THE GIFT
by Lois J. Jenkins, volunteer

The gift arrived in the mail on a very busy Saturday at Beltrami County Historical Society. Several volunteers were present with Director Gary Rozman. We spread the gift out on the conference tables with care and ‘ohs and ahhs’. With little story behind the gift’s arrival we could only make many assumptions. As I rounded the table, looking at perhaps hundreds of embroidered names in red thread on thirty-six unbleached muslin squares, each square surrounded by turkey red, hand-stitched borders, my eyes spied a familiar name: Smerud. My brother in law is a ‘Smerud’. “There, that’s his mother Cora, on another square; I know her,” the gift and the subsequent search for ‘why’ a 101 year old quilt with the signature square reading: “Solway Congregation, Town of Lammers, Beltrami County, Minnesota 1917, Mrs. Petra Frederickson, Pres. Ladies Aid.” have caused so much excitement.

“Then the ‘where’s, how’s, when’s’ started. Could this quilt really be 101 years old and in such great condition? Coming from Dudley-Township in Clearwater County, Lammers Township and Dudley met on the corner of Centerline Road. I thought I might know enough names on the quilt to find the story of the quilt. ‘This is one item that will not immediately go into archives but will be on display so that more and more stories will be told of a people and a township in our County.’

The research started with mining BCHS archives for anything Solway or Lammers, with individual names, too. And there is plenty. I read family history books and papers, township histories, church history, talked with Solway folks, read newspapers (The Solway News 1899-1901) and, visited the two cemetaries. And of course, much online research happened to find some clues. We had theories from quilters who knew ‘turkey red’ was for a friendship quilt and a possible fundraising item. We are of the opinion now that this 1917 quilt was a fund-raiser to build a new church building.

Cecelia McKeig communicated with the donor (born 1947 in Beltrami County in Nebraska) who writes, “Oh, I wish I did know more but don’t. As the oldest of three children and the only one who was born at the time the quilt was made, it was given to my mother [b. 1915] at some point. In the early eighties she gave it to me with only what I’ve told you – that each person who bought a ticket had their name embroidered on the quilt [her family purchased three]. She was only two in 1917 so had no direct memory of it. Clearly the raffle tickets were sold beyond the borders of Solway because the population of that little cluster of homes never went much above 100 and my estimate indicated more than 200 embroidered names. I’m absolutely delighted that the quilt is where it can be appreciated rather than tucked away in storage at my house.”

The next step was to take a picture of each square and note over 353 individuals. Squares usually have eight or twelve names radiating from the center. Two squares have the letters: “S G” in the middle. What does “S.G.” mean? Actually it is not really a filled-quilt as there is no liner. The backing is unbleached muslin and machine-stitched to the front. Deciding to chart the quilt like a township of 36 sections was easy and I now wonder if that was the original quilters plan. All names are alphabetized on a spreadsheet so one can easily find their ancestors.
Summer has finally arrived and we can certainly see the difference in the amount of traffic at our history center in the Great Northern Depot.

There are many activities planned for the summer months and a few new events. We’ve planned activities for the family and any visiting friends and relatives.

- Join us Thursday, June 28th from 6:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. for a guided downtown walking tour. This event is co-sponsored with the Bemidji Park and Recreation Dept. This event is free. The guided tour will begin at 6:00 p.m. at the Depot.

- Please join us on Saturday, June 30th at Noon for our annual meeting. It is an opportunity for you to meet and visit with board members and our Executive Director with a question and answer time. We’ll share the annual report on Beltrami County Historical Society’s finances and activities in 2017. We hope you’ll share your ideas for future exhibits.

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- Don’t forget to visit the Doud Cabin at the Beltrami County Fair in August. We are opening to again have activities going on outside the Doud Cabin.

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.

**From the Desk of the Director**

by Gary Rozman

As you read this, Flag Day will have just passed. We celebrated by displaying an early Minnesota state flag and a 48-star U.S. flag in the history center.

We also began taking your suggestions for a Beltrami County flag, and continue to do so. What symbols say “Beltrami” to you? What patterns convey the story of this place? What kind of design captures the beauty of the bold north as well as the strength of our communities with eye-catching imagery?

One suggestion made by a local designer incorporates green (for the natural resources which brought First Peoples, pioneers, immigrant loggers and other settlers to our region); white (symbolizing snow and winter recreation, which continues to attract visitors to this day); and red (representing Red Lake, our county’s most prominent geographic feature). It also includes a Norway spruce cone symbolizing growth and future generations.

What would your ideal Beltrami County flag look like? Remember, flags should only contain a few primary colors and, since text is hard to read from a distance, no writing whatsoever. Share your thoughts by emailing us at depot@beltramihistory.org or post them using the hashtag #BeltramiCountyFlag. Once adopted, we hope to use it as a teaching tool in history classrooms across the county.

