

CASS COUNTY CLIPPINGS

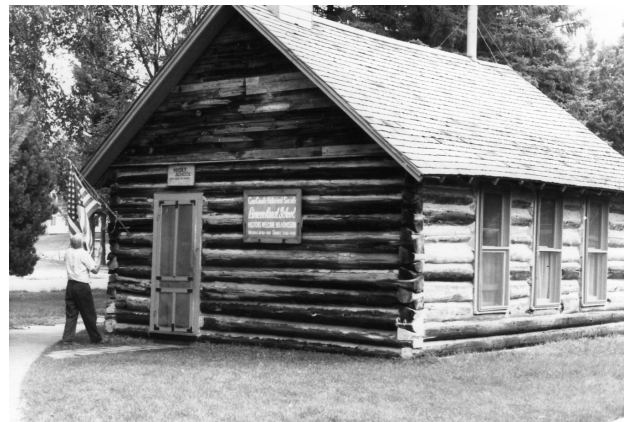
January 1
2013

CASS COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY & MUSEUM

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HAPPY BIRTHDAY Huset School 100 YEARS OLD



The Huset School will turn 100 years old this year and the Cass County Historical Society will hold a celebration on July 25, 2013.

The Huset School was built in an area known as “The Island” of Boy Lake Township. This was a few square miles of rather high land between Leech Lake and Big Boy Lake, with the Boy River to the north and a cedar swamp to the South. Settlers came into this area in the early 1900s and by 1911 there were 14 children in need of an education. Log buildings were the rule, so the settlers cut trees, hewed and fit the logs by hand and this little school was born. The county officials allowed \$100 for furnishings and textbooks, and the first teacher was paid \$18.00 per month. This school was open from 1912 until 1937, and like so many other rural schools, it served as a social center.

Freda Norman Ecker was one of the first teachers. Her recollections were published in 1978 in a delightful book, “My Fifty Years With the Angels.” She spent her lifetime as a teacher and referred to her pupils as “my angels.” She wrote, “Al took us to the school on a Friday afternoon before school started. Did I ever get a surprise. We crossed the bridge over Boy River and drove on and on. Where was the school? Then on a rise of ground beside the road we saw two men planing some boards beside a log building. We stopped and asked them how to find the Huset School. One man laughed as he said, “You are there. This is the Huset School.” I had never seen a log school before, but the inside looked familiar – desks and a blackboard. There was a jacketed stove at the right side of the door as we entered. Not too cheerful an outlook, but it would be an adventure to teach in a log school. Like Lincoln”. (continued on page 3)

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 500 negatives so far.

Cass County Historical Society Board of Directors

Cecelia McKeig, Pres.

Lois Orton, V-Pres

Karen Keener

Elsie Nelson

Dennis King

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Martha Winter

Alexis Hadrava - Treasurer

Donations

We recently received a military trunk and two sets of army and navy clothing from World War I that had belonged to Willard Conner of Cass Lake. These are being prepared for accessioning. The society is always grateful for thoughtful and meaningful donations which will help others learn about their past.

Cec McKeig donated two pairs of antique clamp-on ice skates to the museum, courtesy of her son John McKeig.

Student Visitors

This fall approximately three classes of 6th grade students from the WHA school visited the museum. Mr. Bill Hornung who teaches social studies brought three groups of students to the museum and let them observe and determine an area of interest.



Photo: Freda Norman Ecker

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.

(Huset School, continued from page 1)

In another article Freda wrote, "As there was no house available for me and my two small sons to rent at the time, we had to make do. We lived in the schoolhouse, slept on a folding cot set behind the jacketed stove, and cooked as best we could. It was not too bad as we went back to the farm at Pine River each weekend so I got our washing and baking done." Freda and her sons lived in the schoolhouse from early September until Armistice Day. Then they got a small cabin about a half mile from the schoolhouse that a bachelor had vacated.

"There were 28 pupils, three of them Indian and all precious. All eight grades were in the school and it was a hassle to get a program made to include all the grades. School was from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Water was carried from the closest neighbor." Teachers did all the janitor work, so their day was about an hour earlier and an hour later.

In 1964, Virgil Dixon offered the old log schoolhouse to the Cass County Historical Society. The building was on his property and his only stipulation was that the building be moved as soon as possible. Jake Licke and Martin Reid, officers of the Historical Society secured a permanent lease from the village. The agreement was signed in the fall of 1966. During that fall and the next spring, the society searched for someone who could move the old log building. In early October 1967, David Holmes of rural Backus directed the work of raising up the building and moving it over nearly 40 miles of road to the museum grounds.

