

SIBLEY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY Newsletter ~ December 2021

Volume 31, Issue 4

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Note from the President

In September, Mike Reinhardt, Tom Frauendienst and I had a rare opportunity and pleasure to meet out of state SCHS Members, Charles and Donna Meyer. They came to visit the Museum and meet volunteer friends: Arlene Busse, Marie Main, Lowell Nagel and Joe Strobel. We are forever grateful to the Meyer's for their generosity as exceptional financial patrons along with many objects they have gifted that are part of the Museum's collection.

Thank you Charles and Donna Meyer and to all of you who continue to generously give to keep our SCHS/Museum alive! Mostly, great thanks to the volunteers who help keep our doors open by conducting tours and assisting with research and genealogy information.

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Save the Date:

Sibley County Historical Society/Museum
Sunday, January 2 and January 9
1:00—5:00 p.m.

Christmas approaches with festive decorations and flickering candlelit windows. A Christmas Time exhibit will be filling the museum with holiday cheer and mistletoe. Please come and visit for an after Christmas open house!

Do you need some holiday gift ideas! We can help you with your shopping .

How about... Signage for the Christian Didra log cabin, circa 1858
Gift to the SCHS in Memory of friends and Relatives
Gift a SCHS membership
Gift a contribution to paint the front porch
Gift to lawn and snow maintenance fund SCHS/Museum

Wishing you all Happy Holiday festivities with family and friends.

Cheers!
Jeff DuCharme

Board of Directors:

President

Jeff DuCharme

Vice President

Vicki Stock

Secretary

Shirley Black

Treasurer

Tom Frauendienst

Directors

Joy Cohrs, Holly Harjes, Diane
Fredin, Eldrene Ebert, Mike
Reinhardt

"I heard a bird sing in the dark of December. A magical thing. And sweet to remember. We are nearer to Spring than we were in September." - Oliver Herford



Remembering Mary:

Marie Main

For over 20 years, Mary or Mary Ellen, "All together", as she said she preferred to be called, volunteered at our museum, after retiring from her duties in the classroom. She was always ready and willing to help in any way possible.

Fine old China in the antique cupboards is still shining since she helped wash it, with love and care, not too very long ago.

The smiles and laughter seem, even now, to reverberate in the music room with the memory of Mary, modeling her great aunt Margaret Foltz's vintage Persian lamb coat and hat (a gift from her family, the Foltz family to the museum) at the last, "Christmas Gifts in a House Filled With Gifts", Christmas program given in that room.

She scooped the ice cream at the "Homemade Ice Cream Holiday Party", in a January more than a number of years ago, coming from Gibbon with Rommie, in fifteen degrees below zero weather, just as in the summer sun and heat, she served coffee and lemonade on the front porch for Heritage Days.

Her handwriting appears and will always remain on the pages of the ledger, and on the accession paper she wrote, while carefully measuring and describing a recent acquisition.

Mary was a guide at special events, meeting and greeting and answering questions, informing visitors about the history of many of the artifacts she pointed out to be of interest, recognizing many of our guests from her years of teaching at Gibbon, Gaylord, Fairfax and being a native of Henderson.

Every so often, when Mary would take a break, she would spend the time walking the sidewalks of Henderson, always her hometown, that she still loved, even having lived elsewhere for so long.

She exemplified so many of our volunteers, who through the years, have given of themselves, unselfishly.

Mary rode, with Rommie driving, many miles to the museum through the years on Tuesdays every week, with me as a passenger. They always made a stop in front of my house in Gaylord, plus for many years, also a stop for dear Millie Johnson. I will always appreciate the hours spent traveling and working with both, with everyone, especially our dear friend and co-worker, Mary Ellen (Foltz) Petersen 1938-2021.

Thank you Jeff and Vicki,

Thank you for the time, talent, and expertise you have given to the Sibley County Historical Society. Through your active participation on the SCHS Board and as president and vice president, you have made a difference with your dedication and continued support.

Attention Members: *There is a place on the SCHS Board for you. With the resignation of president and vice president, we need someone to fill their shoes. If you are interested in helping to collect, preserve, and disseminate knowledge about the history of Sibley County, please contact a SCHS Board member.*



Cleaning is done



Cookies are baked



Travel by any means



All dressed up



Ready for you to come.

YOU'RE INVITED TO OUR
HOLIDAY GREETINGS
 at the
Sibley County Museum
 SUNDAY, JANUARY 2, 2022
 SUNDAY, JANUARY 9, 2022
 Time: 1:00 - 5:00 p.m.
 Where: 700 Main Street, Henderson, MN
 No RSVP Necessary, No Admission Charged
 Bring Your Friends

Another What Is It?

