

## The Historic Masonic Temple *by Sharon Geisen*

The three-story, red brick Masonic Temple will be torn down this year. Bemidji Lodge 233 has occupied the temple on the corner of Fifth Street and Bemidji Avenue in Bemidji since 1923. Ninety-one consecutive years is a long time to serve as home for one organization. Does any other building in Bemidji hold that distinction?

The lodge celebrated its 50th anniversary in June 1951 and its 100th anniversary in September 2001. The building has served the Bemidji Masons for 91 of the 114 years since they were organized in March 1901. Their first organizational meeting was held in February of 1900. The Bemidji Masons will continue to serve Bemidji even though this historic building will no longer exist.



Masonic Temple, Bemidji, undated [BCHS-4123].

The Masons purchased the lot on the corner of Fifth Street and Bemidji Avenue from John Goodman on April 5, 1923. Mr. Goodman sold lots 10, 11, and 12 in block 7 for \$1.00. The *Bemidji Sentinel* published an article on June 29, 1923, describing the construction that would start that summer costing approximately \$36,000 for the new three-story building trimmed with white Bedford stone and finished in red, brown, and gun metal brick.

The building committee included: E. N. French, R. H. Schumaker, D. B. Stewart, Dr. G. M. Palmer, W. Z. Robinson and Hallan L. Huffman.

The Masonic Temple was the second building the Masons built for their lodge. The first lodge, constructed for \$8,000, was the building on the corner of Fifth Street and Beltrami Avenue at 423 Beltrami Avenue (Block 11, Lot 1, original town site). The building was referred to as the "Masonic Block" - a building that housed several businesses. The Masons used the second floor for their meetings. The Crookston Lumber Company maintained a reading room on the first floor until 1921. Turkish bath rooms were located in the basement rooms from 1907 to 1911. The building became the home of the Bemidji Pioneer from 1920 to 1975.

Then it became the site of Quistgard's Hallmark Shop. The Masons occupied the building from 1905 to 1923.

The Bemidji Masons "first" home was on the second floor of Dudley Hall at 209 Third Street from 1900 to 1904.

Now Bemidji Lodge 233 will continue its future at their fourth home at the former martial arts school on Washington Avenue South (Highway 71).

Thank you to Dick Labraaten for providing booklets and Bemidji Mason history for this article. Cecelia McKeig provided court house records of the people who owned the Bemidji Lodge 233 location prior to being sold to the Masons in 1923. Cecelia also provided details on the first and second locations of the Bemidji Masons. Find more information from her about Bemidji on [bemidjihistory.com](http://bemidjihistory.com).

[Ed. Note]: As of this printing, the Watermark Art Center in Bemidji has plans to transform the corner of Fifth Street and Bemidji Avenue into green space after the Masonic Temple building comes down.

## President's Report

by Linda L. Lemmer

March came in like a lamb so legend says it will go out like a lion. I am hoping that means the "lion" will not arrive until March 31 so our Night at the [History] Museum on March 28 will have a full house. This is another fundraising event. The History Mystery was wonderful and we hope we can double the amount we raised. We will have a talented musician, some great silent auction items for our guests to bid on, and desserts. Be sure to get your tickets early!

One of our BCHS members, David Quam, has been searching for old videos and creating new videos of local events and stories from local persons. He made them available online, and we added links to them on our website (<http://beltramihistory.org/research/links/>).

Did you get a 2015 BCHS calendar? It has great photos from our Revisiting Beltrami County exhibit. It is a great deal at \$5.00, if only for the pictures, and one can always use another calendar. They are available in the History Center gift shop.

We have a lot of exciting events, exhibits, and activities lined up for the year. We are working on a new exhibit to open this summer. We will be having another History on the Move Bus Tour, Depot Day, and more!

Be sure to renew your memberships so you get all of the news on the events. If you know of someone who is not a member, encourage them to join. The more members we have the more events and activities we can plan. We rely on memberships and contributions from businesses and members, as well as project grants, to make history available to interested persons. Although the City lets us use the building rent free, there is still upkeep and repairs necessary to keep archived materials in good condition. Our latest expenses include a repair of the humidity control of the museum and a five-year inspection and repair of the fire suppression system in the History Center. The things I didn't know until I became president. Uffda!

As always, please know that I appreciate our members and the volunteers helping at the History Center. I am grateful for all of the moral and financial support we get from you. Thank You!



Our complete 2014 BCHS Annual Report will be soon be available on our website:

<http://beltramihistory.org/about>

## From the Desk of the Director

by Dan Karalus

Thank you to everyone who supported BCHS in 2014! Whether you made a gift, volunteered time, donated a historical object, or offered a great idea, your support matters. And your investment in BCHS was amazing in 2014. Over the past year, our membership grew more than 20%, and memberships and donations accounted for over 50% of our 2014 income.

