



# Preston Historical Society

Post Office Box 138

Preston, Minnesota 55965

A 501C/3 Non-Profit Corporation

## NEWSLETTER

### June 2015

Volume 9 Issue 2

### ***PRESIDENT'S CORNER***

**Sheila Craig, President**

There has been much recent action for the Preston Historical Society. We now have new T-shirts, had a float in the annual Preston Trout Days Celebration, and have new plexiglass doors in the elevator. The annual raffle is now underway, restoration of the O'Hara schoolhouse floor will take place this summer, plans are being made for the annual tractor ride, and a fence will soon be installed around the elevator, boxcar, and caboose. Completing this issue of the newsletter are also some historical stories for your reading pleasure.



### ***NEW PRESTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY T-SHIRTS***

Jeanette Schmidt, Norma Vogt, and Sheila Craig model the front and back of the new shirts at the Trout Days booth! The front features the PHS logo and back shows the elevator, boxcar, and caboose. T-shirts are available in sizes: Youth Medium and

Large; Adult Small, Medium, Large. X-large, 2XX and 3XXX. The shirts cost \$15, except for the 2X and 3X which are \$17. They are for sale at the Preston Visitor Center or by contacting us.

### ***PARADE FLOAT***

**Photo by Jeanette Schmidt**

Preston Historical Society had a float in the recent Trout Days parade and celebration! Throwing candy to children were historical society members Elaine Maust and Rosalie Bjorkman. The float was pulled by Bob Maust. You can now view the 'mini' elevator in its place beside the Visitor Center in Preston. The elevator replica was built by John Carlin.



## ***2015 RAFFLE***

Plans are underway for the 2015 Raffle. Dan Christianson, F & M Community Bank is again offering to match each ticket sold with \$1 for a total of \$1000! We have 1000 tickets to sell before the drawing for the winners at our August 6 meeting. If you are able to help sell tickets or are willing to purchase some yourself, please contact Sheila at [smeercraig@gmail.com](mailto:smeercraig@gmail.com) or call 507.273.1481. We again have great prizes donated by members and local businesses.

## ***RAILROAD ITEMS DONATED TO PHS***

**Bonnie Davids**

List of items donated by Michael and Vicki Ott to Preston Historical Society.

- 1) Preston sign -original to the station
- 2) Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific Railroad Company Booklet-List of Station Numbers dated March 1, 1953.
- 3) Eight stamps for Stations Numbers from Reno-Preston -Isinours.
- 4) Black Stamp Pad, Green Stamp Pad, and Green Ink original to station.
- 5) 1918 Milwaukee RR at Preston, MN Blueprint from Chief Engineer at Chicago, IL.
- 6) Electro-Motive Operating Manual 600 and 1200HP Switching Locomotives. 5th Edition, January 1950.
- 7) Builders Plate (Cast Iron)

Michael shared some details about the Milwaukee Railroad. Michael worked at Preston as Agent in 1974 and as Trainman on the Isinours-Preston-Caledonia RR until its abandonment in 1976. Most of the Milwaukee Railroad was dieselized by 1953-54, but the Preston line retained steam engines until 1956. Preston was the terminal for the engines and train crews until 1974. That is why Preston had a two

or three stall engine house. Preston had a 600HP that was built in 1939. The builders plate was on a covered hopper car (grain car, fertilizer, cement, etc.). In the 1950's, 1960's, and early 1970's, every car on the railroads had a builders plate on it.

## ***TROUT DAYS SCRAPBOOK***

**Norma Vogt**

Our thanks to Carl Bakalyar who in 1987 was the first chairperson for the Trout Days celebration in Preston, Carl has donated to The Preston Historical Society a scrapbook of the first two years of activities. The book includes pictures, newspapers, and all the notes of costs and activities.

The scrapbook was on display at the Trout Days celebration May 16<sup>th</sup> along with posters of the original committee members and first fishing contest winners. Thank you Carl.

## ***RESTORATION OF O'HARA SCHOOL FLOOR***

**Sheila Craig**

The Preston Historical Society has recently taken bids to restore the floor at the Schoolhouse. The low bid has been awarded to Tienter Construction, Preston. The hope is to have the floor re-done in time for the Fillmore County Fair, July 21-July 25. Donations are being requested to assist with this special project. O'Hara School alumni have already donated approximately \$1400 of the \$2500 needed to complete the project. One of the O'Hara alumni, Merlin Wangen, has offered a copy of his booklet, "Memories: Son of a Norwegian Immigrant Farmer" for each \$100 donation.

