Andy Mack’s Baggage Cart by P. J. Reynolds

“Wait, please wait!” A woman shouts as she is practically running down the railroad platform with her husband and two children behind her. She is carrying very heavy luggage that she and her family need for their long journey to California. They are traveling all the way from Bemidji, a small town in Northern Minnesota, and they are about to miss their train!

A young man, pulling a baggage cart, already full to the brim with luggage, stops and sees the frantic woman chasing after him. The woman comes to a halt and rights herself. “Thank you for stopping,” she says, gasping for air. The young man, who was known as a “Bag Boy,” smiles at the woman and her family. “You need someone to take that luggage for you, Miss?” he asks politely.

The young man, who was known as a “Bag Boy,” smiles at the woman and her family. “You need someone to take that luggage for you, Miss?” he asks politely.

The woman smiled, looking relieved. “Yes, thank you!”

The polite bag boy takes the luggage from the woman and places it gently in the red and green baggage cart with the other luggage. “Now you better hurry or you’re going to miss your train. And don’t worry about your luggage. It will be well taken care of.” The young man smiled as he watched the family dash down the rest of the platform and climb into their train car. He then hurries himself over to the baggage car pulling the heavy baggage cart behind him and quickly loads the contents from the cart into the train car. The train is ready for departure.

The bag boy steps back onto the platform as the train begins to pull away from the station. The whistle is blown and the bag boy waves at the passengers going by on the train. “Come back soon!” he shouts. But the train soon disappears and it is time to go back to work.

This was a typical scene at railroad depots during the early 1900s. Baggage carts were an essential part of this picture. Most of these carts were lost over time, but a few have been found and restored with loving care. Thanks to Andy Mack, a Beltrami County Historical Society Board Member, one such baggage cart has been brought back to its original condition. This is Andy’s story and how he built one of these now unforgettable baggage carts:

“My interests in railroads, depots, and baggage carts probably began with my childhood on a small farm in North Dakota. One of the products produced on our farm was cream. The cream that we produced was shipped by railroad to a creamery 60 miles from our home town of Pettibone, North Dakota.

“Around train time we would take the cream cans into town. At the train station the Depot Agent would put the cream cans onto a baggage cart, and then he would pull the cart over to the waiting train. The cream would then be transferred to the Express Car and shipped off to one of its many destinations across the United States. But by the 1960s, trucks had replaced trains in the rural areas of the U.S. As a result, branch lines were abandoned and depots were closed. Depots and their contents were either sold, demolished, or moved to another location.

(Continued on Page 6)
President’s Report
by Sharon Geisen

I am writing this column as the new President of the Board of Directors for the Beltrami County Historical Society (BCHS) for the 2015-2016 year. I was elected in July at our Annual Meeting. Linda Lemmer has served the past two years as BCHS Board President. She did a superb job. Like all the board members, Linda is very dedicated to the History Center and has done so much at many of the fundraisers and activities.

Our current Board of Directors are very dedicated to preserving the History Center and history of the area. We are always looking for good volunteers at the History Center, and if it sounds interesting to you, stop in Wednesday through Saturday and talk to Dan. We are also in need of dedicated hard-working individuals for our board. You must be 18 or older, be (or become) a member of BCHS, and be willing to work to sustain our organization and the History Center. Pick up an application at the History Center. We also welcome anyone interested in joining the board to visit one of our meetings at 4:00 p.m. on the third Thursday of each month. Stop by the History Center or contact Dan for more information.

The Great Northern Depot has been busy this summer with tourists and many Bemidji High School (BHS) alumni in July. Many came for the opening of the Good Sports of the North exhibit. From the chatter and laughs, BHS alumni were sharing some wonderful memories and stories.

We hope many of you brought family and friends this summer to the depot. If your guests, family and/or friends like history, keep us in mind. Our Trails through Time exhibit is also a top-quality exhibit.

Soon we will begin planning for several great events for November and December. The Night We Light Bonfire in November and the History Mystery in December are coming back. Watch the newsletter for the details on these two wonderful events. If you would like to portray a Bemidji character from the past, call Dan to get your name on our list of actors.

What to do this winter? Come check out our research room if you are interested in family genealogy. We have microfilm of Bemidji newspapers plus computer access to Ancestry.com, city directories, and much more!

From the Desk of the Director
by Dan Karalus

The Beltrami County Historical Society had another busy summer both inside and outside the History Center. Thank you to everyone who joined us for Depot Day, explored the Doud Cabin and Sunnyside School at the Beltrami County Fair, and visited the History Center to see our new Good Sports of the North exhibit.

