

Clay County Historical Society

Volume XXIX No. 5

Special 75th Anniversary Kickoff Edition

September/October 2006

Celebrating

75



**Clay
County
Historical
Society**

1932-2007

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CLAY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



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President's Message

By Darren Leno, CCHS President



My five year old daughter Chloe and I enjoyed an adventure together in early September. We made our way out to the Clay County Historical Society open house at the historic District 3 "Woodland" School in the Southeast corner of Clay County. Despite its advanced age, the 111-year-old school is still as inviting to children as it ever was, at least judging from Chloe.

She had fun exploring the old classroom desks. She asked me to read her some of the ancient graffiti that students had written or carved into the desks, mostly names and initials (some joined by "+"), proof that long ago, many children spent part of their lives here preparing to meet their futures. She rang the teacher's bell, spun the old globe, and played on the monkey bars.

Some might ask, what is the value of preserving an old building like this? Although the location of the Woodland School is beautiful (set amongst the Oaks, perched above a beautiful lake), it is arguably located in the middle of nowhere, well off the beaten path, and severely under-visited. Why care about an old building like this?

Before we arrived at the school house, Chloe and I talked about her upcoming first day of kindergarten. She now attends Ellen Hopkins, a gigantic facility in Moorhead the scope of which could scarcely be imagined by the pioneers who built the Woodland School. Predictably, Chloe was nervous about her upcoming first day at Hopkins, but visiting the Woodland School I think peaked her interest and excitement about kindergarten.

We talked about how her big new school was different than the Woodland School. For example, she was happy that her school didn't have scary open-pit toilets (she would be worried about falling in), and her new school has water faucets, and a bigger playground. She liked looking at the old books in the school, and hanging from the bar on the playground. Visiting the Woodland School helped her appreciate what she has while also giving her a tangible link to the past, and an appreciation for how Clay County's early children lived and learned.

While not every school building can be saved, the historic Woodland School is an excellent representation of the old one room school houses that were once a common feature on the Clay County prairies and woodlands. This school, with many of its original books and furnishings (the wall clock still points to 3:18 pm, the very last moment that the school was in session on its last day of class).

Built in 1895, the Woodland School is a rare survivor, and has now touched three different centuries. We at CCHS certainly intend for it to touch the 22nd century. But the school does need some work and TLC right now, and will continue to need regular maintenance if it is to survive for future generations.

To ensure that this happens we are seeking funds to paint the building, repair some rotting wood, and to maintain the grounds. \$1,000 would help meet immediate short-term needs; and, as part of the \$75,000 Fund Drive (see pages 8-9) we are establishing a long-term fund for the Woodland School and other properties under the care of the Clay County Historical Society. If you're in a position to help – either with donated labor, materials or funds – the Society would be very grateful.

Please make a point of attending the next open house at the District No. 3 Woodland School, as well as participating in other Clay County Historical Society programs – especially during our 75th Anniversary Year when we'll be highlighting our county's wonderful collections. Bring your children or grandchildren, and if the weather permits, bring a blanket and a picnic lunch. I promise you'll enjoy yourself. Chloe and I look forward to seeing you there!



Chloe at the District No. 3 School well pump.

We would like to sincerely thank the Clay County Commissioners for their letter of congratulations and support for our 75th Anniversary Celebration!

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September 12, 2006

Clay County Historical Society
202 1st Avenue North
Moorhead, MN 56560

Congratulations to the Clay County Historical Society on its 75th Anniversary. This marks an important milestone in the Historical Society's efforts to preserve the history of Clay County.

The Clay County Board of Commissioners encourages residents and visitors to visit the Clay County Museum to see the 75th Anniversary exhibit, which will showcase the best items from the Society's collection, and to attend the many programs and events planned for this special celebration.

Clay County citizens and residents are also encouraged to participate in the fund drive on the occasion of the 75th Anniversary. The Clay County Board of Commissioners appropriates approximately \$136,000 or \$2.50 per capita annually toward the preservation of the County's history. However, it takes much more than that for the Historical Society to continue the preservation of thousands of artifacts in their collection and to provide the basic programming of the museum exhibits, archives and educational programs for the schools and public.

Congratulations again and we wish you the very best in your efforts to preserve Clay County's history and artifacts for many more years in the future.

Sincerely,

Mike "Mac" McCarthy
Chair
Clay County Board of Commissioners

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Join Us for a Diamond

The Clay County Historical Society is historical itself and is celebrating its 75th Anniversary with a year of many special programs and events leading up to the Diamond Jubilee anniversary date – October 8, 2007. The Society will be kicking off its year of Diamond Jubilee programs the first weekend in October and you are invited to participate in one or all the events!

Kickoff Weekend

Our **Diamond Jubilee Gala Kickoff** is scheduled Friday, October 6 from 7 to 9pm. The evening will feature awards given to 75-Year Honorees – people, businesses, and organizations who have 75+ years of history in our county. A Champaign Toast and ribbon cutting by Clay County Dignitaries will formally open our featured Diamond Jubilee Exhibit, “Celebrating 75 Years of Collecting”. Enjoy a dessert buffet, cash bar and live music as you preview the new exhibit and visit with friends and colleagues. The event is \$10/person at the door and you must RSVP by September 29. Members, VIPs and their guests are invited to this by-invitation-only gala reception. Contact a CCHS Board Member or call Lisa at 218-299-5520 if you’d like an invitation!

If you can’t make it to the gala reception, join us Saturday, October 7 from 1 to 4pm when we’ll host a **Public Open House** for the new exhibit! Check out the historic Buffalo Fire Engine on display outside the Hjemkomst Center, take part in the “What is it?” session by Collections Curator Pam Burkhardt and Archivist Mark Peihl (bring in your historic items, documents, and photos for identification), and explore the new Diamond Jubilee Exhibit, “Celebrating 75 Years of Collecting.” You never know what you might discover about Clay County’s History in the new exhibit!

