

CASS COUNTY CLIPPINGS

July 1, 2009

CASS COUNTY
HISTORICAL SOCIETY & MUSEUM

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

Ah Gwah Ching The Penal Camp



The Reformatory Camp 1935-1946

The Reformatory Camp at Ah-Gwah-Ching was established May 20, 1935, following the recommendation of the State Crime Commission to establish prison camps on any site within the state where state-owned land might be worked or improved. The camp at Ah-Gwah-Ching was the first of its kind and opened as an experiment. It was intended to relieve congestion at the St. Cloud Prison and to provide much needed labor for improving undeveloped state land, but it proved to be even more valuable in furthering the cause of rehabilitation. The penal camp was used to advantage as a sort of stepping-stone to liberty on parole since each man was largely on his own.

In 1936, the Ah-Gwah-Ching penal camp had a capacity of 54 men, with laundry, garage, shop, officers' quarters and necessary outbuildings.

During 1937 an option was obtained on a gravel pit close to the Sanatorium. The boys from the Reformatory Camp were employed throughout the winter to screen the sand and gravel, which was later used in the construction of a sewage treatment plant with WPA help.

Care was taken to see that the inmates did not replace men who might otherwise have been on the payroll. The inmates were employed in doing many jobs about the grounds, helping the permanent personnel in their work, clearing land, grabbing stumps, hauling stones, etc.

Between 1936 and 1938, 216 inmates had been transferred from the Reformatory to this camp and of this number 21 were returned to the institution for misconduct. There were three escapes from camp, but all were apprehended within a few hours.

In March 1946, the Penal Camp closed with the result that the institution was required to replace the help received from that camp by full-time employees.

Work Experience Employee Claudia Srok

We have a new face at the Cass County Museum for this summer. Claudia Srok joined us on May 12, 2009 as an employee of the Experience Works program. Participants in this program are placed at eligible host agencies such as a private nonprofit organization, for an average of 20 hours per week. Claudia's previous job was at Siltgoos Learning Center at Lane Community College in Oregon, which is located in an historical train depot. She has a keen interest in Native American research, as exhibited by her certificate in American Indian Studies from Itasca Community College. Her interests and background make her a valuable asset at the museum.

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 museum and the school windows need to be painted.

We have scheduled three history walks through downtown Walker this coming summer. We need 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.

Upcoming Historical Society Programs

Walker History Walk #2 will take place on July 21st at 7:00 p.m. and we will be exploring Cleveland Boulevard in its entirety. Come and learn the history of your own backyard, meet some special guests, and see where Mary Welsh Hemingway was born. We are asking that you purchase your ticket in advance for a nominal fee. Contact the museum at 547-7251 for more details.

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 non-members.

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 second
Tuesday of each month in the
summer at 6:30
at the Museum.**

**The next meeting is scheduled
for July 14, at 6:30 pm**



Walker Band Members about 1910-1915: Sam Guy, Merns Bateman, Carl Stedlund, ? Jackson, Harold Davis, Dick Cron, John Gray, Lester Bromley, Herman Rau, Walter Oleson, Oscar Oleson, Robert Stedlund, Clarence Jackson, Emil Bilben, Ivan Peterson, Roscoe Croff.

Walker Cornet Band

In the spring of 1898, after the trees had donned their garments of green, when the flowers were blooming and the refreshing evening breezes whispered to the citizens of Walker to forsake the labors of the day and to commune with Nature, in the quiet groves or on the limpid waters of Leech Lake, it was thought that to break the stillness of the evening with the "concord of sweet sounds" would be a fitting token of homage to Nature for the gifts she has so bountifully bestowed upon this community. In other words, the people hankered after a brass band, and as they evinced a willingness to donate for the purchase of instruments, it was not long, thanks to the generosity of the citizens of Walker, the large-heartedness of the Village Council, and the energy of Mr. William Feltus, Mr. Charles Kinkele and Mr. J. T. Gardner, that band instruments were purchased and the foundation laid for the present Walker Cornet band.

The money donated by the citizens and by the Village Council was given with the understanding that the instruments should be the property of the Village of Walker.

The instruments were distributed among the proposed members of the band. One or two meetings were held in the month of June 1898, but on account of the temporary removal of several of the members, further

work was postponed until January 1st, 1899, when the band re-organized. In the absence of constitution and by-laws, Mr. Toney was elected temporary leader, and the band thereafter met regularly for practice.