Depot Day and our fair activities generated important fundraising revenue for BCHS thanks to the amazing work of our volunteers and board members. Hats off to them for their hard work! We also received very positive feedback on Good Sports of the North from our visitors. The exhibit will remain on display through Summer 2016, so there is still time to learn some fun facts and try out some vintage athletic equipment. Thanks again to the George W. Neilson Foundation, Kent Wilson, Carol Wilson, Amity Graphics, the Bemidji Pioneer, and Paul Bunyan Broadcasting for the help funding and supporting the exhibit!

Our Calendar of Events shows what we currently have planned for the rest of 2015, but we are always working to provide more connections to county history through BCHS. This fall, the Board of Directors and I will be working to plan strategies to better meet our mission both now and in the future. We welcome input from BCHS members and local community residents. Please let us know what you would like to see from BCHS and feel free to send along any good ideas for events, programs, or other activities and resources that could preserve and promote local history.

Yet it is not just your input that we welcome. We could use talented individuals to serve as board members for BCHS. Serving as a volunteer on a non-profit board of directors requires time and energy, and for a small organization like ours it also means helping with events and programs. It can be difficult to come up with that type of commitment, but serving as a board is important and valuable work for organizations and communities. Please consider becoming a BCHS Board Member, and do not hesitate to contact me or a member of the board for more details and to find out about board member experiences.

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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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Staff
Dan Karalus, Exec. Director
Calendar of Events

October 2: Free Friday Sponsored by Paul Bunyan Communications

November 6: Free Friday Sponsored by Northern Iron Horse Railroad Society

Paul Bunyan Communications sponsors Free Friday at the Beltrami County History Center on October 2! And the Northern Iron Horse Railroad Society sponsors Free Friday at the History Center on November 6! Visit during special extended hours from 12:00-6:00 p.m. on these two days and receive free admission to the History Center's *Trails Through Time* and *Good Sports of the North* exhibits. Also featuring First Friday artwork on display from Gallery North. For BCHS members, this is a great opportunity to bring extended family and encourage friends to visit the History Center and join BCHS. Also, please consider sponsoring a Free Friday yourself or through your employer. Contact BCHS at (218) 444-3376 for more details.

October 11: Semi-Annual Meeting at Saum School

Join us for the Beltrami County Historical Society’s Semi-Annual Meeting at Saum Consolidated School. Explore local history through a program by Leo Soukup on his book *Ojibwe Imprints on Northern Minnesota*. Enjoy a potluck lunch courtesy of the Saum Community Club and the Beltrami County Historical Society. And take a tour of the historic Saum School! Meeting starts at 2:00 p.m. at the Saum School on Pioneer Rd NE, west of Kelliher. Contact BCHS for directions. FREE to attend!

November 27: Night We Light Bonfire

Warm up at the Beltrami County History Center at the Night We Light Bonfire after-parade event from 6:30—8:30 p.m. Enjoy bonfires, hot cider, hot chocolate, cookies, and other treats outside. Explore the museum and find unique holiday gifts in the gift shop inside, including a wide selection of puzzles, mugs and prints from Wanda Odegard, local history books, vintage & quirky games, and railroad-themed merchandise. Refreshments and admission are FREE!

December 31: The History Mystery

An engineer was found dead on the platform outside the Great Northern Depot. Detectives determined the death was a murder and traced it to somewhere inside the depot. Six local, historical figures were present at the time of the murder and all are suspects. Was it the Carnegie librarian waiting for an incoming train? Was it the hardware store owner picking up a shipment of goods? Or did another suspect do it? Detectives need your help to solve the crime. Become an Assistant Detective and join BCHS for this real-life game of Clue! Interview historical figures, eliminate suspects, and find clues. Solve the crime first and win! Tickets are $15/person or $10 for BCHS members. BCHS members may bring guests for the member-price. Kids 12 & under free with a paid adult! Play individually or as a team. Appetizers and snacks provided. Historical costumes encouraged! Doors open at 4:00 p.m. Game begins at 4:30 p.m. Space is limited. Please contact BCHS at (218) 444-3376 for tickets and more information. Don’t miss this great event!

For the latest calendar updates go to our website: [http://beltramihistory.org/events](http://beltramihistory.org/events)
Grand Forks Bay

We seldom see a specific reference to Grand Forks Bay anymore, but from 1902 until 1940, there were frequent references to the popular vacation spot on Lake Bemidji, and Grand Forks Bay even had its own column in the Bemidji Pioneer and in the Grand Forks Herald! Do you know where it was?

