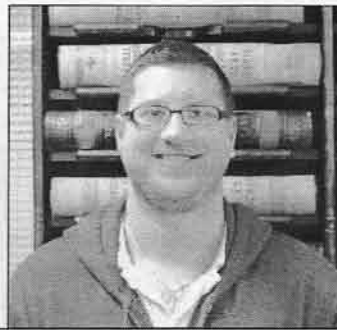
These items were displayed in our *Celebrating 75 Years of Collecting* exhibit. The original contents of the doll trunk were donated in 1992.

## Appreciation to Annual Fund Drive Donors

We would like to extend special thanks to those individuals who contributed to our 2007 Annual Fund Drive. \$4,600 was donated! These much-needed funds are used for general operating expenses which include exhibit production, materials for programs and special events, and office expenses such as postage and equipment.

Anonymous

Norman B. Akesson, Davis, CA  
 Rev. Robert L. and Selma B. Anderson, Moorhead  
 Bob and Lynda Backman, Moorhead  
 Ken and Jan Bauer, Barnesville  
 Robert and Dorothy Belsly, Moorhead  
 Mrs. Helen D. Benson, Moorhead  
 Rev. and Mrs. Olaf Cartford, Moorhead  
 Leland and Dorothy Delger, Fargo  
 Roland and Beth Dille, Moorhead  
 John and Audrey Elton, Hawley  
 Duane and Joan Erickson, Moorhead  
 Jon and Phyllis Evert, Moorhead  
 Dorothy Garven, Los Angeles, CA  
 Janet Gorman, Moorhead  
 Rose M. Gytri, Fargo  
 Del and Rhoda Hansen, Moorhead  
 Fred and Bette Haring, Lake Park  
 Bob and Jan Hillier, Moorhead  
 Arthur Holmgren, Huntsville, AL  
 Ken and Jeanette Just, Barnesville  
 Korsmo Funeral Service, Moorhead  
 Francis Kukowski, Georgetown



Kurt Reuther, CCHS Intern

Larry and Marcella MacLeod, Moorhead  
 Matt and Zona Mathison, Moorhead  
 Dan and Faith Meurrens, Moorhead  
 Gail and Bob Monson, Fargo  
 Robert and JoAnn Nyquist, Moorhead  
 Doris Olich, Moorhead  
 Ronald Olin, Fargo  
 Anne L. Olsgaard, Moorhead  
 Esther O. Olson, Moorhead  
 Don and Kathy Pingree, Georgetown  
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 State Bank and Trust of Moorhead  
 Roger and Joan Stenerson, Glyndon  
 Kelly Wambach, Moorhead  
 Howard and Marcella Wergeland, Moorhead  
 Dale D. White, Moorhead  
 Olaf R. and Rhoda E. Wicker, Hawley

## MSUM Student completes internship at CCHS

My name is Kurt Reuther. I am attending Minnesota State University Moorhead for a Bachelor Degree in History. I grew up in a little town in North Dakota called Center which is near Bismarck. I graduated from Center High School and moved down to the Fargo-Moorhead area. The reason I am obtaining a degree in History is because I have always enjoyed learning about past events and also I believe it's very important to learn because it can produce a better future for the people. A History Degree is very open and can be used in many different areas such as teaching, politics, government, or doing research for Historical Societies.

I started an internship at Clay County Historical Society in the Fall Semester of '07. I enjoyed doing research for CCHS because they have excellent resources and an overwhelming wealth of knowledge. The staff at CCHS are very educated and they all excel in their fields. The people of Clay County can also enjoy looking up information from these varieties of resources and be helped by the great staff.

As I worked at CCHS I was able to research many different and interesting developments. The first research project my Supervisor Mark Peihl had me look into was the formation of

Dilworth, through the Railroads which started most of the developments in surrounding towns. Other research I was able to do was migration patterns during the depression era of the 1930s and the rise of radios and automobiles in Clay County.

One of my favorite projects Mark had me start (that most people of the County and the town itself didn't know) was the separation of Barnesville in the early part of the 1880s. The town of Barnesville split for several years and were known as "New Barnesville" and "Barnesville." The town eventually was united back into one around 1886, but the story of how they were split to how they came back together was very interesting. The town went under several transitions during this time and was very important part to its development which someday people should look upon.

