

# CLAY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



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CCHS Newsletter

March/April 1995

Vol. XVIII. No. 2

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US GOVERNMENT DREDGE UNZER FRITZ AT MOORHEAD WATER FRONT, ABOUT 1880  
In the late 1870s and 1880s the federal government spent tens of thousands of dollars to keep the cantankerous Red River navigable. This \$10,000 dredge dug a 3 ½ foot deep channel in the Red for the flatbottom steamers. The view is to the north from the South (Old N.P.) Railroad Bridge.

Flaten/Wange Collection

## From the President



By  
Chris D. Olson

Does it really only happen once a year? We all get together to recognize the events of the past year... and to look forward in anticipation to the next. There's good food, great entertainment and lots of fun. This year, it's

April 6: The Clay County Historical Society's Annual Meeting!

Join us for an evening of entertaining theatre. Actress Kathy Ray and folksinger/composer Patty Kakac will present, "Women Through the Ages," a historical look (serious and humorous) at how individual women have made significant contributions to our lives. Our thanks to the Lake Region Arts Council and the U.S. West Foundation for helping to sponsor this program. It is free and open to the public. (As always, if you wish to have dinner at the meeting, there is a charge.)

As many of you know, the annual meeting is one of the highlights of CCHS's year. I challenge each of you to bring a friend along this year to share in our excitement. As we look forward to our membership goals, we will need everyone's help. A positive and entertaining experience at our event will make those goals more attainable. Hope to see you (and your friend) on Thursday, April 6.

### Temporarily Away??

Please let us know

Every year many of our members go south for the winter. We are happy they can escape the cold.

However, this does create a small problem. Our newsletter is mailed at a non-profit bulk rate and therefore cannot be forwarded. When you are "temporarily away" the newsletter is returned to us at a cost of 50 cents per piece. It is a lose, lose situation: you do not receive your newsletter and we face an added cost.

If you intend to be away from home for any extended period of time, please leave us your temporary address or ask the post office to hold your bulk mail. Thanks!!

## A CCHS "Wish List"

We have been overwhelmed with the response to a request for donations of high school yearbooks (any year) from Moorhead, Ulen, Hitterdal, Hawley, Glyndon, Dilworth, Barnvesville, Felton, Comstock, and MSTC. Thank you all very much!!

However, we are still in need of many missing issues. If you or someone you know has an annual they would like to donate to Clay County Historical Society, please give us a call at 233-4604 or stop in the CCHS offices, 202 1st Ave. N., Moorhead.

### Feel free!!!!

Editors are encouraged to reprint articles from the Clay County Historical Society Newsletter with appropriate credit.

#### CLAY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



202 1st Avenue North  
Box 501  
Moorhead, Minnesota 56560  
Phone 233-4604

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# "Women Through the Ages"

## featured at Annual Meeting Apr. 6

Clay County Historical Society is excited to present "Women Through the Ages" at the CCHS Annual Meeting/Banquet on Thursday, April 6 at the Hjemkomst Center, 202 1st Ave. N, Moorhead. The presentation in commemoration of the 75th Anniversary of Woman's Suffrage will follow a short CCHS business meeting with election of officers.

*Women Through the Ages* is a fast paced program of humorous and dramatic monologues that depict moments in the lives of ordinary women as performed by professional actress Kathy Ray, of Barrett. Singer/songwriter Patty Kakac laces the scenes with music that celebrates women and reflects musically on the theme for each vignette.

Through quick costume changes, Kathy's repertoire provides a look at life in a rural township at the turn of the century, follows a young woman looking for a job during the Depression, or satirizes a late 1940s woman delivering an address to a Ladies Club on the subject of man's claims to be superior to women. In one of her vignettes, she ages into an elderly woman in a nursing home as she reminisces. She also transforms into a middle-ages "bag lady" who muses with the audience about the generations of female achievers in her family, or she may emerge from the dressing room as a sardonic Southern belle bemoaning her cousin's constant good fortune.

Patty Kakac has been writing and performing folk music since 1978. Her music is about life in rural Minnesota, celebrating its beauty, joys, its people and their struggles. In 1992 she performed one of her songs with Garrison Keillor of Prairie Home Theater fame. Kakac recorded an album in 1991 and is currently working on a second recording.