Research Committee



Sibley County Commissioner Joy Cohrs of New Auburn is also a Historical Society volunteer. She recently brought an old tool to the museum for identification. On-line research shows it to be a carpet stretcher from 1880's. Nothing similar is included in the collection of tools in the museum's basement. Perhaps this too will soon be considered by the museum's Collections Committee.

The museum building was erected in 1884-1885 as the home of the August and Emily Poehler family. Page 654 of *Henderson Then and Now 1852-1994* states, "...in mid-December of 1884, the steam boiler burst. Moving into the house was delayed until after carpets were laid in May 1895." So, an example of a carpet stretcher in the tool collection could be useful in interpretation of our building which is on the National Register of Historic Places.

Wall to wall carpets were originally used on most rooms of the Poehler home. On contrast, visitors will discover original maple and black walnut flooring in the dining room and kitchen.



Feather Tree

Simple candles. Lovely ornaments, a little music, perched on a revolving block of wood become the way to experience the epitome of an old-time Christmas. It was created by the German feather trees in the late 19th century. At that time, German forestry laws prohibited harvesting of evergreens for holiday celebrations.



Goose feathers were sorted, cleaned, washed, dyed, dried, and transfigured into foliage of fake conifers. Tufts were cut from quills, dried then individually wrapped with heavy wire. Branches were created by fitting these feathered wires together. Branches graduated from small to large as they are inserted into a dowel. The trunk then resembles the spokes of wheel. Candles burned safely due to the unique spacing of the branches.

This construction then mimicked the beloved German, white pine. These pines grew about a foot per year sprouting branches that circled its trunk.

Feather tree bases were mainly plain wooden blocks beneath decorative tree skirts. Their size varied from 2 inches to 12 ft. Price varied from 2cents to \$1.49 depending on the fullness of its plumage. Production continued through early 1950's. The feather tree was eventually manufactured in the US, Japan as well as Germany. Being mostly a cottage craft. Components would return to the factory for assembly and shipping.

Exact time of coming to US is unknown. However, 1880 to 1920 Germany exported figural blown-glass ornament and feathered trees. There is a German tale that F. W. Woolworth was on a buying trip when he encountered exhibits of these Christmas decorations. This trip single-handedly reforested American Christmas



with artificial greenery. Popularity of these items grew from NY to San Francisco and country between.

President Teddy Roosevelt's interest in ecology and conservation raised awareness to the Feather Tree. A no-live tree policy in the White House ensued. US households endorse the no mess, no watering, no clean-up convenient tree.

As a collectible tree, prices can range from \$50 to \$1000 or more.

Reference: Christmas Ideas 1986

Recipe for Christmas All Year Long

Take a heap of child-like wonder
That opens up our eyes
To the unexpected gifts in life.
Each day becomes a sweet surprise

Mix in fond appreciation
For the people whom we know;
Like festive Christmas candles,
Each one has a special glow.

Add some giggles and some laughter,
A dash of Christmas food,
(Amazing how a piece of pie
Improves our attitude!)

Stir it all with human kindness;
Wrap it up in love and peace,
Decorate with optimism, and
Our joy will never cease.

If we use this healthy recipe,
We know we will remember
To be in the Christmas spirit,
Even when it's not December.

From Joanna Fuchs, American Legion
Auxiliary, 2020

pageborders.org

Model Airplane Story

Judy Loewe and Arlene Busse

On August 19th, the Sibley County Historical Society had its first program since Covid-19 shut us in/out/down. Kent Meyer, pastor at Zion United Church of Christ, Le Sueur, conducted a double feature evening to reveal his hobby of model airplanes and the biography of Lt. Frederick Harrison Becker, 1891-1973, with relevance to the history of Sibley County.

Pastor Kent is a member of the Zumbro Valley Scale Modelers. His dream was to have a model in a museum. His 1/32 model, Tellier TVMT6, single-engine biplane, encased in plexiglass, now resides in the Military Room at Sibley County Museum. The project from plan, design, meticulous calculations, made-from-scratch aircraft, took 18 months to construct. There are no commercially made kits for this biplane. A few features of this biplane include the underside of the fuselage is meant to land on water. The top wings are longer than the lower wings and are uniquely joined by V pattern of cables. The plane, being very loud, meant that the pilot and his observer used hand signals.



The connection to Sibley County and this biplane is the pilot, Fredrick Harrison Becker. Arlene Busse wrote an article about a World War I pilot that flew 'flying boats'. The pilot was a Sibley County resident for a time. This article appeared in the Mankato Free Press.

"Minnesotan Fredrick Harrison Becker was sent to France when America entered into the ongoing, world-wide conflict. He was one of a class of 13 U.S. Naval Air Service pilots trained for coastal patrol duty to watch over and protect convoys at sea along the coast of France."

Becker was born in Dodge Center and for a time he was a resident of Grafton Township in the northwest corner of Sibley County. His grave is in New York State.

