

Clay County Historical Society

Clay County Historical Society Newsletter

May/June 2004

Volume XXVII No. 3

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A wedding was one of the events held during the First Annual Street Fair and Harvest Festival in Moorhead, September 20-24, 1898. The festival also featured bicycle races, a balloon ascension, needlework and livestock judging. Right: Detail area. See page 5 for the story.



President's Column

By CCHS President, Dale White

A different name on the top of this space must mean that we have begun a new CCHS year. We welcome the newest Board member Darren Leno; thanks and good wishes to departing Board member Merlyn Valan.



Thanks also for the leadership of Donna Voxland, outgoing Board President. Her influence will continue to be felt, since the Board of Directors has structured its annual election of officers so that the retiring president always has one year of active membership remaining in his or her term. We hope that will promote continuity of Board activity from one year to the next. Among other involvements, Donna will continue to oversee the long range planning project that began on her watch nearly a year ago, and which is nearing conclusion.

We are currently a young Board in terms of tenure. Eight of the twelve members are in their first three-year term, and five of them have been appointed or newly elected to the Board within the last year and a half. Yet all are dedicated to the mission of CCHS and share in the staff's belief that we are one of the top county historical societies in the state of Minnesota.

The Board of Directors is also exploring ways that we can gain visibility in the eastern part of the County, thereby attracting membership interest. For example, the Board plans to hold a fall meeting in the District 3 schoolhouse near Rollag. We wish all residents of Clay County to feel ownership of CCHS; that means we not only welcome member's input--we **need** it. This is a theme you may hear often this year.

Summer will see these organizational activities for your participation: the Bergquist Cabin Open House, June 25 and 26, and our booth at the Clay County Fair, July 15-18. Our new exhibit, *Old, New, Borrowed, Blue: Weddings in Clay County*, began June 6. Special events in connection with that exhibit will be announced soon.

Donations and Memorials

March & April 2004

Carolyn Barden, Mrhd for monthly volunteer prize
 Carolyn Bleeker, Chattaroy, WA for research
 Donald Cowan, Wichita Falls, TX for research
 John Elton, Hawley for monthly volunteer prize
 Rodney Erickson, Mrhd for monthly volunteer prize
 Georgetown Garniers for program by Mark Peihl
 Ruth Hoyer, Westchester, IL for research
 Darren Leno, Mrhd for monthly volunteer prize
 Sherry Watt, Glyndon for monthly volunteer prize
 Dale White, Mrhd for monthly volunteer prize
 LaVonne Woods, Omaha, NE for Bergquist Cabin
 Young in Spirit Group, Our Redeemer Church,
 Moorhead for program by Mark Peihl



CLAY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Hjemkomst Center, 202 1st Avenue North
 PO Box 501, Moorhead, MN 56561-0501
 Phone: 218-299-5520/Fax: 218-299-5525
www.info.co.clay.mn.us/history

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 Mark Peihl, Archivist
 Alvera Murch, Bookkeeper
 Janet Nelson, Volunteer Coordinator
 Jane Renner, Office Assistant (funded by Experience Works)

NEWSLETTER PRODUCTION

Lisa Vedaa, Editor
lisa.vedaa@ci.moorhead.mn.us
 Pam Burkhardt, Contributor
pam.burkhardt@ci.moorhead.mn.us
 Mark Peihl, Contributor
mark.peihl@ci.moorhead.mn.us

Cooking up the Bergquist Cabin Open House June 25 & 26

The 14th Annual Open House at the 1870 Bergquist Log Cabin will be held June 25 and 26 this year in conjunction with the Scandinavian Hjemkomst Festival. The Bergquist Cabin, at 1008 7th Street North, is the oldest home on its original site in Moorhead. The Open House is conducted jointly by the Clay County Historical Society and the Swedish Society of the Red River Valley.



The theme at the cabin this year is cooking! A variety of Swedish cookbooks will be on display, and selected recipes will be available for visitors to take home for their own collections. Activities at the cabin will include tours by CCHS Archivist Mark Peihl, accordion music by Ron Anderson, Swedish cookies, kool-aid (donated by McDonald's) and many hands-on Swedish craft activities.

Limited parking is available at the cabin, so plan to

catch the shuttle bus (sponsored by the State Bank of Moorhead) from the Hjemkomst Center, where you can also take in the 27th Annual Scandinavian Festival. The festival runs June 25-27, and celebrates the cultures and traditions of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, and Scandinavian America.

Authentic Scandinavian and Scandinavian-American ethnic entertainment, with folk dancing, arts and crafts demonstrations, and music from Scandinavian Folk to the new Nordic Sound are featured at the festival, as well as mouth-watering Scandinavian foods, colorful folk costumes, family history resources, and magical storytellers. Finland is this year's featured country, so be sure to take in the display of beautiful Finnish folk, fine, and modern art in the atrium!

Admission to the festival is \$5 for adults, \$4 for 55+, and free for ages 19 and under. Adults can purchase a three-day festival pass for \$8. For more information about the Cabin Open House, contact CCHS at 218-299-5520. For festival info visit www.scandinavianhjemkomstfestival.org, or call 218-299-5452.

