

CASS COUNTY CLIPPINGS

April 1, 2014

CASS COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY & MUSEUM

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CASS COUNTY WEATHER HISTORY REPEATS ITSELF

Shown below is the Big Snow of 1922 on the main street of Walker. It seems like we are destined to go through winters with lots of snow, winters of drought, and occasionally, deceptively balmy weather.

The 1930s brought a period of drought and snow storms throughout the county. February of 1930 was balmy and there were signs of spring and the February 27th issue of the *Walker Pilot* reported that following three days of warmth and sunshine, rain arrived during Monday evening. Early Tuesday morning, snow began to coat the trees and by that evening more than two feet of snow had fallen.



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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.

Sponsorship Program

We are expanding opportunities for area businesses, organizations

Sponsors \$250-\$999, 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.

Weather, continued from page 1

Wednesday, the snow continued. The temperatures were so high that water from the previous days' melting did not freeze and in every depression in the roads, there was a bed of slush which caused many cars to run off the road.

On January 6, 1933, the government thermometer at the State San recorded a -37. The following day the San thermometer quit working as it wouldn't register lower than -40. This got the old timers thinking! They remembered the winter of 1924 when a temperature of -48 degrees was recorded in Walker, but could remember no colder weather.

Temperatures recorded in the cold spell the first week in February 1933 were: Feb. 1, -4; Feb. 2, -1; Feb. 3, -2; Feb. 4, -32; Feb. 5, -30; Feb. 6, -21; and Feb. 7, -37. This cold wave covered the entire northern section of the United States

The cold period in 1933 began with the coldest mark reached on January 8, 1933. On the heels of a sunny groundhog day, February 2, 1933, the mercury started to drop, falling from 10 above to 2 below. Old timers spoke of the winter of 1934 when -48 was recorded. Local reports placed the temperature from -50 to -60. Mr. Pilz of Thunder Lake, who furnished the weekly temperature record for the *Cass County Independent*, stated that the thermometer went so low that the mercury within it froze, which occurred at about -39. He estimated the temperature to be -48. Low temperature records were smashed when thermometers slumped to -50. The mark recorded at the government station at Federal Dam was -52,

The 1935-36 winter had one of the heaviest snow depths on record and the costs of clearing the county's roads doubled. The last week in January the mercury dipped to -42 and further complicated snow removal from roads. Arrangements were made to furnish plows to bus drivers, and those living around Hackensack were forced to spend a Sunday trying to clear the snow blocked roads. The temperatures were below zero the entire last week

in January. A shortage of feed for livestock due to drought conditions the previous summer forced Cass County farmers to sell off 504 cattle at a loss due to the government's lower prices; estimates placed the total number at over 1000 before the winter ended. The state highway department battled snow on trunk roads the first four months of winter; October, November, December and January.

From January 15th to the 21st temperatures were recorded from -15 to -38, with the lowest temp at -42. On that same day the year before, the temperature was 41 degrees. Walker's temperature that day registered -50. There were erratic temperatures for the entire month of January of 1936.

The wood detail at the CCC camp at Kabekona Bay, Co. 4707 became an absolute necessity as groups of 30 to 40 men cut salvaged dead timber along Highway 371 to furnish wood for heat and cooking at the camp. The National Park Service loaned men, trucks and tools to the camp. Kabekona Camp 4707 was opened in 1935 on Kabekona Bay of Leech Lake on the left side of Hwy. 371, just after you cross the bridge, in an area that looks very swampy and wet. The men slept in white tents with wooden floors. The CCCs had the job of completing a detailed survey map of Leech Lake. A contour map showing the depth at all points in the lake was the goal as well as soil types and locations and vegetation which would help fish management in the Chippewa National Forest. The survey was completed in March of 1936, in sub-zero temperatures. Thank the young men of the CCCs who had enough stamina to walk 63,450 acres of the lake and collect data that we use today!