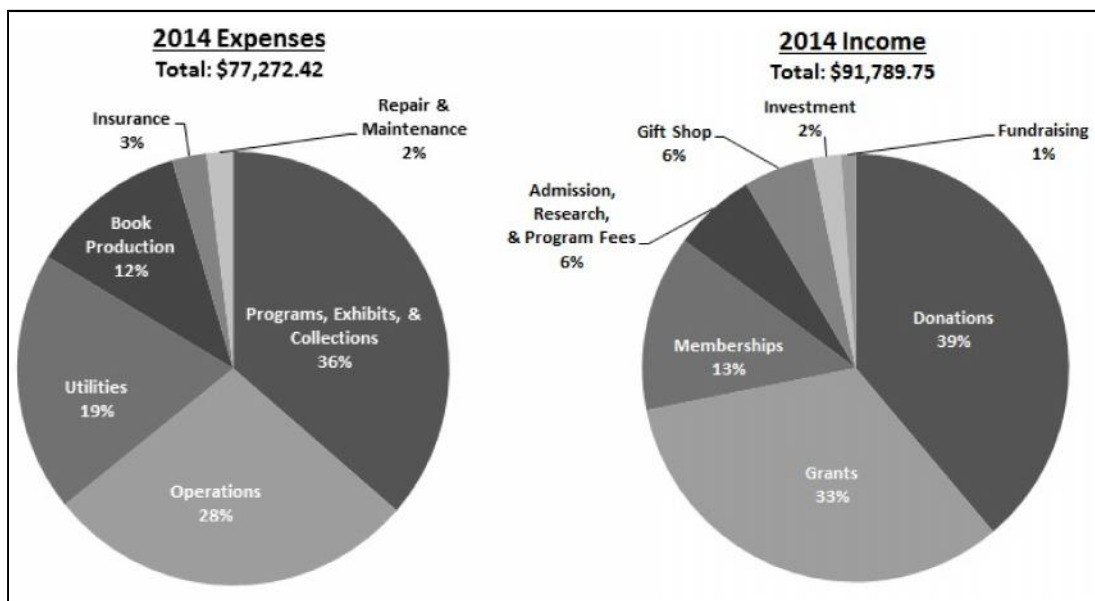
Because of your investment, we can continue to: offer new and interesting history experiences; develop new exhibits, like *Good Sports of the North*; make more of our historical resources available; and hold our popular annual events, like Depot Day and the Night We Light Bonfire.

The graphs below show the 2014 income and expenses for BCHS. Your gifts to us not only fund history programming and preservation, but also help us keep lights on, heat the Great Northern Depot, and serve our friends and visitors.

Please note that although the graphs indicate we profited \$14,517.33 in 2014, \$26,477 of that income included grants and donations dedicated to be spent in 2015 specifically for our new *Good Sports of the North* exhibit and our History in a Trunk program. Take those restricted funds away and our income fell short of expenses by \$11,959.67.

Our Board of Directors used reserve funds to cover that deficit in 2014, and we are making and executing plans to address future losses and strengthen your investment in BCHS. Our Night at the [History] Museum event and June Rummage Sale are the first signs of this commitment to diversifying our income sources and increasing our long-term sustainability through fundraising, growing our endowment, and other revenue-generating opportunities.

So be on the look out for new ways to connect to history and contribute to BCHS in 2015 and beyond. Thank you for investing in us. You, our supporters, are critical to the success of the Beltrami County Historical Society.



## Calendar of Events

### March 28: Night at the [History] Museum

Join us for the first Night at the [History] Museum from 6:45 – 9:00 p.m. on Saturday, March 28 at the History Center. This fundraising event features desserts by Raphael's Bakery Cafe & Minnesota Nice Cafe, a silent auction offering fun experiences and vintage curiosities, and the *Historical Notes* Civil War & Victorian Era musical performance by folk singer Mark Bridge. Listen, watch, and interact as Mark uses the banjo to stitch together the fabric of history and offers the chance to try out historical instruments. Desserts and silent auction begin at 6:45 p.m., and the musical performance begins at 7:30 p.m. Tickets are \$25/person. Please stop by the History Center or call 444-3376 to order tickets. Or reserve tickets online by going to: <http://beltramihistory.org/shop/events/night-at-the-history-museum/>

**Night At The Museum** [History]



### May 16: History on the Move Bus Tour

Get on board and experience the history of Beltrami County and beyond on the History on the Move Bus Tour on Saturday, May 16 starting at 8:30 a.m.! Fuel up with museum exhibits and coffee at the Beltrami County History Center. Then hop on a Bemidji Bus Line bus and explore historic Camp Rabideau, tour the Blackduck History & Art Center, enjoy a locally-prepared lunch, and tour Lyle's Logging Camp in Cass Lake (this stop is tentative and subject to change). History Center opens at 8:30 a.m. for participants. Bus leaves from the History Center at 9:00 a.m. and returns by 4:30 p.m. \$40 for non-members, \$30 for members. Members bring one guest for the member price! Lunch, refreshments, and prizes included! Funds support new exhibit updates at the Beltrami County History Center. Call 444-3376 or e-mail [depot@beltramihistory.org](mailto:depot@beltramihistory.org) by May 7 to guarantee your spot and support local history!

