To acquire property for the Minneapolis, St. Paul, and Sault Ste. Marie Railroad (known as the Soo Line) through what were both business and residential areas in Bemidji, the Bemidji Commercial Club took a leading role. In 1909, the officers of the club were F. S. Lycan, E. A. Schneider, Clyde J. Pryor, and G. E. Carson. Additional directors were W. N. Bowser, W. L. Brooks, A. P. White, J. J. Opsahl, W. E. Neal and William McCuaig. All these gentlemen ranked among the leading businessmen of the city.

At their annual meeting in March 1910, President Brooks spoke highly about what had been accomplished by the directors during 1909, especially about how they had convinced the Soo Railway to change its original plans and build its Plummer-Moose Lake line through this city. Mr. Brooks told how they had raised the money demanded for purchase of right-of-way and how he finally made a personal trip to Minneapolis and interviewed President Pennington of the Soo and secured an agreement from him that the sum to be raised for purchase of right-of-way would

Within the audit report was a list of property purchased for the right-of-way. Some of the property was residential, and some was commercial. Property was purchased from J. P. Pogue, Jessie Spain, E. E. McDonald, and B. J. Neely.

Payments were made to Marie Dudley ($6,000); John Hart ($382); Christine Hubbard ($1,855); Mary Montrieand ($500); Pauline Hennesy ($725); D. McDougal ($500); J. P. Duncalf ($376); Thomas Olson ($820); John Kittleson ($1,500); Anna Buell ($500); J. O. Larson ($1,200); Maggie Meyer ($3,000); Clara Carlisle ($225); K. Nelson ($760); Bart Stafford ($500); John Carlson ($1,039); M. Soper ($500); M. Phibbs ($350); Anna Frydland ($1,019); Sam Cutter ($1,500); Wm. Schlief ($100); J. P. Omich ($2500); Minnie Fenton ($2,026); Charles Nangle ($100); C. H. Williams ($805); H. F. Geil ($1,000); W. E. Rose ($264); Mary McElroy ($760); and Carver ($20).

(Continued on Page 6)
Our Executive Director, Dan Karalus, and the Board of Directors have worked hard this year, and we completed a successful 2016 at the Beltrami County Historical Society.

Thank you to all of you who attended our Veteran’s Day Dinner and Fundraiser. Scotty Allison spoke to the attendees about Bemidji and Beltrami County veterans going back as far as Spanish-American War.

As I write this column the finishing plans are being made for our annual History Mystery event on December 31 (New Year’s Eve). Purchase your tickets early because they do go fast.

Our Executive Director, Dan Karalus has given the Board of Directors his letter of resignation effective January 13, 2017. It is with sincere regret the board accepted his resignation. We wish Dan nothing but the very best in his new position and thank him for all he has done to bring us into the twenty-first century in social media and all he has done with our collection and exhibits.

Please join us on Saturday, January 7, 2017, from 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. for cake, coffee, and hot apple cider. Come and wish Dan success in his new position.

A search committee has been formed and ads have been placed for his position. The Board hopes to have a new Executive Director in January.

The Board wishes everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

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.
December 31: The History Mystery
Detectives need your help! The Depot Agent was found murdered at the Great Northern Depot on New Year’s Eve 1916. Six local historical figures are the prime suspects. Was it the County Surveyor? The hotel owner? The Hollywood starlet? Or someone else? Become an Assistant Detective for this live whodunit that combines the classic game of Clue with local history. Enjoy refreshments, interview Suspects, and explore the Depot to uncover clues. Solve The History Mystery and win! Prizes awarded for First, Second, and Third place. Historical costumes encouraged. It all happens at the Beltrami County History Center. Doors open at 4:00 p.m. & Game starts at 4:30 p.m. Tickets are $15 for non-members and $10 for members. Kids 12 & under free with paid adult! Purchase tickets in advance at the History Center, Wednesday-Saturday from 12-4, or by calling (218) 444-3376, or online at beltramihistory.org/shop. Space is limited.

January 11, 2017: Research Assistance Hour
Announcing the Research Assistance Hour at the Beltrami County History Center, the second Wednesday of each month from 1:00 p.m. — 3:00 p.m. starting on Wednesday, January 11, 2017. Yes, that’s two hours, but we thought that Research Assistance Two Hour Block did not quite have the same ring to it. BCHS volunteers will be on hand to assist with your genealogy projects and other research, help you find photographs and information, and show you how to use the History Center’s Research Room, including our new digital microfilm reader and our electronic records database. FREE to attend. We also plan to use this time to schedule research and genealogy classes and workshops per demand and resources. If you have an interest in volunteering or helping please contact us!

