

# CASS COUNTY CLIPPINGS

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## **Then (1992) and Now (2014): Minnesota's contributions of the Capitol Christmas Tree**

Two Minnesota trees chosen to be the "People's Tree" in Washington DC twenty two years apart have been described as magnificent, impressive and amazing!

In 1992, the Chippewa National Forest and the Leech Lake Reservation provided a 44-year old, 62-foot, towering white spruce. The tree rode securely on an 80-foot open flatbed trailer and was shielded by branches from other white spruce which filled in open spots in the big tree upon arrival. The drive to Washington, DC required two drivers and getting an early start on the journey on Thanksgiving night because of weather concerns. The 1992 tree was a highlight of the Christmas (Brach's) parade in Chicago and another parade in Youngstown, Ohio. Ornaments for the tree produced by Minnesotans numbered 12,719! Prior to the lighting ceremony, held on December 9, 1992, a pipe ceremony was conducted. The ceremony was performed by the Leech Lake Reservation Tribal Council, staff members, and two elders. The beautiful ceremony conveyed prayers for peace and for the health of the environment. A total of approximately 140 Bug-O-Nay-Ge-Shig students earned the right to travel to DC to perform songs during the lighting ceremony.



This past Christmas the 2014 US Capitol Christmas Tree, again lovingly referred to as the "People's Tree", traveled the 2,700 miles to DC in a donated enclosed truck trailer. At the back of the trailer, glass sides allowed the public to view a portion of the wonderful tree. Many residents turned out at Walker City Park to take pictures of the semi hauling the tree.

The Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe invited students from Saint Paul and other urban communities, as well as those in the greater Cass Lake area, to participate in the tree lighting ceremony in Washington DC. The tribe raised funds for the trip. During the lighting ceremony, Senator Amy Klobuchar praised the 88-foot tall tree by quoting Garrison Keillor, "A state where the women are strong, the men are good-looking, and all of the

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### **Historical Society Receives MN Historical and Cultural Heritage Grant**

The Cass County Historical Society Board of Directors and museum staff were elated to hear that the local museum has received a MN Historical and Cultural Heritage Grant in the amount of \$6500 through the Minnesota Historical Society (MHS) to conduct a museum lighting evaluation project. The present museum lighting dates to the early 80s and is inadequate to highlight the large selection of local historical artifacts housed there. The grant is financed in part with funds provided by the State of Minnesota from the Arts and Cultural Heritage fund through the MHS.

In late spring, a nationally recognized lighting expert will travel to Walker to review the present lighting, museum exhibits, and work areas to recommend new lighting which will improve the viewing experience for museum members and the public. The new lighting is expected to also be more energy efficient.

A second grant application will be requested and reviewed by the Cass County Historical Society Board and submitted by museum staff to implement the lighting improvements recommended by the expert during one of the upcoming 2015 grant application cycles.

### **Membership Renewal – 2015**

Cass County Historical Society members are invited to enjoy the museum's continuing enhancement by renewing their memberships for 2015 by sending membership dues to the Cass County Historical Society and Museum, PO Box 505, Walker MN 56484. Cass County residents who do not enjoy membership benefits (free admission, newsletter, etc.) at present may consider supporting this valuable regional historical resource by becoming members.

Various annualized membership levels recognize the support and care afforded the CCHS and the museum. Thanks to all for your support!

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trees are above average." She described the white spruce tree as "88 feet above average." The height tied the MN tree for the second largest Capitol Christmas tree ever with the tallest tree being only a foot taller. Again, Klobuchar found the right words when she quipped, "Second-largest doesn't sound much like a brag but in Minnesota, home of Hubert Humphrey and Walter Mondale, being second is 'a brag'." This time the tree stopped more than thirty times throughout Minnesota and along the route to DC subject to much admiration.

For 2014, individuals, organizations and businesses from across Minnesota raised the money and solicited in-kind donations necessary to cover the cost of the crosscountry trip. Thousands of handmade ornaments by Cass Lake children, including iconic dream catchers, and other enthusiastic Minnesotans decorated the tree and smaller trees delivered to the Capitol.

