

CLAY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



CCHS Newsletter**July/August 1997****Vol. XX. No. 4**



Dazed passengers and crew mill about an overturned train shortly after a tornado struck in 1931. Note cars already lining the highway at right. Hordes of sightseers impeded aid to the injured and slowed recovery efforts.

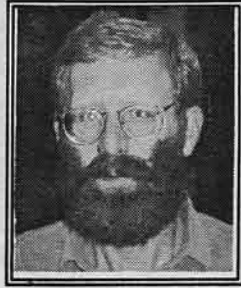
Forum Communications Company Collection

(See story beginning on Page 8.)

President's Report

By Paul Harris, President

We need your help. CCHS is currently in the midst of a membership drive. From now until the end of August, Lutheran Brotherhood Lake Agassiz Branch 8430 will match every dollar we raise from enrolling new individual and family members.



Unfortunately, we aren't like public radio, able to badger people every few minutes for a week until they give in and make the call. That's why I'm asking you, as a member of CCHS, to do the badgering for us. If we are going to recruit new members this summer, it's going to take personal contacts by people like you reaching out to people who are a lot like you, except for one small character flaw - namely, they aren't yet members of the Clay County Historical Society.

I've already challenged board members to contact 10 people and ask them to consider joining CCHS. In your case, I'm going to make it simple. All I ask is that you contact **one person!** You must know someone who shares your interest in local history and would consider supporting our efforts. So here, in ultra-condensed form, are the best reasons I can think of for joining CCHS:

- ◆ CCHS is the official agency charged with preserving the history of our county. If we don't do it, it won't get done! We house a huge collection of material artifacts and historical documents that keeps getting bigger all the time. Our expert staff makes sure these irreplaceable items will be preserved for later generations.
- ◆ Of all the residents of Clay County, **99%** have not yet joined the historical society!
- ◆ CCHS does great programming. Our new exhibit, "How About that Weather?" has raised our presentations to a new level of quality and is just a preview of things to come, as our staff develops exhibits that will gradually replace the permanent exhibit we've had on display for over 10 years. And that's just the tip of the proverbial iceberg when you consider all the different outreach activities through which Mark Peihl and Pam Burkhardt entertain and educate area residents.
- ◆ Belonging to CCHS is cheap. At one point, we were ready to raise our dues, figuring that would be

the quick and easy way to get the most out of our matching grant, but then we changed our minds. We like the fact that our dues are \$15 for individuals and \$35 for families, but we have to make people aware of what a bargain our memberships are.

- ◆ Members get a free subscription to our newsletter. A great way to recruit a new member might be to show them this newsletter, so they can see for themselves the interesting stories it contains. Then they can use the membership form on the back cover to sign up!
- ◆ CCHS continues to receive more than 90% of its operating budget from Clay County. I'm sure you don't need me to tell you that as the federal government digs out from under its mountainous deficit, it's putting the squeeze on every level of government. Clay County, for example, also pays for a big chunk of the welfare tab, and the recent

(Continued on Page 13)

CLAY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



202 1st Avenue North, Box 501
Moorhead, Minnesota 56561-0501
Phone 218-233-4604

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Probstfield Living History Farm will feature early farming methods

Anniversaries are typically a time to look at the past, take stock of the events and people that have made our present situation what it is, and to look ahead and formulate visions of the future.

In just a few years we will mark the turn of a millennium, another thousand years of recorded human history. Our local history isn't long in terms of millenia, only about 150 years, but it is important to preserve this recent history for future generations.

Over the past several years a small group has been working to preserve a small but vital fragment of the Red River Valley's history.

The Probstfield Living History Farm project, entails the restoration of one of the Red River Valley's first functioning farms. Known as Oakport Farm the property is located on the banks of the Red River, north of the present day city of Moorhead.

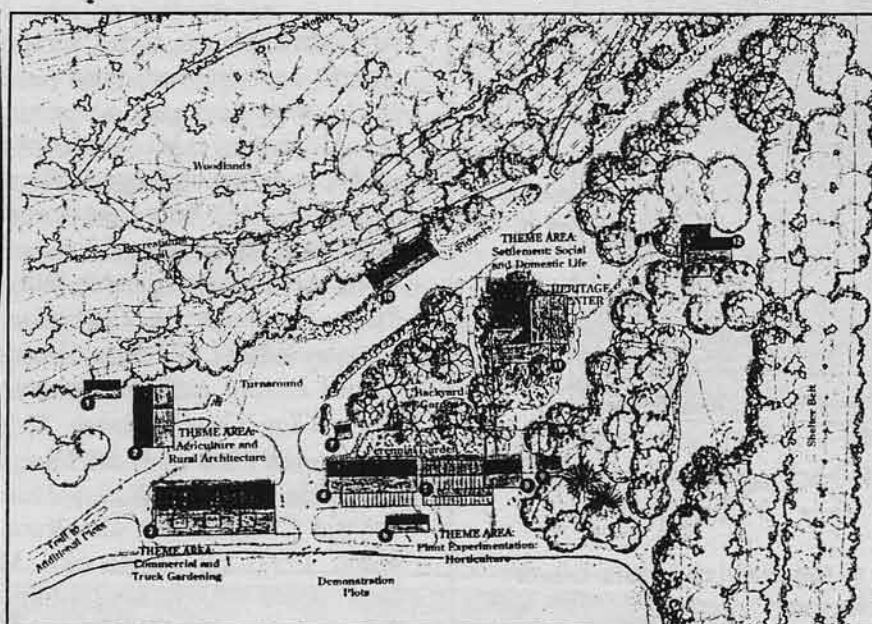
Randolph Michael Probstfield, a young German immigrant, is considered to be the first farmer in what is now Clay County and one of its first three permanent white residents. Probstfield, his wife and 11 children, and their descendants operated Oakport Farm in its various manifestations, including the popular Old Trail Market, for much of this century.