Sibley County Museum in Henderson has one of the French-made fur-lined flight suits worn by Becker during his time in the service. His duties included dropping bombs on German submarines bent on torpedoing the convoys. The air ships assigned to Becker's group were Tellier single-engine biplanes. Each cost \$16,000. They were 'flying boats' with Hispano engines of 220 horsepower, geared to a big wooden propeller wrote Becker in a February 15, 1949, article for the magazine "the Sportsman Pilot". The Tellier6 featured a 30-caliber machine gun and 2 bombs for attack. Bad weather caused most ditchings. Five times total for Becker and his observer Carey. Becker thought that the airships were beautiful.

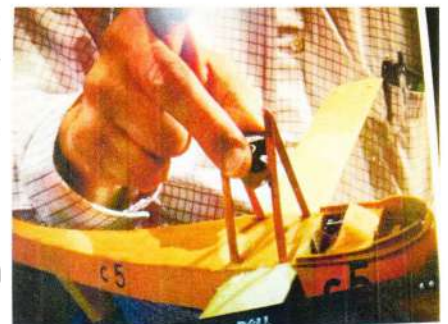


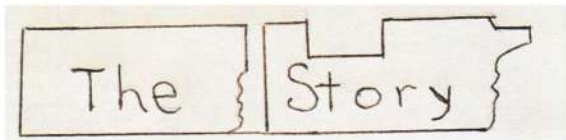
In the article, he described the problems he and his observer, Dan Carey, faced... rough seas on takeoff or landing, a primitive radio, an erratic compass, and a fuel supply of only 160 gallons.

Four homing pigeons were aboard. The birds were used to send messages when all other methods failed. Evidently, Becker's pigeons were not very well trained as they were most reluctant to leave the ship. He would shoot a pistol to scare a pigeon and 'persuade him to make an honest effort to find his way home'.

Pastor Kent's unique observation of this history is how an American pilot came to fly a French-designed plane over the English Channel along the coast of France to protect the French from German attacks on convoys. The pilot had been a Sibley County resident and now a perfect model of his aircraft is in our museum in Henderson, Minnesota.

Thank you, Arlene for Becker's biography and Judy for organizing this interesting Event. Thank you, Kent for coming and telling us about the plane and its connection to Sibley County.





Deck of Cards

How many of you noted the deck of cards, a souvenir from a Henderson bank, at our Sibley mapping display at the '21 County Fair? OK, then there is a significance between a deck of cards and the irregular North border of Sibley County.

Sibley County "Swapped" Two Townships

The above headline was found in the Gibbon Gazette issue of January 1941. Penn and Round Grove Township of McLeod County were removed from Sibley County in the boundary changes enacted at the Territorial Council meeting in 1856. No reason has been found, but a myth would have Henry Sibley losing the land through a wager with Martin McLeod. (p. 17)

Henderson Democrat of March 2, 1861

The article first quoted Henderson editor Gus Buck but does not document where the information on township swapping came from which was the subject of discussion at the Sibley County Historical Society.

"At a meeting of the Historical Society...it was brought up, an explanation of how Sibley County "swapped" two township, Round Grove and Penn, for Faxon. In those early days Faxon was well populated while the two western townships were a minus quantity, so the politicians got busy fortifying their side of the "fence". (p.18)

Source : Bits and Pieces Celebrating 150 Years of Sibley County History

A Timely Coincidence

October 14, 2021, "Arlington Enterprise"

The two longest serving county attorneys in Minnesota, Michael Junge of McLeod County and David Schauer of Sibley County, re-enacted the legendary game of chance that was conducted in 1855, that allegedly removed Round Grove and Penn townships from Sibley County and gave them to McLeod County. The re-enactment was held in the rotunda area on the second floor of the Sibley County Courthouse in Gaylord on Monday, October 11, 2021. It was also held on Schauer's last day of work before his retirement.

Summer Visitors

Sundays at the SCM became the destination for a few. The registration listed most everyone as NOT from Sibley County.

However, our visitors included a 4-H group who came from western Sibley County. Their curiosity, enthusiasm, and good manners should have been bottled and offered for sale for Sibley's potential visitors. We would be rich! We will hope that they encourage their friends to come for such a good afternoon trip into their local history.

The President's page noted a visit from former residents Charles and Donna Meyer had come from Texas.

From North Carolina. Lee and Janet Geronime spent time here and told THE TOOTH story. Lee grew up in Henderson. His dad was the owner and barber at the White Front Barber Shop on Main Street. His mother was the country schoolteacher and eventually the principal in Belle Plaine.

NOT A TOOTH FAIRY STORY

Lee and a buddy were just young lads searching about Henderson. Behind a building they discovered a pile of junk metal. They spied an unusual object. How Neat!! Let's take it home.