I want to thank the staff members of CCHS for giving me such a great experience and new form of appreciation for the County I have been living in for an important part of my life. The skills and tools that I obtained from this experience will help me excel in the field I will soon be entering. After I graduate from MSUM I plan on going to receive my Masters in History and maybe one day a Doctorate.

# A Bridge That Might

By Mark Peihl, Archivist

Regular readers of this space may recall an article we published in 1991 regarding the Fargo and Moorhead Electric Street Railway, the streetcar system which predated our present-day bus mass transit system. Recently, CCHS discovered some new insights into its operation and we'd like to share them with you.

In researching local history you never know where your next lead might come from or where it might take you. One day last fall Liz Lynch of the Lake Agassiz Regional Library stopped by with an envelope from the Milwaukee Public Library. The Wisconsin folks had culled from their collections and sent LARL an illustration from an unidentified publication showing a bridge. It was marked on the back in pencil, "Single Track Swing Bridge on Gt Northern at Moorhead, Minn." Curiously, the picture shows the bridge slightly turned, as if on a turntable. On top is a bridge plaque reading "1896," presumably the year of construction.

We were excited. If it was indeed the Moorhead Great Northern Railway bridge it was quite a find. We had never seen a photo of a local bridge turned, though we knew that all did so in the 1880s to allow steamboats to pass.

From 1872 until 1884 the only substantial bridges across the Red at Moorhead were railroad spans. The Northern Pacific Railway built their bridge in Spring 1872 between the present day Main Avenue and Center Avenue bridges. The St. Paul, Minneapolis and Manitoba Railway (later the Great Northern) built across the Red northeast of where the Hjemkomst Center is now in 1880-1881.

Fargo and Moorhead argued for 12 years about where to build a wagon bridge and who would pay for it. Some folks wanted a bridge on the south side of the downtowns. Others preferred one on the north side. Rickety, temporary spans provided transport for wagons, but had to be torn out each spring before the year's flood. In 1883, the cities compromised and built two bridges. The "South Bridge" went up where the new Main Avenue bridge stands today. The "North Bridge" crossed the Red from Fargo's NP Avenue to the northeast to a street variously called 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue North or Ridge Avenue. The roadway is no longer there. American Crystal Sugar's downtown headquarters, across from the Hjemkomst Center, now sits where the bridge entered Moorhead. In 1883/1884, the NP and GNRys also rebuilt their bridges.

Steamboats still plied the muddy waters of the Red out of Fargo Moorhead in 1884. The Army Corps of Engineers required the railroads and the cities to install turning devices on

the bridges to allow the passage of the steamboat's tall smoke stacks. In each case the turning center span of the bridge rested on a round pier in the river. The railroad footings were both made from Minnesota Kettle River sandstone and still stand in the Red. Steel cased concrete piers supported the wagon bridges. A rack gear encircled the top of each pier. A pinion gear secured to the span engaged the rack. When a steamboat needed to pass, a bridge tender or local policeman brought out a "key," a long iron pole with a wooden crossbar on the top. The tender inserted the key through a hole in the bridge deck and engaged the pinion gear. He then turned the key, moving the pinion gear around the top of the rack, and spun the center section of the bridge as if it were on a lazy susan. The devices cost over \$10,000 each. According to newspaper accounts, when built, the spans "were so well balanced that a small child would have no trouble in turning them."

However, within a few years steamboats quit running out of Fargo Moorhead. By 1890 they were a thing of the past, doomed by the new, much faster railroad branch lines paralleling the Red. The turntables may have been used only a few dozen times. That's why photos of turned local bridges are so rare.

And why the railroad bridge illustration was so intriguing. It looked as if it might show our bridge looking toward Fargo. I wondered if the Great Northern span had been rebuilt in 1896. In the 1950s, longtime Moorhead resident James Fay wrote a column for the *Moorhead Daily News*. Jim used the old files of the paper to give a daily account of what was happening locally 20, 30, 50 years ago on that day. His descendents collected copies of his articles in scrapbooks, arranged by the last numeral of the year he was investigating (eg., 1891, 1901, 1911, etc). It's the closest thing we have to an index to the *News*. A quick check revealed that the GN had rebuilt the bridge in 1896. The Army Corps was apparently still insisting at that time that the River was navigable in Fargo-Moorhead.