There is a plan to restore the farm to a functioning, income-producing farm as well as a heritage and interpretive center. People of all ages will be able to

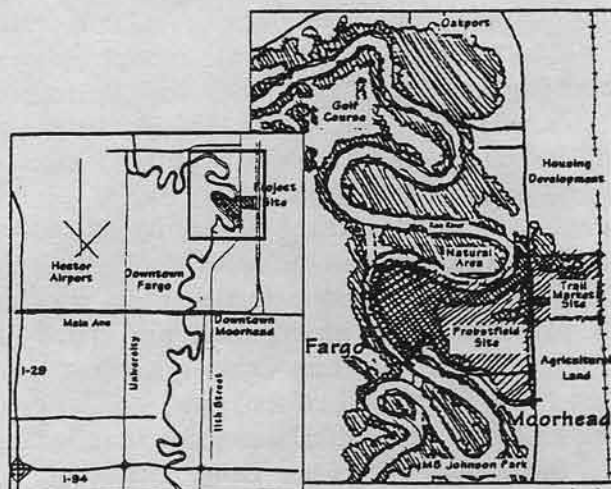
participate in programs, exhibits, and workshops offering a first-hand look at rural life as it used to be.

Fortunately, parcels of the land that constituted Oakport Farm and several of its original buildings are available to form the basis of a Living History Farm. A carefully developed plan for restoration - drawn by Probstfield's great-grandson, Matthew Scheibe, as a landscape

architecture thesis at North Dakota State University - constitutes the blueprint for the project. Land inherited by June Probstfield Dobervich, Probstfield's granddaughter, and by Catherine Scheibe, his great-granddaughter, has been donated to the Probstfield Living History Farm Foundation. A resident manager of the farm has been hired, with plans for beginning cultivation and restoration this year.



This drawing shows plans for part of the Probstfield Living History Farm.



Fargo-Moorhead Vicinity Map with Probstfield Site enlarged.

If you would like to support this worthwhile project there are memberships available. For more information write to Probstfield Living History Farm, P.O. Box 412, Moorhead MN 56560-0412 or call June Dobervich at (701) 237-5621.

Outreach Displays

Opens

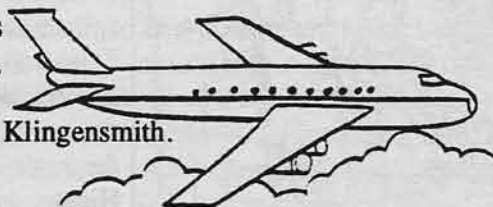
Hitterdal Senior Center	Aug. 19
Ulen-Hitterdal High School	Sept. 9
Viking Manor, Ulen	Aug. 19
Hawley Public Library	Aug. 19
Glyndon Community Center	Aug. 21
Moorhead Public Library	July 16
Barnesville Public Library	Aug. 20

The Hitterdal Senior Center will feature STOP, LOOK & LISTEN. Items include a school bell, threshing goggles, a megaphone and bicycle horn.

GOING, GOING, GONE will open at the Ulen-Hitterdal High School library with items illustrating changes in both technology and life style. What ever happened to white gloves, drive-in movies and hotel keys?

Viking Manor will be UP IN THE AIR with model airplane plans, an aircraft identification wheel and the story of

Clay County's own aviatrix, Florence "Tree-Tops" Klingensmith.



A SCANDINAVIAN

SAMPLER can be seen at the Hawley Public Library featuring items from Norway and Sweden.

The Glyndon Community Center features the Clay County Fair as a focal point in YOU'RE A WINNER. This display highlights awards and prizes from fairs, shows and parades.

The Moorhead Public Library will open AROUND & ABOUT MOORHEAD with items from the distant, and not so distant past.

The Barnesville Public Library presents JUST A WHITTLE BIT with carved items made in Clay County and Scandinavia.

WEATHER MEMORIES

from "How about that weather?" exhibit.

On April 24, 1984 it was 90° outside. My mom was still in the hospital with me. I was just born. We came home the next day, Apr. 25, and there was a blizzard that day.

Artifacts & Donors

MAY/JUNE 1997

Donors include:

Moorhead: Norwest Banks, Clay Co. Recorder's Office, Evelyn Langlie, Dr. Clarence (Soc) Glasrud, Opal Gudmundson, Carol McCarthy, LeRoy & Matilda Kirkhorn
St. Paul: MN Department of Natural Resources
Fargo, ND: Louise Redmann
Torrance, CA: Chris Velline
Highlands Ranch, CO: Bob Foster
Fremont, NB: Sylvia Osmundson Stultz
Bellingham, WA: Burton Grover

Artifacts: photos, slides, scrapbook, year-end financial reports, and stationery from American Bank; (148) copy prints of photographs concerning the potato industry; (33) 35mm film cards "copies of original surveyors plats on file in surveyor general office, St. Paul" drawn Dec. 30, 1880; (46) vols. grantee and grantor indexes to deeds and mortgages & reception books, deeds and mortgages & misc. records indexes; (1) vol. *The Beach Ridge Landscape in Clay County: An Informational Handbook* 1997, (3) *Clay County Beach Ridges Forum: Gravel Mining and Prairie Protection* Jan, Apr. June 1997; *Clay County Beach Ridges Forum for Gravel Mining and Prairie Protection: Final Report* 1997; (1) issue, No. 1 Vol. 1 *Rollag Pioneer Press*, 1996; map, *Natural Communities and Rare Species of Clay Co. Minn.*, 1997; (3) scrapbooks, *Moland Cloverleaf 4-H Club* (from 1937); an *Interim Report - May 1997, Information on the Old Norwegian Copper Kettle of the Ostrem/Reierson Family in the Clay County Museum and Its Role in a Ship's Fire During the Journey from Norway to America, 1878*; booklet, *Grover, Tarje and Geline and Their Descendents to 1995*; (16) vols. 1916-17, 1919-22, 1924-32, 1935 Moorhead Normal School/Moorhead State Teachers' College *Praeceptor*, (20) vols. 1938-45, 1948, 1950, 1954-55, 1958, two each 1966-68, 1969/70 Moorhead State Teachers' College/Moorhead State College *The Dragon*; (1) vol. Moorhead HS *Cho-Kio*, (1) vol. Concordia College *The Scour*; (2) pinback buttons WMSTR 1992 & Jimmy Carter for President; child's clothing items from the 1920s: pair of shoes, (3) white dresses, pink slip, white slip; Nash's coffee can, Log Cabin syrup bottle, (2) strawberry boxes & (2) cake (form) pans; wedding dress & man's wedding suit; (3) balance scales from Janecky Drug, Barnesville, (1) Foster Drug, Gladbrook, Ia; (souvenir) 1 millionth American Crystal sugar 100lb. bag, flashlight, tobacco tin & Sportsmen Unlimited 1923-1948 booklet.