That's when the strange hunk of junk changed into the shape of a tooth with a loop of metal on the top. After some tugs of lifting unsuccessfully, the duo headed home to get The Red Wagon.

Lee will have to be in touch to tell us when the 49-pound tooth came to the museum and its history between the years. It rests in the dentist's corner in the museum's lower level: Village Room.

Thank you-- Lee and Janet-- for coming and sharing with us.

Since Henderson had a population of many immigrants who did not speak English, businesses hung ornaments as signs to represent their wares. This tooth must have been an attraction to the dentist's office.

2021 Museum Vocabulary

Pocilovy	Fire Grenades	Bumberchute
Carographer	Onomatopoeia	Zoom
Nippon	"The Dixie Cup"	Collaboration

Endless Stories of USS Sibley

Editor Harjes



As a member of an LCM squad, S1c(LC) Harold Rodin from Chicago, recalls his USS Sibley duties. He was on one of 27 boats (LC) transporting Marines into battle at Iwo Jima and Okinawa. On a return trip, dead and wounded were brought back to the hospital facilities on the APA 206.

He currently has the flag that was flying on the ship during the battles of Okinawa and Iwo Jima. His flag's photograph is now in the USS Sibley showcase in the museum's Military Room. The last wool, 48-star flag raised on the ship is also there. This flag has been carried to funerals of two crew members from Minnesota.

On a memorable trip, Rodin carried Joe Rosenthal from the ship to shore. Joe was wearing an AP labeled shirt and carried some cameras. Harold cautioned Joe of the Associated Press of the on-going battle, but the AP photographer knew he had protection to proceed. He captured the second flag raising atop Mt. Suribachi. This photo is depicted by the Marine monument in D.C. (The first flag raising photos were in our June 2020 newsletter).

Harold did experience pneumonia while on board. Pat Murphy, California medic in June 2020 edition, administered a penicillin shot for a cure but instead, Harold acquired a life-long allergy to the drug. At that time, penicillin was in first stages of medical use.

Harold views World War II as the US second Patriotic War: "we fought because we were attacked by Japan. The first US Patriotic War was the Revolutionary War: we fought because we were attacked by England."

As of October 25, 2021, Harold is my only living contact. I had a call that Pat Murphy (CA) had passed away October 12.

Junction at Twelve and Six

The junction down the hill on Sibley County 12 and Scenic Highway 6 is the location of Jessenland Township Government, Now and Then.

New life for Maurice Joyce's 1856 log cabin is complete. Thanks to Doug Thomas, Dan Eibs, and crew, a new foundation was laid. The reconstruction plan raised the cabin by one more layer of block above original level. Crews had moved the cabin, log by log, from the woods of Joyce's original property. Travelers must have wondered why a pile of logs? They eventually found out!

This historic cabin/township hall, built before Minnesota was a state, measures 11'-9" by 13'-10". The 5 feet tall, 32 inch wide doorway suggests that some pioneers were short. The cabin appears dwarfed stationed next to the former District Schoolhouse No. 12, now Jessenland Township Hall since 1987.

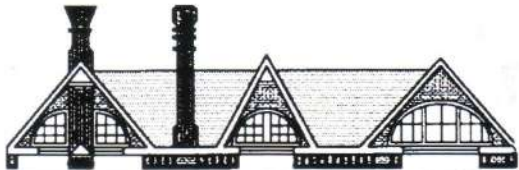
The log structure was first the 1856 home of Maurice and Ann Joyce family of 11 children. It was centered in Section 15 of (then) Jessen Land Township. Meetings and elections were first held here. In November, 1865 elections changed to a schoolhouse because Maurice had asked for more compensation to use his home.

Maurice's grandson Father John Joyce became a local farmer after 30 years of priesthood. During a stewardship discussion he commented.... "we never really own the land, we just use it, the users have their turn to farm and then pass it on. But the land always remains."

Source: Henderson Then and Now p. 607-608; p. 591-3



Jessen Land's then and now township halls



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Check your membership date on the mailing label. *All memberships are due and payable by February 2022, will be valid until February 2023.* Mail to:

SCHS Treasurer
P.O. Box 407
Henderson, MN 56044

Send articles, announcements, photos, and comments to the SCHS Newsletter Editor, P.O. Box 407, Henderson, MN 56044 or email: schs1@frontiernet.net

SCSH Membership Form

- New
- Renew

- Individual \$20.00
- Family \$25.00
- Business \$50.00

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Mail to: SCHS Treasurer, P.O. Box 407, Henderson, MN 56044

Thank you for your support for the Sibley County Historical Society. Your membership is very important to us. It helps us maintain the museum building and grounds, and helps support the activities of the Society. The benefits of a current member include free access to genealogy research, free admission to the museum, and four issues of the newsletter each year.