## **MEMBERSHIP NEWS**

Welcome to new lifetime members: Joel & Barb Mielke, Gary & Joyce Hellickson, and Linda O'Connor. Thanks to Gary & Joyce Hellickson for \$100 donation to our 'plaque project'. Also thanks to the Preston Area Community Chest for a \$100 donation.

## **TRACTOR RIDE UPDATE INCLUDING A 'PEOPLE RIDE'**

**Sheila Craig**

The 2015 Tractor Ride has been scheduled for Saturday and Sunday, September 19 and 20. Elaine Maust is already reporting 24 registrations! The route this year will again headquarter out of the fairgrounds in Preston both days, going southwest on Saturday with the lunch stop at the Community Center in Lime Springs, IA and going north on Sunday with lunch at the Pilot Mound Lutheran Church. We will be needing assistance again with donation of bars and helping with serving for some of the meals and snacks. If you will be around that weekend and could help, please let us know.

Also we invite anyone wanting to drive a tractor in the ride, please contact Elaine at 765.2453. Or if you don't have a tractor, but would like to join on the scenic ride, we have a "people Wagon" that you can ride on! Again contact Elaine to sign up.

## **DAYS AS I REMEMBER**

**Bob Maust**

*In the March Issue of our newsletter, Bob shared the historical story of a trip around Preston starting at the corner where Preston Foods is currently located. We continue his story this month going south on St. Paul Street at the corner with Main Street.*

In the northwest corner of the intersection where now is Root River Appliance, was the Victory Café run by Mickey Meyers and sold to Harlowe Ibach and his wife Donna and next to it going south was the post office which later became Dr. J. P. Nehring's office and which later became the Western Auto Store which is now also part of Root River Appliance. First National Bank was on the corner and downstairs was Archie Gray, Justice of the Peace, which later became the post office which is now also a part of Root River Appliance.

If we turn the corner and go west down Main Street we come to George Soffa Chrysler Plymouth dealership which is owned by Jeff Knies housing the laundromat and storage for Root River Appliance. Next to Soffa garage was where George and his wife lived. She did tax preparation.

Going down the street you came to the Russell and Violet Vischer home. Russell worked for the railroad and Violet managed distribution for the Post Bulletin. On the west side of Vischer was the Fred Diebold residence and the house on the corner was Naegle's Hat Shop. One half block west on the south side of Main Street was the Westlund Cabinet Shop which later became Buche Appliance which later became apartments.

Across Main Street to the South we find a big house on the corner which had upstairs and downstairs apartments. Upstairs was Delia Moe and downstairs Vernon Shanahan 75 years ago. Moving east was house where Mr. & Mrs. Hans Jorgenson and two sons and a daughter lived. In the late 40-50's Hans and sons operated Jorgenson Construction and built many buildings in the Preston area.

Proceeding east was the old Strand Theatre. The theatre was operated by Mrs. Naegle (the hat lady) and Marchant Engle who ran the projector. During World War II Gene Autry, Roy Rogers, Hopalong Cassidy and many other stars were shown. The price of a ticket if under 12 was 11 cents. Many films were shown of actual happenings of World War II. The building which is there today was the second Strand Theatre built by Hans Jorgenson Construction. Unlike first building which had a balcony there was only one level. I believe when the theatre was closed Peoples Natural Gas purchased the building who sold it to Vern & Shirley Dahl who had a clothing store there and who later sold it to Jeff Bennett.

Across the alley next to Bennett building we come to. what was once 75 years ago, the McKnight Hardware owned by Dean McKnight. In this business was Ed Johnson's shoe repair business. In the second level was the telephone office where operators would plug you in to different circuits when you wanted to call. Several telephone operators worked in the upstairs location where you would crank your phone and she would say number please and then she would connect you. They moved to their new building up by the fire station in the late 49's or early 50's. Agnes Mulane was an operator during 1940's, she also lived in apartment in back of Naegle's Hat Shop. Dr. Sauer purchased this building for his office and when he moved his office out to the country the building housed an ice cream shop run by Beverly Olson. Today it is owned by Andy Bisek and leased to the Good Samaritan Society.

We'll head down St. Paul Street in the next "Days I Remember".

## ***NEW VIEWING INSIDE THE ELEVATOR***

**photo by John Carlin**

John Carlin has recently fixed the inside door at the elevator. During special times, the outside doors can be opened so people can look through the plexi-glass and view the interior of the elevator. The doors were opened during Trout Days weekend.



### **Preston Historical Society Officers**

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