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Endowment funds provide income and a safety net

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Otter Tail County Historical Society



One hundred years of haying in Otter Tail County: farmer Ed Parkhill takes a water break in the 1890s (above), and two generations of Isaacsons pick up bales in the 1980s (left).

'A whole lotta farmin' going on'

Otter Tail County museum revamps agricultural wing

Since the Otter Tail County Historical Society opened its agricultural wing in 1983, the exhibits have drawn a steady crowd. Visitors still linger over dioramas depicting harvesting and threshing, timbering and barnyard life. But as other displays began showing their age, the museum staff set to work imagining what might take their place.

They brainstormed on how to encourage more visitor participation. They looked for ways to keep gallery space flexible so that exhibits could

be changed more often. And they envisioned making the farm scenes come to life. "We wanted to give our visitors an even greater sense of 'being there,'" explained Kathy M. L. Evavold, OTCHS curator of collections.

With a \$20,000 gift from a private donor and countless hours of labor donated by dozens of volunteers, the society realized its dreams with the reopening in June of the county museum's agricultural wing.

Farmin' continued on page 2

It's all in the planning

Paving the way for a capital campaign

With the promise of a larger home for the Anoka County Historical Society came an even larger challenge: raising funds to renovate the 1960s-vintage former library building. ACHS staff share their process for undertaking a capital campaign.

When the City of Anoka offered to lease us the vacated library for \$1 a year, we knew we had found our new home. But our building fund, which had been growing slowly over the years, fell far short of the \$700,000 we needed to renovate the facility. So we consulted with staff at the Minnesota Historical Society and other county historical societies on strategies for organizing a capital campaign. Here's what we learned.

First, it was imperative to articulate our long-range vision for the society and define our goals for the campaign. Once we determined our course of action, we retained an experienced, history-minded architect to formulate plans for the renovation. That vision and

Planning continued on page 2

Farmin' *continued from page 1*

The centerpiece of the newly redone wing is an interactive exhibit titled "Grown, Gathered and Governed: A Whole Lotta Farmin' Going On," which will interpret the continuing impact of agriculture in the county. In a small theater space within the exhibit, visitors can watch a short video that introduces the county's agricultural diversity and tells the stories of Otter Tail County's farmers. "Through the video, museum visitors will get an inside look at today's farm culture and the ways farmers have adapted to change through time," said Evavold.

Over the next three years, the exhibit and accompanying video will change periodically as various crops, animals and products are featured.

The museum's dioramas, too, got a fresh new look. Each one was reframed and repainted, then new table-top interpretive panels were added, with flip books full of salient facts and illustrations. More artifacts from the collections also were incorporated. "Our biggest challenge was finding a place for the John Deere

wagon," explained Evavold. "We had nowhere to go but up so some of our volunteers built a platform above the winter farm scene. Then 10 of us somehow managed to hoist the wagon up onto the platform. It looks great up there!"

But what really brings a new dimension to the dioramas is the addition of sound. "The audio component made such a big difference," said Evavold. "Now you can hear a teamster urging his oxen on. You can hear the threshing machine operating. There are chickens, cows and pigs in the barnyard. It's so lively. Of all the changes we made, we got the most impact for dollars spent from adding sound. It wasn't very expensive and it really warmed the place up."

Opening week festivities brought out the crowds, with daily children's activities, public programs funded by a Minnesota Humanities Commission grant and an after-hours reception for Fergus Falls Chamber of Commerce



New table-top panels interpret farming scenes for visitors in the Otter Tail County Historical Society's agricultural wing.

members, where OTCHS staff, board members and volunteers gave community business leaders a behind-the-scenes tour. For more information about this major undertaking, call Evavold at 218-736-6038.

Planning *continued from page 1*

the architectural plans became the building blocks of our fundraising campaign.

Next, we set about securing lead investors in our project. This was an important step; it would demonstrate to the public, to whom we would soon turn for donations, that we had support for our project from other sectors. So we applied for government grants. We appealed to local corporations for cash and in-kind gifts. And we explored which foundations might consider our capital campaign

request. Once we secured gifts or pledges valued at a certain percentage of our total campaign goal, we were ready for the public phase of the campaign.

For the public launch of our fundraising campaign, we sent out press releases describing our campaign objectives and announcing how much money we had already raised. Those press releases generated wider public awareness about our plans and led into our mailing to members and previous donors

soliciting campaign contributions. We know that in each of Anoka County's 18 cities and three townships, there are countless families and individuals who appreciate the work we do – who understand the need to collect and preserve our precious history. It is our hope that they will help us make our new home a reality.

