January 1, 2009

CASS COUNTY CLIPPINGS

CASS COUNTY
HISTORICAL SOCIETY & MUSEUM

P.O. BOX 505 201 MINNESOTA AVENUE W., WALKER, MN. 56484

Ah Gwah Ching

In 1904 the Minnesota Legislature purchased 616 acres of land at \$10.00 per acre for the proposed site of the Minnesota Sanatorium for Consumptives. From July to September 1905, Ole Larson graded the roads and roadways on the grounds of the sanatorium site, cleared and graded the depot grounds, and put in a sidetrack. In September of 1905 the Minnesota & International Railroad (M & I) built the Sanatorium Spur.



Ole A. Larson was hired as Caretaker on February 15, 1906 at a salary of \$50 per month. In the spring of 1906 a farmer's cottage was built. Work began on the Main Building in the summer of 1906. During the summer of 1907, plans were drawn up for the water and sewage systems and for the Camp Houses. Dr. Walter J. Marcley arrived at the Sanatorium in August 1907 as Superintendent and Physician in Charge. The sanatorium officially opened on December 28, 1907 with the admission of two male patients.

By the end of the first fiscal year, the institution had reached its full capacity of 55 patients. The cost per patient that first year was \$1.00 per day. A post office was established at the sanatorium during its first year and a depot for delivery of supplies helped reduce trips to Walker via horse and wagon. Two major purchases during Dr. Marcley's first year were a piano and a safe. The first china service was the well-known Blue Willow pattern.

By 1910, six cottages had been built, increasing the patient capacity to 110. Dr. Walter Marcley adopted the Trudeau philosophy of rest, fresh air, and good food in the treatment of his patients.

About sixty acres of land had been cleared and the wood was used for heating purposes. The institution had great difficulty in securing domestic help. A few of the discharged patients stayed on as employees. The living quarters for employees were inadequate, and new housing was needed as well for physicians and their families. Dr. Marcley resigned in 1911 to join the committee that later became the State Tuberculosis Commission.

Dr. Ohlinger served as Superintendent from 1911-1912, followed by Dr. George W. Beach in August of 1912. Employees and patients shared the same common dining room, and housing for employees continued to be a problem.

A farm of about 180 acres was developed from the deeply wooded grounds by 1907. This farm furnished milk, cream, and butter from a substantial herd of registered Holstein cattle which in ten years time, became one of the most recognized herds in the state for milk production. The farm also raised pork and beef on the

Volunteer Projects

We have some really neat projects that we'd like to get accomplished in 2009. If you have any expertise or just would like to be involved, please let us know by giving us a call or dropping us a note.

Pioneer School house needs to be constantly checked for damage from weather and insects. It needs a new coat of weatherproofing soon. The outhouse and the school windows need to be painted.

We are planning three history walks through downtown Walker this coming summer. We need help writing the scripts, and help with costume development and actors.

We would like to develop trunks filled with local history that can be used by county elementary teachers to introduce their students to local history. We would like to see a few retired teachers as part of a committee that would work on this.

Our work continues on our obituary index. We could use help in clipping, pasting, and writing out cards for our file.

Minnesota's Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment

On November 4, 2008, a majority of Minnesotans voted for the Minnesota's Clean Water, Land and Legacy amendment. What is this amendment and what will it do for us? The revenue that will be generated by a 3/8% sales tax increase is estimated to be nearly \$300 annually over the next 25 years. From this money, 33% will go toward cleaning up Minnesota's waters. Another 33% is to improve habitat and hunting. Parks and trails of significance will receive 14.25%, and lastly, 19.75% will fund arts, history, and other cultural opportunities.

We find ourselves in the same predicament as many other museums. We are hoping that this funding will provide general operating revenue for our museum. We face problems that many other museums also have. We do not have financial resources to provide for adequate staff, to maintain a 40-hour week, or to cover our operating expenses (lights, heat, insurance, etc.). Cass County provides us with a building and each year has contributed to our operating fund. We have been able to do a few projects through special state project grants. What we really need is increased general operating support that we can count on each year so we can keep the door open and serve the people of the county and those visiting us.

We believe that our membership, nearly 150 strong, should gather their friends in support of our mission to collect, preserve, and disseminate Cass County History and impress upon local and state governments that we are deserving of a piece of this pie.

Cass County Historical Society Board of Directors

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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, obit indexes, newspaper microfilm, and other archival materials are accessible for a \$10 research fee for nonmembers.

One of our immediate goals is to expand the microfilm collection of newspapers and census records as we have the only microfilm reader/printer available for public use in the county.