Something Old, New, Borrowed and Blue in new Weddings exhibit

Old, New, Borrowed, Blue: Weddings in Clay County, is the new exhibit at the Clay County Museum! The title is of course taken from the old phrase which has become so symbolic. **Something Old** and **Borrowed** symbolize the connection that still exists between the bride, her family and friends. They will still be there. **Something New** represents her new life. The color **Blue** is an age-old symbol of love, purity and fidelity.

The exhibit chronicles more than 150 years of weddings with Clay County connections. More than thirty dresses are featured, ranging in styles from the hoop skirt of 1865 to the revival of the pioneer style in 1977, along with a variety of accessories from shoes and dress patterns to 70-year-old groom's cake.

Photographs and mementoes of area couples abound. Use a feather pen to share your wedding memories in our journal and try your hand at our bridal shower games,

while the kids try on bow-ties and veils and get creative in the Hands-On Center.

The exhibit opens with a wedding dress and hope chest from the Charlotte Onstine. More than eighty years ago, Charlotte Onstine's mother hired a local carpenter to make hope chests for her three daughters. She decorated the chests with split wooden sewing thread spools. Charlotte married "Bud" Onstine on October 4, 1936. Onstine purchased her wedding dress at Waterman's Department Store on the corner of Center Avenue and 6th Street in Moorhead. Because of the Depression, she bought a dress that could be worn again for dressy occasions. Even a piece of the fruitcake used for the groom's cake is on display!

The Clay County Museum is open seven days a week, Monday—Saturday 10-5, Tuesdays 10-9, and Sundays 12-5. For more information call 218-299-5520.

Outreach Displays

	<u>Open</u>	<u>Close</u>
Hawley Public Library	April	July
Moorhead Public Library	<i>[in use by library]</i>	
Barnesville Public Library	April	July
Fargo CVB	July	October

The Hawley Public Library continues a series on toys. Part 2 BOYS' TOYS features active toys recalling the days of noisy activity. Be prepared to knuckle down with these playthings from the past.

The case at Moorhead Public Library is being used for specialty displays by various organizations until July.

The Barnesville Public Library displays toys that educate and exercise the mind in Part 1 TOYS! JUST IMAGINE! The featured toys include a 1936 Gilbert Chemistry kit, a tea set and a Nancy Ann story book doll, "Missing Link" puzzle and "The Corner Store" by Wolverine complete with food boxes, scale and roll of wrapping paper!



WELCOME! The hospitality industry is the topic this summer at the Fargo Convention and Visitors' Bureau along I-94. Serving dishes, plates and menus from the past will tempt visitors to sample the culinary welcome we currently provide! Don't forget your room key! The display starts in July.

IN-HOUSE DISPLAYS

An exhibit for the 2004 Scandinavian Hjemkomst Festival will open in the CCHS hall case on June 1. This year's featured country is Finland. The display features heritage items as well as modern painting and glass.

CCHS set up a "new" display of exquisite, hand-decorated china in the lobby area. These items were painted by Beulah Forness who holds china-painting classes in the building Tuesday mornings.

Artifacts & Donors

March/April 2004

Donors include:

Moorhead: Jane Tandberg, Helen Hedelund, Beverly Anne Schloesser Woodstrom, Margaret Kragnes, Al & Janet Traaseth, Maureen Reed
Glyndon: Sherri Watt
Felton: Paul DesJardins
Ulen: Maybelle Dinsmore
Dalton, MN: Steve Handegaard
Apple Valley, MN: Jessykah Lattery
Fargo: Stan & Deb Severson

Artifacts include: (4) envelopes of interview materials re: MSUM cultural diversity project - Interviews w/Sonia Mayo Honadel, Walter McDuffy, Yahya Frederickson & Josie Gonzales; photo, view looking east on Center Avenue, Moorhead 1939; long photo of Camp Cody near Deming, New Mexico, October 1917 [camp of 135th Infantry formerly 1st Minnesota]; *Operation Shock and Awe* poster and flyer, and issue of the MSUM Advocate 10-9-2003 about the *Operation Shock and Awe* event; (2) photos: the Bogenrief home, 611 Main, Moorhead and the family's first car; humorous business card, school pin, funeral program, obituary, article 1-22-2001 from the *Farmers' Forum* re: Russell Kragnes; Sunday school pins for Vernon Kragnes, copies of wedding photos of Cora Klokseth and Alvin Kragnes (1917) and Margaret Thordarson and Russell Kragnes (1948), copy of 50th anniversary photo of Cora and Alvin; copy of photo postcard of front of MSTC building after fire of Feb. 9, 1930; color photocopy of School Dist. #91 interior with teacher & students around 1905; cabinet card photo of Grand Pacific Hotel with 1883 Christmas menu on the back; photo of Marcel DesJardins who was killed at St. Lo, France July 12, 1944, (2) two flags from the American Legion Post in Felton named in honor of DesJardins, World War II-era Springfield rifle 30.06; large, oval iron kettle from near Trondheim, Norway used in Eglon & Parke Townships.