When the GN and NP railways merged in the early 1970s to form Burlington Northern (now BNSF), they donated their records to the Minnesota Historical Society. Among the record series is the "Subject Files of the President" of each railroad. Railways are so pervasive in the upper midwest, the subject files touch on nearly every aspect of life and history in the area. They are goldmines of information. We have a microfilm index

Right: Blueprint plans for the proposed Scherzer Rolling Lift Bridge over the Red River for the Fargo Moorhead Street Railway, August 1910. The view is to the northwest looking down stream. Moorhead is on the right. The proposed bridge featured only one moveable section or "leaf" on the Moorhead end. Raising the leaf would open a section of the bridge 40 feet wide, plenty big enough for the steamboats operating out of Grand Forks at the time. Courtesy of Minnesota Historical Society.



# Have Been

to the files. I checked and found references to a long battle between the GNRy and the Army Corps of Engineers over bridges over the Red and other navigable streams. (I'll be scoping those files out next time I'm in St. Paul!)

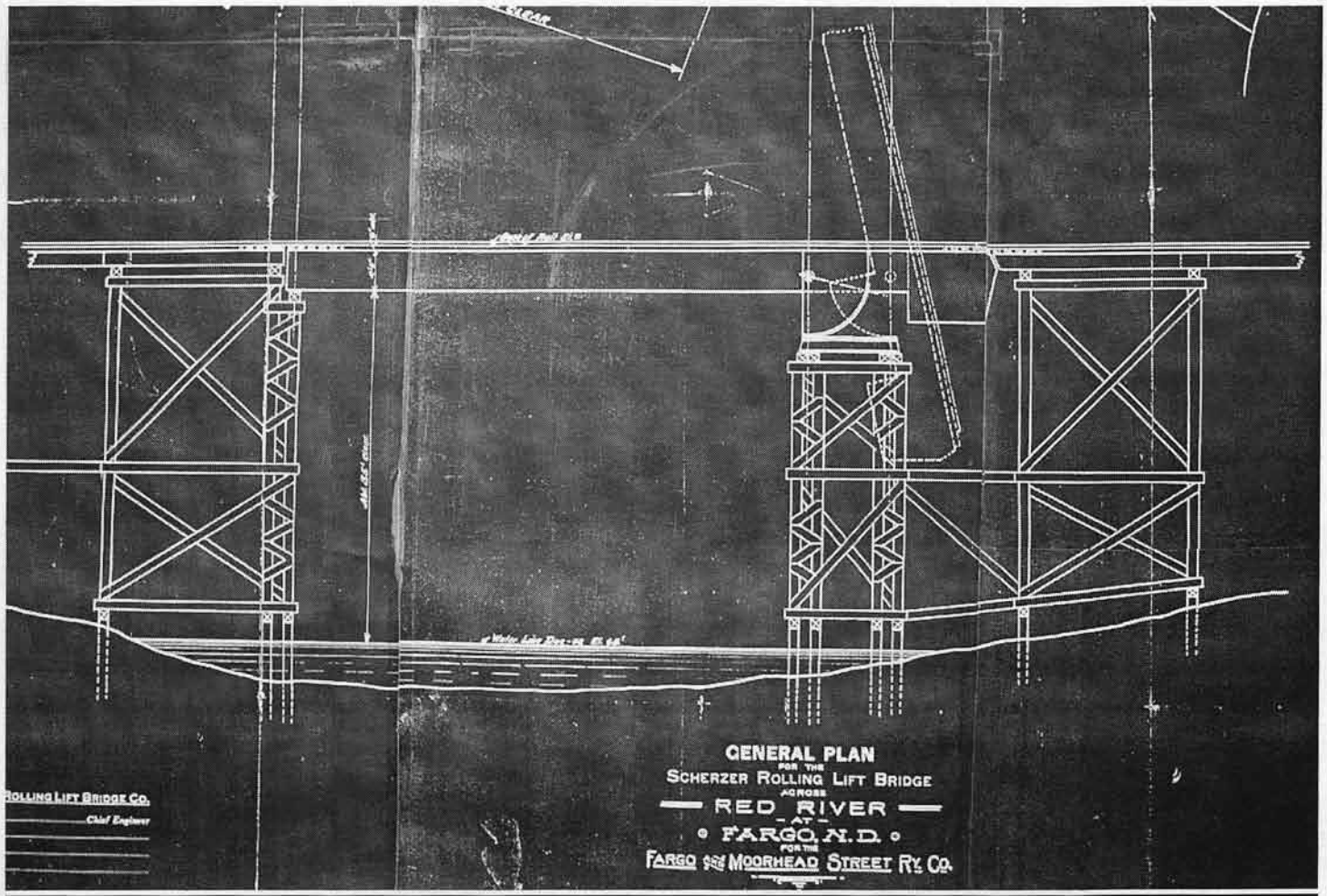
MHS also has some records from the St. Paul District of the Army Corps of Engineers. I checked the online finding aid to these papers and found a series, "Permit Files," containing drawings, correspondence and applications related to bridges. A couple of files included bridges on the Red. Though none mentioned the 1896 span, I was startled to find a file titled "4-123 Scherzer Rolling Lift Bridge across Red River at Fargo, N.D. for the Fargo and Moorhead Street Railway Company, 1910-1911."