Early in the spring of 1968, the old log building was cleaned up. Then the old school equipment was brought out of storage, textbooks put in order, and the school was ready to be presented to the public. Gertrude Rolfe, the last County Superintendent of Cass County, prepared a list of all known rural or interested grade teachers living in the county or vicinity. These teachers were invited to become "Old School Sponsors" and to act as volunteer teachers. The plan worked well, for 65 persons became sponsors and 33 acted as "teacher" sometime during the season.



Sunday afternoon, June 9, 1968 was Dedication Day for the Old School. It was a lovely June day and several hundred persons gathered on the Museum grounds around the old building. The Walker High School Band gave a short concert and a dedication program followed. The school opened to the public on June 15, 1968 with a volunteer teacher in charge each day. During the first year, 6049 visitors signed the guest register.

The popularity of the old school probably hit its peak in 1970 with 11,622 visitors. By the end of 1973, the ranks of the old teachers were thinning out. The society took over more and more of the work and responsibility and the Pioneer School Board finally retired.

Each year, we have visitors to the school and interest by a new generation. Hopefully, the celebration in June will focus attention again on the accomplishments and benefits of the country school.

At the museum, we have some records that pertain to the rural schools of Cass County. If interested in former teachers or students, these records may be useful for research:

county-wide rural school census records 1930-1940s
Walker grade records
Photos

8th grade country school records, 1916-1930s
Some teacher records which show grades from normal
school training 1916-1940s

Vermillion Brook School

These four schools are in an area that was formerly part of Unorganized School District of Cass County. Since 1948, this area has been part of the Deer River District 317 even though the geography of the region would tend to include them with Remer District 118 area. The four schools were Vermillion Brook, Barnes, Lone and Dorholt. Since most of the early records of these schools are gone, we rely on recollections by former students for information about these rural places.

The first school in this area to be built was the Vermillion Brook school. It was built on the banks of the Mississippi at the point where the Vermillion Brook enters the river. This place was well known on the river. There was a halfway house run by Abraham Dobson to accommodate the people traveling from Remer to Grand Rapids along the old Smokey Hollow road. The loggers' wannigans often tied up here while the spring drive was on, and there was so much going on that the pupils often found it hard to keep their minds on their lessons. Mrs. John Landy, who was an early student, recalled being punished by the teacher for playing on the logs that were held in large booms at the mouth of the brook.

There were two graves beside the schoolhouse while it stood on the river bank. One was that of a camp cook who drowned when he fell off the wannigan, and the other grave was that of a local child.

To reach the Vermillion Brook School the children came by trails through the woods or across the river in boats. By 1910 the township roads were built and the school was moved half a mile west to the cross roads. This was done in the winter by Andrew Anderson, who pulled the building on skids along the edge of the brook with his big logging teams.

School was held at Vermillion Brook until 1941 when the small enrollment and difficulty in securing qualified teachers made it more practical to transport the pupils to the Dorholt school. George Anderson was the first bus driver, followed by Carl Riedl, who continued as driver until these services were taken over by the Deer River buses.

Among the early teachers in this school we find the names of Julia Brogan, Climena Torrey, Mable Gary, Mr. Manley, Ethel Moxley and Mr. Phillips. The last teacher here was Marcella Granger. When school was discontinued, the building reverted to the original owner, Mr. Clarence Gielen, who moved it and converted it into a garage. The old school bell went to Ball Club where it was hung in the church tower.

Barnes School

The Barnes School was probably the next school in the area. This school was established about 1907 and the first school room was in a loft over the store house that was used for logging supplies. The pupils consisted of the Barnes children and Edmond Kirkemo. Later the Grife children were included. As there were no roads into this area at all, the only way to get to the school was by boat up the Leech River. The first teachers lived with the Barnes family. In 1920 a road was built into the area and the lumber for a regular school was hauled in. Howard Johnston built the school on the corner of the Barnes farm. When better roads were built and the enrollment became too small to warrant keeping this school going, the children were transported to the Lone School. The last teacher at the Barnes School was Norita McKennet who taught here in 1934. (More on the Dorholt School and the Lone School in the next issue)

Please Renew Your Membership for 2013:

Our Early Birds are:

Sponsors \$250-\$999

Ron Libertus

Friends \$100-\$249

Carl & Judy Berg

Benefactor \$20-\$99

Tom and Sarah Cox

Robert & Florence Crow

Nancy Jacobson

Robert & Betty Kangas

Margaret McGill

Cecelia McKeig

Patricia Munkel

Chris and Dorothy Opheim

Jeff and Sue Peterson

Carol Sargent

Individuals - \$10

Otto Ringle

Tom Salwasser

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.

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

Membership

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

Benefactor (\$20-99) _____

Business (\$50) _____

Friends (\$100-\$249) _____ Sponsors (\$250-\$999) _____ Patrons (\$1000) _____

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