### June 18: Beltrami County Historical Society Annual Meeting & Depot Program by Bill Schrankler

Join us for the Annual Meeting of the Beltrami County Historical Society at 6:00 p.m. on Thursday, June 18 at the History Center. Get an update from the Executive Director, vote on new officers, and enjoy refreshments. At 6:30 p.m. Bill Schrankler will talk about Minnesota's surviving railroad depots and his book *Shadows of Time...: Minnesota's Surviving Railroad Depots*. All members and the public are welcome! Free to attend.

### June 20: History Center Rummage & White Elephant Sale

Head to the Beltrami County History Center on Saturday, June 20 from 10-4 to find a variety of unique and vintage items for sale! Funds raised will support updates to our *Trails Through Time* exhibit and the purchase of new storage materials for our archives. Please donate your new and gently-used items to us to help us make this fundraiser a huge success! Stop by the History Center or contact us at (218) 444-3376 or [depot@beltramihistory.org](mailto:depot@beltramihistory.org) to donate to the sale.



### July 16: Good Sports of the North Exhibit Opening

Start strategizing and drawing up a game plan to visit the History Center on Thursday, July 16 from 6:00—8:00 p.m. for the opening reception for our new *Good Sports of the North* exhibit. The exhibit explores sports ranging from football and hockey to curling and skiing to highlight local sports moments and personalities and how they shaped Beltrami County communities. Bring your teammates to catch some of the first glimpses of the exhibit and enjoy a few refreshments. Free for members! Museum admission fees apply for non-members. The exhibit is made possible by a grant from the George W. Neilson Foundation, as well as donations from Kent S. Wilson and Carol A. Wilson.

For the latest calendar updates go to our website: <http://beltramihistory.org/events>



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# On the Street Where You Live *by Cecelia Wattles McKeig*

## Blocks As Buildings

The best definition I can find is that a block was a multiple occupancy building. In Bemidji, a block such as the Dalton Block might house several offices or businesses and, very likely, apartments or rooms to rent as well. The term block is also used to define a piece of real estate such as Lot 1, Block 3, but that was different than the way the term was used to describe buildings in Bemidji. These blocks were more like “building blocks” – or not!

Over the years there were many blocks, and some of them are still standing. Bacon Block, Barker Block, Battles Block, Dalton Block, Goodman Block, Ibertson Block, Kaplan Glass Block, Masonic Block, Nangle Block, Naylor Block, Suman Block, Troppman Block and so on.

### Miles Block

One of the most mentioned in early days was the Miles Block. It was built by C. H. Miles on the corner of Third and Beltrami, on the corner where the Northern National Bank stood and now the Northwest Foundation has restored the elegant old building.

C. H. Miles purchased the property on the corner, reportedly paying the handsome sum of \$6,000 for it in 1901. He set about to have one of the finest buildings possible. The building was of solid brick, 50 x 80 feet, two stories, with a basement. The corner room was to be occupied as a first class saloon, the adjoining one would be for rent, and the second story was built for offices. His two saloons were the Great Northern and the Golden Club.

Bailey & Loud secured the two front office rooms, which were the largest in the building, and an adjoining library room. Probably no law firm in the state had better or more convenient apartments. The firm hosted a large gathering of their gentlemen friends in honor of having located in their elegant offices, and the evening was spent playing whist and enjoying a lunch.

Dr. Morrison also established himself in this building and rented several rooms. He used the one in the front as an operating room and the other as a reception room. The rooms were described as large and “decorated as beautifully as a lady’s boudoir.” When Dr. Rowland Gilmore came to Bemidji in 1902, he also took a suite of rooms in the Miles Block.

Charley Miles also had the first automobile in Bemidji. It was a two-door Ford painted brilliant red. It was quite a car.

Miles was a nice appearing fellow, a very good dresser and courteous man. He could sign only his own name and that is all he knew, but he made quite a success of his business here. He had all kinds of roulette machines, slot machines and poker tables, all wide open, and he could not help but make money. He eventually moved to St. Paul to pursue his theatrical interest and sold the building in 1908 to George and Gearlds. On January 1, 1910, the former Lumberman’s Bank, renamed the Northern National Bank, moved to that corner and stayed there for decades.