On Sunday, October 8, 1:00-4:00 join us at the Moorhead **Fire Department** main station on First Avenue North for their annual **Open House**, where we also will have the historic Buffalo Fire Engine on display!

Exhibits feature Collections

Collections are at the heart of the mission of the Clay County Historical Society. Exhibits are a great way to showcase the best of the Society’s collection of over 25,000 historical artifacts. On October 7 the Society opens its Diamond Jubilee featured exhibit to the public, “Celebrating 75 Years of Collecting.” There will be over 75 items or collections on display from the Clay County Historical Society’s collections representing history from all corners of the county!

Of particular note will be one collection on display – the Evelyn Grover Collection. Evelyn Grover was born in 1896 on a farm in Moland Township, north of Glyndon. Through her

childhood, she assembled a collection of objects, saving items that appealed to her in a personal way. She kept her treasures in a doll trunk. The treasures, which date generally between 1900 and 1910, include tins, boxes, greeting cards, locks of hair, jewelry, hankies including a black-edged mourning handkerchief, books, a school slate, a pyrography set for burning designs in wood, Easter items, and “My Dolly’s Workbox” for sewing.



Some items from the Evelyn Grover Collection.

This is but one example of the many ways a personal collection becomes a county treasure. The exhibit will answer more questions about “Why Collect?”, “What Should We Collect?”, and “Why

Collect Certain Items?” Also answered is “How Old is Historic?”, “How does the Society Collect?”, and “Why We Need Help!”

In addition and starting in January 2007, the glass Hall Cases located on level 3 of the Hjemkomst Center will feature displays of various collections within the collection of the Clay County Historical Society including softball and other trophies from George “Shorty” Condos, Moorhead history items from A. W. Bowman, folk art dolls from Mildred Heifert, items with local business imprints from Dr. Ron Olin, World War I items from Walter Manning, and more. Watch for more information in the newsletter for details on these monthly displays.

As a gift to the schools, the Clay County Historical Society will be preparing a history poster exhibit to give to each classroom in the county. Based on the “Celebrating 75 Years of Collecting” exhibit, the poster exhibit will feature the history of the county, the collections of the Society, background on the Clay County Historical Society itself and how to get involved in discovering our county’s history. An essay and drawing contest will solicit our youth’s interpretation of Clay County’s history with examples to be included in the poster exhibit.

Programs Throughout the Year

The Diamond Jubilee Celebration will feature a special program or event each month starting in October 2006 through October 2007. Programs this fall will feature a series of history

Jubilee Year of Celebration!

talks by Archivist Mark Peihl and this winter a "How to care for your Collections" series by Collections Manager Pam Burkhardt. The Society plans on bringing in syndicated radio personality Harry Rinker for an Appraisal Fair in March 2007 and then Pam will do a series of "Spring Cleaning – What Is It?" sessions out in the county in May.

Once ready, the Buffalo Fire Engine will be featured in as many local parades as possible along with information booths about the Clay County Historical Society during community celebrations throughout the county. Highlighted during the summer months will be special events at the three properties the Clay County Historical Society owns – 1870s Pioneer Bergquist Cabin, District 3 "Woodland" School, and the Parke Township "Yankee" Cemetery. In September 2007, the Society is planning a History Tour and Road Rally around the County. Finally in October, the Society will formally celebrate its 75th Anniversary with a Diamond Jubilee Birthday Gala featuring a fine dinner, live music, silent auction and birthday cake!

In addition to these programs, the Clay County Historical Society is looking to present 75 or more programs throughout the county over the next year. Archivist Mark Peihl and Collections Manager Pam Burkhardt have some wonderful programs that they are willing to give to social, service, church and educational clubs. Also the popular PAST Trunk Program is available to organizations throughout the county. Check out page 13 and book your next program with Pam or Mark!

The Number 75

Have you noticed we have a thing for the number 75? Well we do! Our Diamond Jubilee Projects and Programs all connect to the number 75 in some way. Here are some of our goals:

- \$75,000 Fund Drive with \$50,000 towards Collections Funds
- 750 Members (we're at about 500 now) by October 8, 2007
- 75 Collections/Items in the "Celebrating 75 Years of Collecting" Exhibit
- 75 Programs out in the County throughout the Year
- 75 Items on the Silent Auction during the Birthday Gala October 8, 2007
- 7.5 Items on the Diamond Jubilee Raffle

We hope you join us by helping us to reach our goals and by celebrating this Diamond Jubilee milestone throughout the year with us!

A Year of Diamond Jubilee Programs

Watch for details in upcoming newsletters!

October 2006

Press Conference
Gala Kickoff & Exhibit Opening
Exhibit Open House
Fire Truck Open House

November 2006

Clay County History Series
Educators Open House

December 2006

Holiday Open House

January 2007

Collections Displays Begin

February 2007

Caring for Your Collections Series

March 2007

Harry Rinker Appraisal Fair

April 2007

CCHS Annual Meeting

May 2007

Buffalo Fire Truck in Parades
Spring Cleaning – What Is It? Series
Memorial Day Remembrance at the CCHS Cemetery

June 2007

Buffalo Fire Truck in Parades
Bergquist Cabin Open House

July 2007

Buffalo Fire Truck in Parades
Ice Cream Social at the Clay County Fair

August 2007


Buffalo Fire Truck in Parades
Woodland School All-School Reunion & Spelling Bee

September 2007

Buffalo Fire Truck in Parades
Clay County History Tour & Road Rally

October 2007

Diamond Jubilee Birthday Gala

Celebrating
75

Clay County Historical Society
1932-2007

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

The Three-Legged Stool:

By Mark Peihl, CCHS Archivist

In 1996, Clay County Historical Society celebrated 60 years of collecting the County's history and 10 years in the Hjemkomst Center. I wrote an article for the *Newsletter* ("A History of our History," Oct/Nov 1996) which discussed the organization's past through our move into the Hjemkomst Center in spring 1986. With our Diamond Jubilee just around the corner, I've been asked to bring that project up to date. Instead of a chronological history since 1986 I'd like to focus on some key themes.

