

NEWSLETTER

Henderson, Minnesota 56044 Ph: (507) 248-3434

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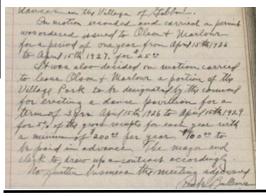
Inside this issue:

The Gibbon Ballroom	1
The Prez Sez	1
County Fair	8
Thanks	8
New and Renewed	9
More County Fair	10

The Gibbon Ballroom

By Rommie Petersen

The Gibbon Ballroom has been a fixture in Gibbon for generations. It had its humble beginnings when on April 16, 1926 "a motion was carried to lease Olson and Marlowe a portion of the Village Park to be designated by the council for erecting a dance pavilion for a term of 3 years, April 15, 1926 to April 16, 1929 for 5% of the gross receipts for each year with a minimum of \$200 per year, \$100 to be paid in advance." ...and so it began. Cory Becker and I pored over the old council minutes to dig out



information on the "pavilion" (as it was called for the next 40 years) to find out ownership, transfers and when the building was moved to the present location east of town, making it then out of city limits, located in Severance Township. One interesting council item; "October 1, 1929. On motion and seconded and carried it was decided that James Olson be notified to comply with the law regarding sanitary conditions at the dance pavilion." There were no plumbing facilities in the

building. Do you suppose the men's restroom was any of the 3 sides of the pavilion? And the ladies' restroom...? Prohibition began Jan



17, 1920. So we know no one drank beer from that day until January of 1933 when it was repealed, so maybe a rest room was not needed. However, I have heard people say there was NO prohibition in Gibbon. My Dad made beer at home, as many others did. Another home-made beverage was wine, dandelion or grapes. Moonshine was readily available. But I digress. Dancing continued in the

(Continued on page 2)



Calendar of Events Check our website for 2015 programs.

 If you have suggestions or comments on upcoming events
 Contact Judy Loewe 507-248-3345



The Prez Sez by Jerome Petersen

I was having coffee one morning in a hotel in Rochester when I struck up a conversation with a gentleman who was at Mayo medical procedure for a brain aneurysm. I asked where he was from. Tennessee. He asked where I was from, and I told him Minnesota, a small town about 3 hours northwest of Rochester. When I told him the name of the town was Gibbon, he said he had been to the Gibbon Ballroom! I talked to a guy at the State Fair. He had a Chevrolet dealer cap on. I asked where that was. Glenwood. When I told him I was from Gibbon, he said he had been to Polka Days years ago. He came through town and wondered why all the cars and campers were there. He went in and found 4 other couples he knew at the festivities. I was visiting

with some young ladies at the Fair. When I told them I was from Gibbon, one of them said

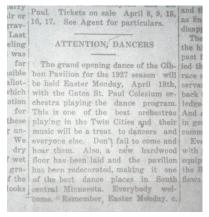


her mom was from Winthrop and talked about going to the Gibbon Ballroom. I usually ask people I meet where they are from, and when I tell them I am from Gibbon, if they are within 100 miles, they know of the Ballroom. They went there, or their parents or maybe their grandparents. I thought that might be a topic for a short article. But as the information began to grow, Arlene thought we could do a booklet on it. And I think that would be a good idea as

(Continued on page 7)

(Continued from page 1)
park until 1932, when neighbors complained about the noise. Eldrene
Ebert researched the property records at the courthouse and found recorded
September 27, 1933, George Eckert sold a parcel of land to Ernest Jahnke and Albin Haberberg for \$200, and the pavilion was moved to its new

home. The building had no founda-





tion, standing on piers. There were no booths, just planks around the perimeter. There was no heat either, so it was closed in the

My brother Melvin always said he served hamburgers to Lawrence Welk. My older siblings said there was no heat, so everyone danced in their <u>overcoats</u> when it got cold. I would imagine if it got too cold there was a cut off line, or else the band couldn't play! Years ago, you always held your partner, nowadays, everyone dances by themselves to the rock 'n' roll. I think while both Rommie and I were in the service, they had roller skating, but I never saw it. All my siblings went to the ballroom a lot! I danced with my mother one time, and I cannot remember when that was! I never saw my folks dance, I don't know if Dad didn't know how to dance, or what.

