

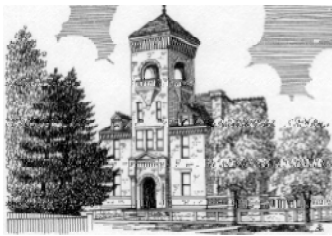
The County Historian

News from the Ontonagon County Historical Society

Dean Juntunen, Editor

Winter 2017

NOTE: If you want an article published in the newsletter, send it to Dean Juntunen, 11425 Aspen Lane, Mass City, MI 49948, or e-mail it to deanjunt@jamadots.com.



MUSEUM NEWS

Greetings Everyone. We've scaled back operations for the winter, but we're still open part time. Museum hours for the winter months are Thursday, Friday, and Saturday from 1:30 to 4:00 p.m.

As always, we deeply appreciate our crew of volunteers, who keep us a vibrant organization. The following columns are a complete list of our volunteers in the past year to our knowledge, including Lighthouse Tour Guides and board members:

Anderson, Doug
Anderson, Marilyn
Bardell, Judith
Basile, Sue
Bishop, David
Brand, Dustin
Buscombe, Martin
Chabot, Bill
Chabot, Roberta
Croteau, Doris
Davidson, Tina

Doyle, John
Eckloff, Jean
Fischer, William
Fuller, Anna
Giuliano, Teri
Gonzales, Kristie
Haarala, Sharon
Helsel, Don
Helsel, Sue
James, Victoria
Johanson, Roberta
Johanson, Bruce
Jousma, Tammy
Juntunen, Dean
Kisor, Debbie
Koski, Jerry
Koski, Linda
Lind, Jean
Lind, Bob
McGuire, Sally

Murray, Helen
Olson, Josie
Parker, Doreen
Pattison, Judy
Penegor, Coriane
Penegor, Diane
Penegor, Willah
Raisanen, Ken
Rieger, Jon
Solberg, Karen
Spetz, Mary Ann
Spolarich, Doris
Zimmer, Ruth

Also, we thank all of the Chamber of Commerce Information Center people who were set up in our museum this past year. They helped us out, too.



Christmas Open House at the Museum. The Table of Plenty. Thanks to all who brought food, decorated, made music, or told fortunes in the tradition of the Finnish Kalevala. We enjoyed fellowship and merriment.

NEW WEBSITE

Our website has been renewed and is looking much more modern, thanks to a mini-grant from the Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs. Carol Maass from the Friends of the Porkies wrote the grant for us. Check it out.

www.ontonagonmuseum.org.

Now we need to start making regular updates on the website.

GIFT SHOP UPDATE

Our manager, Coriane Penegor and her mother and daughter will be making a trip to the big gift show in Chicago the last weekend in January, and they plan to come back with interesting goods for our Gift Shop, whose shelves are currently quite depleted.

IN MEMORIAM

On a somber note, we recognize the Ontonagon County Historical Society Members who have passed on during the previous year, honoring them in our memories. They are sorely missed.

- Elmer Anderson
- Francis Bonen
- Doris Croteau
- Jessie Davison
- David Kekke
- Mary Kushnir
- Cheryl Lackie
- Joan Nygard
- Terry Reid
- Robert Wittla

TRICK OR TREAT TRUNK

Thank you to the volunteers and donors for our Trick or Treat Trunk which we had in the high school parking lot for Halloween. The Trunk was chock full of donated candy, and we had many happy customers.

ANNIVERSARY

The Ontonagon County Historical Society will be celebrating our 60th Anniversary in 2017. Officially, OCHS was formed on April 4, 1957.

We do plan to host an Anniversary event or two, and we will also be hosting the Northland Consortium this fall. The Consortium is comprised of various UP historical organizations.

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

by Bruce Johanson

Dear Members and Friends,

At our recent January meeting, held at the Holy Family church on January 19th, our Vice President, Josie Olson, presented a program that really got me to thinking. Josie made the point that if we don't jot a few things down about happenings in our lives, those events will be lost to future generations, such as nieces, nephews, children, and grand children.

