On the Street Where You Live
THE CENTRAL SCHOOL NEIGHBORHOOD

by Cecelia Wattles McKeig

Central School building, Bemidji [BCHS-5667].

Living on Minnesota Avenue between 8th and 9th Street must have been interesting, especially during Bemidji’s first 100 years. I can almost imagine E. J. Willits, a popular real estate man, in the early 1900s saying, “It’s a nice residential area on the northern edge of the city within easy walking distance of schools and churches.” Between Sept 1 and Christmas vacation of 1898, a fine, four-room, brick school building was built and named Central School. The school population expanded so rapidly that an addition had to be put on in 1900. At first, Central School housed all grades, but the school was overcrowded and bursting at the seams. In 1908, the upper grades moved a few blocks away to the new high school at 611 America Avenue. However, Central School was still too small, and in 1910, using brick from the Bemidji Brick Company, it was enlarged to twice its original size.

At that time, Central School faced south toward 8th Street. In May 1910, there was a hullabaloo about the sidewalk. The street commissioner tore up the sidewalk in front of the Central school building without the consent of the board. The board wanted to know why this action was taken without consultation with any members of the school board and without orders to build a cement walk in place of the board ones. T. S. Andrews was appointed a committee of one to see that the lumber from the sidewalk which was torn up be placed in the rear of the school house.

On May 2, 1910, an explosion of a dynamite cap in the fourth-grade room of Central School produced a panic and the children rushed rapidly into the halls and out of doors. John Lindvall, a thirteen-year-old boy, was sitting quietly in his seat in Miss Cosgrove’s room and was covertly picking the powder out of a dynamite cap with a nail. He cleaned the explosive from two of the copper caps and commenced on a third without realizing the imminent danger. The third cartridge suddenly exploded in his hands, blowing away the flesh on his thumbs and badly injuring the fingers on his left hand. A cloud of smoke quickly ascended to the ceiling of the room. John screamed; other children in the room saw the smoke and ran crying into the halls.

Continued on page 4
President’s Report  
by Sharon Geisen

The Beltrami County Historical Society is gearing up for summer tourist season. Events are being planned and information will be shared as details are finalized. The Board of Directors hopes to host a major fundraising gala later this spring, so stay tuned!

The Board is also planning our Beltrami County Historical Society Annual Meeting to be held on Saturday, June 24th at 4:00 p.m., and we encourage all members to attend. It is an opportunity for us to summarize what happened in 2016 and elect new officers. This year you will be asked to approve changes in our by-laws; the proposed amendments will be mailed prior to the June meeting. Children’s activities are being planned for those attending with their family, and a light meal will be served.

On behalf of the Board of Directors and our Executive Director, Gary Rozman, we are pleased to announce that Dr. Colleen Greer, Dean of the Department of Arts and Sciences at Bemidji State University, has agreed to be liaison to the Board. We are excited to welcome Dr. Greer and welcome her input, support and ideas. She will join Charlene Sturk, Beltrami County Commissioners liaison (the incoming Ward 4 Councilmember will be the Bemidji City Council liaison).

Thank you everyone for your much appreciated support and donations in 2016. History is always “in the making”.

From the Desk of the Director  
by Gary Rozman

To the Members of the Beltrami County Historical Society: I have felt extremely welcomed since arriving in northern Minnesota about half a year ago, and I view my work at the history center as an opportunity to repay your kindness…thank you for taking a chance on me.

Since starting last month I’ve had the opportunity to meet several of you, and by far it’s the best part of my job. The people in this community are some of the most fascinating I’ve ever had the pleasure of encountering, and it’s my privilege to help tell your stories. I want you to know how important you are to the Society – you are the ones who make history, each and every day. I’m here merely as steward…a caretaker tending to your cultural heritage.

As the lifeblood of our little museum, I hope you’ll feel comfortable getting more involved and approaching me with ideas for exhibits, events, newsletter articles or any ways you feel the Depot can be of greater benefit to Bemidji. I serve at your pleasure.

Thus far I’ve been trying simply to stay the course established by my very accomplished predecessor, but from here on in I hope to incorporate fresh ideas, and I hope you’ll join me in that effort. After all, we exist for you, and as such you should have a say in what happens. As a preview of what’s in store, we’re hoping to host the very first “escape room” in Beltrami County—an intensely fun, immersive experience that’s sweeping the nation. We’re also looking forward to Trains at the Depot Day, a new history podcast, the annual County Fair, and a year-long calendar chock-full of the educational, interactive, family-friendly activities you’ve come to expect and enjoy. I hope you’ll join us.