Dean Bruns

coldest months. But Cory said his great-uncles remember dancing in overcoats when it got chilly. In 1934 the property was sold to Jerome and Donald Lynch. Should we call him "The Donald." Things were going downhill by 1950. In the 1950s it was a roller skating rink. By 1954 things fell apart, and the place was sold to the Ballard Family at a sheriff's sale for \$8,157. They, in turn, sold it to a Mr. Wurdemann in 1956. I have lived in Gibbon since 1934, and was not familiar with most of these names that Eldrene dug out of the County Records in Gaylord. In 1961 The Hermel Family took over, first Adolf, then his offspring, Cliff and Kate Hermel and Oradell Boys. Then things picked up. There were

major renovations done to the place. The roof had leaked and the dance floor was warped. A building was literally built over the top of the pavilion. Sharon Haggenmiller was a flower girl in a wedding that had their dance in Gibbon in the early 60s. In 1969 New Ulm discontinued celebrating Polka Days, and Hermels started celebrating Polka Days at the renamed Gibbon Ballroom. Year by year the celebration grew and grew. Jerry Howe said one year there were 33,000 people attending. There were campers by the hundreds; in the park, the football field, the county park and in New Ulm. Jerry had 25 parked at his gas station, plus visitors sleeping in his house. Many people in town rented rooms to the dancers that came from as many as 40 states. It was a well behaved crowd of mostly seniors. Governor and Mrs. Perpich visited Polka Days. He proclaimed the year October 1, 1989 to October 1, 1990 as the "Year of the Polka," and Cliff and Katie Hermel of the Gibbon Ballroom as "The First Family of Polka in Minnesota." They danced in the Ballroom, they danced in the Pumpernickel Room, they danced in the Boom Room, they danced in the South 80, and they danced in the big tent erected in the parking lot. When Hermels owned the ballroom it was a welloiled machine. It was sold in 1977 to Donald Fowler. Hermels got it back in 1985. It was sold again in 1995 to Sowers and Block, back to Hermels in 1996, then Seeboth in 1999, then to Mid American Hospitality LLC. The last business in the Ballroom/ Pumpernickel/Boom Room was a brief appearance of a supper club operated by Randy Grager. That opened and closed in 2005. The South 80 continued having a variety of events until this year.

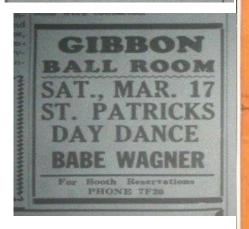


in Michigan

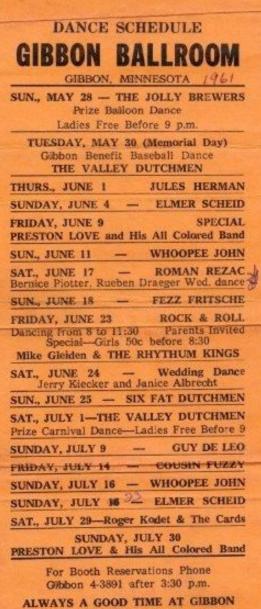
What all went on at the pavilion, you might ask? The biggest single annual event over a 30 year period was Polka Days. Although it was a 4 or 5 day celebration, people came a week before to get the good sites for their motor homes and camping equipment, and to meet old friends from across the country. Gibbon held city wide garage sales that weekend. There was shuttle bus service from the grounds to church services. There were 3 restaurants and 3 bars in town that did a booming business.

In 1987 Gibbon celebrated its 100th anniversary. There were events in

BIG DANCE at the Gibbon, Minn., Pavilion, Sunday evening, April 24th! The biggest dance event in this section of the state. Music by Hunt's Novelty Band and—Are they hot? Say, they're sizziling. New hardwood floor and other improvements. Come and have a real good dance time. You and your friends are welcome, always.