I knew that when the Street Railway Company began operations in 1904 controversy surrounded the manner in which their cars would cross the river. But I hadn't investigated this fully. I contacted MHS and ordered photocopies of what was in the files. My research subject quickly changed to this proposed streetcar bridge.

The genesis of the Fargo and Moorhead Electric Street Railway Company was a painful birth. Much of the trouble revolved around bridges. In 1891, investors in a Fargo electric plant offered to build the twin towns an electrically-powered railroad to carry passengers on a loop from Broadway and Main Avenue in Fargo across the South Bridge to Moorhead's 4<sup>th</sup> Street, then north to Front Street. (Fargo's old Front Street is now Main Avenue. In Moorhead, Front Street was a block north. This confused folks, so in December 1922 Moorhead changed Front Street to Center Avenue.) Then east on Front to 9<sup>th</sup> Street, north to 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue North and back to Fargo via the North Bridge and NP Avenue.

Fargoans enthusiastically jumped aboard. But Moorheadites responded skeptically. Druggist Duncan MacNab told the *Moorhead Daily News*, "An electric railway on Front Street will ruin the street for business. Farmers will not dare to hitch their teams in front of the stores as they do now." Pioneer merchant James Sharp agreed: "We don't want the electric railway in Front Street and I don't know as we want it at all at present." But most arguments surrounded the bridges. Another pioneer, William H. Davy said, "The bridges will be made practically valueless if used by electric streetcars. There is not a horse in the two cities that could be made to face a car going over either bridge."

Continued next page...



## Bridge, cont. from page 9

The group shelved their plans. In April 1902, a Pennsylvania outfit tried again, offering a line to link the downtowns, but added branches to the Moorhead State Normal School (now MSUM), then sitting alone a mile out on the prairies southeast of downtown, and to the Clay County Courthouse, also remotely sited a half mile north of town. Again, Fargo embraced the plan but Moorhead remained cool. In Fargo the City Council (now Fargo has a Commission form of government) could say yes or no on a franchise to use the streets for a railway. But a new city charter in Moorhead mandated such a decision be voted on by the people. In August, the Fargoans okayed a franchise, apparently not much caring where or if the railway crossed over to their smaller neighbor.

A summer of negotiations yielded a proposed Moorhead franchise which included "Section 13. This ordinance to be void and all rights herein granted shall cease and be of no effect unless [the line]...shall enter the city of Moorhead by a [streetcar only] bridge crossing the Red River of the North at the west end of Front Street in said city." The Fargo end would terminate at NP Avenue. That's a long way to build a bridge and would have been very expensive. The company would also have to secure a right-of-way from the owner of the property on the Fargo end – the Northern Pacific Railway, another expensive proposition. The company received permission to build their line to 1<sup>st</sup> Street North, just short of the North Bridge. Some people wondered if this was a way to circumvent the Front Street bridge requirement and someday cross on the North Bridge. When queried about this, company Vice President F. B. Morrill assured the Council "that they had never had any other crossing in view except at Front Street."