Grand Forks Bay was the oldest summer resort on the lake and was platted on the northwest shore of Lake Bemidji. After the Great Northern Railroad completed the connection from Fosston to Duluth in 1898, Bemidji became a center of tourism. The newspapers in Grand Forks, North Dakota told of the wonderful fishing near Bemidji, and North Dakotans came over to the lake region to get plenty of pike. In 1901, the Bemidji Pioneer stated that during the spring it is nothing to go out on Lake Bemidji in a rowboat and catch one hundred walleyed pike in an hour. In four days of fishing, a party of four Grand Forks fishermen caught "about 300 pounds" of walleye. They kept every pound.

This area was served by several launches from the docks at Third Street in Bemidji. The boats made regularly scheduled trips all summer to the resort areas, making it more convenient to travel by boat than by car. In 1907, the newspaper reported that a merry party started out in the “Swallow,” with their lunch baskets, from Grand Forks Bay and traveled to the Mississippi outlet to picnic and explore the woods for blueberries. There are frequent references to Captain MacLachlan and the “City of Bemidji,” as well as other boats on the lake.

There were many splendid cottages at Grand Forks Bay, and the property was considered very valuable. In 1908, Professor Merrifield, president of the University of North Dakota, was reputed to own the very best summer home on Lake Bemidji. The building was of modern design, had a massive stone chimney and wide porticos, and was regarded as being in every way an ideal summer home.

Grand Forks Bay was named in the land description regarding the location of the new normal school in Bemidji in 1915. The site for the college comprised forty acres, ran from Doud Avenue to the lakeshore, and extended from Fourteenth Street to Grand Forks Bay on Lake Bemidji. So now we know that Grand Forks Bay extended from the north side of the college northward to Bemidji Beach, where the Jacobi’s also had a summer cabin. If that rings a bell, it will be because G. R. Jacobi was an insurance agent from Grand Forks. His granddaughter, actress Jane Russell, was born at the Bemidji Hospital in 1921, because her parents were staying in their cottage at Bemidji Beach (just south of Birchmont). An early map shows the location of the Bay area along Lake Bemidji.

The area suffered a wave of vandalism in April 1905. Over a period of ten days considerable damage was done. Almost every cottage had been entered and articles removed. Two of the cottages were stripped of their contents, even heavy articles like beds and extension tables were removed. In one or two cases, doors were chopped down in order to gain admittance. Bemidji promised a quick crackdown. It did not want to lose its valuable summer visitors.

Cottages at Grand Forks Bay were again broken into in March 1915. The cottages had been entered and articles removed. Two of the cottages were stripped of their contents, even heavy articles like beds and extension tables were removed. In one or two cases, doors were chopped down in order to gain admittance. Bemidji promised a quick crackdown. It did not want to lose its valuable summer visitors.

Auditor’s Plat #3 (showing Grand Forks Bay), Bemidji, 1906 [BCHS-2012.148].
on probation. It is hoped that this will serve as an example to people of this character who make a practice of breaking into the cottages at Bemidji during the winter months. Many Grand Forks people have considerable money invested in Bemidji, and it is unfortunate that their property should be the subject of raids of this character.”

Grand Forks Bay had its own social column in the Grand Forks Herald called “G. F. Bay Breezes.” In July 1916, the newspaper reported that Mr. and Mrs. Michel of Willowbend, South Dakota, had purchased the McVey bungalow at the Bay and had then returned to their home in South Dakota after spending ten days in their new summer home. The Michel family then advertised their property for rent: Beautiful ten-room summer cottage, completely furnished at Grand Forks Bay, Lake Bemidji. Large screened porches, fireplace, boat, etc., everything but bedding and silverware. Price for the season: $150. References required.

Tenting was also popular at Grand Forks Bay in 1916, and the newspaper noted, “The rapidity with which the tents are being set up proves the popularity of Grand Forks Bay as just the right place for campers.”

Eventually, many Bemidji people also owned property at Grand Forks Bay. Although they had homes in downtown Bemidji, the attraction of the lake and the summer breezes drew many to acquire a second piece of property at the lake. For example, Mr. and Mrs. C. A. Knapp moved to their cottage at Grand Forks Bay on May 1, 1916. Lloyd Knott wrote about his home in 1976. “This home that I have [1928 Birchmont Road] is one of the original houses known as Grand Forks Bay. Looking through the abstract, it is land originally owned by Freeman Doud. I bought it from Ray Ward. He built the fireplace and the fireplace room. He told me he built the fireplace all by himself.”

Bemidji underwent a wave of construction and improvements in 1922. There was a general belief that times were going to get better in the immediate future. They had no inkling that the Roaring 1920s would end with the Crash in 1929. The Minnesota Electric Light & Power Co. began its 1922 construction program by wiring Grand Forks Bay, Lamoure, and Diamond Point. The wiring was connected up at Irvine Avenue and Twenty-Fourth Street, then strung into Lamoure on Birchmont Road, and then to Grand Forks Bay and onto Diamond Point. Summer residents had requested this action for a number of years. Light wires to the Teachers College had been installed for some time, but this line could not be extended to accommodate the cottages at the Bay, because of its limited carrying capacity. The Irvine Avenue line could carry any kind of load and therefore the line was built from this connection.

