

# Crow Wing County

## HISTORICAL SOCIETY

### MUSEUM & LIBRARY - EST. 1927

SUMMER 2019

PRESERVING HISTORY NEWSLETTER

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#### MISSION:

THE CROW WING COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY MUSEUM IS THE PREMIER INSTITUTION COMMITTED TO COLLECTING, PRESERVING, AND DISPLAYING ARTIFACTS AND INFORMATION RELATING TO THE HISTORY OF CROW WING COUNTY IN ORDER TO PROVIDE EDUCATION, ENJOYMENT, AND RESEARCH MATERIALS TO THE PUBLIC.

#### STAFF:

HILLARY SWANSON  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
NEWSLETTER EDITOR

MARGARET O'ROURKE  
ASSISTANT  
ADMINISTRATOR

DAYLA HART  
COLLECTIONS  
ASSISTANT

## James Olav Saboe Library

The Crow Wing County Historical Society has been presented with an amazing opportunity to expand our collection and connect with the public. Through a generous donation, we will be upgrading our research library into a welcoming, beautiful, comfortable space accessible to anyone for research, reading, or relaxing. While researching in our library, James Olav Saboe envisioned a space that someone would feel comfortable spending time reading and researching. Three years after his death, his wife Mary is making this vision a reality.

James grew up in Crow Wing County on a small farm near Garrison. "James' most beloved place on earth was always that quarter section of Crow Wing County land, its buildings, its history, and the cherished memories it preserved," states Mary. "Moved by this devotion, James became an avid student of all things related to Crow Wing County, including its history, geology, geography, natural resources, industry, cities, citizenry, and art."

The library will feature James' collection of roughly 350 books related to Crow Wing County. Additional materials from the Historical Society's collection will also be available for patrons to peruse. The library will also be equipped with a public computer and a Wi-Fi connection for people to complete research on their own device. Seating will include private workstations, a comfortable sitting area, and a table for large groups to work together. The design has been completed by Widseth Smith Nolting and will feature elements and styles inspired by the sheriff's residence.



## Sue Duda's

### Retirement

After more than 5 years at the museum, Sue Duda, our Administrative Assistant has retired. Sue brought many talents to the Crow Wing County Historical Society. She made great strides organizing our collections, training herself on collections policies and procedures. Her former career as a teacher made her an excellent tour guide and a leader with our school groups. Her passion for history and living in Brainerd all of her life made her a great reference for research. She was dependable and excellent at doing whatever needed doing. She will be missed, but we congratulate her on her retirement. A celebration was hosted in her honor on May 31 at the museum. She is looking forward to traveling and spending time with her family.



## President's Report

It's hard to believe it is County Fair time already. Every year time goes by a little faster. As usual, we need help at the fair – there are lots of buildings that we are responsible for, so it takes a lot of time to keep them up. We're trying to work something out with the Fair Board to help us out. Remodeling of the Historical Society Building is almost complete. We're hoping for an open house this fall. You will like what is being done. We continue to have a lot of visitors at the Museum, even from as far away as Sweden. Our staff does a great job in showing off what we have. It won't be long until we will be thinking about a Christmas Open House. If you can help us with some ideas, it would be appreciated. Have a great rest of your summer.

Don Samuelson  
President



want your house in the jail!?" One boy was asked how he liked the museum and he said, "Well, most of your pictures are broken." We later received a thank you letter that stated, "Dear Historical Society, I learned that there are black and whit pichrs. Love, Ellee."

I look forward to more opportunities to connect with children and families. The upcoming Crow Wing County Fair is another excellent place to expose children to our past. The new James Olav Saboe Library will be complete with children's books and games to involve the whole family in research. In turn, the next generation will learn that history is valuable and fun.

Sincerely,

Hillary Swanson

### FROM THE DIRECTOR

We have had exceptional attendance so far this year. In May, 546 people came through our doors to experience the history of Crow Wing County. Most of these people were schoolchildren ranging in age from first graders to high-schoolers. It is so rewarding to see how interested and entertained children are at the museum. They might not necessarily know they are passionate about history, but when exposed, very few are bored or disappointed. Staff are always amused by comments made by the children, such as "Why would you



# Crow Wing County History Puzzle

By Brian Marsh



## ACROSS

- 1 First county village
- 6 Nisswa racer
- 8 Lake named for a monster
- 9 Horse and \_\_\_\_\_
- 10 Museum display item
- 11 Minnesota governor from county
- 13 Old-time lady's hat shop
- 15 Horseshoe maker
- 17 County lake or wild harvest
- 20 Initial Brainerd industry
- 22 Early military installation
- 23 Lake Hubert artist
- 24 Longtime Pequot Lakes event