Ray and Kakac met during a 1985 production of the play "Plain Hearts," sponsored by the Herman/Norcross Community Education Program. After the show closed they kept running into each other at arts events and political gatherings around their home counties of Douglas and Grant. Kakac and her husband became more



Patty Kakac (left) and Kathy Ray

involved in the Prairie WindPlayers Community Theater in which Ray was already deeply involved. Kakac attended one of Ray's one woman shows and Ray attended one of Kakac's concerts. There began their mutual admiration and they started thinking that it would be fun to do a show together. In August of 1992, the artistic team of Ray and Kakac performed their debut of "Women at Work, Uh Huh," in the Alexandria Area Arts Downtown Theater. In October of the same year, the "Sodbuster," a publication for farm folk, sponsored a three town tour of "Rural Women Through the Ages." That was the start - and as Ray and Kakac suspected from the beginning, "it is fun to perform together."

To make reservations for the annual banquet and program see Page 11 of this newsletter.

## Outreach Displays

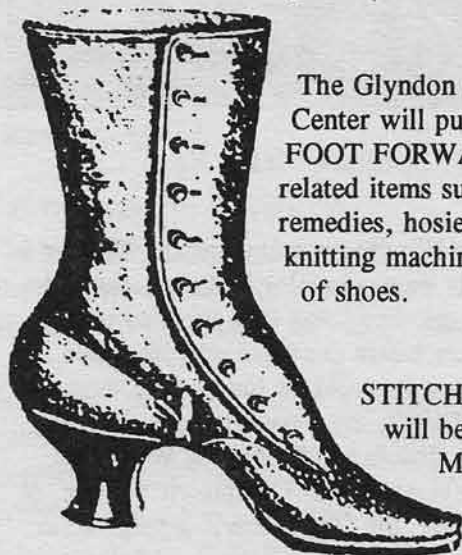
	Opens	Closes
Hitterdal Senior Center	Mar. 20	May 8
Ulen-Hitterdal High School	Mar. 20	May 8
Viking Manor, Ulen	Mar. 20	May 8
Hawley Public Library	Mar. 20	May 8
Glyndon Community Center	Mar. 21	May 10
Moorhead Public Library	Mar. 21	May 10
Barnesville Public Library	Mar. 21	May 10

THEN & NOW at the Hitterdal Senior Center will feature old photographs displayed next to a current photo taken in the same place.

The Ulen-Hitterdal High School will open NATURAL & UNNATURAL HISTORY with examples of flora, fauna and ???

HAIR TODAY, GONE TOMORROW appears at Viking Manor in Ulen. Products and devices used on our "crowning glory" will share a case with shaving tackle.

The Hawley Public Library will MAKE A STATEMENT with a look at pin-back buttons.



The Glyndon Community Center will put its BEST FOOT FORWARD with foot related items such as corn remedies, hosiery, a stocking knitting machine and a variety of shoes.

STITCHES IN TIME will be shown at the Moorhead Public Library with examples of knitting, crocheting, embroidery and quilting.

A display of building components and accessories will be appear in THIS OLD HOUSE at the Barnesville Public Library.

## Artifacts & Donors

January/February 1995

### Donors include:

Moorhead: Clay County Veterans Service

Fargo, ND: Forum Communication Company,  
WDAY Radio Programming

**Artifacts include:** WW II service record information; prints & negatives of ice cutting, Red River dams; (3) vol. City of Moorhead police log 1901-1927; (3) plastic and (2) rubber ducks used in the duck races during River Front Days.