January 20: Shannon Murray—People’s Music
Join the Beltrami County Historical Society for a concert by musician Shannon Murray on Friday, January 20 at 6:00 p.m. at the Beltrami County History Center. Shannon will play historical labor songs and tell working-class stories as part of her “People’s Music: The History and Music of the IWW” project. The concert is FREE to attend and funded in part through a grant from the Region 2 Arts Council. Find out more about Shannon and her music at shannonmurraymusic.com.

March 2017: History Lecture Series
Mark your calendars for the March History Lecture Series! Thanks to a partnership with the Bemidji Public Library, we are working to organize four presentations exploring history and culture for each Monday in March. Presentations will be on March 6, March 13, March 20, and March 27. All presentations will start at 6:00 p.m. and be at the Bemidji Public Library, 509 America Avenue NW, Bemidji. All of them are FREE to attend. We will post more details as they become available on our website (beltramihistory.org/events) and on Facebook (facebook.com/beltramihistory)

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

Bernick’s
959 Industrial Park Dr SE
Bemidji—751-5752

Bob Lowth Ford
PO Box 726
Bemidji—751-3140

Camp Thunderbird, Inc.
49536 Thunderbird Dr.
Bemidji—751-5166

Carpenter & Wangberg, P.A.
201 7th St. NW
Bemidji—444-7564

Cease Family Funeral Home
2807 Irvine Ave NW
Bemidji—751-9700

Chester Berg Toyota
705 Paul Bunyan Dr NW
Bemidji—444-3040

Cool Threads
206 Third St NW
Bemidji—444-4552

DEERWOOD BANK
PO Box 1278
Bemidji—759-6919
Under miscellaneous expenses for the year was another $250 for the McElroy house in April; $166.87 to H. F. Bosworth to move the houses; and on July 23, 1910, $250 to Charles Hammond to repair the 3rd Street house and $6.80 to Andrew Steore for building a chimney, probably for the quarters for the Commercial Club. Rent for space at O'Leary and Bowser, and at the Fenton House was also paid out during the year. The Club moved to the new Nangle building about a year later.

The Commercial Club hosted a major banquet at the Markham Hotel on November 10, 1910, in honor of the completion of the Soo line through Bemidji. Toastmaster Wedge expressed regret that Judge Marshall Spooner had been called away just previous the banquet by the serious illness of a client. Mr. Wedge explained that Judge Spooner had been expected to give a history of the coming of the Soo to Bemidji. In the absence of Judge Spooner, Mr. Wedge traced briefly the events leading up to the building of the new railroad and told of the great secrecy which had to be maintained in the earlier stages. Mr. Wedge said that the Soo had first planned on skirting the north shore of Lake Bemidji. A committee composed of Brooks, Gould, Lycan, Stoner, and Spooner went to Minneapolis to convince the Soo officials that they should build through Bemidji, and thus, President Pennington said he would send Mr. Sand and Mr. Green. These men did come later under assumed names, but at that time not half a dozen persons in Bemidji knew they came.

George M. Huss said that the inception of the Cass Lake-Bemidji line took place in February 1909 when he received instructions to survey the shortest, lowest grade and best line between Moose Lake and Plummer. On July 12, 1909, the first sod of the new road was turned and on August 12, 1910, the line had practically been completed, 6,500,000 yards of material having been excavated. He paid a glowing tribute to the men “who with compass and chain waded the swamps and braved the wilderness to make possible the new line.”

The Minnesota & International Railway (M & I) and the Soo worked together to build the Union Depot. In determining what to name it, W. H. Gemmell, general manager of the M & I, wrote to the Bemidji Daily Pioneer in 1911: "I appreciate the efforts of your paper to educate the good people of your community in the direction of attributing one-half the ownership of the Union Depot to the Minnesota & International. I think if it is called 'Union Depot' by all concerned, it will answer the purpose very well."

Nearly 200 persons crowded the platform to greet the first train into Bemidji's new union depot on July 24, 1911. It was the M & I out of International Falls and south bound for Brainerd. The first ticket sold at the new station by Agent R. E. Fisher was to Postmaster Anton Erickson, who purchased transportation for his wife and daughter to Minneapolis. Despite threatening weather, a continuous string of people came by to inspect the new brick structure. Agent Fisher worked with C. Grover as baggageman and Geo Walker, Jr, as messenger. At night the depot was in charge of the Minnesota & International regular force consisting of Eugene Caskey, ticket and billing clerk, and Elmer Chamberlain, baggageman.