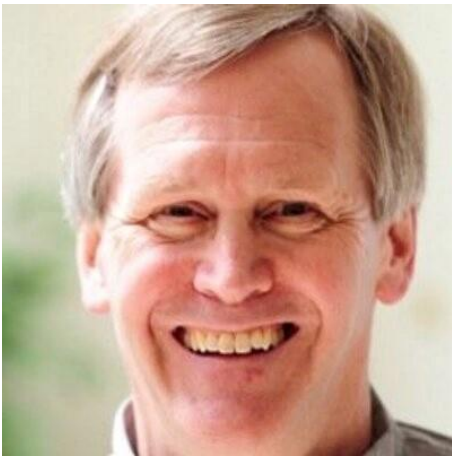
## DOWN

- 2 Early resort family name
- 3 Lake Mille Lacs premier catch
- 4 1930's county concourse locale
- 5 1913 Ironton hotel
- 7 County town named after a man and his dog
- 8 1852 Gull Lake mission
- 12 Long-time Merrifield resort
- 14 The "City of Pines"
- 15 Area Native Americans gathered these for trade
- 16 County town named for a president
- 18 Director or famous mountain climber
- 19 Old county mining target
- 21 Old-time school description

## NEW FACES

This spring, we were excited to elect two new members to our Board of Directors: Mike O'Rourke and Don Wedll. We also had the pleasure of hiring Dayla Hart to replace Sue Duda. If you see them at the museum or our events, please welcome them!

### MIKE O'ROURKE



Mike O'Rourke worked in the newsroom at Brainerd Dispatch for more than 36 years and has lived in Brainerd since 1978.

While at The Dispatch O'Rourke worked as a general assignment reporter, city editor and associate editor, covering politics and government as well as writing human interest stories, columns and editorials. He has served on a Brainerd Lakes Chamber committee and was a member of the Brainerd Family YMCA board from 2004-2010. He concluded leadership training sponsored by the chamber and by the Blandin Foundation. O'Rourke currently serves on the board of directors for the Gordon Rosenmeier Center for State and Local Government at Central Lakes College.

He grew up in Minneapolis and graduated from the University of Minnesota. He is married to Pam O'Rourke. They have one adult daughter who lives in St. Paul.

He said his interest in Crow Wing County history stems from having had the opportunity to meet and write about such individuals as former Gov. C. Elmer Anderson, former Brainerd Mayor George Bedard and Bataan Death March survivor Walt Straka.

### DAYLA HART

Dayla Hart is our new Collections Assistant. She will be in charge of maintaining all aspects of collection documentation, organization, and care. Dayla has a strong interest in history, which she cultivated by earning her bachelor's degree in history as well as minors in anthropology and sociology. Originally from Butte, Montana, she and her husband came to Brainerd by way of Colorado, Utah, and Wisconsin. She has a son, a daughter, two cats, and three dogs.





## DON WEDLL



Growing up on a small dairy farm near Elizabeth, Minnesota with a younger brother and two sisters there was always plenty to do. Everyone had to work to keep the farm operating. The farm was opened up by my grandfather and his father was one of the first homesteaders in the area. There was a small one room school house with grades 1<sup>st</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> and I was one of 14 students that attended it. From there I attended Fergus Falls High School, graduated, and then went to Fergus Falls Community College and Moorhead State University, where I graduated with a degree in mathematics. To further my education, I went to graduate school working on a Master's degree in Mathematics and second degree in education. At that time most of the job offers came from large organizations and required moving to large cities. The job offer I took was at the Mille Lacs Indian Reservation and my job was to tutor tribal students in mathematics. The next year the Reservation moved me from tutor position to Director of Education programs. The next position was to establish and direct Nay ah shing School. As part of the accreditation of Nay ah shing School there was a need to have a trained Administrator, though I held the position of Commissioner of Education, my education was not in school administration. I asked to return to the classroom to teach math. Chairman Gahbow had different ideas and asked me to chair a committee on writing the history of the Mille Lacs Reservation and to research treaties that the Mille Lacs band had signed.

This lead to the Band asking me to establish a Natural Resource Department for the Mille Lacs Band and I was appointed the Commissioner of Natural Resources. The position placed me in meetings with the State Commissioner of Natural Resource, with the Director of US Fish and Wildlife, and Regional Director of US EPA. US EPA had directive to develop what was called an Indian Environmental Policy. US EPA Region V Administrator asked the Chairman Gahbow if I could help with the development of the Indian Policy and all 33 Tribal Governments from the Midwest. From this, US EPA Indian policy got developed and implemented. I chaired the first EPA-Tribal Operation Committee which was a committee representing all 575 federally recognized Tribal Governments in the United States. This lead to the establishment of the American Indian Environmental Office within US EPA.