Certain patterns repeat themselves through the organization's history. CCHS has had its ups and downs over 75 years. It's gone from being a vital part of the community to dormancy and back again. During the times the Society has prospered, however, three factors have always been in place: 1) People—active, dedicated Board Members, staff and volunteers, members and visitors, 2) Financial support, whether from private sources or the public, and 3) an Adequate Facility for the storage and display of the bed rock of our organization: our collections. CCHS is like a three-legged stool. All of these need to be in place for the Society to thrive.

In 1932, the fledgling Historical Society was long on enthusiastic people but short on everything else. In 1936 the federal relief agency Works Progress Administration (best known for its mark on the nation's physical infrastructure) provided funding for staff. Minnesota State Teachers College (MSTC) President Dr. R. B. MacClean provided space for collections in the newly completed MacClean Hall. With three strong legs beneath it the Society took off. Within four years over 4,000 people had visited the museum and collections numbered nearly 3,000 artifacts. In 1940, the museum moved to a new home, a WPA funded basement under MSTC's Campus School (now Lommen Hall).

Soon after, however, WPA money dried up. Dedicated volunteers led by Campus School Principal and CCHS President Ella Hawkinson kept the museum open through World War II. After the war, college enrollment skyrocketed. The College needed space badly and CCHS lost its second leg. The basement became a dormitory and our collections went into storage.

In the early 1950s Minnesota passed legislation allow-

ing county governments to provide funding and space in public buildings for local historical societies. With construction beginning on a new Clay County courthouse in 1953, former CCHS members, volunteers and staff reorganized the Society and received funding and room in the new facility. In August 1954 the workers moved the collections into two rooms in the Courthouse basement. In October the museum reopened.

Thousands visited the museum in the 1950s and '60s. Hard work and the County's support made it one of the most

active and visible periods in the Society's existence. But by the early 1970s the County needed space badly. In October 1971, CCHS moved again, into Moorhead's Great Northern Railway depot.

It was far from ideal. Small, cramped, alternately dry and humid, the depot challenged visitors, staff and collections alike. Our visibility decreased as did visitor numbers and funding. By the mid '70s the organization was again moribund.

In 1976, CCHS reorganized once again. A new Board took the group in a new direction. They hired trained, professional staff. The young, talented workers took the artifacts out of the cramped depot and displayed them in banks, nursing homes and churches.

Visibility, public support and county funding increased. But the organization still desperately needed a better facility.

Facility

The Board looked at a variety of options in the late 1970s and early '80s. A floor in Moorhead's Fairmont Creamery was one possibility. Another intriguing idea involved moving into the then struggling Moorhead Holiday Mall. A history museum in a mall would have been a first for Minnesota. Another local history group, the Red River Valley Heritage Society, was also looking for a place to build an interpretive center for the whole Valley. In 1979, representatives approached CCHS about joining them in the proposed Cultural Heritage Bridge. Designed by renowned architect Michael Graves, the project would have provided homes for various arts and cultural organizations in a new facility built over the Red River at Moorhead's First Avenue North. CCHS declined. The space available would have been great for an exhibit, but was not large enough for



Dr. V. Duane Thysell, 1989. Dr. Thysell was one of the scores of fine folks who have served as our volunteers. Doc grew up in Hawley and knew everyone there. Here he wears a magnifier to identify Hawley area residents in some of our unidentified S. P. Wange photos. Doc could ID about 20-25% of the folks in the images he checked.

CCHS since 1986

collections storage. (In the end, Fargo voters elected not to provide funding and the project disappeared.)

Meanwhile, Moorhead educator Robert Asp built his replica Viking ship Hjemkomst and his children sailed it to Norway. The vessel also needed a home. The Asp family received proposals from Duluth, Hawley and the Twin Cities for a permanent berth. Again RRVHS representatives approached CCHS with a collaboration plan. It called for the two groups to form a separate non-profit, the Heritage Hjemkomst Interpretive Center (HHIC). This organization would raise funds for and oversee the construction of a facility (also called the Heritage Hjemkomst Interpretive Center) to serve as a home for Asp's ship, CCHS and the exhibits envisioned by RRVHS. The HHIC would also manage the building after construction. The site would be the old "Point" neighborhood, just northwest of downtown Moorhead which had remained undeveloped since Urban Renewal in the late 1960s. On June 10, 1983 the CCHS Board agreed. It was a momentous decision and set the stage for CCHS' most successful rebirth.

A huge fundraising campaign followed. HHIC raised over \$5 million from private and public sources including the state of Minnesota and Clay County. Construction moved quickly with the building opening in May 1986. A grand opening followed in October.

The move from the depot to HHIC meant more than just moving artifacts. It required an entirely new way of operating the Society. From the museum's beginnings in 1936, exhibit philosophy ran toward the "county attic" approach, with all of the artifacts on display at once, usually with very cursory descriptive labels. Though popular among many visitors, staff and Board realized this was very damaging to the collections and not the best way to "...disseminate the history of the county" as our mission statement mandated. The new building would be equipped with climate controlled artifact storage areas. Exhibits would be carefully researched and written on specific topics in county history.