## Donations

Kathy Mentjes, LeCenter  
Helen Rudie, Moorhead  
Concordia College, Moorhead

### Where would you like to go? What would you like to see?

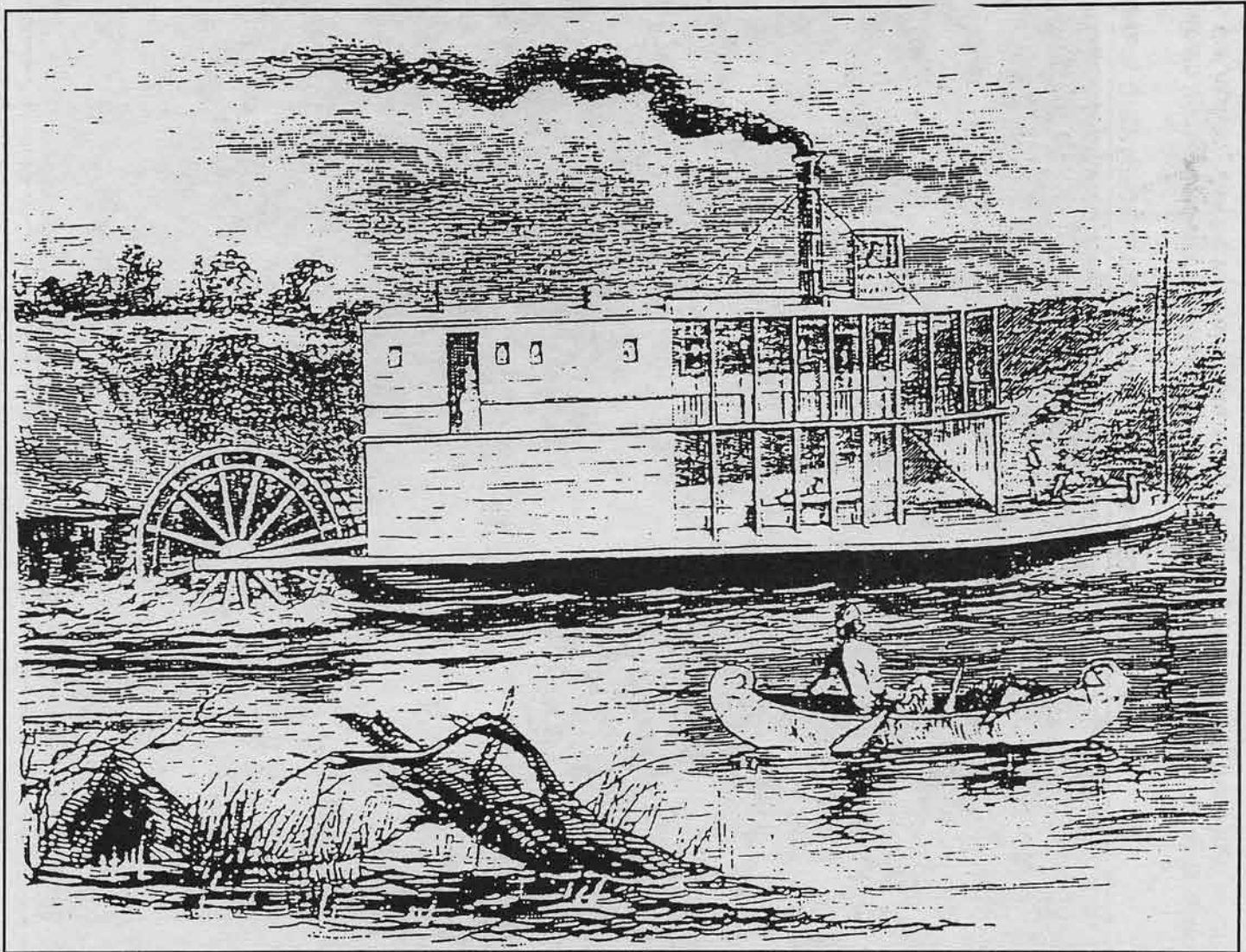
CCHS is in the process of planning several tours for 1995. For the past several years we have made the History Center in the middle of the "cultural corridor" in St. Paul a main focus of our tours. We may continue to do that. However, it has been suggested that other routes might be interesting, too, and we would like your input.

Research into interesting historic areas in Minnesota and the Red River Valley is underway. The Duluth area with Split Rock Lighthouse, the Depot and the Congdon Mansion is one possibility. Ironworld at Chisholm might be available on that same tour. Another option being discussed is a trip up the Red River Valley stopping at museums and historic sites along the way.

An idea being considered is extending the tour into an overnight stay. This might be ideal for either a Duluth or Winnipeg jaunt.

If you already have or are planning on attending a CCHS sponsored tour, please give us a call at 233-4604 with your preferences. Final plans will be made soon and schedules will be published as soon as possible.

# Steamboating on the Red!



**Anson Northup, First Red River Steamboat, 1860**

She wasn't much of a boat. One pilot called her a "lumbering old pine basket that had to be handled as gingerly as a hamper of eggs."