I look forward to meeting each and everyone of you. Please don’t hesitate to reach out for any reason: (218) 444-3376 or depot@beltramihistory.org

yours, Gary

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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<td>Julia Dancker</td>
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<td>Steve Caron, Secretary</td>
<td>Judy Dvorak</td>
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**Staff**

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Calendar of Events

April 8: Trains at the Depot
The Northern Iron Horse Railroad Society is teaming up with the Beltrami County Historical Society to bring back the popular TRAINS AT THE DEPOT event at the Beltrami County History Center on Saturday, April 8th from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. There will be several operating model railroad layouts on display in several different scales, including the most popular scales of HO, N, O and Lego. Photography and video displays will also be presented. A very fun event for the entire family from your little train enthusiasts from age 2 and 99.

April 2017: National Poetry Appreciation Month
Poetry is a powerful vehicle for celebrating and sharing our personal narratives. This year we’re joining Minneapolis-based Milkweed Editions and other independent booksellers across the state to commemorate the fusion of art and history. Specifically, we’re exploring the haiku, and invite members to share their favorites – published or original – on social media using the hashtag #HistoryHaikuBCHS. Post your poems on Twitter and tag @BeltramiHistory for a chance to be featured in an upcoming podcast episode and/or the next issue of this newsletter. As a reminder, haikus are a Japanese poetry form consisting of a 5-syllable line, followed by a 7-syllable line, followed by another 5-syllable line. Here’s an example we composed:

The past comes alive!
Honoring our ancestors
behind arched windows.

For more information about using poems to tell your family history, check out “Because We Come From Everything: Poetry & Migration” at www.milkweed.org/poetry-coalition. Also, consider attending our open mic night, for poets of all ages and experience levels, on Thursday, April 27th at 6:00 p.m..

May: History Book Club
We’re allowing members to choose our inaugural book club selection:

⇒ 38 Nooses: Lincoln, Little Crow, and the Beginning of the Frontier's End by Scott W. Berg
⇒ Black Elk: The Life of an American Visionary by Joe Jackson
⇒ Neither Wolf Nor Dog by Kent Nerburn
⇒ History of Wolves by Emily Fridlund
⇒ Norse Mythology by Neil Gaiman
⇒ Wintering by Peter Geye

Vote via social media by posting your choice and including the hashtag #BCHSbookclub. You can also drop us a line at depot@beltramihistory.org, send us a note through snail mail, or pop by the museum in person. We’ll announce the winner at the beginning of May and use that same hashtag to conduct a virtual discussion of the book throughout the month. Every effort will be made to ensure local libraries and book stores carry sufficient copies, and we’ll gather on Thursday, May 25th at 6:00 p.m. for a face-to-face discussion.

May 6: Spring Cleaning
Roll those sleeves up! Our Board of Directors, volunteers and your fellow members will be pitching in to give the museum a polish before tourist season starts. Please let us know if you plan to attend so we can prepare enough pizza and pop. 12:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

June 24: Annual Meeting
A members-only event. Following a brief meeting to conduct society business, including a referendum on proposed amendments to our bylaws and the ceremonial induction of honorary and lifetime members, guest lecturer Michael Meuers will present “The Teachings of Larry Stillday,” a well-known spiritual leader, healer and teacher from Red Lake Nation who touched many Ojibwe people in northern Minnesota. Please spread the word to friends and neighbors: new members are welcome, but must have their dues paid in full before Saturday, June 24th at 12:00 p.m.
On the Street Where You Live by Cecelia Wattles McKeig

(Continued from page 1)

The lad told the doctor that someone had shot at him through a window, and would only admit that the accident was caused by the explosion when Superintendent Ritchie appeared with the two clean caps and the nail, which he had found under the boy's desk. He then acknowledged that he, Harold Lindseth and Hans Alseth, who all lived in Mill Park, had secured the dynamite caps by getting into the store room at the Crookston Lumber company's mill.

Much activity took place at Central School including summer recreation, seasonal celebrations, and many patriotic activities during two World Wars. In the summer of 1958, Central Elementary School was totally destroyed by fire. The following March, a bond issue was approved to build a new Central School on the same location.