**Barker Block, Bemidji, 2015**  
[Courtesy of Cecelia McKeig].

### Barker Block

Earle Barker came to Bemidji in 1900. He started business as a jeweler and in June of 1903 purchased the Mayo Drug Store. In 1907, he built the Barker Block. The newspaper reported that “the Barker block will be of solid brick, one story high, 100 feet long by 25 feet wide, with a basement running the entire length of the building. The front will contain very heavy plate glass, and will have two of the finest show windows to be found in the northwest. Contractor Kreatz expects to have the block ready for occupancy in time for Mr. Barker to make an elegant display of holiday goods in the spacious windows of his new location.” For the next years, there was not much mentioned about the block itself, although a great deal of attention was paid by the local newspaper on the military life of Lieutenant Earle Barker. He was a veteran of the Spanish-American War and headed Bemidji’s Naval Militia, which was the first contingent of Bemidji men to leave for service on April 17, 1917.

Then in late 1921, a new Barker block was built west of the original block. Otto and Carl Johnson opened a ladies' ready-to-wear establishment on the main floor of the new building. The upper story of the new block was furnished for office purposes. Barker added a public rest room and beauty parlor in the basement. He also advertised the presence of a trained attendant for the children, free stationery, free telephones, free reading material, and a phonograph for the entertainment of those resting. In the store he provided use of a free weighing machine, free

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<p><b>The UPS Store</b> 215 Paul Bunyan Dr NW Bemidji—751-7179</p>	<p><b>Camp Thunderbird, Inc.</b> 49536 Thunderbird Dr. Bemidji—751-5166</p>	<p><b>Cease Family Funeral Homes, 2807 Irvine Ave</b> Bemidji—751-9700</p>	<p><b>Northwoods Lumber Co.</b> PO Box 130 Blackduck—835-7745</p>

telephone service and a Sanitary Stamp Vending Machine. Earle Barker sold Barker's Rexall Drug Store in 1940 to Buck Buchanan and H. Arthur Vanderby, but it continued to be known as the Barker Block. Dr. Groschupf and Dr. McCann's offices were located upstairs. This is where I had my tonsils removed. No hospital stay – but in the doctor's office. Dr. Groschupf was our family doctor, and although his office was upstairs over Barker's, he made home visits. I remember him visiting our home several times when I had bronchitis.

The drug store was sold once again in 1954 and August Ulrich opened the Bemidji Pharmacy in 1955. In April 1956, he established Just a Little Drug Store in the same setting and operated it until his retirement in 1974.

### Troppman Block

Fred Troppman bought the Malzahn Block about 1905 and remodeled it several times. The Malzahn building was one of the oldest in Bemidji. An organizational meeting for the First Presbyterian Church was held there on August 24, 1896. It held many different businesses, but had a serious fire in 1904. Troppman bought the property and although he owned it, it still was referred to as the Malzahn Block for years until Troppman replaced it with a new brick structure in 1916. Troppman's new building was considered the most conspicuous business block in the city, as well as the

newest and best office building. The building was erected at a cost of approximately \$20,000.



**Troppman Block, Bemidji, 2015**  
[Courtesy of Cecelia McKeig].

An ad in May 1916 read: "It is two stories high, one hundred forty feet long and fifty feet wide and is the home of nearly a dozen different institutions. The ground floor is occupied by the Troppman Department store and the Henrionnet Millinery Parlors. Housed on the second floor in large, commodious well lighted rooms are the following business men: Attorneys Andrews, Gibbons and Huffman, in a suite of four fine rooms; Attorney H. L. Loud, occupying a suite of two splendid rooms; Doctors A. E. Henderson and L. A. Ward using excellent quarters in the front corner rooms. To the left of the wide spacious hallway will be found the offices of J. W. Wilcox, who sells Overland and Willys Knight cars and farmlands; the Dean Land Company, who have for the past forty four years been selling Minnesota lands; and Mina A. Myers occupying quarters equipped for a modern hair dressing establishment. When you see the Troppman Block connect these various institutions with it in your mind's eye and you'll never forget who is who in this, Bemidji's best office and business block." (May 19, 1916)

*Cecelia's story may also be found on our website:*  
<http://beltramihistory.org/blog>

## Sidetracked

by *Darla Sathre*

Valentine's Day, with its surfeit of chocolate and other candy, is over. Soon will be Easter, along with more chocolate, as well as a variety of other indulgent sweets. I got to wondering about the availability of candy in the early days of

Beltrami County. The first mention of candy that I found was maple sugar cakes distributed to visiting children by Chief Bemidji!