The depot was in operation into the late 1960s. The space was then occupied for nearly three decades by the Union Station restaurant from 1978 until it closed in 2005.
**The Night We Light Bonfire**

BCHS welcomed about 400 visitors to the Night We Light Bonfire this year! Thank you to everyone that joined us, warmed up with hot drinks, and enjoyed some cookies! Special thanks to Jerry Brademan (aka Franklin Valley) for the musical entertainment and Raphael’s Bakery for providing the cookies. Additional thanks to the Bemidji Jaycees for connecting our bonfire to the other Night We Light events happening around downtown Bemidji.

Join us again next year!
Sidetracked by Darla Sathre

I love winter. So I decided that I would write about all the fun winter activities that one has been able to participate in throughout the years. But I got sidetracked by recalling a family winter story that happened in January 1928. (I owe thanks to my aunt for making sure this story did not get forgotten.) It did not happen in Beltrami County, but in Hubbard County just south of here. But I am justifying it because my grandparents were married in Bemidji. George in this story is my grandpa; Clif, his brother, is my great uncle. They were in their early 20’s when this happened.

George and Clif Miller’s grandma died January 19, 1928. Her name was Margaret Baumann; she was 88 years old. Before moving to Lake George, she and her husband had lived in Springfield, in southern Minnesota. This is where her husband was buried. In order for her to be buried next to him, her body had to be shipped by train from Park Rapids. It became the task of George and Clif to transport her to Park Rapids from Lake George.

The train for Springfield was to leave Park Rapids at 6:00 p.m. They thought that by leaving Lake George by 6:00 a.m. they could make the 25-mile trip in time. So early in the morning they harnessed the horses to the dray and loaded their grandma’s body. Their dad had loaned them his only pocket watch so they would know if they were traveling fast enough to meet the train.

It was a cold day. They had gone about five miles, when the wind started howling and they found themselves in the middle of a blizzard. They were in a quandary. The blizzard could last for days. They did not want to turn back, because then what would they do with Grandma? The road in those days was not much more than a horse trail, but they were very familiar with the trail, having grown up in the area, so they decided to continue on.

Numerous times they had to shovel away snowdrifts so the horses could get through. They had only gone 10 miles by the time dusk fell. George and Clif were exhausted and Grandma was frozen solid! Luckily they were near a neighbor’s farm, so they stopped to spend the night in the barn, while Grandma remained on the dray. The blizzard raged through the night and the next day. By the third morning, the skies were clear and the wind had quieted. However, they knew that the horses could never make it through all the snowdrifts.

Luckily the neighbors had a couple of big dogs that sometimes pulled kids on a sled. The dogs could walk on top of the drifts. So they dug Grandma and the dray out of the snowbank and with the dogs finished their trip to Park Rapids. Apparently they met the train by 6:00 p.m., just a few days late. On their way back home they stopped to return the dogs and pick up their horses.

George and Clif made it safely home with their dad’s pocket watch. Their grandma now rests with her husband for eternity. But that was some sidetrack on the way there!
Thank you for the New and Renewed Memberships!

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From the Collections

Aebelskiver Pan.
Typically used to make Danish apple dumplings or pastries. This pan dates to 1898 according to BCHS records.
[BCHS-1969.16]

Thank you for the New and Renewed Business Sponsorships!

Camp Thunderbird
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Inventory & Deaccession Project

The BCHS Board approved the first group of items for deaccession from the BCHS Permanent Collections in September. The list of items up for removal from our collections can be found on our website at: beltramihistory.org/documents

We chose items for deaccession during our efforts to inventory our collections and in adherence with our Collections Policy. Most items lack significance, are duplicates, or are in disrepair. We plan to move some of them to our Education Collection for use in programs, while others will be donated, returned, or disposed of per our Collections Policy. Please be assured that they will remain in our collection for six to twelve months to allow for public feedback. This process takes a long time and involves a lot of work, but it will help BCHS better care for important existing records and new collections donations. Please contact us with questions, comments, or to help us with our inventory project!

BCHS Winter Photograph

Salvation Army,
ood & Toy Collection,
Bemidji, 1950s
[BCHS-5730].

Find more photos via our Research Room in the History Center.
Beltrami County Historical Society
PO Box 1190
Bemidji, MN 56619

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Beltrami County Historical Society

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- Voting privileges
- One-year subscription to the BCHS quarterly newsletter *The Depot Express*
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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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