821 Minnesota. Napoleon Cota was the first to purchase property on the 800 block of Minnesota Avenue. He purchased the lot at 821 Minnesota and erected a dwelling house there in October 1899. He was a mason by trade and lived there for several years before it became of residence of Dan and Ella Gainey.

Dan Gainey was a teamster for C. E. Battles. His wife was a member of the Willing Workers Band, and also liked to entertain the ladies of the St. Philip’s Church Aid. On March 26, 1913, the property was advertised for sale in the Bemidji Pioneer: “Six room house and closet, good location at a bargain if taken at once.”

Otto R. Stavenau, a baggageman for the Union depot, next owned the property. Stavenau then engaged William Sherwood, a neighbor, to patch and plaster the downstairs, reside and re-nail the siding, putty the windows, fix the screens for windows, build a chimney and side the wood house at the agreed price of $3.50 per day for carpenter work, and $5.00 per day for plastering. Dates of work were from April 30, 1915 to August 2, 1915.

Some other owners were Adam Nikle, foreman for the Langdon Mfg. Co.; Harry Hodder, employed at the Golden Bottle Works; Morris Utter, employed at the Great Northern freight depot; Mrs. Florence McGinty from at least 1927-1934, and more recently Donovan Boldt. Mr. Donovan Boldt, his wife and two boys moved to Bemidji in 1967. He was an employee of the Department of Interior (Forestry). Boldt also played shortstop for the Highway Host team in 1970 and 1971.

Part II of Cecelia McKeig’s “The Central School Neighborhood” will appear in the Summer issue of The Depot Express.
We bid adieu to Dan Karalus, celebrated New Year’s Eve by solving a ‘History Mystery’ and welcomed speakers such as Erik Hokuf of AirCorps Aviation, a treasure trove of information about historic aircraft restoration. We also judged history contests, answered your ancestry questions and started a book club. To take part in future events, check out the calendar on our website, the sampling printed on page 3 of this newsletter, or follow us on Facebook!
Meet Gary Rozman, BCHS Director by Sue Bruns

Gary Rozman’s move from New York City to Bemidji, was a transition from the most iconic city in the U.S. to this small town of northern Minnesota, but it was not the biggest move of his life.

Born in Kiev, Rozman —too young to understand the magnitude of the relocation— moved to the U.S. with his parents in 1976 to live in a place where they could have the freedoms they hadn’t experienced in what was then the Soviet Union. Some relatives had already arrived in the U.S.—part of a huge wave of immigration in the 1970s—and settled in Boston, Toronto, and even Minnesota. His family settled in Queens, New York, the most ethnically diverse place in the country.

With a resume that ranges from acting to teaching to serving as an Urban Park Ranger, Rozman’s different roles provide a variety of experiences that he brings to his new position: Director of the Beltrami County Historical Society. With a degree in Liberal Arts, a background in Natural Resources Management, and certification in Public Administration, Rozman was attracted to this job because of the variety it includes: “As the only person employed here, I have the opportunity to wear many different hats.”

Before coming to Bemidji, he worked for the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation for several years. His knowledge of the history of NYC grew with that experience and his enthusiasm for sharing that knowledge is now translating into a curiosity and interest in learning as much as he can about his new home.

Bemidji, he says, is interesting because “it has at least one of almost everything.” (High praise from a New Yorker whose former home had dozens and more of almost everything.) Rozman, a history enthusiast, is enjoying the opportunity to learn about Beltrami County.

“The world is a stage, and I’m meeting a whole new cast of characters. I’m enjoying the way things happen here. I love just running into the mayor of the town when I’m getting coffee, or getting a call from a county administrator.” These small town aspects imply “less red tape. People are more accessible.” His outgoing nature and background in history are serving him well in his transition into the directorship, as are some other qualities he brings to the job: “Public service and customer service are also very important to me, and I believe my experience will serve me well here. The goal in all cases is to try to help whoever comes to the BCHS for whatever reason.” He is enjoying serving as a resource in local history, often while whoever comes to the BCHS for whatever reason.”

He and others spent about three weeks doing crowd control, keeping emergency lanes open, and eventually helping residents from the area to get into their apartments to get items. Recognizing the need for people to heal, Rozman organized a memorial retrospective the next year. One of his most gratifying moments came from the feedback of a woman who had attended the event and, upon seeing him several years later, thanked him and said, “It was exactly what we needed.”