At the time of the organization of the band, the membership consisted of the following:

Solo B cornet	M. J. Toney
Solo B cornet	Daniel DeLury
1 st B cornet	Robert E. DeLury
Baritone	Wm. N. Feltus
Tuba	J. E. Croff
1 st Alto	Wm. Colliver
2 nd Alto	Peter Wold
1 st Tenor	Herbert McColley
2 nd Tenor	Van Spencer
B Bass	Patrick McCoy
Bass drum	Emmet Gilmore
Snare drum	George Schneider

The first public appearance of the band was at a Masquerade Ball given by the Walker Cornet Band in Hallack & McColley's Hall on Feb 14, 1899. Lunch was served by the band and 2000 prizes given away. The ball was given in honor of St. Valentine. The net profit for the evening was \$10.00, and that was turned over to Mr. Toney as payment for money advanced by him for the purchase of instruments.

The first dance at the Hotel Pameda was on March 10, 1899. On March 15, 1899, the band played at the oyster supper given by the Ladies Aid in the Red Men's Hall. As of April 12, 1899, the band decided that they would hold a dance at Hallack's Hall on the following Friday in view of the fact that the band had no longer the privilege of using the Pameda Hotel for dances.

On May 15, 1899, the band went to Akeley to play at the opening of Therault's Hotel. This was the first time the band made a public appearance outside of Walker. Shortly thereafter, the band decided to purchase fourteen uniforms that would consist of white duck pants, a blue double-breasted coat, red tie, and white hat. Membership in the band changed as members joined and dropped. The usual problems with return of instruments and the return of uniforms plagued the band. At one point, the secretary was instructed to swear out a warrant for the arrest of parties refusing to turn over their suits. One former member actually went to court and was ordered to return the suit and pay the costs of prosecution as well.

Fourteen members reorganized, naming themselves the Leech Lake Band. The village of Walker built a pavilion near the Chase Hotel. Thirty-two first-class musicians played at the State Fair in 1913. Shortly thereafter, the band fell apart. Ten men reorganized in 1915, and for the first time in the history of the band, there were enough musicians but not enough instruments. The band eventually folded.

Items abstracted from the Secretary's Book (1898-1902), The Walker Cornet Band, held at the Cass County Museum, and from the History of Walker, p. 45.

Civil Defense -- Ground Observer Corps

Although the Cold War and the formation of the Ground Observer Corps in the 1950's may be unfamiliar to the younger generation, many of our members will remember the concern with which we responded to this threat. National Ground Observer Corp Day was celebrated on July 14, 1954. This was a chance for everyone to pay tribute to the patriotic volunteers who gave their time and efforts to defend our country against the one thing we all feared could happen, "A Surprise Attack."

The Ground Observer Corps was an organization of civilians who volunteered to report on the movement of aircraft, as we feared attack over our unguarded northern border. These volunteers performed the duty of observers at the observation posts or as plotters, filterers, and tellers, at the filter centers. An observation post was described as a designated room, house, store, school, garage, or any location with an unobstructed view in all directions, and where a telephone was available 24 hours a day at not more than 15 seconds walking distance. Reports of aircraft movement were observed and passed on to filter centers from the observation posts.

The Corps was organized in February 1950 and was a training and standby unit until its mobilization in 1952 into "Operation Skywatch." This marked the first time since 1943 that civilian aircraft spotters were on duty 24 hours a day.

Bena and Pine River hosted one of the initial training sessions on Jan 25, 1952. Bena was the training site for volunteers from Alvwood, Ball Club, Boy River, Cass Lake, Deer River, Federal Dam, Remer and Tobique. Pine River hosted the volunteers from Backus, Emily, LaPorte, Longville, Pequot Lakes, Walker, and Whipholt.

