

CLAY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



CCHS Newsletter

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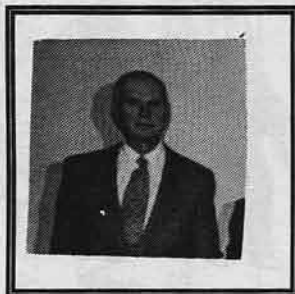
The Probstfield family 1890.

Back row l. to r. Justus, Susan, Dorothea, Edmund, Cornelia, Emily. Front row l. to r. Walter, Mary, RM Probstfield, Josephine, Catherine Goodman Probstfield, Arthur and Alexander.

President's Column

By President Norm Roos

Many U.S. servicemen's memories have been revived and recorded in the last year or two due to a renewed interest in our country's history during the economic depression and drought of the 1930s and the violence of the early 1940s. The recent writings and research of popular TV commentator Tom Brokaw have played a major role in explaining these topics.



Two Clay County Historical Society Board Members, Merlyn Valan and your president have vivid memories of the farm depression and drought followed by extended service in the U.S. Military during WW II.

I had the opportunity recently to again visit neighboring Cass County's Bonanzaville exhibits and demonstrations. The many workers there are to be commended for their interest and diligence in preserving an important segment of our area's history.

At Bonanzaville I had the opportunity to again view and photograph four airplanes that I flew, or flew in, during WW II. The largest of these is the DC3, a plane that Northwest Airlines operated to and from Fargo during the 30s and 40s. It carried between 25 and 30 passengers. When our nation entered WWII this plane model was called the C-47 by the military and thousands were built for carrying troops and supplies all over the world. It was a "work horse" and favorite of flyers because of its stability and "toughness" under adverse weather conditions and enemy fire.

As an aerial navigator I helped fly a C-47 to embattled England by way of Puerto Rico, Brazil and Africa, a round-about-route over long distances of water. This was not a fast aircraft by modern jet plane standards. Our cruising speed was about 175 mph, and with the extra gasoline tanks temporarily installed in the plane's cabin we could stay airborne for about 15-16 hours.

This plane served very well over Europe delivering paratroopers to their drop zones, towing gliders, filled with men and equipment, carrying military cargo to points of urgent need, transporting wounded soldiers to hospitals and camps of rehabilitation, and finally, the most gratifying, the transporting of American prisoners of war

from camps in Germany (and elsewhere) to installations and hospitals in France and England. A former P.O.W. told me recently that it was the happiest moment of his life when he boarded a C-47 for the flight out of Germany, to freedom, a few days after VE Day.

Because of my personal recollections of farm work during the "dirty 1930s" and the horrors of war in the 1940s, I commend the Bonanzaville workers for all their efforts to remind the people of our area "what it was like" during those extremely difficult years.

CLAY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



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Toys, Toys, Toys!

Grand Opening set for Sunday, Oct. 20 .

Join the Clay County Historical Society on Sunday, Oct. 20 from 2-4 as we kick off a year of fun! The Grand Opening of Toys, Toys, Toys! begins at 2 p.m. with a ribbon cutting ceremony. The Society especially invites members to bring their children and grandchildren. Children who attend the exhibition grand opening will be given a chance (through random selection) to participate in cutting the ribbon! After the ribbon-cutting ceremony, there will be entertainment followed by special refreshments.

At 3 p.m. there will be a drawing for the American Girl Kirsten doll raffle. Be sure you get a ticket.



Don't forget to stop by the Museum to purchase your last minute tickets for a chance to win the doll!

CCHS Fall History tour set for Oct. 25-26

There is a lot of history in Red Wing and the community is looking forward to sharing its heritage with Clay County Historical Society visitors on October 25-26. Red Wing is famous for its Red Wing pottery and Red Wing shoes. But there is much more to see and do in Red Wing. There are historic buildings, museums, the Mississippi River, dressed in its fall finery, and much more.

Some of the sites we will visit include: The Sheldon Theatre - considered Red Wing's "jewel box." The Sheldon, built in 1904 and renovated in 1987, is now a cultural Center. A multi-media program on the history of Red Wing will set the stage for our two-day whirlwind tour of the City. Another stop, the Tower View complex was built by Dr. A.P. Anderson, between 1915 and 1921. Anderson invented the process for puffing cereal grains such as Puffed Rice. A retort gun used in a 1902 demonstration of the process is on display at the Goodhue County Historical Museum, another site on our tour. Perhaps the most well known historic site in Red Wing is the St. James Hotel, a Victorian gem built in 1875. Our step-on guide, Dorothy Westfall, will share the history of St. James, plus much more before we head to the Museum.

A noon sightseeing/luncheon cruise on the Mississippi

River is planned for Day 2. Fall colors season in this area is considered to be late October through early November. We should hit it right!

These are just a few of the sites we will visit. Word has it that there is an abundance of antique shops in Red Wing and we are trying to save some time for individual browsing/shopping. Join us on October 25-26. Cost is just \$150 based on double occupancy, slightly more for a single. Call CCHS at 299-5520 for more information. Registration deadline is October 17. Call now to reserve your seat.

Exhibit Wish List for Toys, Toys, Toys!

The new Toys, Toys, Toys! exhibit is going to be a lot of fun. You can help us make it even better. If you have any of the following vintage items you would be willing to lend us for the duration of the exhibit please call 299-5520.

