

CASS COUNTY CLIPPINGS

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WOMEN IN INDUSTRY - Cass County 1918-1919

From March 1918 to December 1919, the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industries Bureau of Women and Children partnered with the Council of National Defense's Women in Industry committee to conduct a survey of working women. The survey results were summarized in a report - - Women in Industry in Minnesota in 1918 prepared by Dr Carol Aronovichi. A survey included 51,361 women wage earners employed in all the important branches of industry, mercantile work, personal service, telegraph and telephone, and other employment.

The survey form asked for a lot of information including name, age, country of birth, nationality, kind of work, wages per week, whether living at home, whether contributing to family support, marital status, whether son or husband was in military service, the husband's present employment, hus-

band's wages for a week, and ages of children.

Only a limited number of women responded from each county, and six counties did not participate at all. Cass County submitted 76 entries. Beltrami County had only 28 entries.

The information on these forms is interesting for the perspective it gives on the female side of employment during the war years and on women who replaced men in certain jobs during World War I.

The following information came from these micro-filmed records at the Discovery Center at Chisholm.

On October 27th, 1918, an investigator named M. Martin visited the W. H. Spurrier Jr. & Co. firm at Pine River. There were seven employees at that time. Five were men; two were women. The women worked 8 to 9 hours per day for a total of 48+ hours per week.

The report also focused on sanitation for the women. At the Spurrier firm, the report noted that there was a separate toilet for women in the basement with a well-piped faucet. Ventilation, light and cleanliness were rated "Good."

The two women employees at Spurrier & Co. were Miss Bessie Pearson and Miss Amelia Gordon, ages 20 and 22. Miss Pearson received \$18.50 per week



Birch Ridge Resort in winter. (As shown in the book, *Leech Lake Resorts*, by Renee Geving and Cec McKeig)

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Many of our members wonder what we do all winter when the museum is closed: everything that we didn't have time to do during the summer when our visitors were touring our museum and pioneer schoolhouse.

Before we closed this fall, we had numerous donations of artifacts. One that really interested us was a large, heavy rock that was found in the area of the Woodtick Trail. We had archaeologists look at it and they confirmed it was not a prehistoric tool. Just a plain old rock!

Then we got a pair of Plains moccasins from the Chase on the Lake along with an offer of an old piano. We had no room for the piano and turned it down, but we were glad to accept the moccasins.

We received a 1929 diary kept by Hattie A. Bailey of daily happenings with her family in Walker. Then a 2011 calendar, "Dancing Wildflowers" and a story book, *Once Upon A Farm* by Jewell Mendenhall, and *My Story*, by Ted Hopen – about growing up in Turtle Lake township.



Skaters on Blind Lake from the Blind Lake Township book compiled by Mary Krecklow



Here are a few other items that came in:

A windbreaker that was worn by a Camp Danworthy counselor Doris Schnack during the summers of 1969-70 when she worked there.

An autographed baseball by the Minneapolis Millers from 1933 era. A home-run ball was hit by Clifford Bilben as one of the two home runs Walker scored that day and Walker uniforms.

A bear trap that was made in the 1800s by a blacksmith in Sweden before Isak Norman immigrated to the US, He had the trap made and brought it with him to their farm on Bungo Creek in 1908 where he heard bears were plentiful. He later moved to property between Blackwater and Mule lakes where he began building a resort, Lakeview Camp. He also built a store on the stage-coach trail that went from Longville to Pine River. He never trapped a bear with this and the trap hung all these years on the wall of an old shed. His grandson Paul thought this belonged in our museum.

Now that winter is here we need to catalogue and put numbers in our ledger and on each item.

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as a stenographer, and Miss Gordon received \$18 per week for her work in bookkeeping. Neither one lived at home or contributed to family support.

Helen Gearey replaced William Kessler at the 1st State Bank of Pine River. She was a 19-year-old bookkeeper and worked 48+ hours per week. She was paid \$12.50 per hour. She replaced William Kessler who was serving in the Signal Service. His wages had been \$18 per hour for bookkeeping and janitor work.

Clara Ackerman lived at home in Pine River and worked for the Pine River Mercantile Company, a retail store. She received \$8 per hour. Sanitation was an outside toilet in good condition with good ventilation, fair light, and good cleanliness. Drinking water came from a well.

Blanche Dodge replaced Arnold Ecklund at the Remer Drug Co. in Remer. Blanche was from Middleton, Nova Scotia. Arnold was a druggist who was serving as a medic in the military. He had received \$18 per week. Blanche received \$14 as a clerk rather than as a druggist.

Hotel Remer had a women's inside toilet with individual drinking cups and individual towels, so it received a high rating for sanitation. Five women worked there for \$7 per week. None replaced a man. Each lived at the hotel. They were Mayme Korb, age 32, widow and laundress; Mae Toland and Josephine Richmond, waitresses; Grace Halvorson, dishwasher; and Rose Redmond, chambermaid.