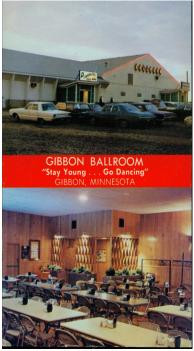


all 4 of the buildings. My parents had their 50th wedding anniversary party in the Pumpernickel Room in 1975. My kids had their 1988 and 1989 proms at the ballroom. Garrison Keillor performed there. Yanni, who is well known for his classical *Live At The Acropolis* album, played in Gibbon with a rock band when he attended the U of M. The Sibley County Pork Pro-



Jason Aufderheide A unique memory from attending what my parents used to call "one of those rock concerts" at the ballroom. I was standing in the ballroom entry way when the door burst open with several Sibley County deputies hauling a guy that had been fighting inside, to the parking lot. I had never seen him before. As he and the deputies struggled through the entryway, he momentarily broke free, yelled "what are you looking at?!" - and punched me in the nose!







(Continued from page 3)

ducers had an annual pork chop feed that was attended by over 1,000. The Gibbon Fire Department had an annual dance and coronation at the ballroom. Lawrence Welk's band waltzed into the ballroom, and he ate a hamburger! And replays of his show are still on TV, 75 years after appearing in Gibbon. Sharon Shimota of Arlington told us her husband Chuck's 1st cousin had their wedding dance in Gibbon in 1975. Married in Arlington, reception at the Coachlight in LeSueur, dance at Gibbon, and she still has the tickets (no longer valid).

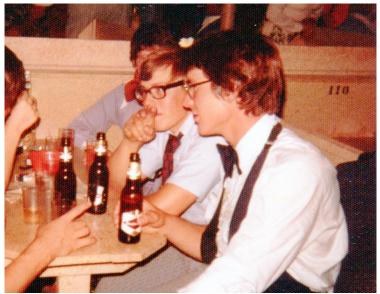
> Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Thomes request the honour of your presence at the marriage of their daughter Lynn Mary

Mr. John Lawrence Shimota on Saturday, the twenty-seventh of September Nineteen hundred and seventy-five at twelve o'clock noon St. Mary's Catholic Church Arlington, Minnesota

Reception following ceremony Dance nine o'clock p.m.
Coachlight Inn Gibbon Ballroom Le Sueur, Minnesota

Gibbon, Minnesota



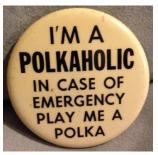


Part of the Shimota Bridal Party partying in Booth 109, Chuck with the bowtie.

It was a nice dance floor, we did a lot of dancing there! My Dad worked behind the bar, and my mother was either working at the popcorn machine, or a booth reservation. Mrs. Fred Pockrandt sold tickets. People would sit in your booth, and you'd show them your ticket, and they'd get out. You could call in 2 weeks ahead and order booths. You could reserve them for a year, which was cheaper than one at a time. Dad worked a lot of rock dances, and it was just wild. All the marijuana smoking, and the teenagers would tear the sinks off.

Sharon Bruns





Gibbon Ballroom co-owner, Steve Seeboth, on "Polka People." These people do the circuit. They go to polka festivals in Michigan, Wisconsin, Illinois, Minnesota, North Dakota, the Pacific Northwest, California, and they make this loop every summer. It's a city in itself—a moving city!

Polka Days — a 34-year tradition in Gibbon attracted thousands of polka fans over several days each year before it ended in 2004. The festival was so popular, PBS did a piece on its impending end several years ago when former owner Dick Seeboth of New Ulm put the ballroom up for sale

Benny Beranek wondered how many kids were conceived in the parking lot during intermissions.

Gibbon, Minnesota sports more square footage of dance floor per population than any city in the United States. And for more than 30 years, RVs from all over the country have descended on Gibbon each summer for the Gibbon Polka Fest, where thousands of polka-loving dancers party until dawn. POLKA TIME looks at this rural and Midwestern cultural tradition through the stories of some of its devotees, whose joy for polka includes a zest for life that belies their age. But with attendance declining and the Gibbon Ballroom for sale, POLKA TIME may also be capturing the twilight of a great American musical tradition and the end of an era.



One of the last big events that took place on the grounds was the Gibbon All School Reunion. There was no





dancing, but reminiscing about the old days. The ballroom

was here for generations, and we thought little about it. It always was and always will be. I guess not. It was used for so many kinds of events in addition to the thousands of dances over those years. How much fun can be had in one place!

I want to add a note here to thank Cory Becker. He did research, supplied some photos and some interviews. The polka buttons on the opposite page came from Cory. We must never let him escape!

This piece might look like a scrapbook, and that is what it is.