Items we are looking for include:

stick horse	Mah Jongg set
old teddy bear	1960s Chatty Cathy (talking)
toy soldiers	hula hoop
Twister game	GI Joe (need several)

Outreach Displays

	Open	Close
Barnesville Public Library	Sept.	Dec.
Hawley Public Library	Sept.	Dec.
Moorhead Public Library	Sept.	Dec.
Fargo Moorhead CVB	Sept.	Dec.

The Hawley Public Library features A CASE OF COKE with collectibles and fun facts about this popular soft drink. Sara Pudas, 1998 Concordia College graduate, researched, developed and mounted this display as part of her internship at CCHS.

Moorhead Public Library is ROLLIN' ON THE RED! Fascinating photos take you back to steamboat travel on the Red River as well as activities along the banks. Admire an early 1930s swimsuit from Hawley's Andrew Johnson store. Check out artifacts that include the remains of lunches eaten at early Moorhead saloons!

PUT YOUR BEST FOOT FORWARD at the Barnesville Public Library with shoes, corn remedies, socks, stockings and an old stocking-knitting machine.



The ROLLIN' ON THE RED display at the Fargo Convention and Visitors' Bureau along I-94 will close for the season at the end of September.



IN-HOUSE DISPLAYS

Most of the recently acquired Probstfield collections will be on view in the east hall case for several months. Additional items from this collection can be seen in the Red River exhibit at

the lower exhibit hall at the west end of the Hjemkomst Center.

CHOCOLATE CENTERED is in the lobby at the Hjemkomst Center. This "sweet" display was intern Lisa Hanson's project back in 1997. Lisa is now the Administrative Asst. at the Coddington Co. HS in Watertown, SD.

Monetary Donations

JULY/AUGUST 2001

Esther Olson, Moorhead
State Bank of Moorhead, Moorhead
(for Bergquist Shuttle Bus)

Artifacts and Donors

Donors include:

Moorhead:	Eva B. Felde, Else Berge
Hawley:	Peggy Ramstad
Fargo:	Pete & Debbie Wold & Family, Eugene A Lucy, Loreen Davenport, June Probstfield Dobervich, Family and Descendants of R.M. Probstfield. [See article Pages 7-9]
West Fargo:	Donald Enge
Argusville ND:	David Nogowski
Apple Valley:	George E. Mellon
Hastings:	Ann Johnson
Ramsey:	The Family of Trine Sorum Dalen
Minneapolis:	Nancy K. Cooper (In memory of Andrew Hobiger)

Artifacts include: Postcard postmarked 1942 of the newest bridge built over the Red River; two photos from a Norwegian Annual Convention June 10, 11, 12, 1926 at Concordia College along with a photo-postcard of Somlena Barlow ca 1910; (3) b/w photo prints of Georgetown and of a baseball game near Georgetown made from Annie Stein's negatives [Stein was an early amateur photographer]; (15) books/booklets on Minnesota agriculture, weather and social issues; (2) books, *Rural Clay County*, 1976 and *The Thirty-second State*; WWII Civil Defense materials about air raids and blackouts; two Concordia College directories for 1991 & 1997, a booklet, *Art as Worship*, Trinity Lutheran Church, Mhd.; Treasurer's Book of Records, School Dist. No. 9, Clay County 1951-1953, ticket receipt for NPRR trip; one bound volume with three newspapers - 1958 MN centennial editions of Mpls Tribune, St. Paul Pioneer Press & Barnesville Record Review;

A collection of sheet music (purchased at Nels Vogel Inc., Comstock Hotel Bldg in Moorhead, MN & Daveau in Fargo) which belonged to Rose Wold - a member of the Lincoln School Mothersingers; a MN centennial souvenir trivet made by Red Wing Potteries, Red Wing, MN; several paper dolls from WWI-era newspapers plus research material for paper dolls; a 1950s candy box Pearson's Salted Nut roll 24-5cent bars by Pearson Candy Co. St. Paul, MN; a banner and flag from 1975 Fargo-Moorhead's "A Century Together" celebration;

A luncheon-size Hardanger-embroidered cloth made between 1910-1915 by Trine Sorum Dalen 1887-1973 and used at the family's lutefisk dinners; (4) bronze figures of children each playing a different game - hopscotch, mumblety peg (chubs), cricket (played w/sticks) and jackstones (jacks) and made by Eva Felde during an art class at MSU in Aug. 1982.

County seat fight a bitter struggle

By Mark Peihl

The histories of many area counties feature battles for the location of the county seat. Clay is no exception. Having the county's capital could bring jobs, trade and prestige to a town. Through the 1870s, the village of Glyndon tried several times to wrest the seat of government away from Moorhead. Each effort failed but they give us a chance to look at some interesting aspects of how local politics and community development worked a century and a quarter ago.

First, a little background on the long-standing rivalry between Moorhead and Glyndon. Both towns, of course, were established when the Northern Pacific Railway laid tracks from Duluth through Clay County in 1871. But the communities were very different from the beginning. Everyone knew that a significant town would develop wherever the NPRy crossed the Red. The railroad's subsidiary, Lake Superior and Puget Sound Land Company, intended to lay out and sell lots in this community. To keep the location a secret until they could secure title to the property, the NPRy set out false survey stakes to a fake crossing in present day Oakport Township. Hundreds of prospective settlers and businessmen (and many gamblers, prostitutes and other nere-do-wells) flocked to the site. In October 1871 the real crossing was revealed and the hordes abandoned Oakport for Moorhead. (The ruse location became known as "Bogusville.")