The City Council set the vote for January 21, 1903. One month before the election, the Council met in closed session and amended Section 13 to say that the line "shall enter the City of Moorhead by a bridge crossing the Red River... at the west end of Front Street... provided the Northern Pacific Railway company will grant the right of way for that purpose... prior to the 15<sup>th</sup> day of January, 1903," an unlikely proposition. Some howled in protest but the deal was done. By that time most Moorheadites were ready for a streetcar line, wherever the crossing went. Voters approved the franchise by a whopping 453 to 85.

Construction began in spring but soon stopped as the Pennsylvanians ran into money problems. The whole thing nearly unraveled, but a group of Fargo investors, headed by attorney L. B. Hanna, took over the project. In September 1903 they proposed yet another franchise calling for no new bridge and the use of both wagon bridges for ten years. Fargo talked them into using just the North Bridge and approved the deal.

It was now up to Moorhead. On September 19, the City Council invited citizens to discuss the franchise and bridge issues. Again, William H. Davy expressed his opposition to granting the company the use of the North Bridge "except for a short period... to allow the building of a new [streetcar only] bridge." Allowing the use for ten years amounted to "practical confiscation of the bridges." Many others agreed. Company official W. A. Scott did not help his cause when, according to

the *Moorhead Daily News*, he "intimated that Moorhead seemed to prefer to stick to the 'kerosene lamp and tallow candle' way of living... He was a very pleasant old grandpa, however, and our citizens charitably allowed him to live on." In a show of hands 16 citizens opposed the company's use of the North Bridge at all, 17 would allow them its use for one year and only 3 were willing to give the company the full 10 years.

In another public meeting a few days later, L. B. Hanna made another offer. He requested the use of the North Bridge through the next two sessions of the U.S. Congress. A movement was afoot in Congress to declare the Red River not navigable south of the mouth of the Sheyenne River. This would eliminate the need for a swinging bridge and reduce its estimated cost of \$25,000 (more like \$570,000 today) by half. The sessions would end by August 1, 1906. The City Council agreed and added another six months if the bridge was under construction by August 1, 1906, pushing the completion date out to February 1, 1907. But they also stipulated that if the streetcar-only bridge was not finished by that time the whole franchise would be null and void. The company balked, saying there was no way they could sell bonds for construction with that possibility hanging over them.

The impasse threatened the whole project. But on October 5, the city offered to accept a bond of \$10,000 from the company, subject to forfeiture if the bridge was uncompleted by February 1, 1907. The company agreed and the franchise went again to a vote held November 6, 1904. Moorhead voters again approved, 550 to 70, and the project finally became a reality.

Actually, the way looked so bright that construction began in both cities before the vote occurred in order to finish the project before winter. On November 24, Thanksgiving Day, the cars began running in Fargo to great fanfare. Moorhead cars rolled December 2. The approaches to the North Bridge needed shoring up before they could carry the cars. Moorhead riders bound for Fargo had to dismount on the Minnesota end, receive a transfer and walk across the bridge to a waiting Fargo car. This was quite an annoyance in winter. But by year's end, the cars were rumbling across the bridge.

People's fears of streetcar-horse conflicts were apparently exaggerated. The *Moorhead Daily News* reported shortly after service began that "there has been very little trouble experienced thus far by horses being frightened by the streetcars. Many people feared there would be a great many accidents when the cars were started in this city, but the horses are acting like old timers and appear to scarcely notice the trolley cars at all."

In February 1906, North Dakota Representative Thomas F. Marshall introduced legislation declaring the Red above the Sheyenne non-navigable. Similar bills had been proposed in the past but died in the face of opposition from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Lots of other folks were ambivalent as well. The real issue was not necessarily steamboat and bridge conflicts but who controlled the River. Without federal oversight anyone could place dams, bridges or other structures on the river wherever they wanted. The Fargo Commercial

Continued next page...