Likewise, the new building would for the first time provide a research archives where genealogists, students and others could use our photo and manuscript collections in a well lit, comfortable environment.

People

The CCHS Board realized early on that opportunities

provided by the new facility would require additions to the staff. The depot era staff included Executive Director John Schermeister, Office Manager Bonnie Ackerman and Registrar Pam Burkhardt. In January 1986 the Board hired two part-time "Museum Assistants:" MSUM Anthropology-Archeology student Donna McMaster and me.

Of the five Pam and I are still here. Over the past twenty years, it's been our privilege to work with many fine, talented people. It takes a special breed of folk to serve a non-profit history organization. One really has to have the

fire in the belly and a love of local history to thrive in the environment. With all due modesty I think one of the real keys to CCHS' success has been its staff. Each of us has brought our own unique set of strengths to our jobs.

CCHS has also had a unique organizational structure for much of the last twenty years. In 1988, Executive Director John Schermeister left the organization. The Board recognized that we didn't have the financial resources to hire a replacement. They asked staff to try to make due temporarily without a Director. Remaining staff worked together as a team, with

the Board President and other Board members taking over much of the administrative duties. All staff members attended all Board meetings and each reported directly to the Board. The situation was fraught with challenges. But all parties concerned, Board and staff, have been straight shooters, honest and open in all dealings. It's been a remarkable situation and ultimately successful. And it lasted for fourteen years. In 2002 CCHS hired Lisa Vedaa as Executive Director. Lisa has brought new ideas to the organization, taken over the administrative duties and led the Society through a long range planning process. But we still work as a team, Board and staff together.

Likewise, we've been blessed with many fine volunteers and interns. It's impossible for me to name each and every staff and Board member, volunteer and intern here. And I'd hate to leave anyone out. Suffice it to say that great people have been vital for CCHS' successes.

Financial Resources

With the move to the new building, the Board also saw the need for additional money. Though memberships, grants, donations and our endowment are and will always be important parts of our income, without public assistance



Collections Manager Pam Burkhardt catalogs an artifact in 1988. When hired in 1985, Pam faced the daunting task of straightening CCHS' collection records.

Continued on page 10...

You Are Clay County's

History is made every day – by you and all Clay County residents! Documenting the history of our county is the responsibility of all of us and at the heart of the mission of the Clay County Historical Society.

As we all know, collections are precious treasures to tell the history of our past; but, collections are in constant need of stewardship to preserve them for the future. Funds are always needed to pay for processing and materials to preserve the collections in order for them to be saved and used in future educational programs and for research.

Archivist Mark Peihl discussed the “three-legged stool” (see article pages 6-7, 10-11) of the Clay County Historical Society – three important components for the Society to prosper: 1) People, 2) Financial Support, and 3) Adequate Facility. Without ample funding, the three-legged stool will not be stable in the future!

We invite you to join us in our goal to raise \$75,000 and reach 750 members in honor of our 75th Anniversary! Why not...

Become a Collections Steward!

Become a Member/Renew Your Membership!

Contribute an Item for the Silent Auction October 8, 2007!

In celebration of our 75th Year the Clay County Historical Society is establishing Collections Funds to provide longer-term care for the county's treasures – your history! Funds raised will go toward preserving and interpreting the collections as well as funding the many projects and programs scheduled during the Diamond Jubilee Celebration Year.

\$50,000 Collections Fund Goals

\$15,000	Collections – Archives & Artifacts
\$10,000	1870s Pioneer Bergquist Cabin
\$10,000	1895 Woodlawn School
\$10,000	1936 Buffalo Fire Truck
\$ 5,000	Parke Township “Yankee” Cemetery

\$25,000 75th Anniversary Goals

\$ 5,000	“Celebrating 75 Years of Collecting” Exhibit
\$ 5,000	Clay County History Poster Exhibit for Schools
\$10,000	75 th Anniversary Programs & Events
\$10,000	Administrative Expenses & Materials

Your contributions – however great or small – will help continue the fine work of the Society! Please review the Fund Drive Form in the centerfold and decide how you can

help the Clay County Historical Society during the Diamond Jubilee Year of Celebration!

Collect your Change for the Society! Call for Your Free Kit!

What do you do with your loose change? Why not start a penny collection?! Why not save all your change for the Clay County Historical Society this next month or next year?!

Only 750 pennies = \$7.50 and 7,500 = \$75!

We are encouraging youth, individuals and businesses to collect change for the Society as one of the ways to contribute to the 75th Anniversary Fund Drive! Why not organize your classroom, book club, local gas station, library and/or office to pool their change for the Society?!

Call Lisa at 218-299-5520 for your Free Kit to Collect Change for the Society!



Earn a chance to win a Framed Art Print! Recruit a New Member for CCHS!

That's right! You could win a framed art print just for introducing a friend or family member to the Clay County Historical Society!

CCHS has been challenged to increase its membership from 500 to 750 in honor of our 75th Anniversary in 2007. This means we would like to greet 250 new individuals, families and business to the Clay County Historical Society!

To meet this impressive goal, the historical society is entering the names of all new members through 2007 in a drawing for a framed art print! The print will be a nostalgic scene to reflect the rich history and heritage of this area that the historical society exists to preserve.

CCHS would also like to give our current members the opportunity to be entered for this fabulous prize, so any CCHS member who recruits a new member will also have their name entered for each new member registered by them! To help us, please make sure that your name is included with the new members' registration.

We know that you will want to help CCHS achieve this goal of increasing our membership and becoming better able to preserve Clay County's history. Start now with the membership form on the Diamond Jubilee Fund Drive sheet in this newsletter!

History and Future!

Preserve Clay County History by Helping Us Build Collections Funds!