Time capsule recovered at Glyndon

By Pam Burkhardt

A highlight of Glyndon's 125th Anniversary Celebration held in June was the opening of a time capsule. Was the capsule, buried in a corner of a park next to the Community Center, placed there during the 1972 Clay County Centennial or the 1976 Bicentennial? There seems to be a general consensus that it was buried in 1976 and City Clerk Denny Johnson agreed. According to Johnson it was not to be opened until 2002.

The time capsule was an infant-size burial vault. Since ground water at the site is higher than normal, the capsule was opened early to check for damage. It was 1/3 filled with water! Because I brought a recovery kit, I had the honor of retrieving the soggy items. Fortunately, mold wasn't a problem yet.

Everyone recognized the two Glyndon Highway Host menus. One woman said her wedding program should be in there - it wasn't visible. Among items retrieved from the "soup" were: newspapers, drivers' license, ID cards, two trophies (one from a demolition derby), a pair of eyeglasses, a catalog, coins (small change), several photos (however, the polaroid images had turned black), a large Bible and a glass insulator. Two promotional items from the 1972 celebration were found: a white, plastic cowboy hat and pinback buttons. There are probably a number of smaller paper items interleaved with the larger items.

Denny Johnson took charge of the items until they can be conserved. He rinsed and dried the 3-D items, and paper items



Centennial Edition still available!

Newspapers in the center of the pile held up very well!



Look, but don't touch! The crowd checks out the contents of the time capsule.

were wrapped and placed in a freezer to await further attention. The CCHS staff hopes to be able to save as many items as possible and views this water problem as a good chance for CCHS to practice conservation of disaster items. Research will need to be done on the history of the time capsule and its contents. Plans are to display the salvaged items at the Glyndon Community Center later this year.

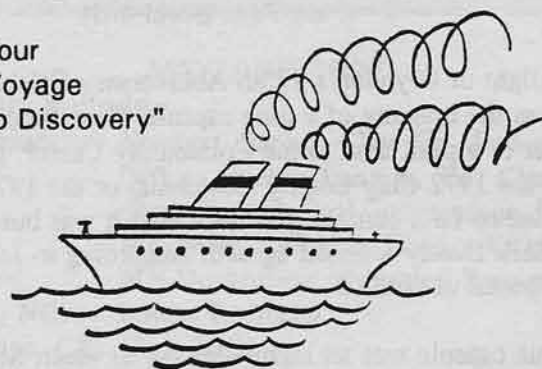
Will there be another time capsule in Glyndon's future? Today's problems will undoubtedly influence future plans of this nature.

Family History Workshop on Sept. 27

"Your Voyage to Discovery" is the theme for Family History Workshop XXII scheduled for Saturday, Sept. 27 at the Moorhead State University Comstock Memorial Union. Henry Z. Jones, a retired film actor and award winning author, will present four sessions: When the Sources are Wrong; Tracing the Origins of Early 18th Century German Palatine Emigrants; Some later Palatine arrivals to the Middle Colonies and Palatines in Ireland; and Family Tradition: How to Separate Fact from Fantasy in Genealogical Research. The strategies that Jones discusses will be helpful to anyone involved in any type of genealogical research.

Other presenters include: Jeanne Alm, MSU, Internet sources and computer software for genealogical research; Verlyn Anderson, Concordia College, Norwegian genealogy; Bill Bekkestad, Fergus Falls and Jackie Marler, Fargo, using church records and passenger lists; Grace Cochrane Bobrowski, Fargo, beginning genealogy; Larry Brown, Fargo, what to do with family photos and papers; John Bye, NDSU, using the Institute for Regional Studies; Rick Crume, Glyndon, beginning and advanced genealogy software including CD-ROMs; Alice Ellingsberg, colonial America: sources in New England; Marcela Faflak, Aberdeen, SD, Czech and Slovak genealogy; Janet Gallagher, Concordia, writing family histories; Beverly Paulson, Moorhead, Swedish genealogy; Bjarne Store-Jakobsen, Norway, Sami Roots; Cari Mayo, Pengilly, MN, and Beverly Paulson and Verlyn

"Your
Voyage
to Discovery"



Anderson, Moorhead, responding to questions about your Sami Roots; Arlen Steinolfson, Fargo, Icelandic genealogy; and Chuck Walen, Fargo, using the resources of the Family History Centers at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

The workshop runs from 8-4:30. A noon luncheon will feature awards for family history research and a talk by Bjarne Store-Jakobsen, a freelance journalist and film producer from Norway, on "Sami in Northern Scandinavia." Booths and exhibits for 20 organizations and vendors will be on display.

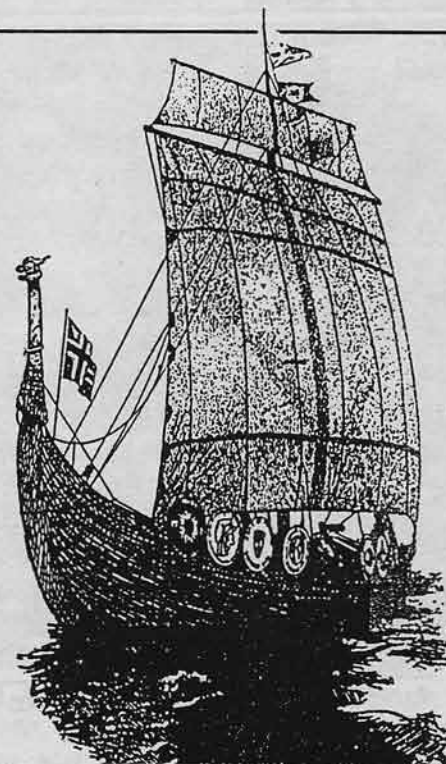
To pre-register, or for further information, contact the Office of Continuing Studies, Box 401, Moorhead State University, Moorhead MN 56561 or call 218-236-2183. This workshop is sponsored by the Heritage Education Commission of Moorhead State University.

Hjemkomst Center Benefit *Auction* Telecast LIVE ON WDAY-TV

A Silent and a Live Auction will be held at the Hjemkomst Center, 202 1st Ave. N., Moorhead on Sunday, Aug. 17. The Silent Auction begins at 12 noon and the WDAY Television Auction will telecast live from 3 to 5 p.m.

Items valued at over \$25,000 include Scandinavian Airline tickets; a Condo in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico; a television; a fireplace; garage door openers; furniture; windows and hundreds of other items.

The telephone number to use for bidding on the Televised Auction will be announced on WDAY the day of the Auction.