**M. Flint Confectionary [BCHS-2171].**

It did not take long before bakeries and candy stores, or confectionaries as they were called, were scattered throughout the area. Mr. and Mrs. Frank Thompson built one of the first in Bemidji on Third Street during the summer of 1896. By July they even had new sidewalks in front of their business. Also, on Third Street in the late 1890s Arthur Wheelock established a combination employment office/confectionary/news stand. These were not the only people to have sweet treat shops on Third Street! Stahl's Bakery was also there. So was Oppegaard's Honeyland Candy Kitchen, which later was known as Suman's Third Street Candy Kitchen.

There were many more bakeries and confectionaries in Bemidji over the years, as well as in surrounding communities. In Puposky, the McKnight family had a building that included the local switchboard, a barber shop and taxi service, as well as a confectionary. Turtle River had both the Cook's Candy Store and the Guyette Bakery. Both stayed in business until 1909.

Here is a little sidetrack story for you. Harry Sinker had a toothache, and went to Shevlin to have it treated. He went through Solway and decided to open a confectionary there. He also became the town marshal.

Let's not forget Kelliher. The operator of the Kelliher Hotel, N. J. Nielsen, was an apprentice to a baker in Norway. Nielsen became known for the rich melt-in-your-mouth pastries he made for the hotel. Baker Ben Richardson of Eggen's Café and Bakery in Kelliher was also known as a good Norwegian baker. Especially loved were his cream puffs, the Wednesday special. A cream puff and a cup of egg coffee could be had for 15 cents!

Certainly most treats were made at home. But it is good to know that even in the early days of Beltrami County, there were bakeries and confectionaries enough to satisfy the sweet tooth!

*Also find this story online:* <http://beltramihistory.org/blog>

## Red, Green, and Orange *by Roy A. Johnson*

As I was walking through our daughter's neighborhood in Pasadena one Sunday afternoon, a noise that was foreign to an urban area caught my attention. The noise was a faint but clear "plup-plup-plup-plup," a sound that is – could it be possible here in the city? – characteristic of an old John Deere tractor. Memories from my youth on a small family farm flooded my thoughts. Our farm was a Farmall tractor farm, but several neighbors had John Deere tractors. This was at the time when John Deeres were built with two-cylinder engines. The sound of the exhaust from these tractors is unforgettable and one of the great nostalgic memories of farm life.

I quickened my pace in the direction of the sound and suddenly, on a cross street several blocks ahead of me, there it was – the green John Deere tractor being driven along at road-gear speed. I walked as fast as I could, hoping to catch up to the tractor and its driver to get a closer look, but the speed of the tractor exceeded my walking pace so that it slowly disappeared into the distance. I was disappointed.



Farmall display at Grinols Implement & Fuel Co., Bemidji, 1950s [BCHS-18527].

When I grew up in rural Beltrami County in the 1940s and 1950s, most farms were small, self-sufficient family farms where one or two teams of work horses were gradually replaced by small, relatively inexpensive, tractors. My father replaced his team of horses just before World War II with a Farmall A, the smallest tractor manufactured at the time by the International Harvester Company. The Farmall A was designed for use as a garden tractor and had an odd appearance. The engine, drive train, etc., were offset (to the left as seen from the driver's seat) to allow clear vision for cultivation of row crops. The tractor could be equipped with an attachable, one-row cultivator, a minuscule capacity for cultivation by today's practices.

At the time, the most popular tractors on small farms were Farmalls, John Deeres, and Allis Chalmers. Farmalls were red, John Deeres were green, and Allis Chalmers were orange. Following World War II, the Ford Motor Company introduced a small tractor that was gray in color. Just as there was good natured ribbing between owners of Chevrolet, Ford, and Plymouth automobiles, each tractor brand had its loyal adherents. On my dad's farm, we only ever had two tractors, the Farmall A eventually being replaced by a larger Farmall C.

In rural settings like those of my father's farm there are occasions, usually in the early morning or late evening, when the air is still and sounds carry across long distances. The tinkle of a cow bell or the slamming of a door on a neighbor's farm can be heard clearly several miles away. In these calm conditions, one may hear the "prrrrrrrrrrrrr" of a Farmall or Allis Chalmers working late in the evening but it is the "plup-plup-plup" of the John Deere that stays in memory. As the sound comes through the still air, one can hear changes in the rhythm of the engine, especially when there is an increase in the load on the tractor. Then one hears "plup-plup—plup—plup—plup—plup-plup-plup-plup" as the engine slows and recovers from the need for more power. To help prevent the engines from stalling at low speeds, John Deeres were built with large flywheels whose momentum was transferred back to the drive train.