Help us preserve Clay County's history and the historical society's collection of historic artifacts by helping us build funds for their care! We will be creating separate funds for each collection area as part of the Diamond Jubilee Fund Drive. The funds will be Collections: Archives & Artifacts, Pioneer Bergquist Cabin, 1895 District No. 3 School, Parke Township Cemetery, and the 1936 Buffalo Fire Engine.

Collections: Archives & Artifacts



The Clay County Historical Society has collected over 25,000 historical items over the last 75 years that document the history of Clay County. These items have been donated to the

historical society in all states of condition, from mint to deteriorating. We try our best to take the best care of the objects in our collection with the resources we have, but preservation materials can be quite expensive.

1870s Pioneer Bergquist Cabin



The Bergquist Cabin in north Moorhead was constructed in the 1870s by Swedish immigrant John Bergquist. It was restored by the Bergquist Family in the 1970s and donated to the Clay County

Historical Society in 1989. CCHS holds an open house here annually with the help of the Swedish Cultural Society of the Red River Valley.

1895 District No. 3 "Woodland" School

The District No. 3 school near Rollag, MN, was the first and last rural school in Clay County (1873-1961). The current school building is the third building on the site.



The first two were built in 1874 and 1882. The School gets its nickname "Woodland" from the thick grove of majestic oak trees surrounding it. The isolated location of the

structure makes it difficult to maintain, and it is currently in need of an exterior paint job and roof repairs.

1875 Parke Township "Yankee" Cemetery



Established in 1875, Parke Township, or Yankee Cemetery, as it is commonly called, is located one mile east and 1/4 mile north of Rollag, Minnesota. Originally, 10 acres of oak forest were

donated by Dr. Charles Sill, a New York dentist. Now, the cemetery covers only about 1/2 acre and few metal, granite or marble tombstones remain. The cemetery was deeded to the Clay County Historical Society in 1942. It is one of the earliest cemeteries in Clay County.

1936 Buffalo Fire Engine

The 1936 Buffalo Fire Engine is one of the largest artifacts in CCHS' extensive collection. The Buffalo was part of the Moorhead Fire Department from 1936 until 1979,



when it was almost sold for scrap. The new pumper truck was unveiled at the fire station on September 25, 1936, and served the community faithfully through fires at the Comstock Hotel and Waterman's Clothing in Moorhead. During the flood of 1975, the Buffalo kept Moorhead's south side from flooding. The historical society would like to restore the truck to working condition for promotional use in parades and community events.

History of CCHS, cont.

CCHS could not be the organization we are today. In 1986 the Clay County Commission agreed to increase their annual funding level and gave us an additional grant for moving expenses. They liked our work. After our new museum opened, the Commission elected to keep funding us at the higher level. This was deeply gratifying to Board and staff alike. Today over 75% of our budget comes from Clay County tax payers. All of us are extremely grateful to the Clay County Commission for their support of our efforts. They make what we do possible and we work hard to earn their continued support and trust in us.

With the three legs of our stool again in place, we've been able to do a lot in twenty years.

Programming

Soon after the building opened, staff began preparing more exhibits. Our space in the HHIC included a 5,000 square foot area for a "permanent" interpretive exhibit (it was up for 12 years) and a smaller gallery for temporary exhibits. In October 1986 we opened our first temporary display, "A Scandinavian Sampler," featuring some of our best Nordic artifacts. Three months later we opened another. Then another.

This is indicative of a CCHS theme since the Hjemkomst Center opened: a focus on educational programming and public service. Our mission statement is to "collect, preserve and disseminate the history of Clay County." We've made a conscious choice to emphasize the dissemination part. Staff has conducted numerous time studies over the past twenty years to see where we expend our efforts. Invariably, 70-80% of our time is spent on educational programming and exhibits. Though we've cut back from a four-times-a-year exhibit schedule, we've designed, written, produced and installed 244 exhibits since 1986!

That does not include displays set up around the county through our outreach programming. In 1988 we installed exhibit cases in locations like the Hitterdal and Glyndon Community Centers, the Ulen High School and area libraries to get our artifacts out into the county. Pam Burkhardt (now Collections Manager) oversaw most of the exhibits. Four-hundred-ten displays later, Pam's still at it, with cases in the Barnesville, Hawley and Moorhead Public Libraries.

Traditional gallery format exhibits are only one way we've tried to educate folks about our county's history. Pam and I have done nearly 2,000 lectures, demonstrations and slideshows for school, church, retirement and civic groups and the general public on a wide variety of topics. Together we've spoken to over 61,000 people.

In 1988 CCHS instituted our PAST (Packaged Artifacts for School Teachers) program. The four trunks packed with artifacts, photos, documents and lesson plans on different topics have been used 388 times by area teachers as well as nursing homes, who've found them useful as reminiscence packages.

Our *Newsletter*, familiar to all you folks, has long been an important part of our educational programming. Most county historical society newsletters are just that, short reports to tell members about the group's recent activities. Beginning in the mid-1980s we occasionally added a short story about some aspect of the county's history. These proved popular and within a few years the articles became a semi-regular feature of each issue. In early 1991, CCHS hired Office Manager Margaret Ristvedt. Margaret had

worked for the *Hawley Herald* for many years. She brought that expertise to the *Newsletter* and turned it into a major part of our programming. (And our most popular membership benefit.) Over 700 copies of each bi-monthly issue now go out to our members, schools and area libraries.

Margaret also initiated our popular History Tour series. In fall 1992 the Minnesota Historical Society invited local history groups to tour their new History Center in St. Paul. Margaret set up and led CCHS members on a bus trip to MHS' new

digs. This proved extremely popular. In 1993, Margaret led another tour to St. Paul focusing on genealogical resources at MHS. Soon the members' only tours to places of historical interest were annual or semi-annual events. Though meant primarily as an educational experience, the tours have brought in some money and are another key benefit of membership. Executive Director Lisa Vedaa has continued the popular events and has edited the *Newsletter* since Margaret's retirement in May 2002.