Harpers New Monthly Magazine, August 1860

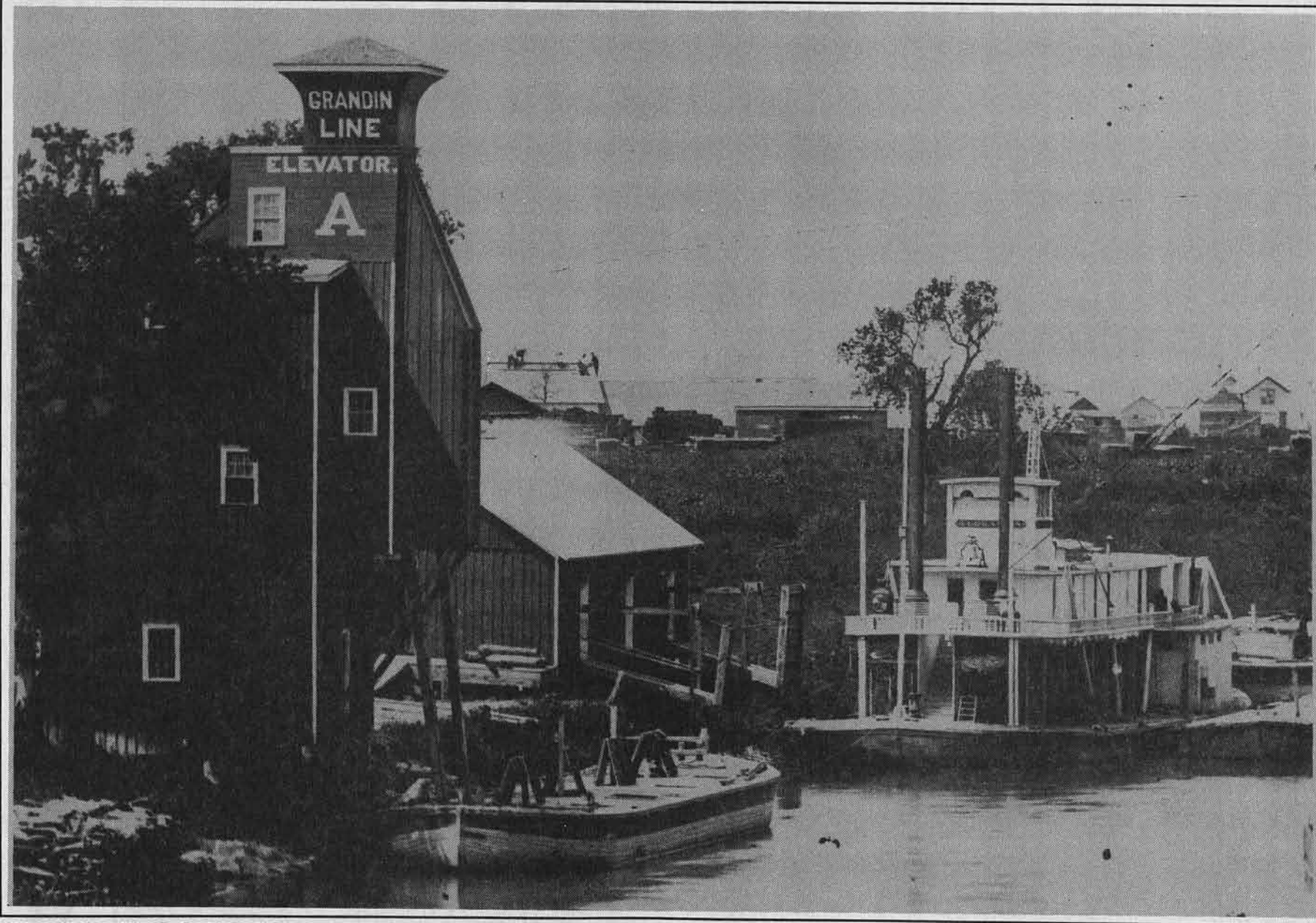
Many visitors to and residents of the area are amazed to find that steamboats on the Red River provided an important local transportation link 120 years ago. "The river must have been wider or deeper or straighter then," many people have suggested. Not so. Surveys from the period indicate the Red hasn't changed much. The images of steam powered paddle wheels chuffing and churning the muddy waters of our border river, difficulties with low water and tight bends, bells, whistles and the arcane jargon of the steamboat men provide one of the most colorful chapters in our local history. But as much as local investors and residents at the time wanted to believe differently, the boats were destined to be never more than a temporary link in a

changing transportation network. Railroads would be Clay County's life line, not the twisting Red. And they would one day be the steamboats' end. Steamboating went through three phases as markets and technology changed:

## FUR TRADE DAYS

In the 1850s, St. Paul and Ft. Garry (Winnipeg) were about the only settlements in the area. Minnesota merchants used horse or ox drawn Red River carts to ship goods for sale to their northern neighbors. The carts were cheap but slow - the 500 mile trip took a month. A steamboat on the Red could cut the trip in half.

(Continued on Page 7)



**GRANDIN LINE'S OPERATIONS, FARGO BANK OF THE RED, ABOUT 1880**

The huge Grandin bonanza wheat farm built their own steamboat and elevator to carry grain from their farm near Halstad. The *J.L. Grandin* was the fastest boat on the Red. Note the auger lifting wheat from the barge at left. Towed behind or tied alongside the steamboats, barges carried far more freight than the steamers did.

Flaten/Wange Collection

## Steamboating (Cont. from Page 5)

In 1859, Anson Northup dragged a steamboat's engine and boiler from the Mississippi River through a nasty Minnesota winter to a spot on the Red near Kragnes, built a new steamboat and named it after himself. The *Anson Northup* wasn't much of a boat, but it was a start. The Hudson Bay Fur Trading Company at Ft. Garry built a steamboat terminal at Georgetown to transfer furs and trade goods between ox carts and the boat. Soon trains of hundreds of carts were squeaking their way from St. Paul to meet the *Anson Northup* and the *International*, a second steamboat built at Georgetown in 1862. Steamboating was a hit!