For news of other county historical societies currently conducting capital and/or endowment campaigns, see page 5.

In service to country and community

Oral history projects record stories of World War II veterans

In this 60th anniversary year of the U.S. entry into World War II, many historical societies turned their attention to the men and women in their communities who supported the war effort. Among county societies undertaking oral history projects on the subject were those in Pipestone and Kandiyohi counties.

Pipestone County gets training in interview techniques

With a state grant-in-aid from the Minnesota Historical Society and matching funds from local American Legion and VFW posts, the Pipestone County Historical Society conducted oral history interviews with 20 World War II veterans. Interview candidates were chosen from among veterans

throughout the county representing all branches of the service – veterans who served in theaters from the jungles of New Guinea to the glaciers of Greenland. Subjects were asked not only about their war experiences but also about their views of the conflict before and after Pearl Harbor and about the impact of the war on their own lives and those of their families.

To prepare for the project, PCHS staff hosted an oral history training workshop conducted by James Fogerty of the Minnesota Historical Society. Members and staff of historical societies in Murray, Nobles and Kandiyohi counties also took part. For more information on this project to record the memories of a passing generation, call Chris

Roelfsema-Hummel, PCHS executive director, at 507-825-2563.

Kandiyohi County takes it to the fair

Last spring Ridgewater College student Jason Haug earned college credit for an internship at the Kandiyohi County Historical Society in Willmar. His project: interviewing local residents who served in the military or on the home front during the Second World War.

Stories were solicited on the society's web site, through mailings to members and in the local newspapers. And what stories they were. Veterans of battles from Europe to the Pacific relived their harrowing experiences. More than one came home with a bride. An Army Dental Corps lieutenant pulled hundreds of teeth a month from soldiers departing for the front, and a home-front nurse welcomed back the wounded. One man, a young boy at the time, remembers watching wide-eyed as a train carrying prisoners of war rolled through town.

Under the guidance of his history professor and KCHS executive director Mona Nelson-Balcer, Haug conducted and transcribed all the interviews and produced a videotape of some of his subjects for viewing by visitors to the museum. He also created an exhibit of artifacts and photos on World War II that served as the centerpiece of the KCHS booth at this year's county fair. For more information on Haug's internship project, call Nelson-Balcer at 320-235-1881.

A daughter's memories

Kandiyohi County Historical Society



In 1943 Beatrice Ronning and daughter Bea (Ourada) sat for a portrait wearing pins that signified they had a loved one serving in the Navy.

Kandiyohi County resident Beatrice Ronning Ourada was just a girl when her father, a lieutenant in U.S. Navy Intelligence, joined the war. She remembers vividly his return three years later from the Pacific: "Coming home was an adjustment for him. His office had been closed for years and he had no car, so there was nothing for him to do at first and no way to get around. That winter he put a fish house on Green Lake and whenever we could catch a ride, we would go out to that fish house together."

Ourada's wartime memories appeared in the December 2000 and April 2001 issues of the Kandi Express, newsletter of the Kandiyohi County Historical Society.

Historic Chippewa City opens season with a spalsh

Every spring for a week before Historic Chippewa City opens to the public, more than 1,500 schoolchildren descend on the site in Montevideo for Heritage Week. Dozens of artists, instructors and volunteers, many of them retired teachers, demonstrate lifeways of the late 1800s and answer countless questions from curious gradeschoolers.



Chippewa County Historical Society

Heritage Week instructors enlighten crowds at Historic Chippewa City.

This year, stops on the tour included a tipi (left), where Vivian Ironheart told of Dakota traditions; the fur trading post (right), where Franz Richter showed off his trade goods; and the buggy shop (above), where volunteer Norm Brakken introduced youngsters to modes of transportation they hadn't even imagined.

For details call June Lynne, executive director of the Chippewa



County Historical Society, at 320-269-7636.

Melrose convent finds new life as museum

Hundreds of supporters gathered in July to celebrate the grand opening of the new Melrose Area Museum in Stearns County. Housed in a former convent built in 1953 for sisters serving the Church of St. Mary, the museum contains several rooms of exhibits, an expanded research center and a hall of photographs of area residents. Visitors are invited to browse through uncatalogued photos to help identify the people pictured.

The Melrose Area Historical Society's move to its new facility was aided by a grant from the Minnesota Historical Society and donations from many area businesses, organizations and residents. The new museum, renovated for full accessibility, serves the towns of Melrose, Freeport, St. Rosa, New Munich, Spring Hill, Greenwald and Meire Grove. For more information call 320-256-4996.