(Written by Linda Gilsrud, Director)

## Charles Graham

Charles Graham was born in Little Falls on September 12, 1883. Charles came to Remer from Cass Lake about 1910 and began doing business for Remer's first bank, The First State Bank, in the lobby of the Remer Hotel. H.A. Harding was president and Charles Graham was cashier. Charles was associated with the Remer Lumber Company as was Theo. Klement. Charles was the manager. He also was the local undertaker. In April of 1924 he operated a feed and flour store near the Soo Line Railroad Depot at Remer and consolidated his business with the Farmer's Cooperative Association. Graham sold his store building and became the manager of the Association. He also closed his cream station. In 1932 he purchased ownership in the Farmers' Cooperative Association where he operated Graham's Feed Store for nearly 40 years, closing down in 1966. In 1924 he was elected one of five directors for the Minnesota Potato Growers Association newly organized in Cass County. He was also a director for the Red Cross at Remer which was organized in 1926.

In 1912 Charley Graham and Frank Simpson organized Remer's first Fire Department. Two dozen pails and two ladders were ordered. Another dozen fire buckets were purchased at a cost of \$12. Charles served as clerk at the first consolidation meeting in 1912 held at Shills Hall to vote on consolidating the Poplar Knoll and the Remer school. He was elected to serve on the school board in July of 1912 where he served the school district for 21 years. He also was elected to serve as councilman for the City of Remer and served in the capacity of recorder and other various positions for many years. When the Mason Memorial Congregational Church of Remer was incorporated in 1919, Charles was a charter member and was appointed to the building committee. In April of 1912 Charles was appointed to serve on a committee to locate a cemetery site.

Graham died August 12, 1967 and was put to rest in the Fairview cemetery at Remer. He married Adalia Flint. One daughter and three sons survived him.



This item from the collection at the Cass County Museum is an old fashioned carpet bag of 100 years ago. It was made of used carpet material which furnished a cheap and convenient bag for the belongings of the many Northerners who swarmed south after the Civil War.

These adventuring opportunists were termed "Carpet Baggers" by the resentful folks south of the Mason-Dixon line.

James Clifton was born in 1842. He served in the Confederate Army in the Civil War. He came to Remer about 1910 and worked as a post peeler in the woods. He purchased a lot near the Remer School. When James Clifton died in 1921, Charlie Graham was appointed administrator of his estate and he donated the bag to the Museum.

James Clifton is buried in Fairview Cemetery and shares a tombstone with George Scobie, a veteran of the Union Army.



## Stagecoach Road (1890-1930) on National Register

The Stagecoach Road that ran from Pine River to Woman Lake and Longville from 1890 to 1930 was instrumental in opening up the area north and east of Pine River to loggers, homesteaders, and to hunters and fishermen. The Widow Lake segment has been documented and owned by the county, and this is the only segment that is intact. This area was recently entered as a historic site on the National Register of Historic Places. The National Register is a listing of districts, sites, buildings, structures and objects considered to be worthy of preservation. This site joins a group of listings for Cass County.



William Burrell

In March of 1910 the Ben Clark family took the stage coach from Pine River to Longville. Bill Burrell had horses and a spring wagon. It took from early morning until noon to reach Pontoria, which was the half-way stopping place to rest the horses and to eat dinner at Mrs. Trippe's. Many people rode the stage-coach and Mr. Burrell tried to miss as many bumps and holes as possible. When Margaret Culhane and Letta Manders rode the stage to Longville in 1910, Miss Culhane told him, "Mr. Burrell, you missed that bump back there!" Without a word, he found a place to turn around again, hit that bump again. She didn't complain any more.

One of our early residents associated with the stage road was William Burrell, for years the owner of the Kabekona Stage Line. He was the successful bidder on the contract to carry the mail to Longville via Pontoria in 1905. The stage ran tri-weekly, leaving Pine River on Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday and departed from Longville on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. He continued to drive the stage coach, but on the night of Aug 14, 1908, he went down the stage with his automobile. He traveled at night so the way would be clear. E. T. Peters took charge of the route by 1909. When Peters took a six-weeks vacation in 1910, Bill Burrell again took charge of the Longville/Pine River stage.