### RAILROADS REACH THE RED

In 1871, the Northern Pacific Railroad reached the Red River at Moorhead and steamboating really took off. Trade with Winnipeg increased dramatically and thousands of eager settlers bound for Canada poured through Moorhead-Fargo. Moorhead became a ship building center. Soon the waterfront (just north of today's Center Avenue bridge) was choked with steamboats and barges heavily loaded with lumber, flour, farm implements, beds, pianos and just about anything people in Canada and along the Red might want to buy.

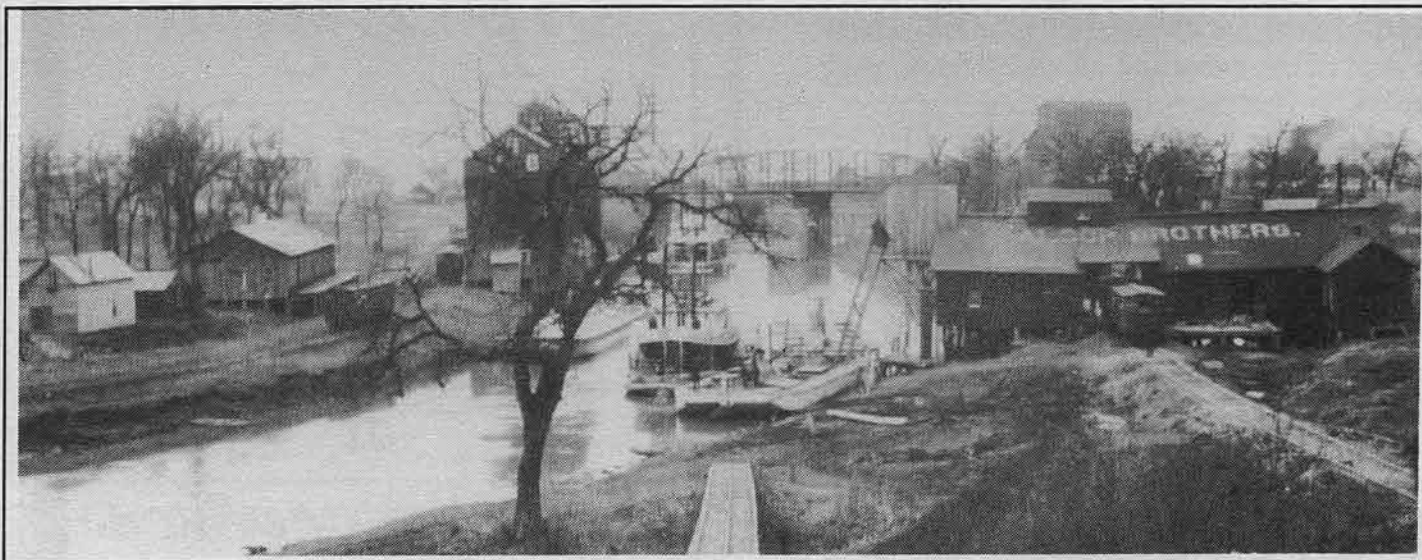
But in 1876, rails reached Fisher's Landing on the Red Lake River, a major tributary of the Red east of Grand Forks. Steamboats pulled out of Moorhead for the new

railhead. Locals turned to building flatboats. They were little more than rafts piled high with goods. After a LONG float to Winnipeg, their sailors sold their wares on the riverbank, tore apart the flatboats and sold the lumber. By 1878 Winnipeg had its own rail connections and steamboating began a long decline.

### STEAMBOATING'S FINAL DAYS

Steamboats could not compete with the much faster and cheaper railroad to Winnipeg, but there were lots of new farmers along the Red with wheat that needed transport to the railroad at Moorhead. Steamboaters turned to short-hauling grain, lumber and other items. In 1878, the huge Grandin bonanza wheat farm near Halstad built their own steamboat, the *J. L. Grandin*, and a big elevator on the Fargo bank for handling their own wheat and that of others. Brothers Henry W. and Charles Alsop followed with two steamers at Moorhead, the *H. W. Alsop* and the side-wheeler *Pluck*. The Moorhead waterfront buzzed with activity again.

But within a few years, the St. Paul, Minneapolis and Manitoba (later called the Great Northern) Railroad built branch lines up and down the banks of the Red. Steamboaters struggled for a few years then gave up. The Grandin Line parked its boat the same day rails reached their farm and the Alsops sold their ships to the railroad. Although steamboats operated near Grand Forks until about 1910, the big boats quit running out of Moorhead-Fargo in 1886.