The first week of March 1936 brought another weather system to Cass County in the form of rain and winter blizzards. First it rained for four hours, then turned to sleet in the afternoon before it cleared out in a few hours. The next day was sunny until evening when the snow flurries started which were later followed by blizzard conditions. Mother Nature suddenly turned off the storm switch and spring took over.

Weather extremes were experienced in the month of January 1937 throughout the nation, as well as Cass County. The weather took a tumble to -47 in Pillager on Tuesday, January 19, 1937. Tuesday night was close to zero, but a snowstorm was brewing, bringing with it a strong wind which closed the roads with snow to a point where travel was almost impossible. Wednesday saw temperatures at -20 and made travel and clearing roads difficult work.

On February 7, 1937, snow began to fall until there was a depth of 14 inches. The fierce wind tore across the county and drifted roads and highways with snow as high as a car. Bus and train traffic also came to an abrupt halt. Citizens were struggling with stalled or stuck cars and dodging in, out, and around snow banks while the biting wind and cold attacked ears or noses. Jennie Bloyer of Remer reported, "On account of the blocked roads many children on the Tobique route have been obliged to remain in town for two nights." Mrs. Art Meleen of Boy River wrote, "There was no school the first three days of the week, as the busses were unable to get through." Mrs. E. McKeebe, of Pine River said, "Norman Dauber helped Harry McKeebe open the road to the main road on Monday. It took five hours and two teams to go half a mile. We need the Blue Ox they tell of, as we certainly have the Big Snow." The twelve man plow crew of Cass County was constantly on the job throughout the entire winter with nine county snow plows and three privately-owned plows to keep traffic from being completely crippled in the county. The crew cleared 441 miles of county roads following each heavy snowfall or blizzard.



Cass County shoveled out from under the 14" snowfall, and deep drifts which were packed hard by a 30 mile an hour wind. Bus and train traffic was stopped for a 24 hour period. The snowfall for the winter was estimated at 70 inches total.

In 1939, thermometers in the neighborhood of Woman Lake registered 28 to 30 below on Monday Feb 20, and from 42 to 45 below on Tuesday.

Record low temperatures were set across Minnesota as we began the month of February, 1996. Federal Dam had held the record low for 96 years with a reading of -59 recorded by the Corps of Engineers in 1898 but in 1996, every radio station was reporting that the old record had been broken by the -60 degrees reading at Tower. This was the actual temperature on the thermometer without the wind chill factor. This 1996 reading set the all-time low for the state of Minnesota.



But there is always SPRING and SUMMER and we can look forward to harvesting a crop of blueberries! Here is a photo from 1960 of a blueberry harvest by the Geving brothers from the archives of the Cass County Historical Society.

Colonel Hougen and the Shingobee Chalet on Howard Lake

The name Col. John H. Hougen has special meaning for many old residents of the Howard Lake area. For him, Shingobee Chalet held many years of happy memories. "The Colonel" as many respectfully called him, owned Shingobee Chalet from 1939 until he sold it in 1975. He served as a member of the Shingobee Township board for six years and as legal advisor for the R.E.A. He volunteered his time and talent to help individual students in speech and English and gave legal advice to many local residents. He was instrumental in the early efforts to consolidate local rural telephones.

The original home was built for the Pillsbury family by C. Statler and Mike Poncelet, Sr. The Colonel bought the house from Smith, Leach and Joyce in 1939. Mark Poncelet, caretaker for Shingobee Chalet from 1948 to 1975, remarked that much of the land around Howard Lake was once owned by the Pillsbury and Walker families.

John Hougen lived on Howard Lake during and after impressive careers in law, education, politics and military service. During the 28 years in the Army, he served at the Nuremberg Trials and was chief of the Army legislative branch of the Pentagon. He was once a member of the Minnesota State Senate and taught at the University of North Dakota Law School.