Those hazy, lazy days of summer?????

Clay County Fair

Over 200 people viewed the CCHS Booth under the Grand Stand at the Clay County Fair in Barnesville during four days in June. The winner of a commemorative "How about that weather?" rain gauge was Kerry Budinger of Barnesville.

The booth, manned by CCHS Staff, Board Members and other volunteers, featured a quilting demonstration, a video of WDAY Television coverage of the 1957 Fargo tornado and several exhibit display boards. The video, also showing in the "How about that weather?" exhibit in the Clay County Museum was especially popular.

Bergquist Cabin Open House

The Bergquist Pioneer Cabin in north Moorhead featured an open house in conjunction with the Scandinavian Hjemkomst Festival in June. Guided tours were given by CCHS Archivist Mark Peihl and there was music and Swedish refreshments. A bobbin lace doily, made and donated by CCHS Collections Manager Pam Burkhardt, was won by Bill Palma of Moorhead. The event was co-sponsored by the Swedish Cultural Heritage Society.

MSU Old Fashioned 4th of July

What better way to celebrate Independence Day than by remembering our heritage? The CCHS booth at the July 4 celebration at Moorhead State University included a high wheel bike, dating from the 1880s and the early 1900s patriotic portrait shown at right.

Parades

CCHS has participating in several area parades including two in Hawley, and one each in Glyndon, Hitterdal and Dilworth. Ken Fox was our driver at Hitterdal and the two Hawley Parades and Mike Sigdestad drove our 1936 Buffalo Fire Truck at the Glyndon and Dilworth Parades.

Quilt Raffle Continues

The 1880 replica Pleated Log Cabin quilt raffle continues through December 7. If you haven't gotten your tickets yet contact any CCHS Staff person or Board Member.

CCHS would like to thank all the volunteers who assisted this summer with the many activities. It couldn't happen without you. Thank you, thank you, thank you!!



Jewell Peterson posed for this patriotic portrait probably sometime around 1910.

Monetary Donations

May/June 1997

Katherine Erickson, Moorhead
Burton & Catherine Grover,
Bellingham WA
Sunrise Lodge #130, Fargo
Dorothy D. Rypka, Cerritas CA
Concordia College, Moorhead
Bi-Centennial Lions Club, Fargo
Betsy Vinz, Moorhead
Jocelyn Birch Burdick, Fargo
(for the Bergquist Cabin)

Endowment Fund

Marian Ferch has made a monetary donation to the CCHS Endowment Fund in honor of Marion Gee's election to the CCHS Board of Directors.

WEATHER MEMORIES from "How about that weather?" exhibit

I am a "survivor" of the Grand Forks flood of 1997. Common sayings were "How high is the water?" "Is the Kennedy Bridge still open?" "Why are those sirens going off?" "What do the words mandatory evacuation mean?" "Radio recovery network" - four stations cooperating as one. Individuals calling the radio [station] to share information, help each other, locate friends and relatives.

Tornado Wrecks GN

By Mark Peihl

Now that it's July, we can probably stop worrying about blizzards. (July is the only month when snow or freezing rain have never been recorded in Fargo-Moorhead!) But we are in the midst of tornado season. Here in Clay County we are far north of the infamous "Tornado Alley" of the southern Great Plains. Every few years, however, the spinning winds strike Clay County. Sometimes they cause damage, occasionally it's severe. Fortunately, only twice have tornadoes taken lives in our county.

On June 9, 1902, a tornado dropped from the clouds five miles southeast of Ada and headed toward the northeast corner of Clay County. It caused little damage until it reached the Andrew Hoium farm, five miles north of Ulen. The family sought refuge in their new barn. The storm smashed their log house carrying some timbers several miles away. Then it slammed into the barn killing four of the seven Hoium children. The twister swept into Becker County killing Mrs. Elef Berg near Voss. Hundreds of others were injured.

Nearly 30 years later another twister killed three people and wrecked the Great Northern Railway's crack passenger train, the *Empire Builder*.

At 4:15 on the afternoon of May 27, 1931, the east-bound *Empire Builder* pulled out of Fargo under dark, heavy skies. Some of the 117 passengers and crew noted the hot, sultry weather. The *Empire Builder* was the pride of the Great Northern, an exceptional train in an era of excellent rail service. It carried passengers and mail daily between Seattle and Chicago along the GN's main line. From Moorhead the train veered southeast paralleling today's Old Highway 52 through Sabin and Barnesville toward Minneapolis and Chicago. Outside Moorhead the engineer put on the steam and the train soon reached its cruising speed of 55 miles per hour.

About the time the train left Fargo, members of another GN crew working on the tracks just north of Rustad (10 miles south of Moorhead) noticed a funnel dropping from the threatening clouds. It headed northeast.

On the *Empire Builder*, the passengers and crew had settled back into their routines. Behind the engine were 12 cars including a baggage-mail car, several day coaches and Pullman sleeper cars, an observation car and a heavy diner. By 4:30 the train was a mile from Ruthruff, a siding 3½ miles northwest of Sabin. The engineer and several passengers had noticed a small funnel cloud to the southwest. Some passengers moved to the right side of their cars to get a better look. They saw the funnel bobbing up and down. Suddenly, a half mile from the tracks, the top of a hay stack exploded. Seconds later the locomotive began quivering and the train shook, windows blew out in several cars and all hell broke loose.

Godfrey Meyers was watching from the Ida Peterson farm a quarter mile to the east. He told the *Moorhead Daily News*, "I saw the train leap into the air twice. The first time it jumped and settled back on the rails, but the next time it went flying out into the air and landed on its side. It caused such a huge cloud of dust that I couldn't see any of the train for a few minutes, but soon the engine came pulling out of the cloud."

The twister had struck the cars just behind the engine. The wind lifted the first car, the mail-baggage car, and turned it on its side sheering the heavy coupling device connecting it to the locomotive. It carried the car to the left about 90 feet and set it down rather gently in a plowed field. It slid 150 feet before coming to a rest 115 feet from the rails. All 11 of the remaining cars followed the mail coach off the tracks and onto their sides like links in a chain. The locomotive remained on the rails.

Two mail clerks in the baggage car escaped serious injury. The impact was so gentle that the glass lamp shades in the car were not damaged.

Passengers and crew in the following coaches were not so fortunate. Some folks had time to dive to the floor and grab bolted-down seat legs. Others were thrown about the cars like dolls in a tumbling box. Fifty-seven people were injured, many seriously.