## Bridge, cont. from page 10

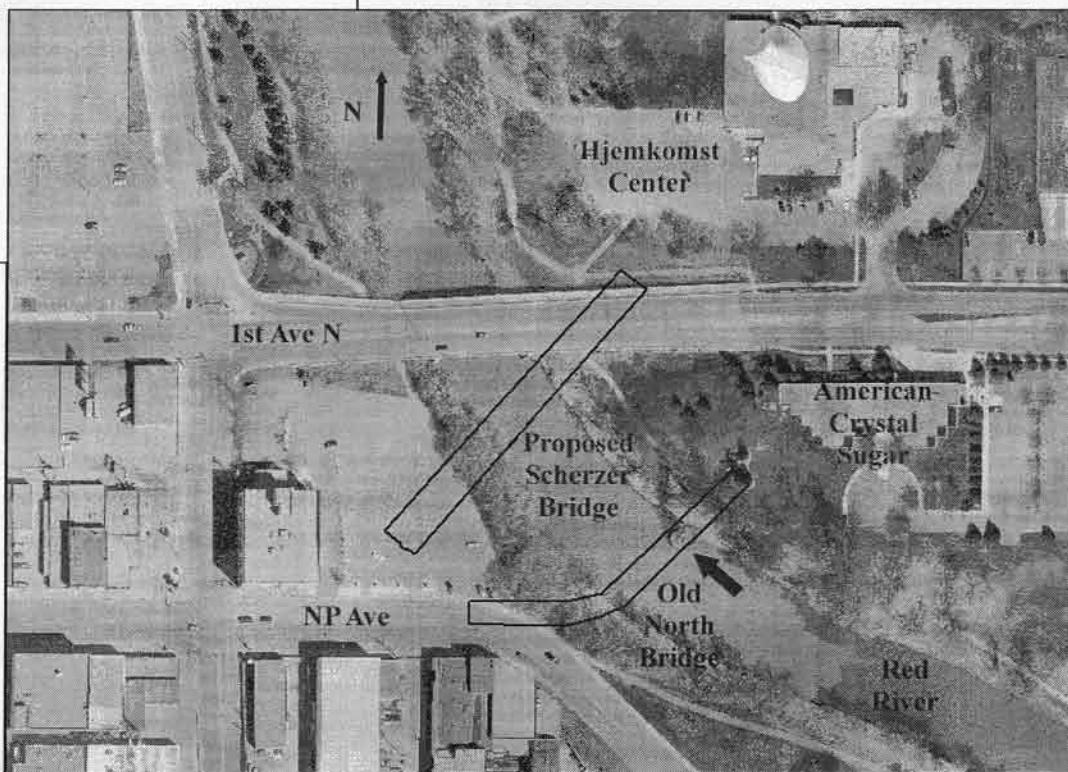
Club worried that this might stymie plans requiring careful coordination such as water power development, irrigation, drainage and flood control as well as transportation. The *Moorhead Independent* editorialized, "Someday the people of the Red River Valley will wake up to the fact that it would be a paying proposition to have the Red River kept navigatable... Who is interested in this proposition to declare the river unnavigatable? Just a few parties who are interested in getting a few cheap bridges across the river – in order to save the expense of putting in a swing bridge."

Thompson's bill failed. In its place came new legislation requiring a permit from the Army Corps for bridges on navigable waterways, part of which is still enforced today.

In January 1907, with no new streetcar bridge in place or on the drawing table, the company asked the city to extend their use of the North Bridge for an additional seven years. Furious city council members flatly refused. Residents fumed. In the end, the city gave the company a one-year extension but required them to pay \$50 per month for the use of the Moorhead end of the bridge with the \$10,000 bond still in effect.

