



Preston Historical Society

Post Office Box 138
138 Saint Anthony Street
Preston, Minnesota 55965

A 501C/3 Non-Profit Corporation

NEWSLETTER

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PAST TIME

Richard G. Petsch, President

Greetings to all.

I have heard weather people say this is the worst winter since the winter of 1976-77. I really could not say, since I have lived my whole life in Minnesota, I can remember many bad winters. After all, winters are a big part of Minnesota, as is Spring, Summer and Fall. Having said that, this winter is more like the winters I remember as a kid.

I really love Minnesota and have spent considerable time exploring this state. One year, we took a family trip for two weeks just exploring Minnesota history in a big circle all around the state. Places like Blue Mounds State Park - where the Sioux Indians would drive the buffalo off cliffs for food and clothing. Fort Ridgely-Mankato-New Ulm area - where the US- Dakota war took place. Tower, Minnesota - where an historic underground iron ore mine is located, where one can travel 1800 feet underground to see how miners worked and lived. There are many more sites, too numerous to mention here, that can be visited.

Talking about all these history sites leads me to discuss something that makes visiting all historic sites, museums and historical societies possible. That something is the people that work at these places. Not the paid staff....the volunteers. Most historical sites and museums have volunteers to do most everything including conducting tours, doing period crafts, demonstrations, running stores, helping with general operation. Volunteers are the life blood to any organization.

The Preston Historical Society has grown and developed greatly since starting in about 1999, when there were a few individuals who saw a historical potential in saving an old wooden structure covered in corrugated steel sheet. It was a brave idea of these "volunteers". Many people in Preston wanted to see it torn down.

Since then, the Preston Historical Society (PHS) has restored the elevator, added a box car, took over and restored the O'Hara School, and added and are in the final stages of restoring a Milwaukee Caboose. All with volunteers. People who worked on these projects, who wrote grant applications, did fund raising, and anything else that needed doing.

Now with the 2014 summer and tourist season coming, the PHS would like to have some of our projects open to the public. The current plan is to have the elevator open for viewing, also the O'Hara School and the caboose. However, we need volunteers to help us out. People who would be willing to put in a couple of hours to be on hand and maybe answer a few questions. It would help out the Preston Historical Society. It would also show you care about Preston history. Be a volunteer.

CABOOSE RESTORATION CONTINUES

Bob Maust, Caboose Restoration Committee

The interior work of the caboose is very close to being finalized. The reupholstered seats and bunks have been reinstalled. We are waiting for spring so lettering on inside and outside can be put on by Kelly Printing.

AUTUMN TRACTOR RIDE

Elaine Maust, Tractor Ride Committee

We have begun making plans for our second tractor ride which will be held September 13th and 14th. We are looking at our routes and stops for Saturday and Sunday. At this early date we have a lot of interest from Minnesota, Iowa, and Wisconsin originating from ads placed in several antique tractor publications. We are anticipating that a good number of entrants from last year will return.

JOHN KAERCHER PRESTON'S FOUNDER

John Carlin, PHS member

John Kaercher was a cooper by trade and engaged in that in Freeport, IL. Early in the decade of 1850 he bought a farm southeast of Burr Oak, IA. He sold the farm in 1854 and started for Minnesota in the company of Theobald Schwertzer.

They went to Carimona and tried to buy a saw mill from the Picket brothers. Two of the brothers thought that \$1,400.00 was a fair price for the mill. The other Picket brother thought they should get \$1,600.00 for the mill.

John and Theobald were dressed in overalls and bed ticking shirts which would not give the impression that they had several thousand dollars in ready cash. The conversation became animated on both sides and John and Theobald were told that Carimona could get along with out any striped Dutchmen. So they proceeded downstream about 4 miles to the abode of John Vail. A price was agreed and the claim was transferred.

A saw mill was built in the spring of 1855, a surveyor was procured and a town was

plotted which was none other than the present village of Preston.

Mr. Kaercher was a man of energy and enterprise. In addition to the two mills, he built the Stanwix House which was a noted Hotel for more than 20 years.

The Hotel was later bought in 1879 by James P. Tibbetts and the name was changed to the Tibbett's House. John also built a comfortable brick residence in the lower part of the village. He bought a farm east of the village and erected a brick residence which would be no discredit anywhere. More to come on John Kaercher.

From the 1894 Fillmore County History.

GRANT RECEIVED

Sheila Craig, PHS member

The Preston Area Community Foundation has awarded PHS a \$1500 grant to make Plexiglas doors at the west entrance of the Milwaukee Elevator. This will allow visitors to see inside the Elevator when it is not open for viewing. It will also make the elevator more secure. The cover over the pit area will also be reinforced and secured.

Preston Historical Society Officers

President: Dick Petsch (507.765.2559)
PO Box 272, Preston, MN 55965
rpetsch@centurytel.net

Vice President: Robert Maust

Secretary: Elaine Maust

Treasurer: Marc Sather (507.765.2181)
PO Box 422, Preston, MN 55965
sbinjail@rconnect.com

Newsletter Editor: Sheila Craig

E-mail: prestonhistoricalsociety@gmail.com