Empire Builder, 1931

Riding in the second car was 30 year-old Andrew Anderson. An unemployed New York carpenter, Anderson was returning from a fruitless attempt to find work in depression-era Seattle. When the car went over, he was pitched across the coach and headlong out through a window on the left side. The following car landed on him. He died instantly.

Godfrey Meyers jumped into a ditch as the tornado damaged the Peterson home and destroyed all the other buildings on the farm. At one point he tried to peek over the edge but the wind blew his head back so hard it injured his neck.

The storm turned north and began a 50 mile destructive tour through Clay and Norman Counties. Damage stretched to the Fertile area. Although the tornado never struck a town or village it was a definite barn wrecker. Some 50 farms sustained damage. Twenty-four in Clay County lost buildings.

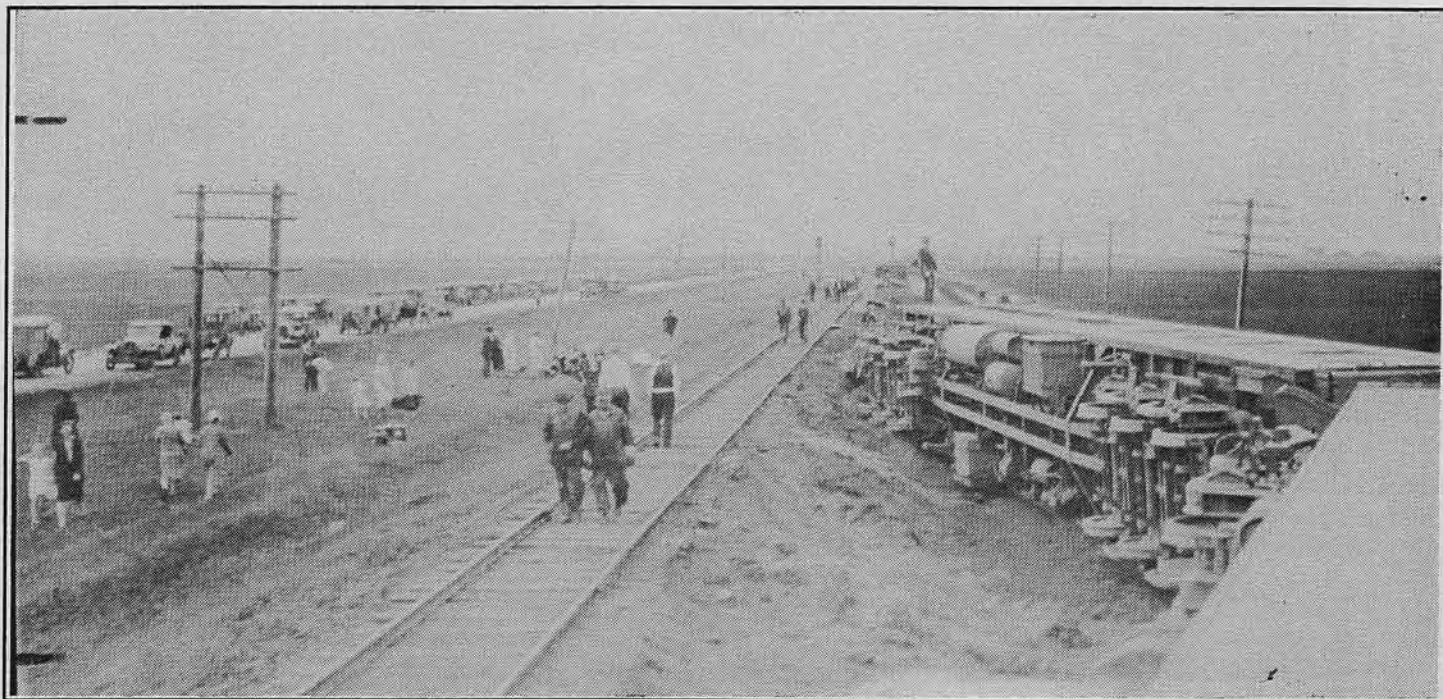
A half mile north of the Peterson farm, the funnel passed directly over Ben Holm's chimney. The wind

sucked every cinder and particle of ash out of the furnace leaving it clean as a whistle. The cleaning came at a high cost - Holm lost his barn.