When we do the book on the ballroom we will have lots of photos and memorabilia of newspaper ads, wedding announcements, prom photos from the a span of nearly 100 years. We will continue to gather photos and information for a book. Maybe YOU can contribute some of YOUR memories. Let us know if you have an interest in this endeavor. If your name is Cory Becker, we will be calling on you!!













Memories of the Gibbon Ballroom:

One-Two-Three HOP, One-Two-Three HOP + One HOP, Two HOP, Three HOP, Four HOP.

Some might think this refers to actions taken during a grass-hopper plague, but to those who took to the floor at the Gibbon Ball-room it will be recognized as the count to the Schottish. It was played in 2/4 time, and was my favorite of the several dances called; "Old Time." It took energy to dance a German Polka, and you needed to be graceful to do a Waltz, but few dances took more skill than when dancing the Schottish. Back in those "Good Old Days" couples would hold each other closely while dancing, and moved smoothly around the dance floor. The dancing I see now on TV makes me think someone must have dumped a cup of fire ants down their backs.

World War II finally ended, young men returned from overseas, (too many didn't), gas rationing ceased, and life returned to normal on farms and in the small towns of Sibley County. There were dances held in many communities throughout the county and nearby area that us "Oldies" remembered as; a social event, a way to let off steam or for many an important part of their "Courting Days." Mostly, dances helped fill a void in the lives of many hard working folks. There were dances in town halls, and some farmers would hold a barn dance when the loft was empty before haying season. No dance provided a greater experience than a barn dance with the floor of a hay loft being somewhat less than smooth. By the mid-1940's with 50 cents for admission, and gas from the tractor barrel put into my 1928 Model "A" Ford, I could get to a dance about three nights a week.

Several of us young guys would meet, decide who would drive, and take off full of zip, and low on caution but that's what builds men out of boys. There were about eight places to choose from and we knew their dance schedules, so it was only a matter of going where one of our favorite bands would be playing. There was the Kato Ballroom in Mankato, kind of a classy place but admission only went there a couple times. I recall the time they had a so-called "Big Name



was a whole dollar, so we only went there a couple times. I recall the time they lie Adams, Vern Bottenfieeld.

Band." They weren't all that "Big," weren't all that good - (they didn't play "Old time" music), and admission was off the scale that night. Sleepy Eye had a place I think was called the "Orchid Ballroom." Nice place, but I only went there once so it's only a blur in my memory. The New Ulm Ballroom was a truly great place, and I probably didn't miss a dance there during the year I worked in New Ulm at Hummel Bros. Clothing and Montgomery Wards. About that time George's Ballroom was being developed in downtown New Ulm and it was sort of O.K., but to this young farm boy it seemed to lack the right atmosphere. There was a small place on the south side of Highway 212 about a mile east of Plato probably called the Plato Ballroom. I never went there, but heard the dance floor only had room for one couple at a time. All that remains is the concrete slab among the trees where the building once stood. The Lake Marion Ballroom on Highway 15 north of Brownton was one of our favorites. History has it some "Do-Gooder," who thought dancing was a sin, dressed up like the Devil and during a dance jumped down onto the floor from a hidden perch above. I doubt he stopped anyone from going to future dances. Standing out above all others was the Gibbon Ballroom, and their schedule was usually filled by one of those great "Old Time" bands from New Ulm. At one time more than a dozen "Old Time" bands operated out of New Ulm, and over a span of 40 or more years there were about 50 "Old Time" bands spread throughout Minnesota south of an east-west line running through Hutchinson. Ah yes, great times at many great places, but none were better than the grand old Gibbon Ballroom. It had just the right atmosphere, and most importantly lots of pretty girls who were good dancers!

The "Old Time" bands of that era had truly great musicians, and many probably never had a formal music lesson. Some of the bands had unique names, and it couldn't get any better than with titles like; The Whoopee John Wilfahrt Band - Fezz Fritsche and the Goosetown Band - Elmer Scheid and his Hoolerie Band (no one played the concertina better than Elmer) - The Melvin Grewe Orchestra" (with Melvin, Waldemar & John Grewe, plus Warren, Art & John Luehring) - The Emil (Dumpfy) Domeier Band - Bill Brown and the Oompah Town Favorites. There was the; The Jolly Germans- The Jolly Lumberjacks - The Jolly Millers and The Jolly Brewers. Those were jolly times, and how wonderful it would be to have them return again. The band that stands out the most in my memory is; Harold Loeffelmacher and the Six Fat Dutchmen. The Six Fats

actually increased in number to eleven by about 1949, and that included one "Skinny Dane" who played the drums - my cousin Bjarne Andersen from Copenhagen.