My dad's pre-WWII Farmall A was started with a crank. Although automobiles by this time were equipped with electrical ignition systems, these were not yet in widespread use on tractors. Starting the engine with the crank was simple, the main requirement being an adequate amount of arm strength. But using the crank came with one precaution, taught me by my dad, and that was not to grip the crank with thumb wrapped around the handle. In case the crank should be caught up in the internal mechanism as the engine started, the crank could rotate rapidly and powerfully. This could lead to a dislocated thumb, or worse, if the handle was gripped with the thumb. John Deeres could be started by turning the flywheel as well as with a conventional hand crank.

Today, just as there are persons who collect "antique" automobiles, there is a thriving hobby culture centered around antique farm equipment. Shows of old machinery are widespread and there is an active marketplace for buying and selling tractors from the era of the small family farm. In an online chat initiated by a man wishing to buy an old John Deere tractor, his memories were clearly expressed as he wrote: "Thanks, I've been leaning towards an A (a John Deere model) since they seem to be the most available. But a G would be wonderful. Heard one of them run a couple of weeks ago. Nice. (I) would like a wide front since I want it to become a dedicated mower. Or I could just fire it up and listen to it at idle and be pretty pleased." (Quote from: [www.yesterdaystractors.com/cgi-bin/viewit.cgi?bd=jd&th=217901](http://www.yesterdaystractors.com/cgi-bin/viewit.cgi?bd=jd&th=217901); Discussion dated October 2, 2006). It may be that a similar sentiment could explain how a John Deere tractor came to be driven through Pasadena on a Sunday afternoon. I remain loyal in spirit to the bright red Farmalls but the sound of the green John Deere provides a warm nostalgia. Hearing a "plup-plup-plup" still evokes memories of the imagined romance of the small family farm; a memory that must be tempered by the reality of the hard work and heartbreak that was so often found in those settings.

**Roy A. Johnson is a BCHS member and author.**

*Have an article idea? Contact us at [depot@beltramihistory.org](mailto:depot@beltramihistory.org). We welcome member contributions!*

# The History Mystery

The History Mystery on New Year's Eve 2014 was a blast! Thank you to all of the "Assistant Detectives" who participated and supported BCHS, volunteers who helped plan and run the event, and to the Ground Round and Leuken's Village Foods for providing appetizers.



And special thanks to our volunteer actors for getting into character as the six local historical figures suspected of "murdering" a local conductor [below, from right]: Ernie Rall as Fred Troppman, Judy Dvorak as Mary Brinkman, Kay Murphy as Grace Warfield, Cindy & Alan Habedank as Lela and Charles Vandersluis, and Maggie Carlson as Helen Gill.

Josie & Alex Brink, ages 10 & 7, solved the mystery! It turned out that Grace Warfield did it, with the Railroad Spike, in the Staging Room. According to Grace, the conductor made a pass at her and she let him have it (Note: This was all fictitious).



Help solve the next History Mystery on New Year's Eve 2015!

## Weapon



## Railroad Spike



Photographs courtesy of the Bemidji Pioneer and BCHS member Kelly Reid.

## Wapiti: The Story of Elk in Minnesota *by Steve Caron*



Did you know that Beltrami County is home to a small herd of elk? Did you also know there is another elk population in Kittson County? The elk that now live in northwestern Minnesota are a small fraction of the vast herds that once roamed the aspen parklands, prairies, oak savannahs, and hardwood forests in our state.

American elk, or *wapiti*, were historically found throughout what is today Minnesota, except the northeastern mixed boreal forest region. Prior to Euro-American settlement, elk were arguably the most widespread and abundant large hoofed animal in Minnesota. As a result of landscape alterations and increasing utilization of elk by humans, native elk were most likely extirpated by the early 1900s.

### Physical Characteristics

The name *wapiti* is a Native American word that describes “white deer,” referring to its very lightly colored coat in spring, or according to some references, for its “white rump.” Elk live in groups, varying from small bands to large herds. Elk herds are larger in late summer and fall.

Elk are large members of the deer family, with adult males or bulls weighing 700 to 1,000 pounds and adult females or cows weighing 500 to 650 pounds. An adult elk is about four to five feet tall at the shoulders, and seven to eight feet in length. Elk, like other members of the deer family, are herbivores and ruminants. The males also grow deciduous antlers each year that are truly impressive, as they are large and sweeping in length, and can be seen at a great distance.

The color of elk varies by season, changing from very light faded brown in spring, to a tawny reddish brown in summer, to gray-brown in fall. Elk are also known for their upper canine ivory teeth and for male calling or bugling during the breeding season. They are unique among deer for these characteristics.

### After the Ice Age

Elk first appeared in present day Minnesota approximately 8,000 years ago following the retreat of glaciers. They most likely have been present in this area of North America continuously until the beginning of the twentieth century. The landscape and climate were favorable for elk in this period, with grasslands, shrubs, and patches of forest in some areas and mixed hardwood forest in other areas.