Melrose Area Historical Society

A former convent serves as the new home of the Melrose Area Museum.

Banking on the future

Endowment funds provide income and a safety net

Operating budgets typically support the day-to-day business of Minnesota museums large and small. Those funds come variously from city and county allocations, private donations and earned income. But to fill gaps and cover extras, museums increasingly count on endowments. By definition, endowment funds contain donated monies that are invested and left to grow; only the interest generated by the fund can be spent. Think of endowments as a kind of insurance policy for a secure future.

Many of Minnesota's county historical societies are currently conducting fund-raising campaigns to

establish or build their endowments. Here are a few of them:

- The **Winona County Historical Society's** Hiawatha Trust Fund dates back to 1976. But because of its relatively modest size (currently \$90,000), the fund represents only a small percentage of what the society should have to support the properties it owns and the programs it offers. So this year, to mark Winona's sesquicentennial, the WCHS launched a campaign to raise \$150,000 in additional endowment funds. Interest income will be targeted to education programs. All donors of \$1,000 or more will become charter members of the Captain Orrin Smith Society and will be permanently recognized at the museum.
- To augment its \$750,000 capital campaign (see story on page 1), the **Anoka County Historical Society** also will undertake a \$500,000 endowment campaign. Both funds will support development of the society's new home in the former county library building. "That's a huge fund-raising challenge," acknowledges co-executive director Jean Smith. "It may take us quite a while. But we hope our members and supporters will step up to the challenge so that we can ensure the preservation of our past for future generations."
- At its planning session last winter, the board and staff of the **Pipestone County Historical Society** set new goals, including a pledge to double the society's

endowment. The fund, administered by the Sioux Falls Area Foundation, was established recently by a private donor who wanted to give the county society some long-term stability. Now an additional \$10,000 will be raised through a direct-mail campaign to add to the fund's \$10,000 seed money.

- Among other county societies that use community foundations to manage their investments is the **Carlton County Historical Society**, which put its permanent endowment funds in the hands of the Duluth-Superior Area Community Foundation. That fund now stands at about \$35,000. All fundraising for the endowment and other special projects for the county's History and Heritage Center is done by the Carlton County Historical Society Foundation, incorporated in 1988 "to benefit and support the society, its branches and its successors in service to the people of Carlton County."
- After months of investigation, the Endowment Committee of the **Cook County Historical Society** chose the Minnesota Foundation, a statewide community foundation, to administer its new endowment fund. Established with a \$60,000 bequest from a longtime member, the endowment will be left to grow to \$250,000 before any interest is withdrawn for historical society projects. Says CCHS president Leonard Sobanja, "This fund will assure our other supporters that any monetary gifts they donate or bequeath will have a long-lasting impact."



Children travel back in time during "Pioneer School Days at the Arches," one of many programs to benefit from revenue generated by the Winona County Historical Society's endowment.

Pipestone County restores local monument

Fencing added to deter vandals

It was the green mustache that finally motivated Pipestone County to clean up its Civil War monument. The Leon H. Moore Memorial Monument – named for the man who sculpted it – had stood since 1901 on the grounds of the county courthouse, where weather, lawnmowers and vandals had left their mark on the uniformed soldier. Armed with a grant from the Minnesota Historical Society and matching funds raised in the community, county commissioners gave the go-ahead for restoration work to begin.

Conservators, who had assessed the statue's condition and

recommended the restoration, washed the limestone statue, carefully scrubbed off layers of lichen and paint, and repaired cracks. They also recommended a regimen of regular cleaning and maintenance by trained personnel.

To protect the statue from future vandalism and damage by lawnmowers, lighting was added and ornamental fencing and a border of paving stones were installed around the base. A brass plaque bearing the names of veterans originally carved on the statue, many of them now illegible, was mounted inside the fence. Today the 100-year-old soldier



Pipestone County

Fencing now protects Pipestone County's Civil War monument, restored by conservators to its original soft grey color.

stands proud once again, in fitting tribute to those who served their country.

Putting the pieces together again

Damaged buildings repaired

After lightning struck the historic New Ulm Post Office last year, damaging one of the building's distinctive stepped towers, local artisans went to work recreating the materials needed for repairs. American Artstone of New Ulm made new castings of the decorative stonework and Ochs Brick and Tile Company in Springfield, which had manufactured the original brick in 1910, supplied new bricks to match. Today the post office (far right), home of the Brown County Historical Society, awaits only a new lightning rod to deflect future strikes.