One wedding dress:

worn June 23, 1904 by Lenora Dahl [Mrs. Otto Mortenson]

worn June 23, 1937 by daughter Ethel [Mrs. Oscar Blilie]
worn June 23, 1947 by another daughter Maybelle Mortenson [Mrs. Harold Dinsmore].

All couples married at Trinity Lutheran Church, Moorhead – more history is included with the donation.

A Harvest Festival Wedding-and more!

In addition to the many dresses and few men's suits in CCHS' new wedding exhibit, there are many other interesting items. Here are "tidbits" from five of the categories.

By Pam Burkhardt, Collections Manager

From the Old Country

A remnant of fabric is described in a note in Norwegian attributed to Jennie Schow Noben.

Year 1885. Alma Schow. A memento from my mother to me. A piece of my great-grand-mother's bridal dress from [the] year 1793.

Jennie's parents were Martin Schow born in 1835 and Dorthea Larsdatter Bjerke born in 1839 and married on September 24, 1861. The Schow family came over from Norway in 1870 and settled in Cass County, North Dakota. Jennie's sister, Clara became the second wife of Moorhead photographer O. E. Flaten.

[Note: Research is being conducted to find the names of the couple married in 1793.]

The Ceremony

The Wednesday, September 21, 1898 edition of the *Moorhead Daily News* reported on an unusual event held during the first annual Moorhead Harvest Festival.

The public marriage under the arch at Fourth and Front Streets at 2 p.m. drew an immense crowd. The band was present and played the wedding march. Justice [Peter] Odegaard performed the ceremony. The couple married was Louis Ford and Sophie Goslin. The bride had a girl about 10 or 12 years of age at her side. She was evidently a widow. The groom has been married before, it is stated, once or more times.

According to the June 22, 1900, U.S. Federal Census, Louis E., Sophie M. and step-daughter Lizzie Ford were living in New Rockford, Eddy

a taste of weddings in Clay County

County, North Dakota.

The September 20-24, 1898 festival in Moorhead had been the first. According to the paper, the next festival in 1899 was the last.



This silk brocade fabric from a 1793 wedding dress is much more beautiful in person. See it in the new weddings exhibit! The silk base is a mauve tone, with ivory, green, and coral embroidered floral motifs.

Wedding Presents

Albert Thompson & Jennie Josephine Morken were married on December 20, 1913 in Barnesville. Ed McDunn, owner of E. F. McDunn Implement Co. in Barnesville, gave the couple a silver sugar and creamer. Albert, born July 22, 1886, was raised by his grandparents, Peter and Helga Anderson of Rollag. Jennie, born November 29, 1891, was the daughter of Peter J. Morken and Anne Kleven Morken of Morken and Parke Townships.

Festivities

Clara (last name unknown) sent a souvenir postcard to Mr. Eric Hagen, Antelope, Montana. It was mailed in Ulen and postmarked April 19, 1916.

Continued next page...

Check out the CCHS Booth at the Clay County Fair July 15-18!

Visit the Clay County Fair in Barnesville July 15-18, and stop by the CCHS Booth under the Grandstand! We will have a brand new laminated ethnic map of Clay County on display—it's the same one from the 1910 Census, but totally redone and a lot easier to read. CCHS Collections Manager Pam Burkhardt will also have added some displays to the school house on the fairgrounds.

The Clay County Fair is a fun time for all—don't miss it!

Photos from the Old, New, Borrowed, Blue Grand Opening June 6



Above: Visitors sign the guest book and register for door prizes. Below: Board Members cut the grand-opening ribbon.



Harvest Festival, continued from page 5

Contained in Clara's message to Eric was the following:

I am now at Ulen again and having a good old time as usual. Are going to a wedding dance here in town tonite.

The Ulen Union had more information on the event. The wedding dance followed the marriage of Golde Stark to Lloyd M. Handcock. They had been married at 3:45 at home. H. H. Herzog was the Justice of the Peace, witnesses were Inga Roft and C. E. Higbie. Many useful gifts were received. The dance was held at the IOOF hall in spite of inclement weather.

Accessories

Carl Thysell wore a white bow tie and white kid gloves when he married Emma Roberts on October 30, 1907 in Minneapolis. The couple lived in Hawley. Carl was born January 22, 1878 in Hawley Township and died September 16, 1952. Emma was born June 6, 1877 in Norway and died February 11, 1951.

The bow is only four inches long and two inches wide. It is decorated with white eyelet embroidery accented with pink.



Above: Guests visit in the exhibit's Hands-On Center.

Left: Jane Renner served. (a reference to the Ladies' Aid minutes of yore).



Ready for Some Fun? Expanded River Arts on Tuesdays

Moorhead businesses and organizations are excited to present an evening of music, art, kids' activities and river fun beginning June 8th and every Tuesday through August 17th from 4:00 pm to dusk.

Follow the Yellow Balloons from site to site!

Activities and sites include:

Art Walk - This summer Art Walk will include the Log Cabin, Atomic Coffee and the Rourke Gallery on 4th Street.

Log Cabin Folk Art Center, 315 4th Street North
Summer Resident Artists and Outdoor Concerts - Bring a lawn chair or blanket and enjoy the fun! Drawings for prizes.