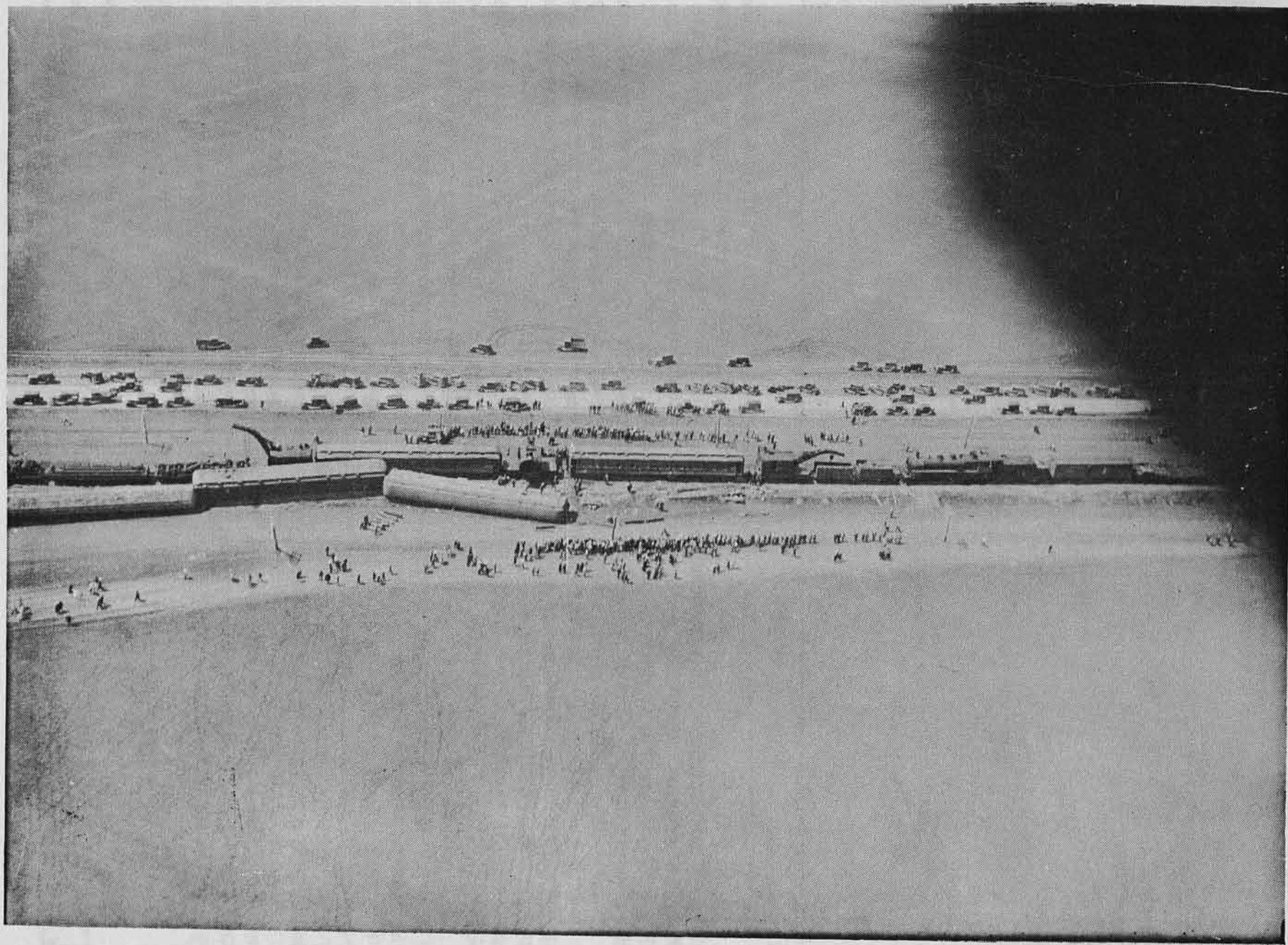
Continuing north, the tornado wrecked two more barns in quick succession on the L. E. Kreps and H. J. Quick farms. Then the funnel receded into the clouds temporarily until the storm reached today's US Highway 10. High winds knocked over four empty boxcars in the Northern Pacific Railway yards just east of Dilworth. The tornado showed itself again, destroying yet another barn and other buildings on the E. C. Miller farm at Watts Siding (where county road 11 crosses Highway 10). From there it headed north into Moland and Morken Townships where it did its most serious farm damage.

It tipped Will Sprung's silo over, punching a hole in his barn roof. According to the *Moorhead Daily News*, "the twister found the hole, lifted the roof completely and set it down on the ground several hundred feet away."

(Continued on Page 11)



Cars lay where they landed just after the derailment. The baggage car, behind us in this view, flew 90 feet off the tracks.



Kept back by police lines, hundreds of sightseers can be seen in this aerial view taken the day after the derailment. GN crews had normal service restored to the line within 30 hours.

Forum Communications Company Collection

1931 Tornado (Continued from Page 9)

On the Buffalo River, the tornado struck the L. D. Fleming house. The terrified family sought refuge by their machine shed. But the storm lifted the shed, carried it over the Flemings' heads and dropped it two hundred feet away. Two horses and a bull lay buried but unharmed under the wreckage. Mr. Fleming chopped through the timbers with an ax to free the animals. The storm crossed the Buffalo and bore down on Mrs. Andrew Hatledal's farm.

Lillian Jessness taught in the nearby District #8 school and boarded with the Hatledal's. She had just finished the term and was upstairs in her room packing for her trip home when the storm approached. Mrs. Hatledal screamed and everyone headed for the basement. Miss Jessness saw the laundry stripped from the clothes line through a second floor window. By the time she reached the ground floor the out buildings were exploding. She told the *Fargo Forum*, "Mrs. Hatledal and the three younger children were in one room [of the basement. Her 18 year-old son] Melvin was attempting to hold the door shut which led to another part of the basement. As he tugged at the door, the house was lifted from over our heads. A section of concrete about eight feet long broke from the wall behind us pinning the boy to the floor and leaving me imprisoned behind it." Melvin died soon after.

The tornado then cut a half-mile long swath through the woods along the river, flattening 600-700 trees and slammed into Concordia Lutheran Church. When the dust cleared only the church's concrete steps remained.

The funnel turned east toward Henry Anderson's farm. Anderson was blown fifty feet when the garage door he was trying to close blew out. The twister then headed back toward the river and Fred Kudebah's barn. Fred was inside when it struck. In an instant the barn lifted, twisted, splintered into a million pieces and was scattered

across the fields. Fred was left standing in the open without a scratch.

Next it struck the Nels Hanson farm, probably the hardest hit in Clay County. Here the *Moorhead Daily News* said the "wreckage resembled the aftermath of a shrapnel barrage. Ripping through the dense grove in the midst of [which] Mr. Hanson had set his buildings, the wind left the trees looking like sticks."

Hanson lost all his machinery and buildings. The wind sucked the family's clothes out through the windows and scattered them through the trees. As the tornado crossed the river, it had evidently sucked up a huge amount of water. Everything on the farm was covered with a coat of thick mud. The interior of the house looked as if a crew of plasterers had been at work using mud instead of plaster. Of Hanson's 200-300 chickens and turkeys only 13 were left wandering the yard dazed, caked with mud and minus most of their feathers.

The twister shifted northeast passing between Felton and Borup, wrecking more buildings on the way. In Norman County the storm veered north past Twin Valley and Gary before dissipating about 10 miles south of Fertile, some 50 miles from where it began.

(Continued on Page 12)



The twister lifted the cars off the tracks, breaking only a few ties and slightly bending the rails. The locomotive, visible in the distance, remained upright on the tracks.

1931 Tornado (Cont. from Page 11)

Meanwhile, back at the *Empire Builder*, rescue efforts were underway. After the initial shock passengers and crew alike assisted the injured and infirm through windows and off the train. In the club section of the observation car, several of the most seriously injured were trapped for over forty-five minutes while rescuers battered their way in.

Motorists passing by on Highway 64 (today's Old Highway 52) brought news of the disaster to Fargo-Moorhead. Soon doctors and nurses were on their way to the scene. Word spread quickly around the area.

Within half an hour of the derailment, hundreds of cars filled with curious sightseers were jamming Highway 64, impeding the movement of the injured to hospitals. The GN quickly assembled a relief train to pick up the passengers and crew. Within an hour, all were heading back to Fargo. At 11 p.m. a replacement train carried the uninjured passengers on to their destinations. Others remained in local hospitals.