There was no need for secrecy at Glyndon. There a private colonization company, the Red River Colony headed by Luman H. Tenney, had acquired the townsite from the NPRy. Tenney planned to make Glyndon a temperance colony (no liquor allowed) and sought colonists from upstate New York and New England. A handful of sober citizens trickled into the village.

Through the winter of 1871-1872, crime was a major problem in Moorhead. No organized government existed. After a series of shootings early in 1872, citizens petitioned for and received permission to form a county government. Moorhead became the new county seat. A log jail and two-story wood frame courthouse followed.

Although both towns' creation depended on the arrival of the NPRy, the railroad's real goal was a transcontinental line to the Pacific Coast. Locally, however, the real prize was trade with Winnipeg. Moorhead's success hinged on steamboat traffic on the Red River. Glyndon, on the other hand, held a key advantage: a second north-south running railroad. The St. Paul and Pacific Railway intended to connect St. Paul with a Canadian railroad at the international border. The crossing with the NPRy was at Glyndon.

(Continued on Page 6)



This non-descript two-story, wood frame building served as Clay County's first courthouse until 1878. The ing was an inadequate fire trap and an embarrassment to county citizens. The view is north on 5th St from Front Street [Center Ave] in 1873. The courthouse sat just east of the Fountain in today's Moorhead Center Mall.

County Seat (Continued from Page 5)

In 1872 the new line was quickly building north and south from the budding townsite. When completed, the problematic and seasonal river traffic would never be able to compete with the railroad. Further, the small but rapidly growing population of farmers in eastern Clay County had little reason to support the river town. Glyndon's future looked bright.

In August 1872, E. B. Chambers, editor/publisher of the Glyndon *Red River Gazette* launched an attempt to move the county seat to Glyndon. The attempt went nowhere but gave Moorhead a scare. That fall, the St. P. & P. Ry ran out of money and quit laying rail. Instead of a railroad with international importance, Glyndon wound up with a section of track running from a nondescript spot on the prairie five miles south of town to an equally unimpressive spot forty miles north of Crookston.

In 1874, Glyndonites made another attempt. On June 4 George Sargeant bought the NPRy's large colonists' reception house at Glyndon and offered it to the County for use as a courthouse if the county seat was moved to Glyndon. Twelve days later, the Lake Superior and Puget Sound Land Company (concerned that the removal would hurt their chances at selling Moorhead lots) made a similar offer of a block of land on the northwest corner of today's 8th St and 1st Ave N. The county chose the Moorhead offer and later that year built a two-story brick jail on the site.

Thwarted again, the Glyndonites' ambitions simmered for several years. Then, on April 5, 1878, the County

Commission (in a meeting unattended by the Glyndon area Commissioner, George S. Barnes) voted to let bids on a one-story brick courthouse to be built on the Moorhead lot offered by the LS&PS Land Company in 1874.

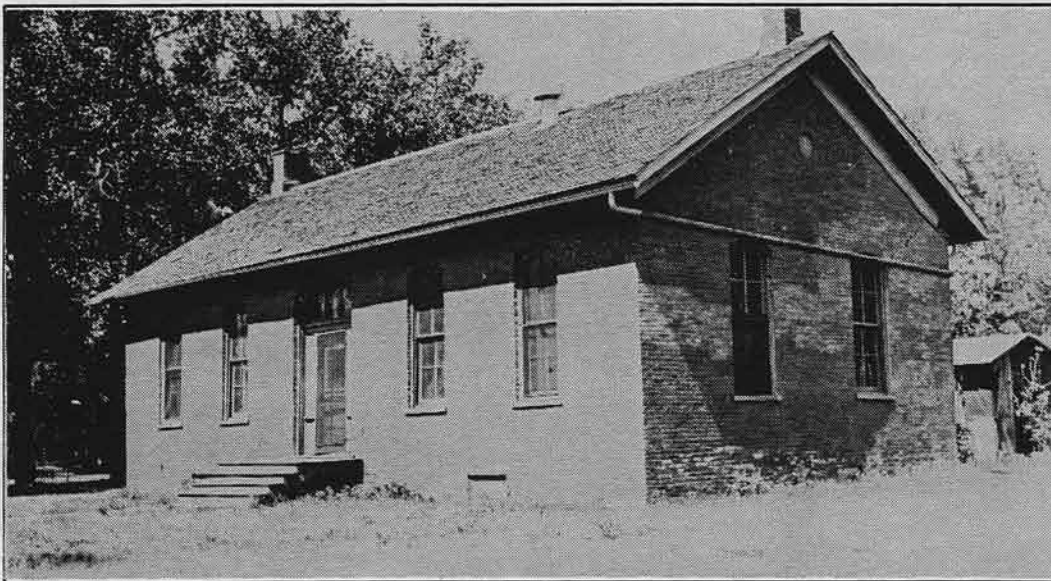
Moorhead's newspaper, the *Clay County Advocate* (the only newspaper published in the county) neglected to mention the letting of bids in its write up of the Commissioners' meeting. Glyndonites saw the affair as an attempt to secure the county seat for Moorhead once and for all. They decided to act.