Hjemkomst Center, 202 1st Avenue North
Clay County Museum and Archives - *Old, New, Borrowed, Blue: Weddings in Clay County* free exhibit. Genealogical research help is available in the archives. (299-5520)

Heritage Hjemkomst Interpretive Center - Call for current information. (299-5511)

Gardener's/Flea Market - Sell or browse for antiques, collectibles, hand crafted items, flowers, plants, and baked items. Held in the west end of the parking lot of the Hjemkomst Center. (299-5340)

S.S. Ruby Pontoon Tours/Canoe and Kayak Rentals - Tour the Red River by the S.S. Ruby that leaves every hour or rent a canoe/kayak from under the 1st Avenue North Bridge in Moorhead (access in Hjemkomst parking lot). Sponsored by River Keepers. (701-793-7829)

Alpine Carriage Rides - Free carriage rides on two routes! Ride from the Log Cabin through old South Moorhead or take the second route through the woods along the Red River from the Hjemkomst Center to the Moorhead Center Mall. Carriage rides connect most events!

Atomic Coffee - Art walk begins here at 5:30 pm with the Gallery exhibit. (299-6161)

Red Bear Grill - Specials and music on the patio. (287-0080)

Moorhead Public Library - Storytelling for kids at 6:00 and 7:00 pm every Tuesday. On August 10th the library will be celebrating its 100th year with music, ice cream treats and games from 6:00 to 8:00 pm. (233-7594)

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Members elected to Board of Directors at Annual Meeting

The Clay County Historical Society elected three members to its board of Directors, Tuesday, April 20, at the organization's Annual Meeting at the Hjemkomst Center. Darren Leno was elected to his first three-year term, and Alvin Swanson and Rodney Erickson were elected to second three-year terms. Board members are allowed to serve two three-year terms.



Leno is a Moorhead native and a financial advisor with Thrivent Financial for Lutherans. He has a strong interest in local history and believes that knowing more about the history of the community in which he lives makes it a more interesting place to live, and makes him a better

informed person on local issues. Leno would like to help the historical society identify ways to augment and expand its revenue sources and membership base.

Swanson has been member of CCHS for more than 20 years. He has farmed in Clay County all his life with the exception of two years spent in military service, and has worked with a number of community organizations. Swanson is currently serving as CCHS Treasurer.



Rodney Erickson is a retired teacher and librarian. He served 33 years as MSUM Collection Development Librarian and has served on several boards and committees, including the Lake Agassiz Regional Library Board, Moorhead Public Library Board, and the Tri-College Acquisition Task Force. He is currently Chair of the Board Education Committee.

Seventy-three people attended the CCHS Annual Meeting, and \$208.00 was collected in a free-will offering for the program, *Coya Comes Back*, a one-woman play written and performed by Kathy Ray, from Barrett, Minnesota. The Lake Region Arts Council provided Ray with a grant to help her develop the play.



Above: The Friends of the Buffalo River State Park are celebrating the grand re-opening of the Park's swimming beach June 20.

Left: Able Hedlund was President of the Moorhead Rod and Gun Club and instrumental in establishing Buffalo River Park.

Buffalo River State Park

Clay County's little gem

By Mark Peihl, CCHS Archivist

On June 20, the Friends of the Buffalo River State Park will celebrate the grand reopening of the park's swimming pool. I plan on taking in the festivities, scheduled from 1:30-4:00, and urge others to do so as well. This little jewel in the center of Clay County is one of my favorite haunts. I cross country ski and hike its many trails and marvel at the constantly changing panorama of its wild prairie flowers. An unusual combination of geology, farming practices, drought, a nationwide depression, evolving government agencies and the efforts of a dedicated group of sportsmen brought about the park. But it was a difficult birth. This article looks at the park's origins.

The Buffalo River State Park today sits squarely on the Buffalo River Delta, a geologic remnant from thousands of years ago. Many of our readers know that at the end of the last ice age, some 12-15,000 years ago, water from melting glaciers pooled here to create glacial Lake Agassiz. Changing drainage patterns affected the level of the lake. At each level, beaches, like bathtub rings, formed all around the lake. Two of those beaches are visible near the park. Campbell, right at the entrance to the park, is marked by a plaque on a huge bolder just off Highway 10. Herman beach, marking the highest level of the lake, runs north and south about 2½ miles to the east, near the park's eastern border. Between the two is the Buffalo River Delta.

Many rivers carried water and sediments into the lake, including the Buffalo River. Rocks and gravel settled out near the mouth of the Buffalo, lighter sand and silt flowed further out before settling. This created a fan-shaped delta at the Buffalo's mouth. Wave action from storms crossing the lake eroded back the western edge of the delta creating Campbell beach. Unlike most of the rest of Clay County, the soils in the beach/delta area are pretty marginal, better suited for haying and grazing than crop production. It's one of the few places in the state where virgin prairie escaped the plow.

The area is also marked by flowing springs which feed the Buffalo. Through most of its length the Buffalo is a

muddy, lazy, typical little prairie stream running in a trench, but through the beaches and delta it tumbles over rock and sand cutting a deep ravine. Here the river is a clear, cold, fast spring-fed creek with a mix of elm, ash and basswood trees along its banks.