For 19 years I worked on research and administrative work related to the litigation of the 1837 Treaty of the Mille Lacs Band's off reservation hunting and fishing rights. The case was filed in federal court and 2 ½ years was spent trying to settle the case. When the state legislature rejected the settlement, the case went to trial in Minneapolis, from there it was appealed to 8<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court of Appeals in St. Louis and finally to the United States Supreme Court where there was a 5 – 4 decision in favor of the treaty right.

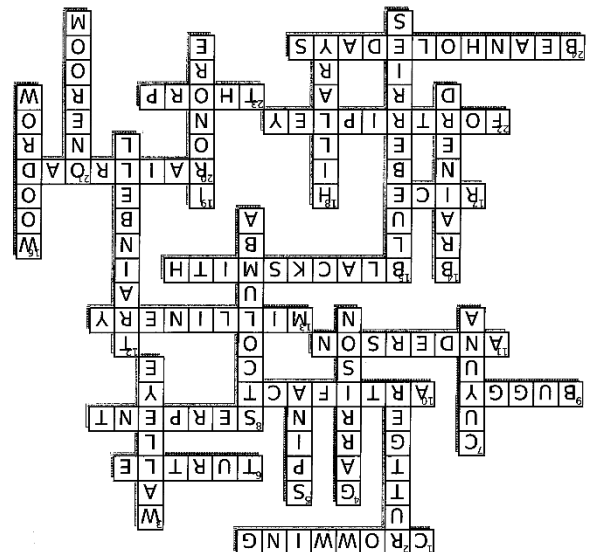
At that time, the Mille Lacs Band was undergoing political change and was looking at long range planning. I was asked to work on a 50-year plan for the Reservation. Instead, I left the Band and moved to Alaska where I worked for a tribal organization called the Association of Village Council Presidents out of Bethel, Alaska. There I worked for five years on environmental issues with 56 remote Alaska villages.

Retirement, back in Crow Wing County, has provided opportunity to become a member of the "Friends of Old Crow Wing" and do historical research work on issues related to Crow Wing County. Honor the Earth, an environmental organization, has me doing supportive work on environmental and other related issues. Serving on the Crow Wing County Historical Society Board is providing a greater understanding of Crow Wing history and ways to preserve the history for future generations.

## Thank You Volunteers!

Bill & Sandy Ash	Harold Holk	Ann M. Nelson
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Peggy Hildebrandt	Camille Naslund	Martina Yount
		Board Members

Answers to crossword:



## A HISTORY LESSON...

**CROW WING COUNTY FAIR**

By: Lucille Kirkeby

The history of the Crow Wing Co. Fair leads you on numerous twists and turns, starts and stops.

The Fair began in 1897, a commercial venture, owned and operated by local drug store owner M.K Swartz. It was located just east of the 1900 block of East Oak Street. Mr. Swartz had horse racing, bicycle racing, 3 legged racing, etc. There were also exhibits of vegetables, cattle, sheep, hogs and poultry. The big attractions, however were the horse racing and the bicycle racing. There was a half mile cinder track for the races. The fair was ongoing for about twelve to fourteen days each year. The year that the County Fair Association was discontinued put an end to the horse racing and the park quickly deteriorated.

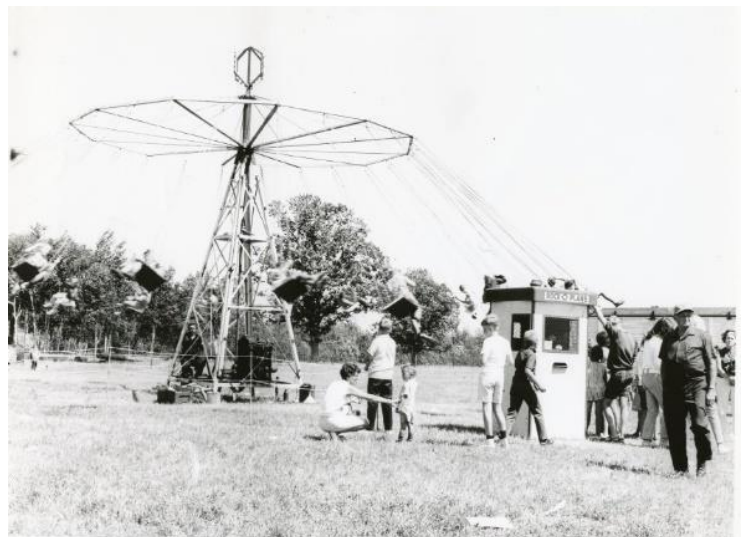
Fairs began in other villages in the county, Crosby, Pequot Lakes, etc. Forty years passed before a fair was again started in Brainerd.