A year passed and more, but the company just quietly kept making the \$50 payment. In March 1908, the City Council set another open meeting to discuss the situation. Given the apparent hard feeling expressed in the newspapers, everyone appeared startled when only one person showed up to protest the company's continued use of the bridge. Company Superintendent C. P. Brown used the occasion to vehemently deny an article which had appeared in a local Moorhead newspaper (apparently the *Moorhead Citizen*, which we don't have for 1908) "charging that one of the officials of the company had in an interview stated that 'they had a cinch on the city, and could use the bridge as long as they wanted to.'" The *Moorhead Daily News* reported that he characterized this statement as "malicious," and said "I don't know who inspired that article, but whoever it was, he stated an absolute falsehood."

This present day aerial view shows the locations of the old North Bridge and the proposed location for the Scherzer Rolling Lift Bridge sketched in. Note the arrow pointing to the existing North Bridge footing still sticking out of the river. The North Bridge entered Moorhead on what was called Ridge Avenue or 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue North. The proposed Scherzer Bridge would have connected with old 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue North. Both streets were vacated during Urban Renewal in the late 1960s. Adapted from blueprint courtesy of Minnesota Historical Society.



But the company really did have the city in a tight spot. It was pointed out that the company had never actually promised to build a bridge, only that they would forfeit their bond if it was not constructed. The city could use that money to tear up the tracks on their end of the bridge but that would do Moorhead very little good as that would require riders to again transfer at the bridge. Besides, the tracks could still remain on the Fargo half of the bridge. The City Council grumbled, but extended the \$50 monthly payment for another year.

In 1909, the city quietly extended the deal for another year. But in 1910, long-time company critic William H. Davy was Moorhead's mayor. When company attorney C. A. Nye asked the city for another one-year extension, Davy called into question the city's legal ability to accept the agreement without a change in the company's charter and a vote of the people. He also complained about the company's service and the fact that they had never filed an annual report of their Moorhead earnings with the city as required by the franchise. Nye asked Davy if he wanted the company to remove its rails. The company still held all the marbles, but agreed to furnish an earnings statement.

The statement indicated the company may not have been completely up-front. It indicated that the company had shown a net loss operating in Moorhead of \$5,600 for the previous year. Davy told Nye that he had communicated with a prospective bond buyer from the east who had been told the company was netting \$36,000 per year profit. Nye blandly replied that, "the company was possibly interested in making as good an impression as they could in order to sell their bonds." The Council was not pleased, but extended the agreement through February 1, 1911.

Continued next page...

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Village Inn Restaurant

### Bridge, cont. from page 11

Davy may have continued to pressure the company. In August 1910, they submitted an application for a permit for a movable bridge with the Army Corps. Its design was remarkable and, if built, would have been a unique addition to the area's infrastructure. Unlike the earlier bridges, this span would not turn to allow boats to pass, but would lift a section out of the way. Many of us have seen movies showing bridges opening in the middle by pivoting on hinges on either side. (They often show the hero's car vaulting over the opening span leaving the bad guys stranded on the bank behind.) These are called Bascule Bridges, from the French term for see-saw or balance. Heavy counter weights on the land side of the bridge make it easy to raise and lower the span. But wear and tear on the axel-like "trunnion" in the hinge can cause problems.

In 1893, Chicago engineer William Scherzer patented a new style of Bascule bridge, which required no trunnion. The Scherzer rolling lift bridge instead featured curved trusses which allowed the opening section or "leaf" to actually roll back toward the bank like a rocking chair (see the illustration on page 15). Simple, elegant and requiring no center pier,

Scherzer bridges were much cheaper to build than the usual moving bridge. This was the type proposed for Fargo-Moorhead.

The streetcar company's application proposed placing the bridge just north of the existing North Bridge, with the Fargo approach connecting NP Avenue to Moorhead's 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue North, about where today's 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue North bridge enters Minnesota. In January 1911, the *Fargo Forum* reported "The days of the city of Moorhead drawing that nice little emolument of \$600 from the Fargo & Moorhead Street Railway Co., for the use of the east half of the north bridge, are numbered... Manager Brown said that the company was extremely anxious to have a bridge crossing of its own [and was reasonably certain] that the contemplated structure would be erected this year, in fact everything was in readiness for inviting bids and letting the contract" as soon as the Army Corps approved the permit.