When the bids were opened at the October 1878 Commission meeting, Commissioner Barnes of Glyndon "presented a petition of citizens of the County remonstrating against the erection of such or any building by the County, and urging the purchase of safes in which to preserve the County records, and moved that no action upon the bids submitted, be taken prior to April 1st, 1879." The petitioners planned to ask the State Legislature to allow a vote on the county seat question in the general election in November 1879. The Legislature would be in session between January and March 1879. The petition to stop the building would buy them time. But Barnes' motion lost two to one with Hawley Commissioner Andrew Glasgow voting with H. A. Bruns of Moorhead. (Glasgow's vote may not have been popular back home. In the November elections, he received only 21 of the 285 votes cast in his district.)

Glyndonites regrouped. On February 11, 1879, citizens met in the offices of the newly established Glyndon *Red*

River Valley News to discuss the situation. M. M. Gragg, Luman H. Tenney and *Red River Valley News* editor/publisher Luther Osborn were appointed a committee to draw up a petition to submit to the legislature calling for a November vote to move the seat to Glyndon.

If smug Moorheadites snickered up their sleeves, they had a nasty surprise coming. Within days the petitioners had gathered over 515 signatures, almost all from the eastern and middle sections (Continued on Page 10)



Clay County's second courthouse, Northwest corner of 1st Ave N & 8th Street. Plans for this courthouse set off the fight for the county seat in 1879. WPA workers tore it down in the mid 1930s. Forum Communications Company Collection

"A Family Affair" The Probstfield Collections

by Pam Burkhardt

June Probstfield Dobervich, Family and Descendants of Randolph Michael Probstfield recently donated a large number of artifacts to the Clay County Museum. What follows is a very brief history written to highlight some of the artifacts (listed in bold type). This is not meant to be a comprehensive history of the family or the county. The majority of these artifacts will be on display for several months in the east hall case across from the Clay County Museum in the Hjemkomst Center.

◆◆◆◆◆

Randolph Michael Probstfield (RMP) was born in Koblenz, Prussia, Nov. 8, 1832. At the age of 19, he immigrated to Wisconsin. He worked in the lumber industry there and in Illinois and, then, shipped out as a cabin boy on the *Prometheus* to Nicaragua, returning by way of San Francisco. He and a partner went into the hotel business in Chisago City, but his partner's difficulties forced him out of business. While working in West St. Paul, Randolph began a life-long interest and participation in politics. Because of the bank crash of 1857, he (along with many others) lost his savings and had to look for other opportunities.

Rich lands in the Red River Valley invited speculators in towns such as Lafayette and Sheyenne City in northwestern Clay County and Dakota City across the Red. [1 share of Lafayette Stock dated 1857] (See Page 8) RMP left St. Paul for the Valley in 1859 with two companions. They caught up with the Anson Northup expedition on their way to Lafayette with the disassembled *North Star* steamboat. The St. Paul Chamber of Commerce offered a bonus to the first one to put a steamboat on the Red to open trade with the Hudson's Bay Company in Canada. The Hudson's Bay Company established their southernmost site at Georgetown in 1859 along the ox cart trail between St. Paul and Winnipeg. [ox shoe (half)] In 1862, the steamboat *International* was built at Georgetown. [Whistle from steamboat *International*] [Note: That site is referred to now as Old Georgetown to avoid confusion with present-day Georgetown, 14 miles north of Moorhead.]

Probstfield set up his residence close to the Company site and was one of the carpenters hired in 1860 to build a warehouse. He was in charge of operations there in the mid-1860s. [H.B. Co inventory, 1867] In the fall of 1868, he established his farm along the Red River south of Old Georgetown on the ox cart trail and

stage line. [Minn. Territorial Pioneers Badge belonging to RMP] Later, steamboats would stop at one of two landings on the farm to buy vegetables and wood. [a roulette game from one of the steamboats and brass spinner]

In 1861, RMP went to South Bend, Indiana and married Catherine Goodman (b. 1839 in Ohio). [ambrotype of Mr. & Mrs. Probstfield ca 1861-62] They had eleven children: Mary Ann (1862), Alexander (1865), Justus (1866), Edmund (1868), Cornelia (1869) and Susan (1870) born in Georgetown; Dorothea (1872) born at the site of the present E. Grand Forks; and Emilie (1874), Walter (1877), Arthur (1879) and Josephine (1882) born at the Oakport farm.

RMP received a formal education in Germany and could read, write and speak five languages. He held classes for his five oldest children in his house before helping to build the first rural schoolhouse in Oakport Twp. in 1881.

Child's school desk Dist. #23

Hill's spelling blocks 1867

Encyclopedia Britannica, Edinburgh Subscription Edition, 21 of 23* volumes, 1878 with receipt

Primary Spelling Book of the English Language, prepared by L. J. Campbell, 1865. Inscription: "Alexander P. Probstfield, February 28, 1870"

Robinson's Progressive Practical Arithmetic, by Daniel W. Fish, 1876,

Zweites Lese- und Lehrbuch für Deutsche Schulen, by Hermann Reffelt, 1871, 1874

*He fell on hard times and couldn't afford to complete the set.