The present fair began in 1937 with the purpose of providing the 4-H with a chance to exhibit club projects and compete for prizes.

That first fair was held at Lum Park in the dance pavilion. Then began the search for a permanent location for the fair. Bane Park was the chosen location, but the property owner forbid the use of the property for a fair. Next the Fair Association discovered that the old mill site on Rice Lake was available. Fifty-two acres were acquired. The next hurdle was to get the buildings built. Building began with WPA labor, but were not ready by fair time in 1938 so the fair was held at the Brainerd Armory. Temporary barns were built behind the Armory. The carnival was outside in the street. By 1939 things were ready to go.

It stayed in the Mill Street location for a number of years as the fair expanded. In 1941 flowers were added. In 1942 there were 20 4-H booths. The fair went to four days in 1945. The 1946 polio epidemic forced the cancelling of the fair in 1946. In 1948, a grand stand was added. More space was needed for the fair and for parking. By 1961-1962, negotiations were made with the Northwest Paper Company to acquire property south of Brainerd along 13<sup>th</sup> Street. By 1962 the fair was ready to go in its present location.

Since locating to South 13<sup>th</sup> the Fair had grown. Added were a new horse barn, a historical exhibits building, children's farm yard. In 1970 an education building was added to accommodate the ever increasing number of exhibits. One could go on listing all kinds of additions to the fair. Birney Wilkins was the driving force in the success of the Crow Wing County Fair.



# LOCAL HISTORY EVENTS

## **July 29-August 3 – Crow Wing County Fair**

Come see our historic buildings and displays. Please contact the museum if you are interested in volunteering at (218)829-3268.

**History in your Backyard** – sponsored by Sylvan Township and Pillager School Community Education.

**July 30** – Early Non-Native Settlers presented by Mike North

**August 27** – Red River Ox Cart Trails presented by Ron Miles

**September 24** – The 1862 Uprising presented by Don Wedll

**October (TBA)** – The Gull River Lumber Company presented by Jeremy Jackson

For more information, please contact the Sylvan Town Hall at 218-746-3652.

## **August 3 - Canoe Day at Crow Wing State Park**

Includes a presentation by Jim Cummings on the Village of Old Crow Wing. For more information, call Crow Wing State Park at 218-825-3075

## **September 8-12 - Northern Pacific Railway Historical Association Annual Convention**

For details see [www.nprha.org](http://www.nprha.org).

## **September 20-22 - Brainerd History Week**

### Supporting County/Municipality

Crow Wing County

City of Brainerd

### Supporting Townships

Crow Wing

Garrison

Ideal

Irondale

Long Lake

Oak Lawn

Platte Lake

Roosevelt

St. Mathias

Thank You!

We thank the following  
individuals for their generous

## DONATIONS

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Linda Engel

Focal Point Photography Club

Lois Jubie/State Farm Good Neighbor Foundation

Joyce Kauffman

Laura Larson

Paul Nelson

Sheila Northrop

Mary Saboe

In Memory of Ron Hart

Diane Runberg

In Memory of Marilyn Rubbelke

Mary Korbolic

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Roberta Mrazek

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## 2018-2019 BOARD OF DIRECTORS



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**Camille Naslund**  
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218-866-0651

The Crow Wing County Historical Society Museum, Sheriff's Residence, and Research Library is located next to the historic Courthouse

Phone: 218-829-3268 Fax: 218-828-4434

Email: [history@crowwing.us](mailto:history@crowwing.us) Web: [www.crowwinghistory.org](http://www.crowwinghistory.org)

Hours: Tuesday-Saturday 10AM-3PM (closed major holidays and holiday weekends)

### CWCHS Yearly Membership Levels:

\$500.00 – Patron	\$50.00 – Sustaining
\$250.00 – Benefactor	\$40.00 – Family or Non-Profit Org.
\$100.00 – Booster	\$30.00 – Supporting Individual
\$75.00 – Sponsor	\$20.00 – Individual

To become a member of the Society, send your name, address, and telephone number along with your membership dues to the Crow Wing County Historical Society, P.O. Box 722, Brainerd, MN 56401. If you would like to give a gift membership to the Society, please send the name and address of the person for whom the membership is intended. Memorials of loved ones are also accepted. Donations can be sent to the same address and are tax deductible. Membership forms are available on our website or at the Museum. You can also pay online using PayPal.

## WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

FAMILY MEMBERS  
Mike & Pam O'Rourke

SUPPORTING  
INDIVIDUALS  
Peter Driessen

INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS  
Jenny Dalquist  
Susan Holstrom Johnson  
Kerry O'Rourke



Listed on the National  
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