Correspondence in the file indicates the Army Corp's only quibble with the bridge was whether the 40-foot opening was wide enough for steamboats operating on the Red in 1911. The

Continued next page...

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### Bridge, cont. from page 12

Corps District Engineer reported that the only remaining boats were the U.S. government-owned steamer *Ogema* and its dredge (22' and 24' in beam, respectively) and the Red River Transportation Company's steamer *Grand Forks* (26.5' wide). The Engineer remarked, "it is very doubtful if larger boats than these ... will ever navigate the river between Fargo and Belmont [25 miles south of Grand Forks] for many years to

come." The Corps approved the permit April 29, 1911.

Obviously, the bridge was never constructed. It's kind of a shame, it would have been an interesting addition to local infrastructure. But other forces were at work. In September 1911, the streetcar company owners sold out to H. M. Billingsby's Consumers' Power Company (later Northern States Power Company). The new owners sought and received

Continued on page 15...

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

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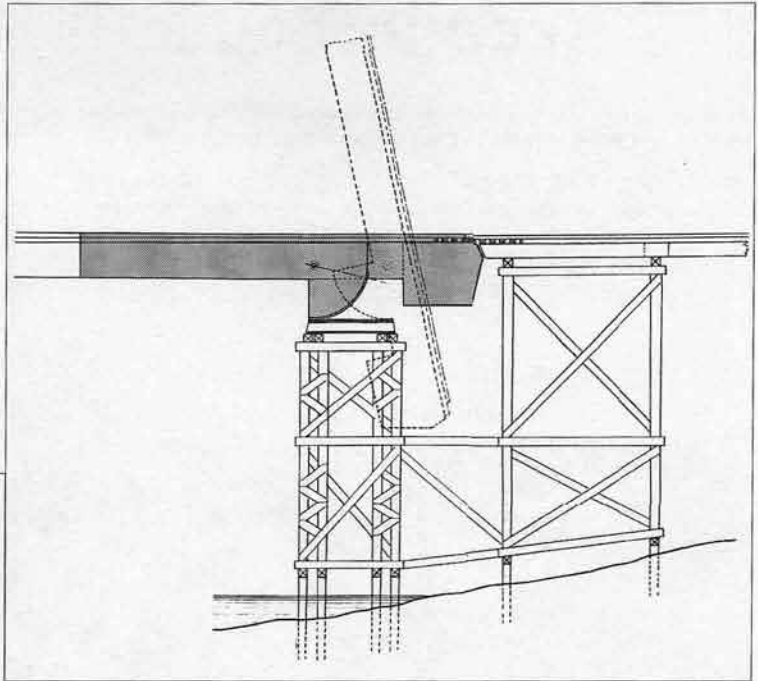
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**Bridge, cont. from page 13**

yet another franchise from Moorhead voters. This one did not call for any new bridge. Fargo-Moorhead streetcars continued to rumble over the North Bridge for another 25 years while Moorhead quietly collected its \$50 per month "emolument" for the use of the east end of the bridge.

In summer 1937, NSP ended streetcar service and the cities switched to busses for our mass transit needs. In 1942, Works Progress Administration employees tore down the old North Bridge and used its steel in the war effort. Its concrete footing still sticks out of the Red. The river is still considered navigable by the Army Corps and the Coast Guard. The federal government retains control of the stream and structures built on it.

This illustration shows the moving mechanism on the Moorhead end of the bridge in detail. The movable section is shown in the closed position in grey and in the raised position with a dotted outline. The leaf would actually be rolled back toward the Moorhead bank to open it. One man with a hand crank could raise or lower the bridge in about 30 seconds. Adapted from blueprint courtesy of Minnesota Historical Society.



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- March 23 Easter, Clay County Museum  
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- May 7 CCHS Annual Meeting  
Guest Speaker: Nina Archabal,  
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- May 11 Sesquicentennial of Minnesota  
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- May 26 Memorial Day, Clay County  
Museum closed
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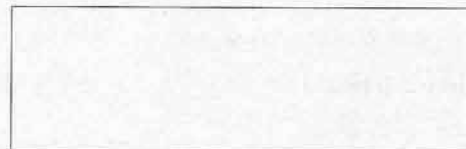


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