We tend to take our history for granted. We tend to see family events and happenings as everyday items that are not very important, but to someone down the road a few years, these things may become VERY important. This also goes for pictures or photos.

**NOTICE
DUES DUE**

Now is the time to pay your annual dues (\$15 per individual, \$25 per family). Or, consider becoming a Life Member for \$150.

Your membership form is enclosed with this newsletter.

The other day, I got a phone call from a gentleman who asked if we have any photos of Markie's corner grocery that stood at the corner of Firesteel and Beck Roads. Regretfully, I informed him that we did not have anything in the museum archives about this little neighborhood grocery, which had served the Firesteel Community with Emil and Selma Markie operating their "Mom 'n Pop" grocery (and they had a gas pump too), living in the old Beck country schoolhouse behind the store.

During the past summer, one of our SHIP kids wrote a history of the Firesteel neighborhood. Not only could we not find any photos of Markie's store, but although we have searched and called several people, we cannot locate any pictures of the Firesteel Hall. Sure, many remember going there to dances and other social events, but did no one ever take a picture of the place?

Too often we don't see daily events as our history taking place right under our noses, and some day, someone is going to want to know or see a place or event and it will be lost except to scattered memories.

A few years ago (actually 25 years ago), as a Community School project, I sat down with a number

folks, many of whom are no longer with us, and got them to put in writing some of the things they had seen or done. We bound these stories together in a booklet we titled, "Time Flies." Some of the contributors, among others, were the late Helen Hayward Kalivoda, Pearl Carlson, Earl Doyle, Neil Store, Ralph Hill, Werner Lamsa, and Onni Filppula. In 1994 we did a similar project at the Mass-Greenland Community Schools and published "Life in Our Times." The late Elma Lukkarila, Toivo Katajamaki, Charlie Baullinger, Andy Hendrickson, and a host of others wrote stories about happenings when they were growing up. These oral histories are invaluable for anyone doing research about events in our area. I also want to mention the autobiography done by the late Walt Koski, who was one of our past members, in which he documents the rise and decline of the Finnish Cooperative movement.

Josie's presentation stirred me to thinking about my own family's history, and though I am not a native to this area, our two children were raised here, and I've told the stories of my own family coming to America from Norway, living in a sod house in western Minnesota, and being so poor they couldn't afford lead shot for their gun, so they stuffed wet newspaper down the barrel and shot a deer with it to keep from starving! Someone down the family line will want to know about things such as this. If we, as members of a historical society are going to take our mission seriously, we have to start recording some of these stories handed down in the family.

I will volunteer to hear stories and put them on paper if anyone wants some help doing this. The events that have shaped our lives are much too valuable to let them pass from memory. Let's keep the faith.

Bruce H. Johanson, President

REQUEST

You can save us money and resources if you opt to receive your newsletter electronically in pdf format. Your computer is probably already equipped with the Adobe Acrobat Reader, but if not, you can go to the Adobe website and download it. So far, over 100 people have signed up for e-newsletters. Graphics are better in pdf, and you can zoom to your preferred font size. If you're interested, please send an e-mail request to deanjunt@jamadots.com.

LIGHTHOUSE NEWS



This is our quiet time for the Lighthouse, which is in cold storage until after the snow melts.

Meanwhile, our "light box" is on display in the museum. This light box demonstrates how Fresnel lenses work, turning all light that passes through from inside the lens into an outgoing horizontal beam, with almost no dispersal.

Thanks go to those families who volunteered for our Lighthouse's 150-year celebration last fall.

If you are interested in being a lighthouse philanthropist, we still have the following rooms or structures available for sponsorship.

32 Spiral Steps	\$300 ea
Oil House	\$3,000
Master Bedroom	\$5,000
1st-flr 1890's kitchen	\$6,000
West Parlor	\$6,000

TROUT CREEK LIBRARY DONATION

The Trout Creek Library Committee had been a nonprofit corporation; however, they recently disbanded. In their fund dispersal process last year, they gave us a generous donation of \$1,250. This year, we thank the Trout Creek Library Committee for an additional donation of \$500. Winters are quite slow for us, so the timing of the \$500 donation is just perfect.