Last year, Rozman’s farewell gathering in New York was held by the new observation tower at the 9/11 memorial. Now, just a few weeks into his new job, he admits to missing a few things about New York: “Bagels, rye bread, NY slice of pizza—all with dough made with delicious NY water—from the Catskill Mountains!” He also misses the expansive New York park system and the city’s public transportation options. “And bodegas,” he adds.

At the same time, however, he’s a quick study for Bemidji history and culture and embraces the unique things he’s found here, both work-related and experiential.

“I’m fascinated by ice fishing,” he says. (At the time of this interview, however, he had not had an opportunity to try it.) “And my husband and I signed up for curling through Community Education.”

At the History Center, Rozman describes a challenge of the job: “Because I’m learning, everything takes longer than it will eventually. It’s difficult to get to everything in a day: the technical aspects of maintaining our collection, learning to use PastPerfect, fielding calls and requests for historical information, learning the history of buildings in the area. The appreciation of the history, however, is something I come armed with. I’m hyper aware of the importance of our being purveyors of truth and I believe that it is more important now than ever.”

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Reierson Construction, Inc.
6160 Mill Street East
Bemidji—751-3796

Richard Phelps/Century 21
1085 Paul Bunyan Dr NW
Bemidji—766-5623

Sanford Health
1300 Anne St NW
Bemidji—751-5430

Slim’s Bar & Grill
142 Anne St NW
Bemidji—444-7546

Southside Restaurant
149 Convenience Ln SW
Bemidji—444-3133

Turtle River Electric, Inc.
4357 Minnkota Ave. NW
Bemidji—751-0286

The UPS Store
215 Paul Bunyan Dr NW
Bemidji—751-7179

VFW Post #1260
PO Box 1271
Bemidji
On February 24th, Shannon Murray, a “Folk-Punk” songwriter, and musician made an appearance at the Great Northern Depot. She performed many songs and along with her performance included a presentation about the Industrial Workers of the World, or the IWW. With her guitar she performed many high spirited and fun songs that the organization sang during their times of hardship.

The IWW was considered to be a unique organization. Everyone that worked was put into the union, no matter your color, race, or obligations. All workers had some sort of power. Beltrami County even had an IWW headquarters two blocks from the Great Northern Depot on 2nd street.

The songs that the union workers sang were used to recruit people towards their cause. They used their songs to bring the people in. Freedom of speech, government, and women’s rights are just a few topics that were discussed during Shannon’s presentation. And the subject matter of her songs brought attention to these topics along with many others.

The reason Shannon keeps performing is because she feels as though she was meant to do this. She’s telling the story of the working class which is not told very often. She is unearthing history through music. “History’s important, who knew?” She says as she jams out on her guitar.

Her up-beat “Folk-Punk” music is used to attract a younger audience. Since many children nowadays are not interested in history, they only care about what happens in the now. “These people’s lives and memories matter. We are the only way these stories will stay alive. We have to keep telling them,” Shannon said as she spoke of the working class and prepared for her final song.

A few of her songs included:

- Hallelujah I’m a Bum
- Dump the Bosses Off Your Back
- The Preacher and the Slave
- My Last Will
- Rebel Girl
- The Union Makes Us Strong

Her presentation spoke of the people and issues that occurred during the time of the IWW. People like Mother Jones, “the most dangerous woman in America,” fought for child labor laws and mining labor laws. Joe Hill, ed while working for the IWW, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn who Hill to be released, and for the freedom of speech. Lucy Parsons, who was an anarchist, thought that less Government would give the people more power. And Judi Bari, who was the first person to bring together labor unions and the environment.

Shannon Murray continues her tours all over Minnesota and will hopefully return to Bemidji to do another performance of her incredible Folk-Punk Industrial Workers of the World songs. History is important, and if we forget about it, we are bound to repeat it.
Beltrami County Historical Society
PO Box 1190
Bemidji, MN 56619

Annual Membership Benefits:

- Free museum admission
- 3 hours of free assisted research
- 10% gift shop discount
- Voting privileges
- One-year subscription to the BCHS quarterly newsletter *The Depot Express*
- Perks at 300+ historic sites in the United States through the Time Travelers Network (timetravelers.mohistory.org).

### Annual Beltrami County Historical Society Membership

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- Charge my credit card or make check payable to: *BCHS, 130 Minnesota Ave, Bemidji, MN 56601*

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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.

*BCHS is a 501(c)(3) organization. All gifts are tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law. Federal EIN: 41-1484638 / State of Minnesota Tax ID: 6530934*