On the farm, Probstfield conducted experiments for both the US and Minnesota Bureaus of Agriculture. His crops were exhibited at the state and county fairs. Not only was RMP one of the first vegetable farmers in the area, but he also experimented with crops considered unusual at that time such as tobacco, celery, peanuts and sugar beets. **Wooden Cigar Molds and Clay Pipe from Holland Inscribed: "Goedewaage Gouda"**

Award medal & framed certificate from World's Columbian Commission for Saskatchewan wheat Interstate Fair ribbon 1907

(Continued on Page 8)

Probstfield (Continued from Page 5)

Gardening for Profit, 1867, Inscription: "R. M. Probstfield."

Small Fruit Culturist, 1867, Inscription: "R. M. Probstfield."

Apples and Apple Growing in Minnesota, Bulletin No. 83, Horticultural Division, University of Minnesota, Agricultural Experiment Station, July 1901

Annual Report of the Minnesota Horticultural Society for the year 1891, Vol. XIX,

[See p. 98 for remarks of RMP on apple trees.]

Copper stencil P-R-O-B-S-T-F-I-E-L-D used to mark shipping bags.

Framed Patrons of Husbandry. Original Charter for Moorhead Chapter of National Grange 1874 Northern Potato Growers' Sales Co., Moorhead, 1913-1915, unpublished, bound carbon copies of letters, orders, other business papers of company.

Probstfield was involved in civic affairs. He served as post master, assessor, treasurer, clerk, school director, Clay County Commissioner (one of the first three) and was a member of the Minn. Senate (1891-93).

[Painting of Senator RMP by Corrine Airhart] He was defeated twice for the legislature.

Desk used by RMP with pigeonholes labeled Politics, Business, Requests for Help,

Hay Claim and Awards; documents regarding a hay claim; Moorhead Twp. record & minute book Mar. 20, 1873- Feb. 23, 1884

RMP's wife, Catherine enjoyed gardening and had smaller-sized tools for her use. **[Round Nosed Shovel; Garden Fork] With eleven children, she was kept busy. [Spinning Wheel, hand made - used by Mrs. RMP - 1860's - 1890's; pair of carders; Sewing Box with contents] She and her husband were accustomed to visitors and, at one time entertained 28 unexpected guests. Cribbage was one of her passions. A family story says Catherine would take her cribbage board and "head into the woods looking for a game." [Ivory Cribbage board shaped like a seal; Playing cards]**

The following is an excerpt of a letter [page 49 of RMP's transcribed letters] from Catherine to Randolph in St. Paul dated March 28, 1891:

.... You say you bought some new chairs. What kind did you buy? Edmund [son] fixed up the old ones, they look half ways decent. So all I would care for is a good rocking chair.... **[Rocker, spindle back with black leather seat]**

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

Silver poultry prize 1928 and a best display trophy won by Emilie Probstfield

Book: "Inbreeding" (of farm stock) belonged to Ray Gesell

Included: Membership card for LaCrosse [Wis.] Poultry Assn.

(2) Brass Sebright (poultry) Awards

5 Medals - American Poultry Assn. Won by Ray Gesell

Leg bands for poultry - on string

Shipping stencil B-Y G-E-S-L

The Legislative Manual, State of Minnesota, 1949. "Raymond L. Gesell."

banner & pennant, "Votes for Women" made/used in Wisconsin and brought back to farm by Cornelia (family believes they may have been used in this area as well)

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

♦♦♦

Spanning the Years:

Moorhead State University [now MSUM] Archeology Department completed a dig at the farm site in 1997. The results were published in the booklet *Archaeological Testing at the Historic Probstfield Farm* (21 CY 67) MSU Michlovic & Kitch [(7) boxes and additional bags from the Probstfield archeology dig along with mounted display of photo-reproductions, text panels, labels & title panel created by MSU] CCHS featured the artifacts from this dig in a display for Archeology Week in April through Museum week in May of 2001.

In the Present:

June Dobervich and her sister the late Evie Gesell collected and researched family history for years. One room in the house June and Evie shared was called "the museum." It contained most of the family's historic items. June shared her knowledge by taking photos and artifacts into the schools. **[(4) sheets white foam core story boards used by June]**

(Continued on Page 9)

One Share of Stock

Lafayette was a paper town in Breckenridge County [now divided into Clay and Wilkin]. It was located across the Red River from the mouth of the Sheyenne River. "Paper town" refers to a settlement that was incorporated, but never developed. There were other paper towns in the area. Dakota City was across the Red from Lafayette and Sheyenne City one mile north. Burlington was about seven miles south of Moorhead. The 1857 share of stock was transferred from Charles McDonald to Eugene Bumand? to George Emerling to Randolph Probstfield in 1859. Emerling accompanied Probstfield to Lafayette that year.

Probstfield (Continued from Page 8)

June put together a number of well-organized binders covering subjects such as correspondence with relatives, operation of the Probstfield Living History Farm, excerpts from books, newspaper clippings, photos and, as they say, other items too numerous to mention. When June moved from her home to an apartment recently, a selection of artifacts was turned over to the Clay County Historical Society – a move that had been discussed for some time.



Probstfield Living History:

The Probstfield Living History Farm Board, formed about 10 years ago, is currently pursuing a Minnesota Historical Society grant to evaluate the historic structure of the farmhouse to make it serviceable. The Board works with teachers from the Probstfield School to create service-learning projects at the farmstead. The family is still involved – June Dobervich and Cathy Scheibe, June's niece, are board members. Board President, Donna McMaster, together with Dr. Terry Shoptaugh of MSUM, is working on a video of the life of R.M. Probstfield with funding provided by a Minnesota Humanities grant. McMaster also handled arrangements for the Probstfield artifacts currently on display in the Red River Valley exhibit in the Hjemkomst Center.