### Elk Extirpation in Minnesota

Elk, as well as other large ungulates, have been utilized by humans for thousands of years in Minnesota. Many people, including Native Americans and Euro-American immigrants from the late seventeenth century through the nineteenth century, were dependent on wildlife for subsistence. Also, during the latter part of this period commercial harvest of elk was prominent. Elk meat became a popular fare in restaurants in villages to large cities.

Native elk essentially disappeared by 1900 in Minnesota. A few remained in the far northwest portion of the state (Kittson and Roseau Counties) and individual elk sightings were made into the early 1930s. But the vast herds of *wapiti* across Minnesota were gone.

### Re-establishment of Elk in Minnesota

In 1913, the Minnesota State Legislature appropriated \$5,000 for an elk re-establishment project. Minnesota acquired 56 elk from Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming in 1914 and 1915. James J. Hill donated an additional 14 captive elk from Ramsey County, Minnesota.

A 700-acre elk corral was constructed in Itasca State Park, between the two south arms of Lake Itasca, to hold these 70 elk. The animals did not prosper and only 13 remained in the enclosure by 1916. However, by 1925 the herd had increased to 25. During the 1920s, small numbers of elk were donated and transferred to various parks for display



and to the Superior National Forest in northeast Minnesota.

### **Elk Moved to Red Lake Game Preserve**

During the late 1920s, the federal government undertook a resettlement program for farm families in several areas of northern Minnesota, including the area immediately north of Upper and Lower Red Lake in Beltrami County. This was named the Beltrami Island project. Also during this time, the state paid off ditch bonds for the county in return for the transfer of the lands to the state. The Red Lake Game Preserve was created in this vast area.

In 1935, 27 elk from Itasca State Park were moved to the western portion of the Red Lake Game Preserve in extreme northwestern Beltrami County (22 miles northeast of Gygla). By 1940, the elk herd (Beltrami, Lake of the Woods, and Roseau Counties) had increased to an estimated 100 animals (possibly as many as 200). During the mid-1940s through the 1950s, state wildlife managers estimated the elk herd at 50-75.

### **Elk Damage to Agricultural Crops**

Beginning in 1939, reports documented damage or depredation to farmers' crops by elk. The relocated elk began to move or migrate off public lands onto private lands in the area. Crops, such as alfalfa, hay, oats, sunflowers, and other grains were sought out by elk.

As elk damage grew, the illegal harvest or poaching of elk began limiting the size of the elk herd. Efforts by state wildlife managers at placing food on public land to "short-stop" elk failed in deterring the elk herd from moving into the farming country southwest of the game preserve. In addition, habitat became less attractive to elk within the game preserve. However, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) implemented various elk habitat management projects on state lands in the elk country.

### **Elk Politics**

Elk depredation of farm crops and elk poaching problems continued into the 1970s in the Grygla area. Elk issues further heated up politically in the early 1980s when the state legislature passed a mandate directing MDNR to remove all elk from Beltrami, Marshall, Pennington, and Roseau Counties.

### **Elk Roundup**

From October 1985 until March 1986, 14 elk were captured by driving, darting with anesthetic, and baiting the animals. The MDNR roundup did not go well. The best option would have been to lure the elk into a corral during the winter months, but the deadline in the legislative mandate would not allow this. The elk roundup was a media circus. TV helicopters and numerous reporters were present. Several captured elk died during the round-up. Despite the efforts by MDNR, only five elk were relocated.

The mandated elk removal was officially rescinded by the legislature in 1987 following elk mortality caused by the roundup activity and legal action to halt roundup activities. Elk habitat management activities were consequently increased and the legislature authorized an elk hunting season to limit the size of the Gygla elk herd to 30 animals.

The first modern day elk hunt was held in 1987. An elk hunt has been held periodically since. The legislature also authorized compensation to farmers from elk damage.

### **Minnesota Elk Today**

Between 1980 to the present day, the Gygla elk herd has numbered 20-50. But these are not the only elk in the state! In the early 1980s, an elk herd from Manitoba began crossing into Kittson County in far northwest Minnesota during the summer. Some of these elk began living year around in Minnesota.

There are three sub-groups of Kittson County elk identified by MDNR: Lancaster, Caribou-Vita, and Water Tower herds. The Caribou-Vita sub-group is a "border" herd that crosses back and forth from Manitoba to Minnesota. Approximately 40 of the estimated 110 to 215 Kittson County elk are considered year around residents.

### **Minnesota Elk Today**

Elk crop depredation issues, similar to the Grygla elk, began in Kittson County in the early 2000s. This initiated crop depredation abatement or management efforts with local farmers by MDNR, as well as fall elk hunting seasons.