The traffic situation near the wreck continued to grow worse. By 7 p.m. a mass of cars, four abreast and eight miles long crawled south on Highway 64. The *Fargo Forum* reported that sightseers returning to Moorhead crept back "on muddy side roads, through muck filled ditches, along perilous, sliding railroad grades... Some motorists abandoned their cars and took to heel."

In Moorhead, Police Chief J. B. Erickson called out every one of his officers and the American Legion to stop all south bound traffic on 64 then headed to the wreck. Erickson said, "I never saw anything like it in my life... it took me three hours to drive seven miles."

At the wreck scene, Clay County Sheriff Archie Whaley had taken charge, forcing sightseers to continue south to Sabin then north via Clay County 11 to Watts Siding and along today's Highway 10 back to Moorhead. It took hours to straighten out the mess. At 1 a.m. 6,000 automobiles still jammed the road. The *Fargo Forum* called it "the greatest assemblage of cars probably ever seen in Cass and Clay Counties." The *Forum* reporter estimated that 16,000 people were on the road at one time.

The GN rushed three huge wreckers to the scene to right the derailed cars. They had the first car, the heavy observation car, back on the rails by 2:30 a.m. The *Forum* reported, "the wreckers then moved

southward, jockeying the cars to the rails in the order in which they lay." The trickiest was the baggage car, lying 115 feet from the tracks. Workmen built a spur line to the car and tipped it up onto the new rails. "So large were the crowds at the accident scene last night that today workmen had hard solid ground on which to lay rails and on which to work, the trampling of so many feet giving an almost concrete-like appearance." Within 30 hours, normal traffic resumed on the GN.

(This wasn't the first time a tornado had brought a train to grief in the area. On July 7, 1890, a twister tossed twelve cars from the Northern Pacific tracks on the west edge of Fargo. No one died on the train but Mrs. James McCarthy and her seven children died when their north Fargo house collapsed. On June 22, 1919, a tornado swept through Fergus Falls twice, killing over fifty people, the worst cyclone in area history. Five miles west of town, the winds toppled **another** 12 car train from the GN tracks. In all three cases the engine remained on the rails.)

U. S. Weather Bureau Observer Roy McClurg admitted being puzzled by the tornado. His instruments in the Moorhead Post Office (now the Rourke Art Museum) showed nothing unusual before or during the storm. The afternoon maximum wind was only 33 miles per hour. McClurg speculated that "apparently the tornado struck a narrow pathway in its rush over the western end of Clay County, its force being tremendous because of the fact that it was not diffused."

It's also unclear just how many tornados appeared that day. Several passengers and crew on the Northern Pacific's east-bound *North Coast Limited* claimed the train had a near miss with a twister between Moorhead and Dilworth about the time of the GN mishap. Conductor Thomas Clark saw a funnel approaching from the north and gave the engineer the "dynamite signal" to proceed as fast as possible. The twister passed behind the train, missing it, Clark estimated, by 15 seconds. West of Felton, E. J. Murphy reported two separate damage causing funnels.

The GN interviewed farmers within a 10 mile radius of the wreck and concluded that **three** tornados had come together north of Rustad to form the one that upset their train.

Damage from the storm has been estimated at over \$200,000. Some families lost their homes, many others their farm buildings and machinery, a devastating blow to farmers already struggling through the Great Depression. (Cont. on Page 13)

Tornado

A Red Cross survey found that 24 Clay County farms had suffered severe damage; 400 fowl and 20 other animals had died. Only three families received assistance.

Nearly two weeks after the train wreck, four of the injured were still in local hospitals. One, Mrs. George Havens from Conrad, Montana, appeared to be recovering. But on June 8, she developed an infection and died, the third and last victim of one of Clay County's worst tornados.

WEATHER MEMORIES

from "How about that weather?" exhibit

I live in Fergus Falls and for the very first time in my life it snowed on May 13. It's rather strange to see snow on trees that are trying to push out new leaves.

President's Report

(Continued from Page 2)

federal welfare reform is not likely to leave them with a lot of money left over for helping us. Like so many semi-public agencies, our future lies in raising more money just like this.

- ◆ If none of this works to sell memberships (strange as that seems), pull out the clincher: Some new member who signs up before the end of August is going to win a \$20 gift certificate to Smokie's Steakhouse in Hawley! And I would add, it would only be fair for the winner to take along whoever talked her or him into joining. Hope that's you!

WEATHER MEMORIES

from "How about that weather?" exhibit

We had a yellow tube around our house in the flood of 1997. It was like we were on a raft. (An 8-year old)

Business Memberships

Thank You to the following businesses and organizations for their support!!!

PATRON (\$200 - \$499)

Case Corporation, Fargo

SUSTAINING MEMBERS (\$100 to \$199)

City of Hawley, Hawley

Dilworth/Glyndon/Felton Schools

Fargo Forum, Fargo

First National Bank, Hawley

Fisher Farms, Glyndon

Hawley Public Schools

Home Builders Association

of Fargo-Moorhead

Korsmo Funeral Service, Moorhead

Moorhead Area Retired Educators Asso.

Northern School Supply Co., Fargo

Rapat Corporation, Hawley

Sellin Brothers, Hawley

SUPPORTING MEMBER (\$50 to \$99)

Altrusa International Club, Mhd

Bentley & Bentley, DDS, Hawley

Michael J. Burns Architects, Moorhead

Cass-Clay Creamery, Inc., Fargo

City of Barnesville, Barnesville

Coast to Coast, Moorhead

SUPPORTING MEMBER (\$50 to \$99) Cont.

Dilworth Wal-Mart, Dilworth

Fevig Oil Company Inc., Felton

F-M Printing, Moorhead

Gjevre, McLarnan, Hannaher, Vaa, Skatvold

& McLarnan, Attorneys, Mhd

Gunhus, Grinnell, Klinger, Swenson

and Guy, Ltd, Moorhead

Hannaher's Inc., Moorhead

Hornbachers Foods, Moorhead

Kirk's Super America, Hawley

Mid-Day Lions, Moorhead

Moorhead Trader & Trapper Inc., Mhd

Norwest Bank MN, West N.A., Mhd

Petermann Seed Farm, Hawley

State Bank of Hawley, Hawley

State Bank of Moorhead, Moorhead

Tenneco Packaging, Moorhead

United Electric Serv. & Supply, Inc, Fgo

Vikingland Kiwanis, Moorhead

Wahl Drug Store/Gift Shop, Hawley

Ward Muscatell Auto, Moorhead

Wright Awning Company, Moorhead

Wright Funeral Home, Moorhead

Thought about joining CCHS??