Have a great summer, and hope to see you at the Depot!

**Beyond Beltrami**

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For this issue’s Beyond Beltrami segment we went WAY beyond. Our photo essay is a travelogue of images documenting a recent journey through Japan. We stopped at museums dedicated to fermenting sake (rice wine), telling the story of the atomic bomb explosion in Nagasaki, and interpreting the natural history of their islands. As often as possible we traveled by rail and enjoyed comparing their trains and stations to ours (unfortunately, we didn’t get a chance to ride their famous bullet train).

We’ll be publishing more stories of international adventure in future issues, including a planned visit to Fillotrano, Italy, final resting place of Giacomo Beltrami and home to a collection of Native American artifacts he transported from Minnesota.
Recently, on a trip with sister and brother-in-law Smerud, I came upon the answer to S.G. It is Spring Grove, Minnesota. Many of the names on the quilt were of people who emigrated in 1825 and to Winnisheik County, Iowa and Houston County, Minnesota, as soon as land was surveyed, or as early as the 1850’s. They built an active farm and town life and church life in the Norwegian Lutheran Evangelical Church with their cemetery across the border in Winnisheik County, Iowa. As I was reading and digesting and then scanning Smerud family genealogy put together by Margie Smerud, more questions jumped out, but also more names on the quilt. A great example is the Smerud-Benson family genealogy dating back to about 1000-1200 in Hadeland, Norway. This family history book tells us why they left Norway, but not why they left Spring Grove for Solway.

The Solway Quilt was the backdrop for a successful “June Genealogy” workshop on June 9.

Are you curious about your ancestry? Contact the History Center and inquire about our proposed genealogy club. Folks are also invited to conduct research at Beltrami County Historical Society, using our tools and archives to find your roots. You are also invited to share your family papers, books, files, objects and photographs.

The quilt is currently on display at the Beltrami County Historical Society and will be on view in the Doud Pioneer Cabin at the Beltrami County Fair this August. Come see it!

Call Gary at 444-3376 to find out how to get your logo here!  

Judy Dvorak is being honored as an Outstanding Volunteer! Judy is a tremendous asset to the Historical Society. The institutional knowledge she brings to the museum is invaluable to us in helping tell the story of Beltrami’s past. As a longtime resident of the area, she brings a personal dimension to the events we recount in our exhibits and displays. Because of her many years of experience volunteering at the history center, she’s also instrumental in helping our staff and other volunteers perform necessary tasks such as cataloging collection items, and assisting with research requests. Judy is kind, congenial, and makes a very convincing “History Mystery” character! Please join us in celebrating Judy at a special plaque presentation ceremony to be held during our annual meeting, Saturday, June 30th, 12:00 p.m.

**Get your logo here!**

Bell from Duluth, Missabe & Iron Range Rail Yard

Steam locomotive #1217 is presented in memory of Larry Oakes III by his parents, Larry and Carol Oakes of Bemidji. Son Larry was a graduate of Cass Lake High School and an award winning journalist by his parents, Larry and Carol Oakes of Bemidji. Son Larry was a graduate of Cass Lake High School and an award winning journalist. "Little Northern Depot" is a free lending library. Beautifully hand-crafted by long-time member Andy Mack, it graces our grounds outside of the Great Northern Depot. Donate your gently used books and find a fun summer read!
Paul enjoyed the cool Minnesota summers. He liked to smell the beautiful wild flowers.
**HISTORICAL MELODRAMA**

Thursday, July 26th, 6:30 p.m.

$25/adult | $20/child-senior-student

**Marilyn Shutter Stage**

Beltrami County Fairgrounds

Live commercials for local businesses! Refreshments served!

**Proceeds support the Beltrami County Historical Society | 218-444-3376**

Presented by special arrangement with Pioneer Drama Services, Inc., Englewood, Colorado

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This is a page from an unpublished coloring book featuring scenes of Paul Bunyan and Babe the Blue Ox across Minnesota. It was donated by the Itasca County Historical Society. Please share it with a child in your life!
Recently, on a trip with sister and brother in law Smerud, I came upon the answer to S.G. It is Spring Grove, Minnesota. Many of the names on the quilt were of people who emigrated in 1911 from Spring Grove, the first Norwegian settlement in Minnesota. Norwegians immigrants started coming to America in 1825 and to Winnishek County, Iowa and Houston County, Minnesota, as soon as land was surveyed, or as early as the 1850’s. They built an active farm and town life and church life in the Norwegian Lutheran Evangelical Church with their cemetery across the border in Winnishiek County, Iowa. As I was reading and digesting and then scanning Smerud family genealogy put together by Margie Smerud, more questions jumped out, and then scanning Smerud family genealogy dating back to about 1000-1200 in Hadeland, Norway. This family history book tells us why they left Norway, but not why they left Spring Grove for Solway.

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by Sharon Geisen

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