UPCOMING DINNER MEETINGS

ALL DINNERS AT 6:30 pm

February 16, Thursday -- Siloa Lutheran Church
(Margot Anderson Responsible)

Darren Lukkari will give a presentation on his work stint in Antarctica in 2015-2016, which

included wintering over (our summer).

March 16, Thursday -- St Paul's Lutheran Church in Mass City
(Ken Raisanen responsible)

Ken Raisanen will present a DVD on the glaciation of the Great Lakes.

April 20, Thursday -- Holy Family Catholic Church
(Doreen Parker responsible)

Program to be announced.

May 18, Thursday -- Holy Family Catholic Church
(Dave Bishop responsible)

Presentation to be announced.

PAST PROGRAMS

October:

(Dean Juntunen responsible)

Michelle Blood from the Iron County Historical Society gave a presentation titled, "Building Iron River," focusing on the history of prominent buildings in Iron River and Crystal Falls -- two towns in Iron County that had once been in competition to be the County Seat.

November:

(Jerry Koski responsible)

Graham Jaehnig, Daily Mining Gazette Writer, gave an engaging presentation on Houghton History, which is tied to copper of course.

December:

(Doug Anderson responsible)

Bruce Johanson gave a presentation on a research paper by SHIP Intern Hannah Davidson, on Finnish history, and

the Finnish migration to our area over a century ago, focusing on the Firesteel area. Her paper is published at the end of this newsletter.

January:

(Josie Olson responsible)

Josie Olson gave a presentation on writing family histories, which she said should include lots of stories. Ms. Olson included several interesting anecdotes from her own family.

Editor's Note:

The following is a short paper by one of our SHIP interns from the summer of 2016.

HISTORY OF THE FIRESTEEL

By Hannah Davidson

The Firesteel Road was located in the township of Ontonagon, beginning at Broemer's corner, better known as the junction of Strang Road and Daniels Road, and ending at Koski's corner, near the end of the old North Road which comes out of Greenland. The two roads were eventually joined together to become known as the North Firesteel Road.

Along the old Firesteel Road, many Finnish emigrants came to settle in America in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Slowly, many of them began to clear fields and build their farmsteads, and within a few short years, the road was established. Since the road was first built, the Firesteel has changed in many ways.

Some may wonder why so many Finnish homesteaders left Finland to come to the Upper Peninsula.

Although there are various reasons as to why many people left Finland, it all began during the Napoleonic Wars, when most of the region was

part of the Kingdom of Sweden. Finland was controlled by Sweden from the 13th century up until 1809, when the vast majority of the Finnish-speaking areas of Sweden were ceded to the Russian Empire after Tsar Alexander I's armies conquered the Swedes and took the territory.

Once under Russian rule, the four estates of Russia (the Nobility, Clergy, Burghers, and Peasants) occupied Finland to declare that Tsar Alexander I would become the Grand Duke of Finland. To do so, the Diet of Porvoo was convened.

The Diet of Porvoo was put forth to declare by the estates of Russia that they swore their oaths of allegiance, committing themselves to accept Tsar Alexander I as the true authority of Finland, and to keep the constitution and form of government unchanged.

Subsequently, Alexander I promised to govern the territory in accordance with its laws, but the people of Finland thought that the Diet of Porvoo confirmed that Russia would rule Finland under the Swedish Instrument of Government as the constitution of Finland.

Furthermore, conflicts arose and to settle the conflict, the Treaty of Fredrikshamn was signed to maintain peace after the Finnish war. Following the Treaty of Fredrikshamn, on September 17th, 1809, Finland remained a Grand Duchy of the Russian Empire.

After the Diet of Porvoo was settled and Russian rule was introduced to Finland, Tsar Alexander allowed Finland limited autonomy. This meant that Finland was a self-governing country within the Russian Empire and had the Tsar designated as their head of state.