The Cass County Historical
Society meets on the third
Monday of each month in the
summer at 6:30
at the Museum.

The next meetings are Feb and April.

grounds. The farm garden was an eight-acre plot which furnished fresh vegeatables throughout the season and an excess that was stored and consumed throughout the winter months. The san was very much self-sufficient in those early years. The farm was discontinued in the early 1950's.

The first issue of the *Pine Knot*, the monthly magazine for TB patients, was published in September 1913 and continued until 1924. Treatment still included rest, fresh air and good food. Patients were placed in open porches, summer and winter – even under extremely cold conditions when the cots were covered with snow. Nurses wore coats and mittens to care for the patient. Dr. George Beach resigned his position as Superintendent to enter the Army.

Dr. P. M. Hall was appointed Acting Superintendent on June 1, 1918. The average daily population grew to 230. Some steam heat was added to the cottages, a root cellar was completed, and a new silo was built. The library had 980 volumes, and the farm had its own dairy herd. With Dr. Hall's tenure, emphasis was placed on entertainment for the patient. Staff and patients were encouraged to participate in skits and plays in the Recreation Hall.

Miss Healey came to the State San in October of 1918 as Matron and Head Nurse and stayed until her retirement in 1940. Her devotion to the institution went beyond nursing care. Many hours of her time were spent well into the night, mending, making curtains and looking after the welfare of the institution in every possible way. In 1918, Miss Healey had eleven nurses on her staff and eight nurses' aides. In 1940, her staff of nurses numbered 81. Miss Healey was always highly respected, as she was an unusually kind and capable woman. When the employees organized a band in 1933, Miss Healey made the capes and caps for all 35 members. Her pet saying was, "I'll have to take you over my checkered apron," and she repeated it many times to patients and employees as a mild form of rebuke. In 1937 while Miss Healey was on vacation on the west coast, the patients autographed a red-and-white checkered apron and sent it to her. Each square carried the name of a patient.

In January of 1935 the Indian Sanatorium at Onigum burned. All patients were brought across the ice of Agency and Shingobee bays of Leech Lake and housed in temporary quarters in the Camp House. One of the greatest tributes paid to Miss

Healey was the Indian name given to her – G e c h e M u s h k e k e E q u a y, meaning Great M e d i c i n e Woman.

After the war, there was a

marked change in the treatment of

tuberculosis. The extreme fresh air treatment during winter on the open porches was condemned. Miss Beatrice Lindberg was appointed as State Occupational Therapy Director for tuberculosis – a position that was the first of its kind in the United States. She introduced Occupational Therapy to the Sanatorium in November 1919.

A 24-bed cottage, a greenhouse, and a six-stall garage were all built about 1922. A new curtain and stage settings were installed in the Recreation Hall. Thanks to funds from patients and employees, a receiving radio set was placed in operation. Construction of the first two infirmaries began as a response to isolate the more severe cases of tuberculosis from those that were less severe. The U.S. Government also accepted Dr. Hall's suggestion to change the name of the post office at the State Sanatorium to Ah Gwah Ching from the Ojibwe language meaning "out-of-doors."

By 1923-1924, the capacity of the institution had grown to 325. Dental services were added in 1926. The new highway between Walker and the State Sanatorium was completed, and a hearing was held on a petition for a new railroad station and an agent. A new Power House was built and began providing the facility with heat and light. The smoke stack rose 150 feet above the building foundation.

Dr. H. A. Burns was employed as Assistant Superintendent in 1928. The B-Building or Infirmary was still overcrowded due to the number of war veterans admitted. Construction began in June 1928 on the Hall Pavilion, which was designed for a capacity of forty children.

Throughout the ten years of Dr. Hall's service, there were many additions to the buildings and the grounds. All who knew of his work praised him for his untiring efforts in the treatment of tuberculosis. He died on July 18, 1928, and his funeral was held at the Recreation Hall at Ah Gwah Ching.

During a three-year period beginning in 1932, Ah Gwah Ching participated in a bird-banding project, tagging 3,625 birds.



The first weather station at Ah Gwah Ching was established in December 1907. January of 1908 saw 52" of snow and a temperature of -37. There were only twenty clear days in that month. A weather station, a gazebo type building built of stones, was introduced to the sanitarium grounds in 1923 and was in operation up to 2008. The temperature report for Walker came from this station.

In 1935, a prison camp was established on the grounds in an innovative program for inmates from the reformatory at St. Cloud. They worked in the dairy barn and gardens and other jobs as needed on the grounds.