In the midst of restoration work last fall on the Perham Public Library, built in 1887 as an Episcopal church, a stone wall gave way, sending the entrance tower crashing to the ground. Laying a façade of new



HMEOTC

History Museum of East Otter Tail County.

stonework over a cement block base (above left), masons were able to approximate the old stonework. When work is completed, visitors to the



Brown County Historical Society

Historic New Ulm Post Office.

History Museum of East Otter Tail County, which now occupies the building, will hardly notice the difference.

Two new books tell personal histories

Transformation. That's the common thread in two very different books published recently by local historical societies.

***Ojibwe: Waasa Inaabidaa* by Thomas Peacock and Marlene**



Wisuri. Afton Historical Society Press. 250 pages. \$39 hardcover, \$29.95 paper.

For Ojibwe educator Tom

Peacock, a personal journey led to *Ojibwe: Waasa Inaabidaa* ("We look in all directions"). In 1991 Peacock went to Washington, D.C., to do research about his Fond du Lac Reservation in the files of the Bureau of Indian Affairs. There he found a

letter written by his own great-grandmother, pleading with the commissioner of Indian affairs to let her sons return home from the Pipestone Boarding School because she was ill. Her request was refused; that winter she died.

"My work in the National Archives was a life-changing event," he writes. "It brought home to me the extent of the human tragedy that has come to define the federal government's role in the education of its indigenous people and the lingering effects on contemporary American Indian families and cultures." Combining new research in historical documents with interviews of more than 60 Ojibwe families in Minnesota, Wisconsin and Michigan, Peacock lends a historical perspective to some of the contemporary issues – tribal sovereignty, treaty rights, education – over which Ojibwe and non-Indians find themselves at odds.

Color photographs by Marlene Wisuri, director of the Carlton County Historical Society, complement historic black-and-white photographs. Order by e-mail at www.aftonpress.com or phone 1-800-436-8443.

The Brooklyns: A History of Brooklyn Center and Brooklyn Park.



Brooklyn Historical Society. 600 pages. \$29.95.

More than four years of research and the stories of 350 families went into

The Brooklyns: A History of Brooklyn Center and Brooklyn Park. The book documents the transformation of small, rural Brooklyn Township, organized in the 1850s, into two suburban cities.

You'll meet the famous (Garrison Keillor, Jesse Ventura) and not-so-famous residents who helped shape the communities. And there are plenty of historical photographs to peruse – photos from both the Brooklyn Historical Society archives and many personal collections. The book also takes a serious look at the effects of urban sprawl and the changing racial and economic face of the two cities.

To order call 763-536-0842 or write Brooklyn Historical Society, P.O. Box 29345, Brooklyn Center, MN 55429.

Local history records go online

East Otter Tail County launches web site

Earlier this year the History Museum of East Otter Tail County in Perham rolled out the first phase of its new web site,

www.HistoryMuseumEOT.org. The site, funded by a \$25,000 grant from the Library Services and Technology Act, makes available to researchers a searchable database of some of the museum's historical records. Included are birth, death and marriage records; an index to the *Enterprise-Bulletin* newspapers (completed to date up to 1930); articles from the two-volume

East Otter Tail County history book; and a category called "Newsbits" – additional items that caught the eye of the indexer.

A second LSTA grant, also awarded to the museum in conjunction with the Viking Library System, will fund further development of the site. Next up: an online catalog of the museum's historical photographs. For more information call director Lina Belar at 218-346-7676 or e-mail museum@eot.com.

Researcher seeks WWII veteran shipbuilders

Minnesotans were stationed in San Francisco

Northwestern University doctoral candidate Christopher James Tassava needs your help. While doing historical research for his dissertation about ship building on San Francisco Bay during World War II, he learned that many of the men and women who worked in the shipyards came from Minnesota. He believes that a large number of them returned to the state after the war. They would now be in their 70s and 80s.

If you know of anyone who might have worked in such a capacity during the war, Tassava would like to hear from you. He can be reached by e-mail at c-tassava@northwestern.edu.

Winter 2002 grant deadlines

Here they are again – deadlines for the Winter 2002 round of state grants-in-aid and Certified Local Government grants. If you haven't already done so, it's time to prepare your application now.

Jan. 18, 2002: Pre-application due.

Feb. 22: Grant application due.

April 4: Grants Review Committee meets.

Application forms are available online at www.mnhs.org/about/grants/stgrants.html. For more information, call grants assistant David Grabitske at 651-297-4416 or e-mail david.grabitske@mnhs.org.

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