We've also made a special effort to work closely with area media. CCHS is recognized as a reliable and accurate source for local history. We've helped TV stations and newspapers with a couple hundred stories with a historical component or context or with photos from our collections. The relationship has been reciprocal. Local media have been great in promoting CCHS' events and programs. In 1997, KFGO Radio personality and local history buff, Bob Harris, interviewed me about one of our *Newsletter* articles. This led to a popular series of Tuesday afternoon interviews that ran all summer. That fall Bob was transferred to another time slot and the program ended but we still get comments on it. We'd love to do it again!

Collections

We haven't neglected the "collect and preserve" part of



The brand new Hjemkomst Center in 1987, home of the Clay County Historical Society.

History of CCHS, cont.

our mission statement. Since 1986, we've more than doubled the number of artifacts and archival materials to the collections. We have nearly 30,000 artifacts to keep track of. A major part of Pam's job has been to straighten out our old records. When she began in 1985, Pam was faced with a depot strewn with artifacts and a jumble of donation forms, old labels and record books. She had to reconcile the two. It was like a huge game of Concentration, matching items with records. With patience and tenacity she's nearly completed the job.

We recently acquired copies of PastPerfect Collections Management software. In time this new technology will dramatically improve the way we manage and use our materials. Stay tuned for updates!

Archives

The move to the new building also gave us space for a research facility for public use of our manuscript and photos. Since 1986 we've had nearly 10,000 visits or phone, mail or email requests for information. About half have been from genealogists. In 1989 major grants from the Alex Stern Family Foundation and the Minnesota Historical Society enabled the purchase of a microfilm reader printer and scores of rolls of microfilm copies of Clay County newspapers, census and naturalization records, maps and other materials. Since then we've added many more rolls of records from far flung organizations for use by researchers here in Clay County.

Technology

More recent technologies have radically altered the way we interact with our patrons. In 1985 CCHS boasted one photocopier and one office typewriter. New technologies have altered all of our lives. CCHS is no exception. Computers, email and the internet have made it much easier for patrons to communicate with us. Volunteers and I have spent thousands of hours in our darkroom producing copies of our photos for patron and exhibits. Scanners and ink jet printers now make the darkroom nearly obsolete.

We've also used technology to acquire new records. In 2004 CCHS worked closely with the Clay County Recorder's Office to scan the County's death records from 1872 to 1932 as well as maps, plats and other records. These digital records have been invaluable additions to our collections. We expect more to follow.

In 2002, our website went online. Since then tens of thousands of visitors from all over the world have viewed the site. Lately we've averaged about 1,000 visitors per

month to the site. Clay County generously hosts our site for us. That's a tremendous impact for very little expense. We've made a special effort to not only list the materials we have available for researchers here, but to get actual content online. This includes copies of plat maps showing property ownership, tax lists, city directory listings and much more.

Challenges

CCHS has faced many hurdles since 1986. In 1997 we, like the rest of the Valley, struggled against a record flood. The city of Moorhead built two dikes to keep the raging Red out of our museum. Staff and volunteers manned the pumps 24/7. We all knew what was at stake. Had the dikes failed, the bottom two floors of the Hjemkomst Center (our home) would be filled with water. But the dikes held, the pumps worked fine and we dodged a huge bullet.

The next year we were not so lucky.

The non-profit HHIC organization, dependant on gate receipts, donations, grants and support from CCHS, had struggled for years to pay off the remaining debt on the building. In 1990 the city of Moorhead paid off the debt and took ownership of the facility, renaming it simply the "Hjemkomst Center." In 1998, the city also took over management and maintenance chores, freeing HHIC to do programming.

Later in 1998 the city built a major addition to the building, making room for Moorhead's Senior Connections

program, the newly merged Fargo and Moorhead Chamber of Commerce and new exhibit, archives and office space for CCHS. On July 19, 1998 a construction related water main break dumped 16 inches of water into our exhibit and artifact storage area in the lowest level of the building and 1½ inches in our office and archives and other storage areas. Quick action by the city, Clay County, staff, volunteers, preservation professionals and neighbors saved CCHS artifacts from major damage. The community response was overwhelming and humbling. The flood closed our exhibit areas and set us back months but CCHS emerged from what could have been a devastating disaster stronger than before.

Water problems aside, the past twenty years have been an extraordinary run for CCHS. We've grown from a struggling organization in an inadequate facility to one of the best county historical societies in the state. If you notice a certain pride showing through in this article you'd be right. All of us in the organization: staff, Board, volunteers, the community, the County and you, our members, can be justly proud of CCHS. With three legs standing firmly beneath us we can look forward to many more years of progress ahead!



CCHS' temporary exhibit gallery, 1987. "Cures for Cabin Fever" was one of the first of over 240 exhibits we've mounted since moving into the Hjemkomst Center in 1986.

Outreach Displays

	<u>Open</u>	<u>Close</u>
Hawley Public Library	June	October
Barnesville Public Library	June	October
Moorhead Public Library	July	September
Fargo CVB	April	October



Our HAT'S OFF at the Hawley Public Library to all those who served in the military. Artifacts dating from the Civil War to Desert Storm are featured as well as some interesting facts about Decoration Day, our nation's flag, the GAR and other organizations.

The Barnesville Public Library looks at the art of knitting in A STRING OF PURLS with artifacts from the county's history. The libraries have books for the beginner knitter and the expert.

The Moorhead Public Library currently has a display by another community group. A CCHS display will return in November.



