



## Preston Historical Society

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A 501C/3 Non-Profit Corporation

**NEWSLETTER  
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### **PAST TIME**

By: Richard G. Petsch, President

Greetings to all, Wow! This has been some kind of winter. No snow. Well, hardly any to speak of anyway. I think I ran my snow blower twice, maybe three times, mostly just to say I ran it. Then March got very warm. April got chilly. Minnesota! You gotta love it.

The weather is not the only happening going on. History or the celebration of historical events is also going to be making headlines.

First. There is the on-going celebration of the 150th anniversary of the American Civil War. This year will honor events of 1862. I am currently reading the first volume of the three volume set by author Shelby Foote, which covers 1861 -1862. I will be watching for events to be held at Civil War sites around the country.

Second. 2012 is the bicentennial of another American conflict. The war of 1812. This was a war fought between the United States and Britain over basically Britain stomping on America's rights. Britain was at war with France (Napoleon). In an effort to stop shipping to France, Britain blockaded American sea ports. Britain also started impressment of American sailors. British sailors would go aboard American ships and take American sailors, saying the American sailors were deserters from the British Navy, which most were not. The British were defeated in the battle of New Orleans led by Andrew Jackson, January of 1815. There are 13 veterans of the War of 1812 buried in Fillmore County. There will be a special service held at the cemetery at Lenora on June 16, where 3 of the 13 are buried.

Rev. Mark Woodward will deliver the invocation. Watch for the announcements. Wreaths will be placed at all 13 sites.

Third. April 15, 1912. The sinking of HMS TITANIC occurred. Over 1100 passengers lost their lives in the cold waters of the north Atlantic. I know I have been interested in it for many years. All part of history.

February 9, 2012. The Preston Historical Society was notified of a grant from the Legacy Fund in the amount \$24,301. 00 to complete architectural drawings for the proposed rebuilding of the bagging house, scale house, and scale enclosure. Once this grant is completed, the Preston Historical Society will be submitting a grant request to rebuild the above mentioned buildings. Let us all hope for the best to make this historical site a reality.

The Preston Historical Society is always looking for good people to join good people to advance the history of the Preston area.

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## **Back in 1947: Tale of 2 Johns**

By: Richard Hovelson

John was a gardener south of Forestville. Originally he raised raspberries, apples, and other garden produce. My Aunt Stella would go out and pick raspberries. One day her sister went along. John said my aunt could pick raspberries but her sister couldn't because she was too fat and would knock the berries off. John also trapped pocket gophers. He would can the meat for his cats so they had meat in the winter.

The other John was a 1936 John Deere that I used to plow gardens and lots where I raised potatoes, sweet corn, and popcorn. I had several lots across from the fair grounds. I had a shed I kept the tractor in. There was a person that worked for the City who was caught stealing gas from the City pumps. I was to go for 2 weeks Army Reserve, so I filled the tractor with water and put it in the shed. When I came back from training, I stopped at the POP for gas to go to work. Here was the City employee. He had his car, his wife's car and his scooter torn apart. I said to the attendant at the pump, "has cousin got car trouble?" His answer was, "I don't know where he got that last gas, but I think it was all water".

In the Greenwood Cemetery are two graves with no markers. They are in the far corner. One was hanged as a horse thief and the other took his own life. They were not allowed to be buried with the other people.

My father told of the Funeral Parlor that was above what is now the Drugstore. There was a bunch that would play cards and have a few. One of the girls went to sleep so the others picked her up and laid her in a casket and put candles near her head. When she woke up she let out the most terrible scream.

Later there was a Heitner Funeral Home. My mother would do fitting and patching for Mrs. Heitner. Heitner was telling my mother of an incident at the embalming room. She was working on a man. Sometimes arms and legs move and this man had his arm move. It touched her knee and run up her thigh. She said I knew he was dead, but that was a weird feeling.

Then there was a story of Ballard who lived in Buffalo Grove, top of the hill. He did milking and chores for the farms at the bottom of the hill. When he would walk home he would cut through the Waukee Cemetery and the woods to home. One night there was an open grave and some jokers crawled in with some white sheets. When Ballard went through the cemetery, they came out in sheets with weird sounds. Ballard ran for home. He never would go near the cemetery again.

## **Legacy Grant**

By: Richard Petsch

I wrote in my article about receiving the Legacy Grant for the architectural drawings to restore the buildings which were connected to the historic elevator. The elevator as it was built in 1902 was basically a square of 24 feet, standing about 65 feet tall. By 1909, the bagging house on the north side, the scale and grain dump enclosure, and the scale house on the west side were all added.

Three architectural firms are bidding on the project. One architectural firm will be selected to provide the drawings for the reconstruction. These drawings will become part of the next grant application for the actual restoration of the historic elevator buildings.

Due to space limitations, much thought has gone into and continues to go into what displays there will be and the use of

interactive displays. The work of the successful architectural firm and the PHS will be to make the most use of the space in the reconstructed buildings, including use of the boxcar for displays.

It is an exciting time as the PHS works through the many challenges to create a true museum and an interpretive center for Preston and surrounding area.

To be at a place where we can even think about a museum and to also be able to dream about what or how this will all come together, is itself a dream come true. Stay tuned, or better yet, join us in the adventure.