His wages were \$8 a night, (when they played), but \$9 a night when they played in Wis-

consin. Harold had a reputation of never over paying his musicians. If there ever was "Mood Music," those "Old Time" bands could get you feeling just right – maybe with a little help from the bottle hidden under the seat of the booth. I never did understand why you could openly carry in a bottle of whiskey, but couldn't have it sitting on top of the table. Beer was available at the bar, or you could simply buy a bottle of pop and mix your own drinks. By "Intermission," when the musicians took their break, the edge of the band stand would be lined with drinks set there for them by patrons as a measure of appreciation. "Intermission" served another purpose, and if the parking lot east of the Gibbon Ballroom could talk what stories it could tell!

Ed Kruse, former Grafton Township resident



(Continued from page 1)

we continue to gather data and photos. Meanwhile we have the piece in our newsletter.

What age range should we include for volunteers at our society? We are pretty selective on the ages of our volunteers. But if you are between Millie's and Cory's ages, we will find a place for you. From the teens to the nineties. Cory is a recent volunteer and a new member. He donated books he has completed on his family's genealogy. Sharon Shimota is still "The Kid" and Cory will be the substitute kid. He is a great young man and we welcome his help.



Cory Becker (15) and Millie Johnson (90+)

Dr. Myron

Lindeman, of Redwood Falls, has been working on one of our organs. He is not a medical doctor, so he is restricted to external musical organs. He has made numerous trips, we'll call





them house calls, to the museum to get it back in running order. He had to do a transplant deep in the bowels of the instrument. He found a perforation, and managed to close it. He is an expert, recommended by Lawrence Crawford. Al assisted with the bellows-

ectomy. (My computer didn't even know that word) When he finished, he gave us a mini concert. We are hoping he will give us a return engagement at our Christmas Party, play a little and tell some history about the organ.

We are planning on a Christmas Open House again this year. The volunteer team is putting ideas together on the presentation. In spite of horrible weather some other years, we have had very good attendance. The three photos on the right are from previous events.

We are sooooo busy at SCHS but we managed to take a day to have a Porch Party for our regular volunteers, board members and a few guests. The weather was perfect to be on our porch. Charles and Donna Meyer were here from







Texas. They make us happy twice, being there, and bringing wine for us to help us celebrate. They are "A" guests. There were also



many unwelcome uninvited guests and they would be the "Bee" guests.

We will be part of the Henderson Heritage Days, October 3rd. The Brown Cemetery, the Library and downtown are other stops on the historic tour.

Rommie





Sibley County Fair 2015

By Dorothy Peterson

Once again the County Fair is history and we had another great experience. Over 450 guests signed our visitors book during the 4 days and we know there were others who stopped in but did not sign in. We even had a visit from Doug Ohman, author of numerous popular books about Minnesota who had very nice things to say about our County Schools Book, and even bought a copy.







Bees, bees! We sure learned a lot about them and the amount of work put into the beekeeping business from the



Mr. Honl pointing out the Queen Bee in the hive to a young guest.

Honl Family of Winthrop, our beekeeping experts. Rand and Jo Honl, their sons Bert & Jesse and their families, were a great addition to our exhibit and had a very popular display. Kids of all ages enjoyed trying to find the "queen" bee which the Honls' had

marked. Some very good visits were had with this dedicated family. Honey sticks were generously given to all, as well as a lot of good information, including recipes, using honey.

Part of the SCHS exhibit included making butter, and inviting visitors to try fresh, homemade bread samples topped with butter, and honey, preserves or sorghum. Using small pint jars, kids were invited to "shake, shake, shake" until the cream



Eldrene Ebert and Miana Nagel

THANKS

Thanks to this list of kind people who gave memorials or donated to our society. We are always grateful for your generosity.