Cottage residents could now cook, heat, and light by electricity! Eventually there were many summer resort areas platted around Lake Bemidji – Bemidji Beach, Birchmont Beach, Lakeside, Lavinia, Riverside, to name a few -- but Grand Forks Bay was the first.

In 1937-1938, residents of Grand Forks Bay included Joseph Boninger; J. Raymond Olson, manager of the Gambles Store; Harry Gray, Chief of Police; and Mrs. Theodora Bradford. About 1939, the street addresses were changed and the same residents lived at 1912, 1920, 2112, and 2302 Birchmont Drive respectively!

Cecelia’s story may also be found on our website: http://beltramihistory.org/blog
While browsing through some Bemidji history publications, I (more than once) came across the famous 1897 photo that looks east on 3rd Street toward Lake Bemidji. Immediately one notices a bear cub and a fawn among the people.

The Carson family owned two bears, one of which is seen in the photo along with Evan Carson. The first year they let the bear cubs hibernate over winter in the root cellar behind their family hotel, but come spring Evan got too close and one of the bear cubs stripped off his trousers!

The young lady in the photo petting the fawn is Maude Near, a relative of the Carson family. (Sidetrack: She later became a teacher at Campbell Lake School, and then married F.O. Sibley. They lived on a farm near Solway, and he later became one of the early county commissioners.)

The Alexander Cameron family, early area settlers, had a pet fawn, which they bottle-fed. As it grew, it became quite a pest, loving to find a house door left open so it could come in and eat food off the table. To protect it during hunting season the family tied a bell on a red ribbon around the deer’s neck, but it got shot anyway.

The Rhodes family lived on the south shore of Lake Bemidji. They also found a fawn and took it in as a pet. They fed it soft bread and milk from a beer bottle. To keep dogs away from it they built a wire fence. When complaints were made, the deer was picked up and taken to the train platform and put in a crate to be taken away.

(Sidetrack: Waskish, north of Kelliher, is named for the Ojibwe word for deer – waawaaskehi.)

In researching these stories of deer and bears as pets, I was sidetracked by my own childhood bear memory. In the late 1950s, the Jim Warfield family (who owned the Log Cabin Court tourist cabins) acquired a bear cub to use as a tourist attraction. Smokey, as they named him, had been rescued after his mother had been shot. The Warfields built a cage for him and put a collar on him so he could be leashed. He was on display mainly for people to look at, but sometimes friends could feed and pet him. Smokey loved to drink pop, and doing so made him more docile. Feeding him a bottle of pop and petting him is what I remember doing. Jim’s son, Marshall, remembers entering Smokey in a pet show sponsored by Jake’s Drive-In. Smokey entertained the crowd by drinking a bottle of pop while crossing the street and won first prize. Smokey was with the Warfield family for two years before they released him back into the wild.

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

(Andy Mack’s Baggage Cart...Continued from Page 1)

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(Andy Mack’s Baggage Cart...Continued from Page 1)

“Some baggage carts were preserved in museums, but many were made into lawn ornaments. Exposed to the weather, the carts deteriorated over time and were forgotten. I restored my first cart in the 1990s, followed by three more over the last few years.

“I found this cart set in a yard on Gemmel Avenue in Bemidji. The original owners of the cart were the Godparents of [BCHS] Board Member Linda Lemmer, and I bought the cart from her. The only thing original on the cart was the running gear; the rest of the cart was replaced with treated oak lumber.

“When the cart was in my possession, I intended to restore it the way it was originally built. The construction of this baggage cart is very similar to how early railroad cars were built. This cart was built with steel wheels with solid rubber tires; the first baggage cart was made with wooden wheels. You may ask if this cart was owned by one of the railroads. No one really knows. The only identification I found was Serial #10355 on the rear metal sill.

“The cart restoration I have done couldn’t have been possible without the donated materials and time from the many people who were willing to help. I would like to thank Kevin Helblad for the oak, Kent Minske for sawing the oak, and Thor Thorson for all the steel work. Thank you for all you’ve done, I couldn’t have done it without you. This is my fifth baggage cart that I have restored, and God willing I will do one more!”
Thank you for the New and Renewed Memberships!

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BCHS Fall Photograph

Last class in session, Saum School, 1960 [BCHS-1016].

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

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The Smallest Of The New Fall Coats

Fall fashion ad from the Bemidji Daily Pioneer, September 24, 1915.
The Depot Express
A publication of the

Beltrami County Historical Society
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Bemidji, MN 56619

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