This delightful combination of environments, a wooded clear stream running through virgin prairie, has attracted people for ages. It's a natural place for a park.

The park buildings today are located in the southeast quarter of section 10, Riverton Township. Jacob Henry Smyser and his wife Mary acquired the quarter through the Homestead Act in 1883. But Smyser was no ordinary sod buster. He was born in Pittsburg to a wealthy steel family, graduated from West Point in 1861, and joined the 4th U. S. Artillery. After the Civil War, Smyser remained in the Army's Ordinance Department for a few years then contracted tuberculosis and retired from the military. He and Mary moved west for his health, arriving in Clay County in April 1878. He filed on his quarter and bought up much of the surrounding countryside, eventually owning over 1,600 acres.

Though far from ideal for farming, the area was perfect for Smyser's needs. He raised blooded horses and cattle, grazing them on the rich prairie grass. Jacob and Mary built a twenty-room mansion on the banks of the Buffalo about where the park's headquarters now stand. Surrounded by servants, Smyser lived the life of a country gentleman. They called the place Willow Bank Farm. Mrs. Smyser entertained eastern guests in high style, throwing lavish parties. Visitors picnicked, swam in the Buffalo and toured the estate on splendid saddle horses and in a fancy carriage driven by a cockney groomsmen. Their home featured a spectacular curved mahogany banister, built by a cabinet maker brought from the east specifically for the task.

But Captain Smyser's tuberculosis eventually returned. He died in May 1885 at age 46. After his funeral in Pittsburg, Mary returned to Willow Bank Farm for a time but she soon sold the property. A succession of owners

Continued next page...

raised livestock on the parcel. Locals used the area for hunting and other forms of recreation. Eventually, Moorhead businessman William H. Davy acquired much of the land.

Agriculture was changing the rest of Clay County. High grain prices during World War I induced many farmers to put more land into production. Falling commodity prices after the war depressed farm income. Farmers responded the only way they knew how – by increasing production, breaking up more prairie land. This sent prices even lower.

In 1923, a group of Moorhead area sportsmen, alarmed at the disappearance of game and fish from the fields and waters of Clay County, formed the Moorhead Rod and Gun Club. Some of the tactics of this active bunch seem today, at best, quaint. They declared war on the crow, (“the most destructive enemy of game birds known to man”) and shot thousands. And they failed to recognize the real culprits - loss of habitat and declining water quality. But they did create a game refuge in the beach ridge area, introduced the Ring-necked Pheasant and Hungarian Partridge to Clay County, and stocked count-



C. P. Brown was President of the Moorhead Rod and Gun Club in 1935 and got the ball rolling for the establishment of Buffalo River Park.

less fish fry in local lakes and rivers – including Brook and Brown Trout in the delta section of the Buffalo River.

In 1934, the club received word that parties planned to create a private resort along the Buffalo in Riverton Township. Members and others in Clay County realized this would keep the general public out of this long-popular recreational area. By early the next year,

the club formulated a counter proposal. They planned a 20-foot-high dam (near the present state park dam) which would back up a lake half a mile wide and a mile long for the propagation of fish, establish a public recreation area, create relief construction jobs for those unemployed by the depression and to provide an emergency water supply for Moorhead, Dilworth and Glyndon.

The idea attracted lots of interest and support all over the

county. There were only three lakes in the county with real fishing potential, all in the southeast corner of the county. 1934 had been an extremely dry year. Dust storms from Dakota darkened the skies, lakes dried up. The Red River, sole source of water for Fargo, quit running. And water levels in the deep wells Moorhead relied on dropped precipitously. The proposal looked pretty good.

A petition quickly gathered over 500 signatures supporting the “Muskoda Dam and Reservoir Project.” (The name came from a railroad siding and small community two miles to the east.) The Clay County Commission, Moorhead City Council, Rotary Club, Kiwanis, Chamber of Commerce and American Legion Post also signed on. In March 1935, Rod and Gun Club President C. P. Brown began the process to seek federal and state funds for the project. (Moorhead resident Brown was the manager of the Fargo and Moorhead Electric Street Railway and later Chairman of the Buffalo River Dam Committee. His nephew donated copies of his correspondence to the Buffalo River State Park. Much of the information in this article comes from that collection.)

By the time Franklin D. Roosevelt took office as President in March 1933, the Great Depression had reached critical proportions. FDR responded to the emergency with a series of relief programs to aid those out of work. Among the first was the Federal Emergency Relief Administration. Under FERA the states, through State Emergency Relief Administration offices (SERA), distributed the federal funds. Because of the urgent unemployment situation, FERA initially relied on direct relief – cash payments to the needy. But FDR hated direct relief. He called it “a narcotic, a subtle destroyer of the human spirit.” He much preferred the poor to work for their assistance. By the end of 1934 FERA had shifted to funding projects designed to improve the nation’s infrastructure and employ those in need.

The Minnesota SERA divided the state into eight districts, each with a supervising engineer. Local groups submitted project plans to the district engineer who examined the proposal, made recommendations and forwarded the project to the state level for final planning and funding. Brown and the Rod and Gun Club launched a two-pronged attack for money. They submitted plans to the SERA engineer and sent a delegation to meet with the SERA administration in St. Paul. And they mounted a savvy and aggressive lobbying campaign to get the state Executive Council (the Governor, Lt. Governor, State Auditor, Treasurer, Secretary of State and the Attorney

Continued next page...