### O'Hara School Update

By: Sheila Craig

Pictured is the O'Hara School Plaque, one of the special donation plaques used to recognize special donors. Names have been engraved on the plaque representing donors or in memory of someone. Each is a \$100 donation, unless otherwise specified on the engraved plate.

The Preston Historical Society would like to thank all of the individuals, businesses, and groups who have donated to the renovation of the O'Hara School. As noted in a letter this past winter to O'Hara alumni, PHS has been very active in working to restore the O'Hara School House.

Cedar shakes have been used to reroof the school. Also restored at the same time was the bell tower. This was financed by fundraising from the 2010 Historical Society raffle, O'Hara School alumni and other donations.

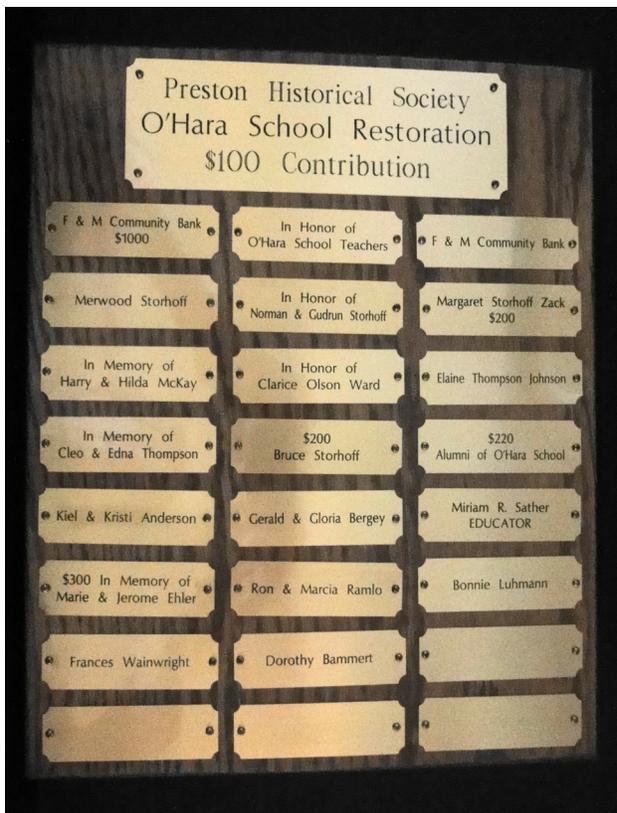
The interior has been repainted by Ben Voigt, a member of Preston Boy Scout Troup 67 for his Eagle Scout project. He was also responsible for the fundraising for the paint.

The exterior painting was accomplished with paint donated by Preston Lumber Company. The painting work was done by the Sentence to Serve work crew.

The replacement and restoration of the windows was financed by a \$200 grant from Tri-County Electric Operation Roundup program and an \$800 grant from the Preston Area Community Foundation. The project included 3 windows being replaced and the other 5 being repaired. The repairs included 8 new screens, new locks, and having all the windows re-stung with pulleys and rope by Crist Hershberger, of Hershberger Windows of Canton, MN.

The last project has been the replacement of the worn steps. This was financed by O'Hara School alumni and the construction work donated by PHS member John Carlin. Only a few final touch-up items remain to be completed. The school will again be open during the Fillmore County Fair, July 24 – 28.

As you can see there are 4 empty plates on the O'Hara donation plaque. It would be great to have these all filled!





The 1951 Milwaukee Road caboose no. 992095 is very close to making one last trip from Preston Iron Works to the Milwaukee Elevator Co. historic site here in Preston.

The caboose will receive another round of welding repairs, sand blasting in preparation of the caboose being primed and painted and then placed at the section of former rail track installed east of the Historic Elevator. The historical society has received two grants in recent months that will change the look of the caboose that has been under going restoration work since the Society acquired the caboose in summer and early fall of 2009.

Landscaping work undertaken last fall by Mensink Landscaping of Preston set the stage for the repaired, primed and painted caboose “trucks” (two wheel sets that support the caboose on the rails installed by the Society). The caboose wheel sets and retaining wall installation completed the basic site work necessary to move the caboose to its final resting place near the Interpretive Center and Milwaukee Elevator.

Since last fall, the Preston Area Foundation provided funds to repair the window frames and glass windows in order to weatherize the caboose cabin once it is primed and painted.

Thanks to a grant from the Picture-it-Painted program, Valspar paint products will be made available to the Society for the final priming and painting of the caboose shell.

The sandblasting work necessary to prepare the caboose for priming and painting will be undertaken late this spring and over the summer months. The caboose will receive its fresh coats of primer and paint needed to be applied before the windows (already finished and paid for) are to be installed. The caboose will then make the trip to its final location at the trailhead railroad track next to the Milwaukee Road Boxcar and the Historic Milwaukee Road Elevator.

When the work to move the caboose to the trailhead is complete the Society will continue restoration activities on the inside of the caboose cabin to prepare the interior of the caboose for public viewing and enjoyment.

The Society would like to thank everyone that has donated time, money and expertise to this point. Without hard work and donated resources the Society would not be at a point to take a rusty old caboose and transform it back to a time when it was being used by the railroad serving Preston. We look forward to your continued support!