### Moorhead-Fargo Waterfront, 1886

1886 was the last year steamboats ran regularly out of Moorhead-Fargo. Railroad branch lines built along the Red did them in. When this picture was taken the Grandin Line was still operating on the Fargo bank (at left) but the Alsop brothers had sold their boats to a railroad.

Flaten/Wange Collection

## Death and Marriage Record indexes available in the CCHS Archives

CCHS Archives now holds microfilm copies of the indexes to the Clay County Clerk of Court's marriage and death records. We don't have the records themselves but the indexes do list the date of the event and genealogists know how important a good date can be. Newspaper obituaries and wedding announcements can be wonderful sources but you have to find them first. The indexes will make finding those dates much easier.

The indexes appear quite complete and cover deaths and marriages from about 1875 to 1981. Until recently the birth, death and marriage records were kept by the Clerk of Court. In 1982 the Clerk's Office microfilmed the records and the indexes. Today the original volumes and the films are maintained by the Clay County Recorder's Office. It was through the efforts of Recorder J. Bonnie Rehder that CCHS received the indexes and we owe her a debt of thanks.

The deaths are all on one roll of film. The marriages are on two rolls, one listing the brides and another the grooms. Information recorded includes the names of the individuals, the date of the event and on which book, page and line to find the original record.

Minnesota state law is quite strict about who may make copies, certified or otherwise, of birth, death and marriage records. But since the indexes are only a finding aid, we can make copies from them. If anyone wants copies of the records themselves we send them to the Recorder's Office.

State law is also very strict about the protecting the privacy of people involved in illegitimate births. Since even the birth record indexes refer to the legitimacy of the birth we can't have them (and don't want them).

Our thanks, again, to Clay County Recorder Bonnie Rehder for her help with this project!

### Lights, Holograms and Illusions showing in Heritage Hall Feb. 18 - May 28

You have to see it to believe it! From one perspective they look flat and dull. But take a step to the right or bend your knees and the picture comes to life. You have just experienced the art and magic of holography. The Hjemkomst Center is now showing 40 fine art and technical holograms, information panels, and laser, optical and perception displays.

"*Lights, Holograms and Illusions*" is an entertaining, interactive and educational experience for all ages.

*You Are Invited*

*to the*

*Spring  
Cleaning  
Sale*

*at*

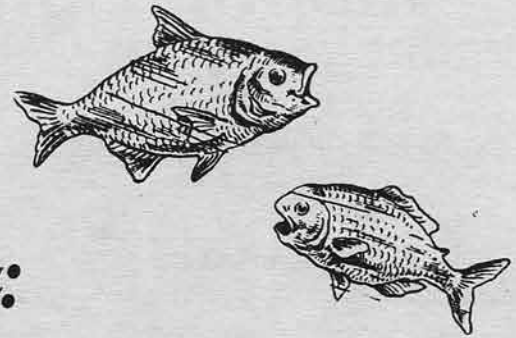
*The Heritage Shop*

Visa/MasterCard Accepted



# CLAY COUNTY MUSEUM features

## *"Old Ruby:*

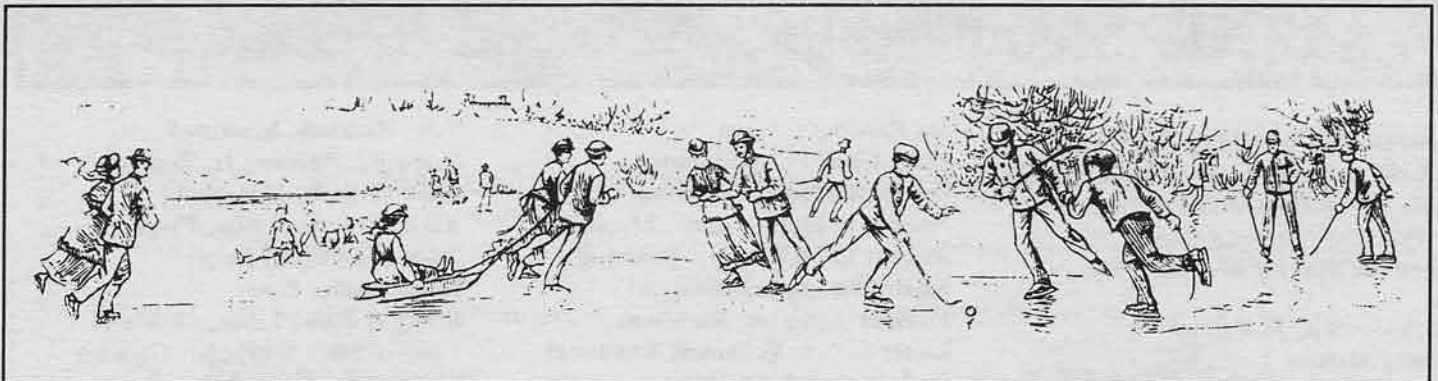


## Red River of the North //

How Clay County residents and the raging Red have used and abused each other will be explored in *"Old Ruby: Red River of the North."*