Donations: The 'K' Foundation, Charlene (Lampe) Thoemke, Pam Lepke, Rich & Roseann Nagel, Arlene Karels, Roger & Holly Harjes

Grants & Memorials: In Memory of Roman Jaus: Dorothy Peterson, Robert & Sharon Haggenmiller, Martin & Loretta Jaus, Rommie and Mary Petersen. In Memory of Norman Nelson; Rommie and Mary Petersen. In memory of Bucky Grewe; Margaret Hoffman. In honor of Arline Karel's 90th birthday; Rommie and Mary Petersen.

A special thank you to the Roman Jaus Family, the Pudewell Family and Arline Karels for their very generous donations.





turned to butter. Some of them insisted they wanted to do it by themselves, while other efforts were a "family affair".

The preserves were furnished by, "Yesterday's Kitchen" (Kelli Sloot), and the sorghum was furnished by the David Tesch family of Henderson who provided the well done exhibit on the left.

(Continued on page 10)





Cory	Becker*	Gibbon	MN
Barbara	Bening*	Arlington	MN
Dori	Kistner*	Gaylord	MN
Herman	Kyrklund*	Big Springs	NE
Marie	Renneke*	Minneapolis	MN
Marlin & Joanie	Rose*	Henderson	MN
Verne & Donna	Schlueter*	Arlington	MN
Robert	Wieman*	St. Paul	MN
Jeanette & Eugene	Bening	Hutchinson	MN
Linda L	Cancio	Sacramento	CA
Robert	Fahey	Belle Plaine	MN
Bernice V	Hanson	New Brighton	MN
Wayne	Jarvis	Cedar Falls	IA
Ed & Dorothy	Kruse	Apple Valley	MN
Eric V	Larson	Winthrop	MN
Allen Co. Public	Library	Fort Wayne	IN
Virgil A.	Lieske*	Austin	MN
Janet	Lundgren	Gibbon	MN
Charles & Donna	Meyer	Houston	TX
Harold & Bonita	Pettis	Gibbon	MN
Gloria	Sinell	Gaylord	MN
Don & Betty	Strobel	Henderson	MN
Shirley & Charles	Supplee	Bloomington	MN
Elaine	Thies	Gaylord	MN

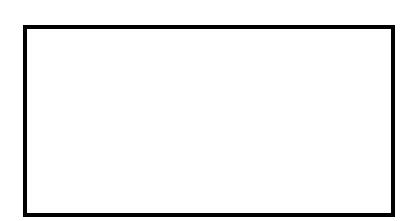
Membership Form renew	NEW	Regular meetings are held at 7:00 p.m. on the fourth Tuesday of the month, March thru November at the museum in	
NAME	SCHS TREASURER	Henderson. The public is invited. The museum is open to the public for tours on Sundays from 2:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. June	
ADDRESS	PO Box 206	thru October and by appointment.	
	Arlington MN 55307	!	
PHONE	•	Send articles, announcements, photos and comments to	
E-MAIL		the SCHS Newsletter, P.O. Box 407, Henderson, MN	
E-WAIL	<u> </u>	56044 or Email: schs1@frontiernet.net	
Individual\$20, Family \$25, Business \$50	Send to:	<u>i</u>	
I would like to receive my newsletter by en	nail (in living color!)	Check your due date on the mailing label.	
		Membership dues are as stated on the form. Please use it	
I would like to receive my newsletter by US	<u>S Maii</u>	to renew your subscription or pass it along to anyone who	
		is interested.	





P.O. Box 407
Henderson, MN 56044
Phone: 507-248-3434
Email: schs1@frontiernet.net

SIBLEY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY BOARD		
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Rich Nagel	Treasurer	
Sharon Haggenmiller	Curator	
Judy Loewe	Marie Main	
Millie Johnson	Sharon Shimota	
Ruth Ann Buck	Mary Petersen	



(Continued from page 8)

Numerous 4-H'ers and former 4-H'ers enjoyed our display of 4-H memorabilia.



Mystery Items

Our mystery items were related to our exhibits and are identified in the pictures on the right. Top; Jar opener. Middle; Bread baking pan. Bottom; Stove lid handle. I am missing the photo of the bee smoker. It is a *mystery* where it can be. Where else, I found one on Amazon, not our artifact. It's a fake, and I confess!