The GOC included these volunteers which we found listed in the files of the Ground Observer Corps at the Minnesota Historical Society: **Backus**: Mr. and Mrs. Robert Powers, Walter Thorndike, Doris Bailey, Cecil Carlson, Vernon Martin. **Bena**: Arnold Krinke, **Boy River**: Harvey and Carmen Countryman, Elizabeth and

Individual (\$10)

Judy Laverne Arens
Francis Bean
Bob Bean
Vi Blackburn
Alice Groth
Karen Kezele
James O. Mans
Elsie Nelson
Diane Pitzen
Dr. Otto Ringle
Robert Rogers
Elizabeth Sauer
Erma Schantle
Arthur Shenk
Jeanette Silbaugh
Glenna Tappe
David Yde
Betty Zaffke

Family (\$15)

Dick & Donna Evenson
Alice Groth
Steve & Kay Johnson
Bob & Betty Kangas
Glenn & Patricia Mechelke
Bob & Esther Rupp

Business (\$50+)

Acorn Hill Resort
Anderson's Grand Vu Lodge
Anderson's Spirit of the North
Anderson's Cove
Anderson's Northland
Chippewa Lodge
Hummingbird Press
D. W. Jones, Inc.
Orton Oil Company
Leech Lake Lumber
May Creek Senior Living Campus

Membership - 2009

Benefactor (\$20 - \$99)

Virginia Abullarade
Charles & LaVonne Beckman
Clarence & Bonnie Byersdorfer
Audrey Chelberg
Tom & Sarah Cox
Leland & Dorothy Delger
Margaret Dewey
Don Flyckt
Jerry & Renee Geving
Nancy Jacobson
Don and Karen Jensen
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Diana Kramer
Cecelia McKeig
Steven Mecklenberg
Pat Munkel
David Nieman
Norbert & Rosemary Ochs
James & Leona O'Neal
Chris & Dorothy Opheim
Oliver Opheim
Glen & Joycelyn Reus
Carole Sargent
Dana & Bev Sheldon
Dick & Kathie Stoneking
Gary & Margaret Trimble
Bob & Ann Winegar
Harry & Martha Winter

Sponsor \$250-\$999

First National Bank of Walker
Bob & Nita (Eagle) Frink
Lois Orton

Friend (\$100-\$249)

Dr. Steve & Sharon Bilben
Don & Margaret Brown
Jim & Shirley Dowson
Dan & Sue Eikenberry
Betty Hutt
Jerry & Greta Steelman
Tom & Doris Williams

Cities & Townships

City of Bena - \$100
City of Chickamaw Beach - \$25
City of Federal Dam - \$50
City of Lake Shore - \$50
City of Walker - \$500

Blind Lake Township -- \$100
Boy Lake Township - \$250
Fairview Township - \$1000
Kego Township -- \$250
Leech Lake Township \$200
Loon Lake Township -- \$100
Pine Lake Township -- \$200
Pine River Township - \$100
Powers Township - \$150
Rogers Township -- \$50
Salem Township - \$30
Shingobee Township -- \$1300
Smoky Hollow Township - \$100
Trelpe Township -- \$150
Turtle Lake Township - \$500
Wilkinson Twp -- \$25
Woodrow Township -- \$50

Corrine Countryman, Mrs. Carl Peterson. **Cass Lake:** Charles and Grace Bingaman; Elizabeth and Arlen Kittilson, John Von Bargen, James Seward, Farrell Creech, Lawrence Pound, Darwin Gamache, Wilbur Isaacson, Tony Wold. **Federal Dam:** Leona O'Neal, Hugh Slocum. **Hackensack:** Harold Cole, Gerald Kiehlbock. **Longville:** Glenn and Florence Daughenbaugh, Lloyd and Vivian Boyle, Vernon Lyons, Ralph and Selma Manders. **Pine River:** Mr. and Mrs. Carl Tappe, Mr. and Mrs. Abe Baker, Margaret and Marjorie Baker; Mr. and Mrs. James Harker, Mrs. Wm. Sheppard, Warren Hoffman, C. C. Carlson. **Remer:** Julius, John, Mariellen, Genevieve, Pat, and Thomas Breikreutz, Mr. and Mrs. Frank Gilmer, Gerald Gilmer, Mahlon Swentofsky. **Schley:** Lloyd E. Folsom, Anna Folsom. **Walker:** Louis Tausch, Jr., Archibald J. Cyr, Mrs. Alice Tausch, Willis Dahlem. **Whipolt:** Ralph McConnell.

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. We are a 501(c)3 organization and contributions are tax deductible.

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Memorials in any amount are also welcome.

Name _____

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