The welcome mat is out at the CVB (Convention and Visitors' Bureau) with a display of hospitality.

The Fargo Dome has a temporary display on the Hjemkomst Center in a small case shared between CCHS and HHIC.

IN-HOUSE DISPLAYS

The hall case is being used for an OPEN STORAGE display of artifacts in the CCHS collections. An Open Storage display shows a lot of artifacts with general labels and text. We had planned to display a large number of artifacts from particular collections in the hall case during the 75th Anniversary exhibit, but advanced our timetable due to work for the Hjemkomst Center's roof replacement. The new air handling system will pass through the center of our Main Storage room. This means we need to remove artifacts and almost half of the shelving due to large amounts of dust created during construction and water from the wet saw cutting through a wall. HHIC has also generously offered the use of parts of their storage and display areas for a few months.

A display of Beulah Forness' exquisite, hand-decorated china has been arranged for viewing in the lobby area. Beulah teaches china-painting classes in the building Tuesday mornings.

Artifacts & Donors

July and August 2006

Donors:

Moorhead: Glenna Lemke, Ruth Smith, Ruth Swanson
Lake Park, MN: Audrey Anderson
Anoka, MN: Eva Hedstrom
Edina, MN: Tim Layeux
Fargo, ND: Dr. Ronald Olin

Artifacts: Scrapbooks compiled by Orabel Thortvedt along with numerous identified photos and other items – Orabel's father was Buffalo River Settlement pioneer Levi Thortvedt; book: *Minnesota: The state and its Government*, Joseph Kise MSTC 1951; (2) photos of NPRR steam engines with some identification; materials relating to St. Ansgar's Hospital with the booklet *A Glimpse of the Franciscan Sisters of Little Falls, Minnesota* by Sister Beata Lorsung, OSF; a box of materials relating to Moorhead's Harbor School; handmade wedding dress and photo of Edna Brand (Mrs. Clifford) Anderson married June 1, 1934; a beaded leather belt worn by Buckskin Harry Parnell; book and CD *Arctic Dance, The Mardy Murie Story*, by Charles Craighead & Bonnie Kreps [Mardy was the wife of wildlife artist and biologist Olaus Murie]; commemorative pottery mug "Kassenborg Block 1898," plastic bottle from 81st Annual Felton Field Days June 16 & 17, 2006.

In July and August we received additions to the advertising materials collected by Dr. Ronald Olin. He has been collecting these and other items for about 25 years and is still searching! The entire collection will be displayed during our 75th Anniversary year celebration.

Book a Program from the Clay County Historical Society!

Clay County Historical Society staff are looking to present 75 or more programs in the county throughout the Diamond Jubilee Celebration year. Archivist Mark Peihl and Collections Manager Pam Burkhardt have a number of fun and educational programs just waiting for a venue. Why not book a program for your social or service club, church or organization? Programs are free although a donation to the Clay County Historical Society is greatly appreciated. For more information and to book a program call Mark Peihl at 218-299-5520.

Stockwood Fill (30 min. slide show) Why is the railroad up in the air east of Glyndon? A look at this major engineering feat.

Old Ruby: Red River of the North (30-60 min slide show)

From steamboats to recreation, how Fargo-Moorhead and the river have coexisted for over a century.



Streetcars! (30 min

slide show) The Fargo and Moorhead Electric Street Railway – where it ran, how it worked and why it disappeared.

1897 Flood (30 min slide show) How the second highest flood in area history compared to the 1997 flood.

Early Photography (35 min slide show)

Challenges faced by early county photographers in the 1870s – and the extraordinary photos they produced.

Welcome to Beerhead! (35 min slide show)

Moorhead's colorful saloon days, 1890 to 1915.

Old Georgetown: Transportation Crossroads (35 min slide show) A look at Clay County's oldest community, transportation hub in the fur trade days.

Preserving Your Family Photos (30-60 min lecture) Presentation on how to save your pictures (and other documents) for future generations.

Fur Trade in the Red River Valley (60 min presentation) Designed especially for school children. This lecture – demonstration covers the why and how of early fur trading in the area.

Conservation of Textiles (60 min demonstration) Presentation on how to care for heirloom textiles and needlework.

Spinning (30 min demonstration) Demonstration on equipment used in spinning wool, preparing wool for spinning and quilting and dyeing.

What's in the Archives? (60 min tour) Designed especially for school children. From death records, photos and old newspapers, a look at how to go about local history research and the types of tools we use.

Overlooked Genealogical Sources (60 min lecture) For genealogists, a look at some obscure but very helpful family history resources.

History Along Highway 10 (30-45 min slideshow) How our road system developed and some historic sites along this busy route.

Doc Humphrey's Home Movies (25 min video available for checkout) An amateur filmmaker's view of Moorhead in 1917.

PAST Educational Trunks are available to schools



organizations in the county who wish to explore a variety of topics in Clay County's history. The trunks are packed with hands-on objects and photos, educational plans and ideas for using the trunk materials. For more information contact Pam

Burkhardt at 218-299-5520.

Heritage Members and Sponsors

Please help us thank these business members for supporting the Clay County Historical Society by patronizing them with your business:

PATRON (\$500+)

Please consider supporting CCHS at this membership level!

SETTLER (\$200-\$499)

Mac's, Inc.

State Bank of Moorhead (Sponsor)

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First National Bank of Hawley

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City of Hawley

Korsmo Funeral Service

Moorhead Antique Mall

Moorhead Area Public Schools

Moorhead Drug Company

Moorhead Vikingland Kiwanis

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State Bank of Hawley

EXPLORER (\$50-\$99)

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Fargo-Moorhead Heritage Society

Harmon Glass Doctor of Moorhead

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Moorhead Ace Hardware

Moorhead Area Retired Educators

Moorhead Midday-Central Lions

Richtman's Press Club

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Wells Fargo Bank MN, N A, Mhd

Wright Funeral Home

The number of members in these categories continues to grow! Thank you to all of our wonderful members for your tremendous support.

