

CASS COUNTY CLIPPINGS

APRIL 1
2013

CASS COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY & MUSEUM

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Horrendous Wind Storm Hit Norway Beach in 1940

The worst storm in the history of Cass Lake struck on the morning of Wednesday, July 24, 1940 at 4 o'clock and did hundreds of thousands of dollars of damage to farm woodlots and forest lands of the U. S. Forest Service, Indian Service and State of Minnesota.



Millions of feet of virgin timber at Star Island, Norway Beach and Pike Bay were laid in windrows when high wind roared out of the northwest and swept an area twenty miles wide from Bemidji to Grand Rapids.

The greatest damage was done at Norway Beach where 300-year-old Norway Pines were laid down in windrows as though some giant reaper had swung his scythe down the beach. The winds raged for an hour from Steamboat Lake to Big Lake.

About \$700 damage was done to Erick Hogland and a like amount to Leo Wittner, C. J. Carlson and Leon LaPage. LaPage's spruce grove was flattened. The grove and buildings at the DeWitt farm were ruined.

At Crescent Beach on Big Wolf, trees blocked the road from Kamadji to Anderson's. Every one suffered damage. The Kauffman canoe was picked up and thrown over the Deal garage and his row boat was put high up on the bank. At the boat landing the wind took the garage off its foundation and threw it into the swamp. The bathhouse at Highland Inn was thrown into the harbor and trees snapped off like match sticks.

Roaring over to Squaw Point, the wind wrecked several cottages and boats at the Gangelhoff Resort. It threw trees around on Strawberry Point and the Engineers Camp, crisscrossing the road into Norway Beach with hundreds of Norway and white pines. Ranger Mel Cummings immediately threw a CCC crew on Norway Beach road and it was no time until the road was cleared to the resort. Boyd Demo, the USFS lookout, said that the big norways bent before the wind and their tops touched the ground before they

Legacy Grant Update

Work has been progressing for the past two months on scanning and recording the data into the PastPerfect software purchased with the Minnesota Legacy Grant. Dan Eikenberry, Cec McKeig, and Renee Geving have been working at the museum and have processed approximately 900 negatives so far.

Cass County Historical Society Board of Directors

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Storm Damage July 1940 at Norway Beach

Cass County Research Center

The research center is staffed by the Cass County Historical Society at the Cass County Museum in Walker. Through the winter, research help is available by appointment. The research library, obituary indexes, newspaper microfilm, and other archival materials are accessible for a \$10 research fee for non-members.

To make an appointment during the winter hours, contact Renee at 218-652-4377.



broke. Some trees didn't break even then, and released sprung back, broke and fell the other way. For that reason, some people thought it was a "twister" instead of straight line winds.

The campground was a shambles and several cars and trailer houses were smashed. Falling trees smashed the trailer houses of A. P. Stump of Grand Forks, and Roy Hatfield of Minneapolis and the trailer house of H. W. Ohman caught fire. A tree demolished a car from Iowa but the three men sleeping in the car were uninjured.

Thomas Kennedy of St. Paul was crushed when a tree fell on his tent and his partner Frank Fenelon was badly hurt. Kennedy, an instructor at the Globe Business College, was camping on Norway Pine Beach the morning of the storm. A Norway pine blew down and pinned Kennedy under and smashed his pelvis bone. His companion Frank Fenelon was stabbed in the leg with a branch and but notified the USFS men who spent three hours of good hard work getting the giant tree off Kennedy. Dan Prothero took him to town on the Camp Wanaki boat. He was treated at the Cass Lake hospital and then taken to St. Paul. After lingering in a St. Paul hospital for ten days, Mr. Kennedy passed away.

The United States Forest Service then closed Norway Beach to all picnickers and campers so that the work of salvaging timber and cleaning up the beach could get going. Appraisers came in and offered the salvage from the timber to the highest bidders.

In Cass Lake the wind raised havoc with the shade trees about town, broke windows, broke down power and telephone lines, blew down chimneys and the smokestack of the box factory. The box factory stayed closed until the smokestack was put up again.

The windows of the P & L Variety Store, Christiansen Studio, Mullen Hardware, Corner Clothiers, and Oja's Grocery were all blown in. The woodlot at the Gamache Farm was blown down; it was one of the show places in Pike Bay Township. (Information from the Cass Lake Times, July 25, 1940)

Here Comes Spring -- Baseball is Here Again



Walker Baseball team at the Hackensack Baseball Field, 1940

Back Row: Ben Oliver, Marion Kennedy, Darrell Hillberg, Charlie Carlson, Bucky Richmire
Ray Oliver, Russ Smith, Glenn Witham, Rudy Swenson

Front Row: Bob Bailey, unknown, Jim Witham, Paul Ferianck

Batboys: unknown, unknown, Bobby Kennedy

New Sponsorship Program

We are expanding opportunities for area businesses, organizations, associations, and individuals to support the Cass County Historical Society and its goals. For \$100 or more, you may sponsor Free Admission days, events, historical programs and presentations, and permanent or temporary displays. The sponsor will be part of the advertising of the event and will be listed on our website with a link to their website. Some of the benefits to sponsors include another form of advertising, showcasing community responsibility, reaching a target audience, and increasing visibility in the community.

If you are interested in being a sponsor, please contact the director at 218-547-7251.



Photo: Lewis Wilson Family, 1940.

An excerpt from the memoirs of Phyllis (Wilson) Turner, 1935 – 2002
Born in Walker, Minnesota. Died in Sheridan, Oregon. Memoirs donated to the Cass County Historical Society.

My earliest memory of myself is of sitting in the sunlight on the back doorstep of our tiny stucco house in Walker, Minnesota. My father and other men, probably my uncles, were moving furniture out, and I was vaguely anticipating our move to the country. It was summer, and I was four years old.

That move that I was sitting and wondering about at four years old was to set the tone of my life and was even then the beginning of a life-style.

Most people today would wonder how much more “in the country” one could be than where we were living on the edge of town in Walker. The town could claim only a population of 1000. It was a neat, clean and an economically stable community. The thing that elevated the town to being something more than a pass-through community on the highway, was the lake on which the town was situated. Leech Lake. The lake I claim full possession of as my own childhood lake, whose waters have continued to nourish my psyche long, long after I left.

At any moment, wherever I am, I can recall Leech Lake, can know it is still there, exactly as it was then. When I do so, I always feel a quiver and chill in my arms and the roots of the hairs of my head stand up. These recollections, the vivid images I have of the lake, do not make me yearn to go back; I have no apprehensions of it calling me back. The lake is just comfortably there, an idyll I can always look back upon as though it were a smiling and encouraging face.

The Museum depends on your membership and donations to keep the door open.
If you haven't done so yet, please renew for 2013.

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