General) to approve state money to purchase flowage rights to the land to be flooded. The club enlisted state legislators, local politicians and party leaders of every political stripe in the effort.

Public funding was necessary for the project to succeed but trying to get it involved a long slog through federal and state bureaucracies. In May the Executive Committee approved the land acquisition funds but the rest of the plan took years to complete, morphing along the way into a completely new project.

In March 1935 the SERA engineers surveyed the proposed reservoir site and submitted a preliminary plan to the state. A series of frustrating delays followed. SERA took all summer to come up with final engineering drawings. In September the US Army Corps of Engineers refused to approve the plans because of "engineering deficiencies" and sent them back to SERA for revision. Meanwhile, the federal government gave preliminary approval to the venture, subject to agreement by the Army Corps and the Minnesota Department of Conservation. It received Works Progress Administration (WPA) project number 7-178.

The FERA plan of funneling money through the states never worked that well. The feds did away with FERA December 31, 1935 and turned relief projects over to the WPA. With this program, the federal government administered projects directly. Local groups had to come up with money for materials and the feds paid for the labor. Federal regulations also required that a local governmental body had to accept responsibility for the project and see to its continued maintenance.

Problems started in December when the Clay County Commission refused to take responsibility for the project and the feds dropped a bombshell. A water source for Moorhead was a central part of the project. Regulations required that the Moorhead City Council agree to definitely make use of the water before the reservoir could be completed. Pumping facilities and a pipeline could cost the city between \$250,000 and \$500,000. The city tried to submit a vaguely worded letter of support for the project but it did not satisfy the feds. With money nearly in hand, the project was close to unraveling. The city council asked federal and state officials to come to Moorhead to discuss the project. The brutal cold and blizzards of early 1936 (see CCHS Newsletter, Jan/Feb 1993, "Just How Cold Was It?" for further information about this incredible winter) delayed the officials' visit

until April. Meanwhile, the state went forward with condemnation proceedings on the 122.8 acres of land the proposed reservoir would inundate.

On April 7, WPA officials finally met with local authorities. The meeting concluded with the dropping of the water reservoir part of the project and the county commission agreeing to take on the dam responsibility. But it was a moot point. Without the water source component, it was highly unlikely that the feds would approve the plan, money allocated or not.



The WPA built the park's showers, dam and parking lot border with cut fieldstone donated by local farmers. The buildings are on the National Register of Historic Places.

Even with the water component, the plan would have been in trouble. The Department of Conservation was clearly never pleased with the dam and reservoir project. But a new plan was coming together in St. Paul which would change the venture's direction completely.

Since the 1880s the state of Minnesota had haphazardly acquired properties as state parks with no real plan for their development or use. By 1923 twenty-three such "parks" were in place, many little more than monuments to events related to the US - Dakota Conflict of 1862. Most were administered by the State Auditor, some by the Forestry Department. In 1925, the legislature created the Department of Conservation (predecessor to today's Department of Natural Resources) and placed the parks under its jurisdiction. But real professional park management did not begin until a separate Division of State

Continued next page...

Buffalo River State Park, continued from page 11

Parks within Conservation took over in 1935.

Harold Lathrop, the first Park Commissioner, brought a new ethic to park management that tried to balance the inherent paradox of maintaining natural environments with use of the parks by recreationists. Lathrop also attempted to address the uneven geographic distribution of state parks. Most were located near the twin cities or in the Minnesota River Valley. None existed north or west of Itasca State Park near Park Rapids. With advice from the National Park Service, state funds to buy lands and WPA funding to outfit the parks, the late 1930s saw the biggest and best planned expansion of the state park system in Minnesota's history.

In July, 1936, Department of Conservation Engineer Abbott G. Smith and WPA Division Engineer Walter Macgregor visited the proposed dam site with members of the Rod and Gun Club and local game wardens. They proposed a new plan. Instead of one huge dam and reser-

voir (which they pointed out would drown out every tree in the vicinity) they suggested building a series of three to five small dams creating pools for wading or swimming in the channel of the Buffalo and saving the timbered land proposed for inundation for a state park. Excited by the idea, practically every official in Clay County quickly lined up to sign on to the new proposal. A couple of weeks later, Lathrop also visited the site with Smith, Macgregor and about 50 local officials, liked what he saw and promised to push the state park. Within days 500 county residents signed a new petition supporting the park.

Their enthusiasm was well placed but a bit premature. A new round of maddening delays began. Designs for the first of the smaller dams were not completed until fall. Park officials also entered negotiations with William H. Davy for the donation of a 200 acre parcel just west of the dam site. The proposed park would bear his name. Things were close to a resolution when the 92-year-old Davy died in December 1936. To everyone's surprise he

Continued next page...