Individual Patron (\$500+)

Elsie Pitsenbarger, Fargo

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Dave & Carol Zielinski

Volunteer for CCHS, cont. from back page**Collections Assistant**

Collections assistants help the curator catalog acquisitions and maintain existing items in the CCHS collections. Volunteers may also assist with taking down exhibits and creating and installing new ones.

Collections Assistant volunteers must be attentive to detail and working with the public is not required.



New and Renewed Memberships

CCHS extends our appreciation to the following individuals who renewed their membership or became new members in July and August:

NEW MEMBERS

Don Dobmeier, Barnesville
 Virgil Gunnarson, Hawley
 Ferdinand Haring, Lake Park, MN
 Frank & Loureigne Kimm, Pelican Rapids, MN
 Dan Kopen, Abercrombie, ND
 Gary Martinson, Minneapolis, MN
 Terry V. Olson, Barnesville
 Janet Ostercamp, Moorhead
 *Cynthia Sillers, Moorhead
 *Alex Swanson, Moorhead
 Terry & Diane Tobin, Barnesville
 Duane Walker, Moorhead
 *Gift Memberships

UPGRADES

Hal F. Janneck, Vancouver, WA
 James H. Landblom, Fargo
 Neil H. Larson, Harwood, ND
 Robert & JoAnn Nyquist, Moorhead

RENEWALS

Marjorie Aakre, Moorhead
 Allen County Public Library, Fort Wayne, IN
 Robert L. & Selma Anderson, Mhd
 Milton & Armored Arneson, Mhd
 Erwin & Clarice Backlund, Mhd
 Kim & John Baird, Fargo
 Roland & Carolyn Barden, Moorhead
 Russell & Lois Bekkerus, Glyndon
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Dorothy L. Bentley, Hawley
 Meredith & Aldrich Bloomquist, Mhd
 Michelle Bowlin, Bowling Green, KY
 Beth Brunelle, Fargo
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 Paul Dovre, Moorhead
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 Delores Eiler, Fargo
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 Sister Mary Ann Fay, Crookston
 Mike & Diane Fillmore, Hawley
 Dorothy Garven, Los Angeles, CA
 Mae Gee, Moorhead
 Howard R. Geng, Moorhead
 Marv & Audrey Gerhardson, Hawley
 John & Nadine Glas, Moorhead
 Helen Glawe, Fargo
 Raymond & Joan Grefsrud, Hawley
 Juanita M. Griebel, El Cajon, CA
 Edward A. Gudmundson, Moorhead
 Joyce & Gustav Haug, Hawley
 Clair O. Haugen, Moorhead
 Carole Lee Hays, Albany, OR
 Mary E. Hennessy, Fargo
 Jessica Henry, Hastings, NE
 Dennis & Kris Herbranson, Arlington, TX
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 Frank & Adrie Israelson, Wolverton
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 Dr. Burton & Paula K. Johnson, Mhd
 James D. Johnson, Moorhead
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 I. Morris Rasmussen, Fargo
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 Alfred Rieniets, Moorhead
 Sam Rikhus, Ulen
 Rona Robbins Mears, Dallas, TX
 Ron & Nancy Saeger, Fargo
 Matt K. Scheibe, Eugene, OR
 Anna E. Schneider, Moorhead
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 Lois Selberg, Moorhead
 Ardis E. Severson, Moorhead
 Maxine Lee Shulstad, Barnesville
 Doug & Margaret Sillers, Moorhead
 State Bank of Moorhead
 Bernice A. Stensgaard, Moorhead
 Justine Swanson, Fargo
 Ronnie & Donna Tang, Felton
 Al & Janet Traaseth, Dilworth
 Arnold Tranby, Moorhead
 Otto & Bernadine Ursin, Moorhead
 Galen & Sharon Vaa, Moorhead
 Faye B. Wells, Vancouver, WA
 Evert Wiisanen, Moorhead
 Jim & Clara Wilkins, Fargo
 Susan Woodstrom & Karen Helfand
 Marilyn Wussow, Moorhead

Become a Volunteer for CCHS !

With the increased programming and events for the 75th Anniversary, there is even more work to do and we could use a few extra helping hands. If any of the volunteer descriptions below interest you, call Lisa at 218-299-5520, or stop in to fill out an application! If you are a current volunteer and interested in trying something new, just call!

Museum Receptionist

We now need help greeting visitors and answering the telephone during the week so we are expanding our weekend Museum Greeter volunteer positions to Museum Receptionist – every day! The receptionist will greet visitors, provide information about exhibits and other aspects of the Hjemkomst Center, and direct visitors to staff for appointments, research questions, or artifact donations. There will be ongoing small projects like data entry or helping with mailings to fill the time. Volunteers must enjoy working with people, feel comfortable answering



the phone and responding to a variety of visitor questions. Hours are flexible and shifts are available to fill this position by more than one volunteer.

Membership Assistant

This volunteer would help us manage the membership program, preparing renewal notices and thank you letters for membership renewals, and updating the membership database. Some visitor and telephone reception may also be involved. Computer experience is required.

Research Assistant

We receive hundreds of requests for all kinds of research throughout the year, and it takes time to find quality information for our patrons. Much research is also conducted to increase our knowledge about items in our collection, write a newsletter article, or prepare for a public program. Working with the public is not required, but would be helpful.

Continued on page 15...



CLAY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Hjemkomst Center
202 1st Ave N
PO Box 501
Moorhead MN 56561

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