LAFAYETTE, MINN.

Each Share One Hundred Dollars.

Situated on the Red River of the North,
OPPOSITE THE MOUTH OF THE SHEYENNE RIVER, AND AT THE
HEAD OF STEAMBOAT NAVIGATION ON RED RIVER.

This is to Certify, That Charles McDonald is
Proprietor of One Share in LAFAYETTE, MINNESOTA,
October 24th A.D. 1857, subject to the Rules and Regulations
of the Proprietors.

Charles McDonald
President.

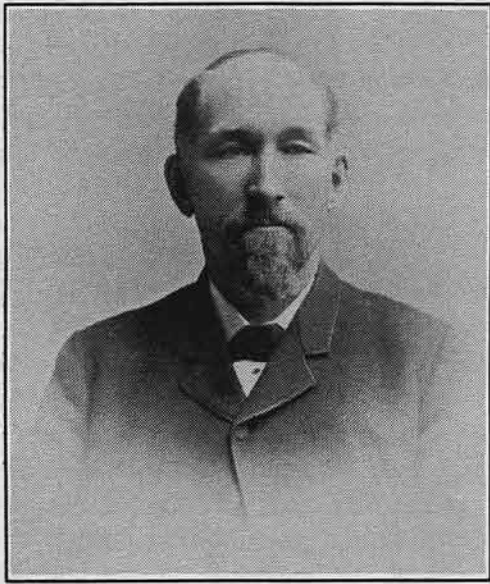
Randolph Probstfield
Secretary.

CLAY COUNTY, MINN.

THIRD PRINT.

County Seat (Continued from Page 6)

of the county. This in a county with only 900 registered voters! Farmers in the rapidly growing east had little



Minnesota State Representative Solomon Comstock played a key role in the 1879 county seat fight between Moorhead and Glyndon

sympathy for the river town.

Moorhead was a long way to go to conduct legal business; Glyndon was more centrally located. And the County Road between Moorhead and Hawley (now US Highway 10) was plagued by an often impassable

swamp three miles west of Glyndon.

Shocked Moorheadites met in the Bramble House Hotel to plan a counter strategy. They drafted a remonstrance – a petition opposed to the removal petition. They collected about 300 signatures in western Clay County.

Representative Solomon Comstock of Moorhead was the natural one to carry the removal petition to the legislature. The other Representative from the 41st District, Michael Anderson, was from Fergus Falls; the lone Senator, Andrew McCrea, was from Perham. Saturday evening, February 22, a contingent of Glyndon residents met Comstock at the Glyndon depot while he was on his way home from St. Paul. They asked for his support and he gave a short address. What he said was not recorded verbatim. The Glyndon *Red River Valley News* reported that Comstock “gave unreserved expression to the sentiment and promise that, if a majority of the people of Clay County desired a county-seat election, so far as he was concerned, they should have it.” The St. Paul *Pioneer-Press* reported from Glyndon that, “Representative Comstock, though a Moorhead man, made a speech from the cars here Saturday night, pledging his co-operation in affording the people an opportunity to vote on the question.” But the Moorhead *Clay County Advocate* said, “We are authorized by Mr. Comstock to say that he made no

such speech, and that all he said was: ‘If an actual majority of the people of the county want to vote on the matter, I shall not stand in their way.’”

Comstock was in a tough position. He was “a Moorhead man” to be sure. One of the city’s earliest residents, Comstock had built a successful legal practice in Moorhead and had become wealthy buying and selling its real estate. He still owned much land there. Moving the county seat would hurt him professionally and personally. Having Moorhead’s county seat status in limbo over the course of the coming building season would stymie the city’s rapid growth. Yet here Comstock was faced with a petition signed by nearly 60% of his county’s legal voters asking him to do just that.

As Comstock was addressing the crowd, the Moorhead contingent was canvassing eastern Clay County for signatures. Their success or lack of it there became a matter of contention. The remonstrators claimed another 300 signatures. How does one get 600 signatures on a petition in direct opposition to another petition that gained 450 when there are only 900 registered voters in the county? The remonstrators claimed that many signers of the removal petition had been led to believe the election would let them choose Hawley or Muskoda as county seat and were upset when they realized that the choice would be either Glyndon or Moorhead. This may be true. But the removal advocates provided compelling evidence of fraud on the part of the remonstrators. For instance, pasted to the remonstrance was a list of 27 names of voters from Lund Township (now Tansem Township). Above it was a sheet with this written on its top: “At town meeting held at the town of Lund against moving a county seat to Glyndon, Feb. 22d, 1879.” Just below, written in a different hand was: “Forty-one registered. I hereby certify that within is a true and correct copy. Peter Hanson, Town Clerk.” Hanson later wrote to the *Red River Valley News* that no such meeting had ever taken place and claimed fraud. Also writing in were several Lund residents whose names appeared on the remonstrance who also claimed that no such “meeting” had occurred.

Comstock spent part of Sunday, February 23, conferring with his Moorhead constituents as to a plan of action. On Monday he carried both petitions to St. Paul. The next step would be to bring the matter before the House Committee on Counties and Towns. The seven-member committee would vote whether or not to send the proposed legislation to the House for a floor

(Continued on Page 11)

Family History Workshop focuses on the military

The theme of this year's Family History Workshop, to be presented on Saturday, Sept. 29 by the Heritage Education Commission (HEC) is "Military on Parade: a Salute to our Veterans."