Remembering the Past: Carr's Confectionary Store. The name on the door of the truck says Joe Carr, Laporte.

Characters in History

“Gold Dust Jimmy”

On the shore of Mann Lake, where a narrow strip of land separates the waters on Man Lake from Baby Lake, there stood an ancient log cabin in 1937. It was a primitive abode; a broken stove in one corner with blackened pots and pans, a lamp with a broken chimney, a candle protruding from a hole bored into a log, a chair fashioned from oak limbs in another corner, and a number of wolf and bear traps scattered over the dirt floor. This was the home of “Gold Dust Jimmy”. Jimmy had experienced trouble during his early days and his after life was spent in solitude here in this cabin. He had very few neighbors and didn’t welcome visitors. He claimed the land he lived upon was given to him by the government in return for some service rendered. He more than likely was a squatter because the government didn’t give him a deed to the property. He lived a simple life until “tourists” began flocking into the country, buying cottage sites and building homes on the shores of lake within his “domain”. He began wildly talking of evicting the trespassers and they were quite uneasy. He had a fine physique and always dressed in deer hide breeches and high leather boots. Over a doeskin shirt, he wore a beaded and fringed buckskin coat. His hair was black and fell below his shoulders and was crowned by a sombrero. He was never seen without his rifle and it was usually accompanied by a large pistol, strapped over his hip. He had a large pile of stones piled by his cabin and he was sure they carried traces of gold. Hence his name, “Golddust Jimmy.”

“Six Shooter Bill’ Wegner

Six Shooter Bill was christened Louis Wegner and lived near the Trelipe Dam on Trelipe Lake. He wore a buckskin coat and pants, which he made himself, and a large felt cowboy hat. He always wore a six shooter on his hip. He had quite a rough reputation around the Longville area. He sported a beard and handlebar mustache. He ended his life in a home for the aged at Pine River, entering in 1959 and passing away at the age of 94 on January 4, 1974.

“Hungry Mike” Sullivan

Sullivan was in charge of lumber camps along the Brainerd and Northern Railroad between Pine River and Walker and worked for the Brainerd Lumber Company when they first came into Cass County around 1894. He later worked for Backus and Brooks Lumber Company around 1899. He and his brothers, Jim and Tom, all came from Canada and were all working together. Mike was a big man, about 6 feet and 225 pounds. His appetite was voracious and quite equal to Paul Bunyan’s. He once took a four pound loaf of bread and made a sandwich with three pounds of beefsteak for lunch. His appetite got the better of him when he was working with a log-driving crew. When the men went to work on the water, Mike cruised up and down river, eating all their lunches. He sent the men back to camp for their dinner. Once while at the Merchant’s Hotel in Bemidji he had a double-header for breakfast: a dozen eggs and double pancakes with double everything. Many times his manners won over, and he’d sit and eat a normal meal and then leave to go to a restaurant to order another meal. Many a tale has been told in lumber camp bunkhouses about Mike eating twelve dozen eggs for breakfast, a whole ham for lunch and fifty baking powder biscuits and 30 pounds of beef for supper. These tales were greatly exaggerated. He was a very gentle man and very kind and was known to have taken his shirt off and given it to a man who did not have one. No lumberjack ever passed his camp hungry and he was loved by all who knew him. In his later years, he was found to have a tapeworm that measured 112 feet. It was said that he went downhill after that and died in 1912 or 1913.

If you know of a character where you grew up, why not share your story with the readers of future newsletters. Send your story and a photograph via email to us and we’ll print it, editing it if necessary.



CCC Camp Walker 1723

Jan-Feb 1938

The Museum depends on your membership and donations to keep the door open.
If you haven't done so yet, please renew for 2014.

Membership

Single (\$10) _____ Family (\$15) _____

Friend (\$20-99) _____

Business (\$50) _____

Booster (\$100-\$499) _____ Benefactor (\$500+) _____ Patrons (\$1000) _____

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Email: _____