New CCHS Memberships & Renewals

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

NEW MEMBERS

Ace Hardware, Moorhead
Carolyn Kirk, Andover, NJ
Moorhead Antique Mall
Bob & Linda Swanson, Moorhead

NEW GIFT MEMBERSHIPS

Rick & Anne Brakke, Moorhead
LaVonne Brandt, Moorhead
Betty Leiseth, Moorhead
Wayne & Sylvia Nelson, Hawley
Anne Olsgaard, Moorhead
Kirk & Kathy Watt, Glyndon

RENEWALS

Herbert & Clarice Aakre, Hawley
Florence Anderson, Moorhead
Olive Andvik, Moorhead
Joel Belgum, Moorhead
Carl L. & June Bailey, Moorhead
Helen D. Benson, Moorhead

Jim Bergquist & Jane Eastes, Battle Lake, MN
Robert A. Brekken, Hawley
Dorothy Carey, Moorhead
Florene Culp, Audubon, MN
Jim & Portia Danielson, Moorhead
Paul DesJardins, Felton
Jean P. Doty, Hawley
Gordon & Carol Ekre, Hawley
Arnie & Mary Ellingson, Fargo
Mike Elton, Burnsville, MN
Duane & Joan Erickson, Moorhead
Karen D. Evanson, Moorhead
Janet Fox, Hawley
LaVerne Larson Halverson, Mpls
Delmar & Rhoda Hansen, Moorhead
Harold Helmeke, Moorhead
Loren Helmeke, Fargo
Irene Hogan, Moorhead
Mr. & Mrs. Earl Ingebretson, Felton
Dr. Heidi Kassenborg, Afton, MN
Richard Keeping, Hawley
Keith & Lorraine Langseth, Glyndon
Jerry & Dona Lein, Moorhead
Sandra McEvers, Moorhead

Melberg Church Supply, Moorhead
Katherine Mentjes, LeCenter, MN
Eileen Michels, St. Paul, MN
Karen Myran, Hawley
Don & Helen Olson, Moorhead
Sherwood Peterson, Jr., Rochester, MN
Don & Kathy Pingree, Georgetown
Elsie Pitsenbarger, Fargo
Kathy Richards, Georgetown
Al Rieniets, Moorhead
Mel & Margaret Ristvedt, Hawley
River Keepers, Fargo
Leslie Rogne, Kindred
Dean & Sara Sather, Fargo
Mildred Skugrud, Moorhead
Rachel Smithwick, Barnesville
Stenerson Lumber, Moorhead
Aubrey & Catherine Thomas, Mhd
Bruce N. Thorson, Waite Park, MN
Myrtle Tufton, Moorhead
Matthew & Kathy Valan, Moorhead
Merlyn & Shirlee Valan, Moorhead
Robert & Judy Videen, Moorhead
Gloria Weisgram, Moorhead
Arthur & Marie Wenner, Moorhead
Tom & Diane Wray Williams, Mhd

Buffalo River State Park, continued from page 12

died without a will. His attorney, William Adams, was not appointed executor of his estate until February. The state arranged a purchase agreement that spring. A bill in the 1937 legislative session passed establishing the "Buffalo River State Park" but the legislature, dominated by fiscal conservatives, refused to allocate any money for maintenance. Lathrop refused to submit the dam plans to the WPA without a way to maintain it.

Clay County eventually agreed to provide maintenance and Lathrop submitted a new proposal calling for only one dam, picnic facilities and a 300 foot wide sand bottomed swimming pool. Other features included a road into the site and a fence around the grounds. Construction proceeded through summer but halted in fall 1937, ironically because of a lack of workers.

Work progressed intermittently over the next year and a half. During the winter 1938-39 the WPA built shower facilities, a latrine, garage and park manager's residence. All, like the dam before, were built with cut fieldstone, donated by local farmers.

The park opened with little fan-fair in Spring 1939 but pollution in the Buffalo kept the pool closed until the next year. A new chlorination system fixed the problem. No newspapers covered the park's official (but anti-

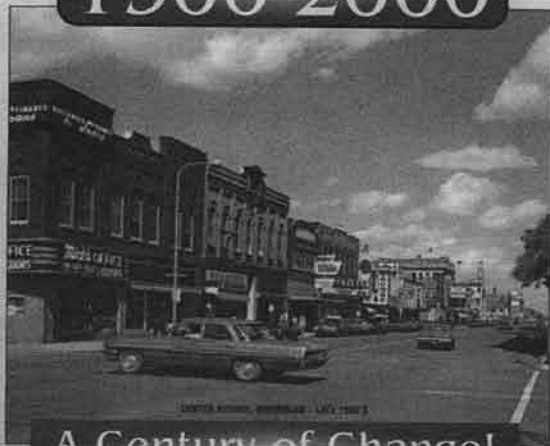


A visitor to the Buffalo River State Park relaxes by the park dam in 1939. *Fargo Forum*.

climactic) opening on Memorial Day, 1940. Since then the park has been expanded several times.

The Last One Hundred Years in
MOORHEAD
 MINNESOTA

1900-2000



A Century of Change!

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Take a stroll through the last 100 Years in Moorhead

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These high-quality, paper cover books, published by Heritage Publications of Hendrum, MN, are fundraisers for the Clay and Cass County Historical Societies.