One of the presenters for the workshop is Les Bakke, director of the Minnesota State University Moorhead Computer Center and a past president of HEC. Bakke is currently coordinating the Commission's Veterans' oral history project. This project is dedicated to collecting oral histories from area veterans, especially WW II era veterans.

News reports tell us that WWII veterans are dying at an alarming rate - and if their history isn't taken soon it will be too late. CCHS is glad these veterans' voices are being recorded.

For more information on the Family History Workshop, call 236-2183.

First Open Storage display features Probstfield Collection!

What is Open Storage? It is artifacts stored in public view. Open Storage displays generally feature more items than an actual exhibit, but without detailed label copy. A label on one shelf might read "home-made blacksmith tools - 1880" or "copper kettles from Norway and Sweden 1850-1900." The artifacts are still used for other exhibits and outgoing loans.

The Probstfield Collection is the museum's first Open Storage display and appears in the east hall case across from the museum. The display will not be static. The collection will be unpacked and catalogued and the process explained as we work - a good opportunity to show how an "object" becomes an "artifact."

A few items will be featured along with an explanation of the direction each one needs to take. For example, the fragile clay pipe needs a special mount to secure it while in storage. It will also need a special mount when it is displayed. Research on the pipe's manufacturer was found and will be placed with it.

SNOW BIRD ALERT



We have just one small favor to ask.....

Since our newsletter is sent at a non-profit bulk rate it cannot be forwarded nor can it be held when you are temporarily away.

Therefore, unless we have the correct address or instructions not to mail out the newsletter during a certain time frame, it gets returned. And every newsletter that is returned costs us an additional 60 cents. That is more than a first class letter.

Please, let us know if you are going to be away for any length of time. This will save us money and assure that you get all your newsletters. We appreciate your help and thank you in advance for taking care of this matter.

County Seat (Continued from Page 10)

vote. Comstock delayed for a week, while both sides lobbied furiously. Comstock refused to carry the legislation unless the proposed election was moved from the November General Election date to a special election in May. This would spare Moorhead a summer in limbo. The Glyndon contingent would not bite. They may have been concerned that farmers, busy with spring work, would not vote or that the County Commission might not appropriate money for a special election.

Finally, around March 3, with only a few days left in the session, they approached Representative Anderson. He agreed to submit the election bill to the Committee. Over Comstock's objections, the seven voted unanimously to send the bill to the full House. It was debated March 5. But without Comstock's support, the proposal was doomed. The House voted to delay the bill indefinitely. Moorhead had won.

Comstock returned to Moorhead to cheers, fire works and a brass band. Glyndonites were furious. For six months the *Red River Valley News* editor Luther Osborn bitterly denounced Comstock in weekly columns. But the die was cast. Glyndon never again threatened Moorhead's hold on the county seat.

A Great Book

(You'll need two - one to read and one to give away)

THE 20TH CENTURY IN MOORHEAD

Heritage Publications, in collaboration with the Clay County Historical Society, is proud to announce this unique 184 page book that takes a year by year, decade by decade look at the past century in Moorhead. This book, which is full of historic photographs, provides a glimpse at the last ten decades with major news events of the day as well as several first-hand recollections by people from our community that lived through them. There is a limited printing. Pick up your copy today at the Clay County Museum and Archives in the Hjemkomst Center, 202 1st Avenue North in Moorhead or send in the form below to CCHS, PO Box 501, Moorhead MN 56561. Call 218-299-5520 for more information.

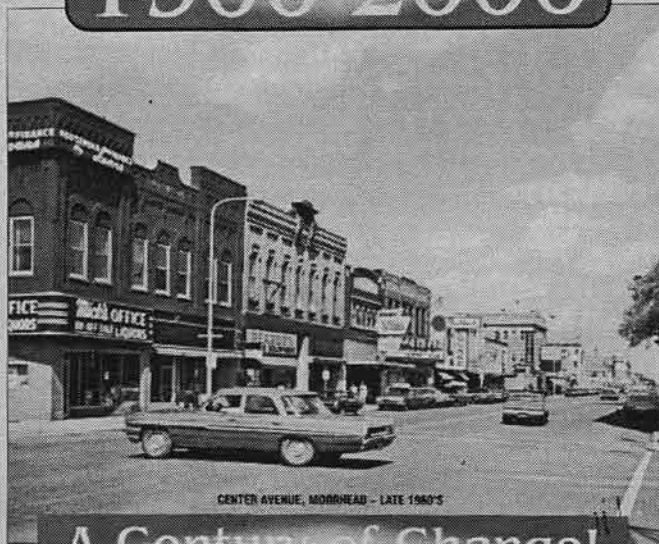
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The Last One Hundred Years in MOORHEAD MINNESOTA

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Published by Heritage Publications in collaboration
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CCHS Memberships - New and Renewals