In 2009, MDNR approved and published a *Minnesota Elk Management Plan* that established elk population goals. The Grygla herd is 30-38, and the Kittson herd is 20-30 year around resident elk. This plan also outlines many strategies and actions for the future presence of wild elk.

### **Minnesota's Elk: The Future**

Currently there are less than 75 wild elk living year around in northwestern Minnesota. The 2009 MDNR *Elk Plan* population goals of 50-68 elk has stirred some opposition from local elk enthusiasts. In response, MDNR has initiated discussions with interested citizens and has announced that it will revise its *Elk Plan* in 2016.

### **How Many Elk?**

It is of interest that Michigan has an elk population of 1,000 or more in the upper Lower Peninsula, Wisconsin has a growing elk herd, and eastern states such as Pennsylvania and Kentucky have large robust elk populations.

How many wild elk should Minnesota have? That depends on your perspective and whether your experiences with elk have been positive or negative. Adequately funded habitat management, crop depredation payment, and crop abatement programs are a key part of reducing and even solving anti-elk sentiment. Can Minnesota support 500 or more wild elk? Only time and changing human perspectives will tell.



Image on opposite page and logo above from the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (<http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/>).



We could still use your input, talents, and stories about sports moments and personalities in Beltrami County for our *Good Sports of the North* exhibit!

Have a favorite sports memory? Please contact us to tell us about your experiences with sports and recreation in the area and how those experiences impacted your life. We want to hear about the time you scored a hat trick, outran the field, cheered a local team, or simply had fun skiing in the cold. Share your stories.

We could also use some additional items. Help us make history by donating or loaning:

- Sports Videos & Highlights!**
- Hockey Photographs & Equipment**
- Basketball Gear**
- Curling & Cross Country Skiing Photos & Items**

To contribute please contact Dan Karalus at (218) 444-3376 or depot@beltramihistory.org. Or visit the History Center, Wednesday-Saturday from 12-4.

# Deaccession Planning

We are busy assessing our inventory of books, manuscripts, photographs, and artifacts, and making plans to deaccession items from the Beltrami County Historical Society collections. What does this mean? It means we are working to determine which items and records we may officially and permanently remove from our collections.

BCHS accumulated thousands of photographs, books, objects, and other records over the past several decades. Some are deteriorating and/or duplicates. Others are not related to our mission or do not fit with our Collections Management Policy. Removing these items from our collections will help us create valuable space in the Great Northern Depot and allow us to improve the preservation of the rest of our collection.

Over the next several months, we will determine which items we can no longer care for properly or do not fit the scope of our collections and mark them for consideration of deaccessioning. Items will most likely be either sold, donated, or destroyed (if they are in disrepair). BCBS plans to publish an announcement prior to making final decisions.

*Please contact us at depot@beltramihistory.org or (218) 444-3376 for more information.*

*The mission of the Beltrami County Historical Society is to provide connections to county history through public archives, collections, interpretive exhibits, and programs that educate, invite dialogue, and inspire self-reflection.*

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**Thanks again to everyone who created connections to history through our 2014 Annual Giving Campaign! Your support is *Awesome! Wonderful! Thank you!***

### **BCHS Spring Photograph**



**Inside of Warner's Hotel, Puposky, 1910 [BCHS-268].**

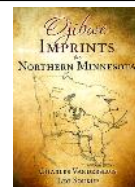
*You can find more photographs in our online Photograph Database: <http://beltramihistory.org/research/photographs>*

### **Dugout Canoe Update!**

Maritime Heritage Minnesota (MHM) received the lab results from radiocarbon testing on a sample of the BCHS dugout canoe. MHM says the canoe is "modern" and from a tree cut during the height of the atomic bomb tests in the early 1950s.

According to the lab report, the BCHS canoe:  
 "...is reported with the units 'pMC' rather than BP. 'pMC' stands for 'percent modern carbon.' Results are reported in the pMC format when the analyzed material had more 14C than did the modern (AD 1950) reference standard. The source of this 'extra' 14C in the atmosphere is thermo-nuclear bomb testing which on-set in the 1950s. Its presence generally indicates the material analyzed was part of a system that was respiring carbon after the on-set of the testing (AD 1950s)."

The second printing of *Ojibwe Imprints on Northern Minnesota*, our new book by Leo Soukup & Charles Vandersluis, is now available in our gift shop and online. The 300-page book sells for \$29.95 and includes three CDs of oral histories told by John G. Morrison, Jr. Support BCHS & contact us to order a copy of this fascinating book!



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**Thank you for supporting the Beltrami County Historical Society!**

Your memberships and *tax-deductible* donations preserve collections of manuscripts, textiles, maps, photographs, and artifacts.

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