Topics include:

transportation ■ clamming ■ recreation  
flooding ■ ice cutting ■ pollution

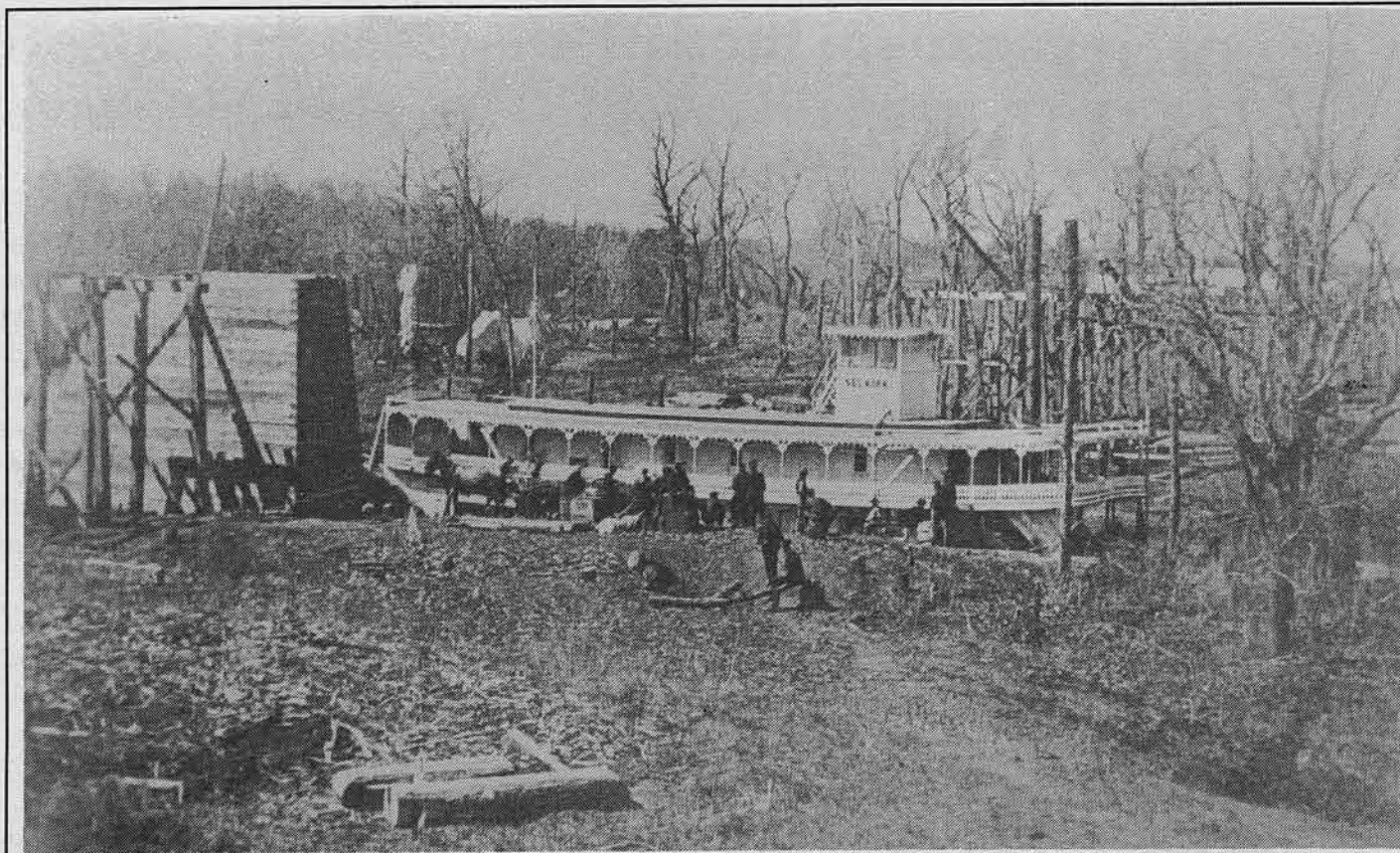


The Clay County Museum **PERMANENT EXHIBIT** includes unique characterizations of one facet of the history of towns in the county. Together they form a chapter in the overall history of Clay County.