JULY/AUGUST 2001

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

RENEWALS

Esther Olson, Moorhead
Phyllis A. Wirries, Moorhead
James H. Landblom, Fargo
Kent & Donna Knutson, Moorhead
Holly Heitkamp, Fargo
Donna Knauber, Sabin
Donna N. Nix, Moorhead
Aldrich & Meredith Bloomquist, Moorhead
Arnold & Melvina Tranby, Moorhead
Veteran's of Foreign Wars, Moorhead
Allen County Public Library, Ft Wayne IN
Edgar B. Peterson, Burbank CA
Sister Mary Anne Fay, Crookston
Paul & Mardeth Dovre, Moorhead
Robert & Dorothy Belsly, Moorhead
James Antonen, Moorhead

Mae Gee, Moorhead
Faye B. Wells, Vancouver WA
Arvid Thompson, Barnesville
Maxine Shulstad, Barnesville
Barton Cahill, Moorhead
Russell & Lois Bekkerus, Glyndon
Sara Lee Cook, St. Paul
Paul & Joyce Eidbo, Moorhead
John & Nadine Glas, Moorhead
Ardee & Eunice Johnson, Moorhead
Loretta Ramstad, Hawley
Karen & Joe Schneider, Moorhead
Maxine Workman, Borup
Adeline Corwin, Ulen
Dorothy Garvin, Los Angeles CA
James & Lois Johnson, Moorhead
Roger J. Minch, Fargo
Donald & Naomi Rice, Moorhead
John R. Roos, Hinesburg VT
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Stanley Lunde, Ulen
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Gloria Anderson, Fargo
Donna Nelson, Moorhead
Lawrence L. Kava, Barnesville
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Irene Kinsella, Moorhead
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Donna Merchant, Edina
Ona May Brunsvold, Moorhead
Bette Haring, Lake Park
Eva B. Felde, Moorhead
Ruth Franzen, Fargo
Lawrence Gilbery, Moorhead
Helen Glawe, Fargo
Edward Gudmundson, Moorhead
Rev. Cecil M. Johnson, Moorhead
Joseph Pederson, Hawley
Una Rydeen, Fargo
Rigels' Inc., Appliances-TV, Moorhead

CCHS welcomes the following:

NEW MEMBERS

June & Stan Dewerff, Moorhead
Benjamin Dille, US Embassy Managua,
Nicaragua
Carole Lee Hays, Albany OR

CCHS History Tour to

Historic Red Wing

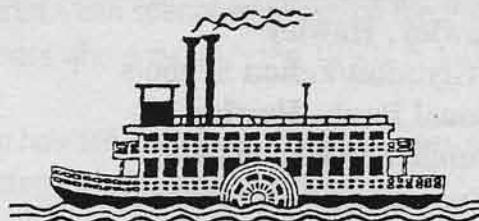
Sites of interest:

- ★ St James Hotel ca. 1875
- ★ Red Wing Stoneware Co
- ★ Red Wing Shoes
- ★ Sheldon Theatre
ca. 1904
- ★ Anderson Center
(the man who
blew up cereal)
- ★ Goodhue County Museum
AND MORE.....
- ★ Sightseeing/luncheon cruise on the
Mississippi. Enjoy the last of the Fall colors.

Thurs.-Fri.
Oct. 25-26

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Individual Memberships are just \$20.
Join now by calling 299-5520!

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includes all*attraction fees,
transportation,
motel accommodations,
& several meals.

Registration Deadline is: Wednesday, Oct. 17
For more information and/or to register

Call 299-5520

Clay County Historical Society, Hjerkomst Center. Box 501, Moorhead, MN 56561

Minnesota death records can be accessed online

A new and exciting service for researchers and genealogists debuted in July when the Minnesota Historical Society web site announced an online "death index" for the entire state of Minnesota. The index lists the exact date and county in which a person died and takes in more than 1.4 million death certificates recorded in Minnesota between 1908 and 1946. The database allows a records search by name alone.

Plans are to continue microfilming the years 1947-1955 and put them online as they become available. This is a joint project of the Minnesota Historical Society and the Department of Health.

Why does the microfilm start with 1908 you ask? Because in 1908, the Minnesota State Health Department became the official repository for state birth and death records.

Prior to 1908, information was kept by counties or townships with some variation in the manner of keeping records. For deaths before 1908, researchers must still contact the county in which the person died.

The Minnesota Department of Health - the official repository for state birth and death records - now maintains a computerized system for records dating after 1996. Once the system is fully automated, no new paper records will be created. However, researchers will find it easier to obtain death records, with microfilm copies available for purchase or through interlibrary loan.

The death certificate database address is:
<http://people.mnhs.org/dci>

Clay County Historical Society

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Thank you to these special BIOS Members of Clay County Historical Society

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**Grand Opening:
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Learn how the changes in children's lives are reflected in their toys and games.

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- ☐ \$ 50 to \$99 Supporting Member
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As a CCHS BIOS (Business, Individual, Organization Support) Member you will receive all benefits of an individual and/or family membership plus a certificate ready to frame and display, extra complimentary passes to visit the Viking Ship, the Stave church, traveling exhibits in the building, and a listing in all CCHS bi-monthly Newsletters. To become a CCHS BIOS Member please return this form or a facsimile to CCHS, Box 501, Moorhead, MN 56561-0501 or call 299-5520.

Business: _____

Contact Name: _____

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CCHS Membership Application

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

☐ INDIVIDUAL \$20.00 ☐ FAMILY \$35.00 ☐ Donation

MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

- * Support preservation of our heritage
- * Bi-monthly newsletter
- * Discount on Acid-Free Materials
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