In 1936, the main building was remodeled under the WPA program. Wooden porches were enclosed and fireproofed and terrazzo floors replaced all wooden floors. From 1937-1940, Ah Gwah Ching was decorated with WPA paintings and other art objects. Late in 2007, the Minnesota Historical Society became the steward of this collection, which had remained on location for seventy years. The Ah-Gwah-Ching collection consists of more than 160 items including prints, watercolors, oils and woodcarvings by such artists as Bob Brown, Henry Bukowski, Reathel Keppen, Dorothea Lau, Alexander Oja and Bennet Swanson.

After treating nearly 14,000 patients over 50 years, Ah Gwah Ching closed on January 1, 1962. The facility was immediately converted to a state nursing home for geriatric patients and was renamed the Ah Gwah Ching Nursing Home. Under its new mission in the 1970s, it served as many as 462 geriatric patients with a wide variety of physical and mental illnesses.

In 1983, the Lakeside Treatment Center was opened in the building that was originally built as living quarters for the nurses. The first floor had 14 bedrooms and a large reception area. The second floor had 19 bedrooms. The Lakeside Treatment Center moved to Brainerd in 2000. The Walker Hackensack School District leased the building for use as an Alternative Learning Center from 1997 to 2002.

In 2007, all facilities were closed at Ah Gwah Ching and patients were transferred to area group homes or other state run facilities.

Cass County Board awarded demolition contracts May 20, 2008 for existing structures at Ah-Gwah-Ching. The Historical Society has obtained a truckload of the bricks and will be selling them during the summer of 2009 as a fundraiser for the Cass County Museum.

Information from Skip Oliver's "A Brief History of the Minnesota State Sanatorium – Ah-Gwah-Ching Nursing Home 1907-1982, In Commemoration of our 75th Diamond Jubilee" and from Cass County Museum

Single (\$10)

Henry Achermann Judy Laverne Arens Francis Bean **Bob Bean** Vi Blackburn Margaret Dewey Marcella Fisher Nancy Jacobson Karen Kezele William Kline Diane Kramer Charlene Moore Elsie Nelson Frank Olson Diane Pitzen Robert Rogers Elizabeth Sauer Erma Schantle Jeanette Silbaugh Betty Zaffke

Family (\$15)

Phil & Gina Borland
Bob & Dodie Burdick
Dick & Donna Evenson
Rich & Krista Hansen
Steve and Kay Johnson
Tim & Shelli Johnson
Bob & Betty Kangas
Norbert & Rosie Ochs
Jocelyn & Glen Reus
Bob & Esther Rupp
Dana & Bev Sheldon
Art & Lois Shenk
Richard & Glenna Tappe
Bob & Germain Yochum

Business (\$50)

D. W. Jones, Inc.
Huddle's South Shore Resort
Hummingbird Press
Leer Title Services
Little Apple Book Store
Orton Oil Company
Ranch House Supper Club
Relative Research - Cec McKeig
Dr. Steve & Sharon Bilben

Membership - 2008

Benefactor (\$20 - \$99)

Virginia Abullarade

Edy Asell Peggy Berglund Clarence & Bonnie Byersdorfer Tom & Sarah Cox Gordy & Liz Dahn Leland & Dorothy Delger Don Flyckt Jerry & Renee Geving Dave & Helen Hamilton Dick Hein Don and Karen Jensen Bob & Shirley Jewell Patricia Herbison-Jones Harry Loger Steven Mecklenberg Ron & Rosalie Miller Pat Munkel David Nieman Norbert & Rosie Ochs Chris & Dorothy Opheim Oliver Opheim Bob & Sandy Pauly John B. Risteau Carole Sargent Dick & Kathie Stoneking Gary & Margaret Trimble Bob & Ann Winegar Harry & Martha Winter

<u>Friend (\$100-\$249)</u>

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Memorials

Ardyce Achermann Jeanette Fisher Glenn Otteson

Other Donations

Jerry Geving: Nine upholstered chairs, one computer chair, misc. office supplies Carol Sargent: Microfilm Purchase

2009 Membership

The Museum depends on your membership and donations to keep it going. Please consider your pledge for 2009 in one of the following categories

Membership			
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Cass County Historical Society PO Box 505 Walker, MN 56484			
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Website: www.casscountymuseum.org			
Email: casscountymuseum@gmail.com	1		
Newsletter: Cecelia McKeig Renee Geving			
Museum Phone: 218-547-7251 Winter Hours: By Appointment			