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

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**STEAMBOAT SELKIRK TIED UP BELOW THE UNCOMPLETED NORTHERN PACIFIC RAILROAD BRIDGE, MOORHEAD, 1872**

This is one of the earliest photos of Moorhead-Fargo in the CCHS Collections. Once goods and people could reach the Red via fast moving trains, steamboat traffic downstream to Canada really took off. This view is to the southwest from about where the Moorhead end of the Center Ave. bridge is today. In the trees at left one can see the tents that made up "Fargo in the Timber" where early residents could find whiskey, gambling and other entertainments. In the distance to the right is "Fargo on the Prairie," home to Fargo's more sober citizens.

Roy Johnson Collection

## CCHS Memberships - New and Renewals

### January/February 1995

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

Bob Homann, Moorhead  
Kathy Mentjes, LeCenter  
Charles Nelson, Alexandria, VA  
Helen Rudi, Moorhead  
Lorraine Haugstad, Moorhead  
Jackie Packer, Burnsville  
Bob & Cindy Swenson family, Mhd  
W.L. Haggart, Fargo  
Concordia Dept. of History, Mhd  
Rick Crume, Glyndon  
Alvin Swanson, Moorhead

Jan Hendricks, Fargo  
Diane Gruhl Fillmore, Hawley  
Donna McMaster, Moorhead  
Norman & Myrtle Larson, Moorhead  
Richard T. McMurray, Annandale, VA  
Susan Clemedtson, Moorhead  
Florence Anderson, Moorhead  
Esther & Dick Vollbrecht, Moorhead  
Darlene Rustad, W. Fargo  
Curt Danielson, Moorhead  
Vern Pederson, Moorhead  
Grace Landin, Moorhead  
Ethel Menhold, Felton  
June Adele Dolva, Hawley  
Paul & Florence Korsmo, Moorhead  
Olaf & Verna Cartford, Moorhead  
Lysle & Diane Meyer, Moorhead

T.W. Richards, Moorhead  
Sherwood Peterson, Jr. Rochester  
Mark Chekola, Moorhead  
Bill & Evelette Snyder, Fargo  
Sharon Hoverson, Fargo  
Helen Austin, Baker  
Erling & Janice Linde, Moorhead  
Lucia & Steve Schroeder, Glyndon  
Shirley Strand, Hawley  
Mary Leach, Glyndon  
Dorothy R. Johnson, Moorhead

CCHS welcomes the following new members:

Mary & Kenneth Tangen, Moorhead  
Nels & Myrtle Snustad, Moorhead  
Howard R. Geng, Moorhead

# 1995 Annual Meeting/Banquet Thursday, April 6, 1995

at the Hjemkomst Center, 202 1st Ave. North, Moorhead

## "Women Through the Ages"

with

**Kathy Ray & Patty Kakac**

**A program of humorous and  
dramatic vignettes  
that characterize and celebrate  
women's lives.**

This activity is funded by grants from the Lake Region Arts Council (through an appropriation from the Minnesota State Legislature) and the U.S. West Foundation.

**Door Prizes** *Throughout the evening*

### Schedule

5:30-6:30 *Social Hour*

6:30-7:30 *Dinner/Business Meeting*  
(including election of officers)

7:30 *Program*



For reservations return coupon below by April 3

1995 CCHS Annual Meeting/Banquet  
at Hjemkomst Center  
202 1st Ave. N., Moorhead  
Thursday, April 6, 1995

**\$9.00** per person

Make check payable to:

**CLAY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

Please check your choice of Entree & return to CCHS by Apr. 3

☐ Lemon Pepper Chicken Breast    ☐ Tornado of Beef

1995 CCHS Annual Meeting/Banquet  
at Hjemkomst Center  
202 1st Ave. N., Moorhead  
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NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

Please check your choice of Entree & return to CCHS by Apr. 3

☐ Lemon Pepper Chicken Breast    ☐ Tornado of Beef

### CCHS - 1995 MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

I would like to begin/renew my membership in the Clay County Historical Society. Please enter my membership in the category I have checked below:

- ☐ INDIVIDUAL \$15.00
- ☐ FAMILY \$35.00

### CCHS MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

- \*\* Support preservation of our heritage
- \*\* Bi-Monthly Newsletter
- \*\* FREE Admission to the Center
- \*\* 25% Discount on Photo Reproductions
- \*\* 10% Discount on Acid-Free Materials
- \*\* Voting Privileges
- \*\* Invitation to all CCHS Events

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

Family memberships, please list family members.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Husband

\_\_\_\_\_  
Wife

\_\_\_\_\_  
Children (under the age of 18)

Return to: Clay County Historical Society  
P.O. Box 501  
Moorhead, MN 56561

(218) 233-4604

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CLAY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



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Address Correction Requested