Pick up your copies today at the Clay County Museum & Archives in the Hjemkomst Center, 202 1st Avenue North, Moorhead, or send your check or money order for \$23.00 to CCHS, PO Box 501, Moorhead, MN 56561.

Call CCHS at 218-299-5520 for more information.

River Arts, continued from page 7

Moorhead Center Mall - Live music and pony rides from 5:00-7:00 pm on June 8th. Business discounts. (233-6117)

Mable's Bed and You Cook Breakfast - 1st Tuesday of every month Open House. Mrs. Santa Claus will be visiting her sister Mable. Bring the kids to visit! (233-5625)

Funky Junque - Special: 10% off any item. Open 10:00 am to 6:00 pm. (299-2000)

Ace Hardware - Kids Club Activities- Kids build projects to take home- first one is a birdhouse! Open to all ages. Held in the Ace Hardware Parking lot. (236-6905)

M & H Gas Station - Hotdog Cart outside. Special: 2 for 1 car washes. (233-5510)

Continued next page...

Sponsor, Patron, Sustaining and Supporting Memberships

Please help us thank these members for supporting the Clay County Historical Society by patronizing their businesses:

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We need you!

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SUSTAINING (\$100-\$199)

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Melberg Church Supply
Moorhead Midday-Central Lions
Stenerson Lumber
Thrivent Financial for Lutherans
Ward Muscatell Automotive
Wells Fargo Bank MN, N A, Mhd
Wright Funeral Home

Sincere thanks go to these individuals in the Patron, Sustaining, and Supporting membership levels!

Individual Patron (\$200-\$499)

Darren & Jane Leno, Moorhead
Richard T. McMurray, Annandale, VA
Katherine Mentjes, LeCenter, MN

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Bruce N. Thorson
Phyllis Thysell
Ron & Deanna Ulven
Mark & Donna Voxland
Arthur & Marie Wenner
Dick & Kathy Zaylskie

River Arts, continued from page 14

Rourke Art Gallery – South of the Log Cabin, Art Walk ends here. Discounted Admission of \$2. (236-8861)

H&R Block - Open until 8:00 pm. Free balloons for kids. Free double check of your tax returns. (236-6250)

Dairy Queen - 2-for-1 Soft Serve Special- example- cone, sundae, banana splits from 6:00-close. Tuesdays only. Some restrictions may apply.

Thank you to the following supporters for making this summer fun a reality!

City of Moorhead, H&R Block, Sportland, Pepsi, Crown Trophy, Scheels All Sports, Clay County Sheriff's Department, MN State Patrol, Hornbacher's, Moorhead Public Service, Casey's General Store, Marco, Uptown Hair Co., Karlson Law Office, Games-to-Go, Lake Agassiz Arts Council, FM Junior League, Moorhead Junior Chamber, Moorhead Center Mall, FMI Insurance, Critter's Feed and Seed, Carol Widman's Candy Company, Farmer's Insurance Group.

Additional information at individual sites, Hjemkomst Center and Moorhead Center Mall. Visit www.cityofmoorhead.com/parks/thingstodo or call 299-5340.

Calendar

June 2004—March 2005

Old, New, Borrowed, Blue: Weddings in Clay County exhibit

June 25 & 26 Bergquist Cabin Open House

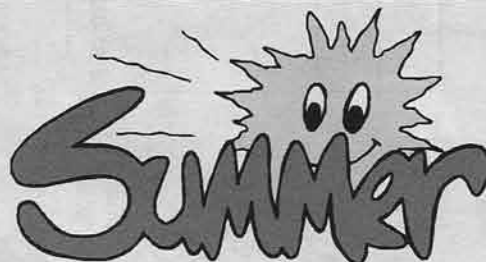
June 25-27 Scandinavian Hjemkomst Festival

July 15-18 Clay County Fair—CCHS Booth under Grandstand

Fall 2004 Clay County History Tour—watch newsletter for details

December Holiday Open House

Schedule subject to change



Old New Borrowed Blue

Weddings in Clay County

30 dresses from 1865—1977,
photographs and Hands-on Center

Through March 2005

May-July:

Finnish Folk and Fine Art

In the Atrium Display Case

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



CLAY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

MEMBERSHIP FORM

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

- ☐ Individual* \$20 ☐ Sustaining \$100
☐ Family* \$35 ☐ Patron \$200
☐ Supporting \$50 ☐ Sponsor \$500

*Businesses are not eligible for Individual and Family membership levels

CCHS MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS:

- ◆ Support preservation of your heritage
- ◆ Bi-monthly newsletter
- ◆ Discount on Acid-Free Preservation supplies
- ◆ Discount on photo reproductions from archives
- ◆ \$1 off admission to Hjemkomst Center Exhibits
- ◆ Access to CCHS history tours
- ◆ Voting Privileges

In addition to the great benefits listed above, Supporting, Sustaining, Patron and Sponsor members a certificate ready to frame and display, and a listing in all CCHS bi-monthly newsletters.

To become a CCHS Member please complete and return this form or a copy of this form with check for dues payment to:

CLAY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
PO Box 501, Moorhead, MN 56561-0501
Visit our website! www.info.co.clay.mn.us/history

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