Maud Phelps worked as a general assistant for \$18 per week at the First State Bank of Remer.

Selena Wittwer replaced her husband Fred Wittwer at the Wittwer Merc. Co. in Remer. He was serving in the army in Field Artillery. She received \$6 per week for 54 hours as a clerk. Fred had earned \$15 per week for 60 hours as a clerk.

Mrs. M. B. Patton and Mrs. Ethel Sjoblom were telephone operators for \$10 per week for the Remer

Rural Telephone Co.

Twenty-three women worked for the Northern Pine Crating Co. in Cass Lake under the watchful eye of a matron Mrs. James Henely, whose husband was disabled. She was the mother of seven children, ages 6 to 23. She was paid \$18 a week.

Fifteen men had gone into the service from this factory, but the report could not say that the women had replaced any specific men. They all were classified as "ordinary mill and factory labor" except for Marian Rice, age 23, who was the bookkeeper. The women were Rose Roy, Ruby Wheaton, Nellie Ferguson, Ella Carpenter, Minnie Teal, Eva Compeau, Amelia Hank, Helena Stoatenburg, Flossie Kenedy, Florence Lilly, Guida Burns, Emma Boutang, Gilda Nelson, Isabelle La Gesse, Anna Perrault, Ada DeWitt, Mrs. Clara Stoatenburg, Sara Asbell, Mabel Smith, Anna Hanson, Hellen Pavlovitz, and one Ojibwe woman Anna Dent. Most were paid \$13.50 per week.

The Great Northern Railroad had eleven employees at Cass Lake. Nine were men; two were women. Carrie Simonson had replaced William Hooker, serving in France. She was the clerk and worked 55 hours per week for \$25. This was an increase over wages of \$21 which was the previous salary of Wm. Hooker. Blanche Myhre was 28, divorced, and working as the yard clerk for \$25 per week.

Erma Kimball, Kathryn Flack, Mary Faherty, and Ethyl Engebretson were telephone operators for Northwestern Telephone Exchange in Cass Lake.

Mary Torve, Elva Henderson and Naomi Williams worked for the Taylor Department Store. Ruby Henderson worked 60 hours a week in sales for a furniture and variety store. She earned \$10 a week.

Bertha Harding and Marie Christensen worked for the First National Bank. Pearl McDowell worked at a bakery. Rose Reiter was a waitress for Cain's Restaurant. Clara Tyson worked as a chambermaid at the Tedford Hotel for \$5 a week and lived at the hotel.

Ida Schulke, Emma Schulke, Edna Mayo lived at the Great Northern Restaurant in Cass Lake. They used a common toilet in the basement. Ventilation, light, and cleanliness were ranked poor to fair. Ida was night cook for \$6 a week; Emma was a chambermaid. Edna was a night dishwasher for \$4 a week. Emma Moritz lived at home in Cass Lake but also worked as a dishwasher for the restaurant. Ida and Emma Schulke, sisters, were Russian. Emma Moritz was also Russian.

Dora Perrault was a clerk for the U.S. Post office at Cass Lake. She earned \$9 per week. She was still working at the post office in 1930. Bertha Forsythe worked 54 hours a week as a stenographer for the Cass County State Bank.

Doris Utley was a typesetter for Utley and Ittner for the newspaper office. She was 18. No wages were listed as she was working for her brother, Grant Utley. She worked 48 hours a week. She married Howard Robinson in Cass Lake in 1923.

Kathryn McGuire, age 26, was an Irish-born trimmer for a millinery store in Cass Lake where she received a respectable \$18 per week. A trimmer was a designer for hats. In this case, she trimmed a hat for a customer according to their instructions. Millinery was both a craft and a trade, so she was paid quite well for her talent. She returned to Mankato as a seamstress after the war.

Ada Zimmerman, age 45, worked in the office of the Superintendent of Logging in Cass Lake. She worked 42 hours per week, and her pay level of \$21 per week was unusual. In 1905, she was a teacher at the Leech Lake Boarding School and received \$600 per year. In 1910, she was working for the government in this logging office, along with Marie Walton. They both boarded with the logging superintendent, E. J. Fulton and his family. Both refused to answer as to their age on the 1910 census! Isabella Raboin also boarded with the superintendent's family and was a servant for the household. About 1921, Ada returned to Ashland, Ohio and died there.

The Gorenflo Hotel had seven employees in 1918. Three were men, four were women. The women worked 12 hours per day for a total 84 hours per week. One worked after 9 p.m. Four of them worked 7 days per week. Kristina Marsolic, age 22, worked as a chambermaid for \$4.50 per week. Lillian Northbird, age 20, also worked as a chambermaid. Olga Olson worked in the laundry for \$4,00 a week, and Anna LaVoy was employed as a night clerk. Anna was a Canadian and had not applied for naturalization.