JOIN Now

to double the money!

Lutheran Brotherhood Lake Agassiz Branch 8430
is providing matching funds up to \$2,000.

Plus: All new members through August 31 are eligible to win a \$20 Gift Certificate to "Smokies" in Hawley

**Return membership form on back cover -
Individual Memberships \$15 and Family Memberships \$35 per year**

Ask a friend to join CCHS - They'll thank you for it!

CCHS Memberships - New and Renewals

May/June 1997

CCHS extends a very special thank you to the following individuals who have renewed their membership for another year.

Lyle & Grace Clark, Moorhead
Drs. James and Yvonne Condell, Moorhead
Robert Gerke, Moorhead
Bette Haring, Lake Park
Vera Knapp, Moorhead
Katherine Erickson, Moorhead
Donna Nelson, Moorhead
Ward Muscatell Automotive Group, Mhd
Marion Bjorndahl, Hawley
Gene Christensen, Glyndon
Clara Evenson, Fargo
Janet & Kenneth Fox, Hawley
Mrs. Dorothy Martell, Fargo
Ethel R. Medalen, Mankato
Burton & Catherine Grover, Bellingham WA
Marilyn Wussow, Moorhead
Mrs. Joy R. Johnson, Moorhead
Sylvia Larson, Moorhead
Maurice & Garnet Floberg, Moorhead
Norman Akesson, Davis CA

Eleanor Aarestad, Fargo
Jim Fay, Moorhead
Hornbachers Foods, Fargo/Moorhead
Marion Gee, Moorhead
Susan Belawski, Roseville
United Electric Service & Supply, Inc., Fgo
Ray Stensrud, Moorhead
Justine Swanson, Fargo
Cindy Palmer/Paul Harris family, Mhd
Rex E. Woods, Moorhead
Rose M. Gytri, Glyndon
M/M Bernard Gill, Hillsboro, ND
Carroll & Jo Engelhardt, Moorhead
Les & Rose Bakke, Moorhead
Irene Swenson, Moorhead
Albert Knutson, Moorhead
Loren & Londa Ingebretsen, Felton
Marie Daellenbach, Moorhead
Majorie & Kelly Aakre, Moorhead
Gary H. & Rebecca Olson, Moorhead
Betsy Vinz, Moorhead
Mabel K. Johnson, Moorhead
Louise Nettleton, Moorhead
Mark Grommesh, Barnesville
Ramona Kooren, Hawley
Ralph Lee, Moorhead

Evert Wiisanen, Moorhead
Norwest Bank, Moorhead
Jean Doty, Hawley
Conn Bjerke, Moorhead
Patrick Colliton, Fargo

CCHS welcomes the following new members:

Kenneth A. Bye, Moorhead
Betty Christensen, Glyndon
Nona Krzyzaniak, Moorhead
Ruth Smith, Moorhead
Mary Ellen Thompson, Fargo
Helen Roseberg, Fargo
David & Phyllis Davis, Fargo
Kenneth Smemo, Moorhead
Marion Gillespie, Moorhead
Joan Nelson, Moorhead
Edward & Elizabeth Clark, Moorhead
Lee Kolle, Borup
Margret Kragnes, Glyndon
Maxine Shulstad, Barnesville
Mae Gee, Moorhead
Carol Schoff, Hawley

CLAY COUNTY MUSEUM

 features

"How about that weather?"

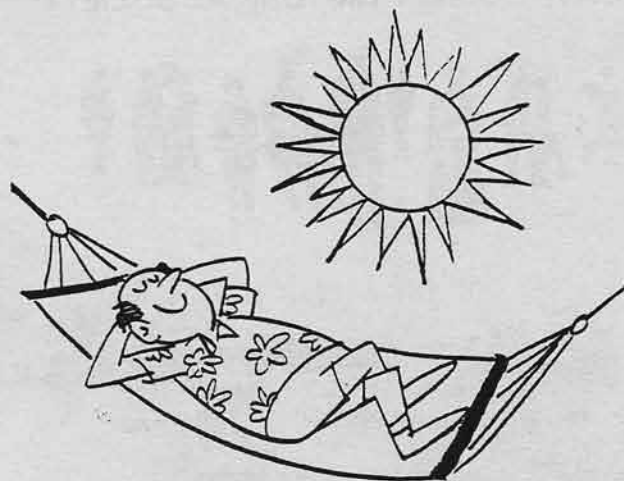
★ Feb. 23, 1997 - Jan 31, 1998

--- Free Admission ---

What is unique about Clay County weather? How do folks cope with our weather extremes - both hot and cold? How do we predict weather?

Our weather exhibit will try to answer these and many more questions.

Several hands-on activities in this major new exhibit.



PERMANENT EXHIBIT includes unique characterizations of one facet of the history of towns in the county. Together they form a chapter in the overall history of Clay County.

Hours are: 9-5 Mon.-Sat., 9-9 Thurs. 12-5 Sun.
Lower level of Hjemkomst Center, 202 1st Ave. N., Mhd. - FREE ADMISSION

CCHS Business Membership

- ☐ . \$ 50 to \$99 . Supporting Member
- ☐ . \$ 100 to \$199 Sustaining Member
- ☐ . \$ 200 to \$499 Patron
- ☐ . \$ 500 and up . Major Exhibit Sponsor

As a CCHS Business Member you will receive all benefits of an individual membership plus a certificate ready to frame and display, extra complimentary passes to the Hjemkomst Center's exhibits and a listing in all CCHS bi-monthly Newsletters. To become a CCHS Business Member please return this form or a facsimile to CCHS, Box 501, Moorhead, MN 56561-0501 or call 233-4604.

Business: _____

Contact Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone #: _____

CCHS - 1997 Membership

I would like to become a member of Clay County Historical Society.

☐ INDIVIDUAL \$15.00 ☐ FAMILY \$35.00 ☐ Donation

MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

- * Support preservation of our heritage
- * Bi-monthly newsletter
- * Discount on Acid-Free Materials
- * FREE Admission to Clay County Museum & Archives and two complimentary passes to the Center's Exhibits
- * Discount on Photo Reproduction
- * Voting Privileges
- * Invitation to all CCHS events

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