The people of Finland accepted having limited autonomy under Russian rule until 1835, when Elias Lönnrot published the nation's epic, the Kalevala. As a result of this publication, members of the Swedish-speaking upper classes and

some Russian bureaucrats started promoting Finnish culture and the Finnish language to have their own nationhood. Due to Sweden ruling Finland in the 16th and 17th century, the Swedish language was spoken by 15% of Finland's population, and only peasants spoke the Finnish language. In 1863, the Finnish language finally gained an official position in administration and eventually became an equal official language in 1892.

As a result of many people throughout the region wanting to claim their own nationhood, the opposing side, the Russian Empire, began to try and stop Finland from achieving their goals. To do so, the Russian Empire made three declarations. First was the February Manifesto that was convened on February 15th in 1899. When the Tsar signed the February Manifesto, he decreed that the Diet of the Estates of Finland could be overruled in legislation if it was in Russian imperial interests.

The Finnish people considered the decree to be a takeover of the Finnish constitution and in return, half a million Finns signed a petition to request revoking the manifesto. In spite of that fact, the Tsar didn't receive the petition.

Secondly, the Russian Empire declared the Language Manifesto of 1900, which made Russian the official language of the administration of Finland.

Third, the Russian Empire declared the Conscription Law of 1901, which incorporated the Finnish army into the imperial army and Finland's soldiers to Russian training camps. These declarations were all key to defend the Russian Empire and the beginning of the Russification policy.

Russification was the policy of the Russian Tsars that was designed to limit the special status of the Grand Duchy of Finland and more fully integrate Russian customs in Finland such as politically, militarily,

and culturally throughout the empire. Since this aimed to limit the special status of the Grand Duchy, it could possibly terminate Finland's autonomy. The people of Finland strongly opposed Russification and fought back by passive resistance and by strengthening Finland's cultural identity. Until the first wave of Russification, Finland had their own form of currency, stamps, army, religious beliefs, and their own language. Once Finland began to lose these privileges in their autonomy, the first wave of immigration began.

In 1898, now under the rule of Tsar Nicholas II, General Nikolay I. Bobrikov was appointed to be the Governor-General of Finland. Once Bobrikov was appointed, he very quickly became disliked by the natives of Finland. This was because Bobrikov was an adamant supporter of increasing the Russian Empire's extensive autocratic rule.

Furthermore, Finland did not like Bobrikov because he had supported all of the declarations the empire had made to limit their self government. In addition to the Language Manifesto that Bobrikov supported, in 1900 he issued orders that all correspondence between government offices was to be conducted in Russian and that education in the Russian language was to be increased in the schools. Bobrikov also forced the Finnish conscripts to serve with Russian troops. Instead of having the Finnish army being in Russian training camps, now they would join the Russians completely and could be sent anywhere in the Russian Empire.

At the first call-up in 1902, only 42% of the conscripts reported, leading the Russians to conclude that the Finns were unreliable. Finally in 1905, conscription was abolished in Finland.

Due to all of Bobrikov's actions, he was very disliked by Finland and this eventually led to his

assassination. On June 16th, 1904, Nikolay Bobrikov was killed by Eugen Schauman in Helsinki, Finland. Schauman shot Bobrikov three times. Two of the bullets ricocheted off of his decorations and the last bullet bounced off of his belt buckle and caused severe damage to his stomach, resulting in his death later that night. Afterwards, Schauman left a letter stating that he justified his actions as a punishment for Bobrikov's crimes against the people of Finland, and shot himself twice and died at the scene.

Another important factor in people leaving Finland was because of the democratic change in 1906. As a result of the Russian Revolution and the Finnish strike in 1905, the previous four-chamber diet was replaced by the unicameral Parliament of Finland. This was the first time throughout all of Europe that there was universal suffrage (the right to vote) and eligibility was implemented to include women. Yet, locally things were different because in the municipal elections, the number of votes was based off the amount of tax that was paid. This meant that the wealthy could cast a number of votes, while the poor had very little or no votes at all. Due to this, many were angered that they were unable to have a voice in what was going on throughout the nation. Following this, many fled Finland to the United States.

In addition to the democratic change in 1906, the second wave of Russification began in 1908. This cost Finland much of its autonomy and caused further resistance from Finland. Due to all of the complications in Finland's autonomy, Finland pushed for independence. Finland's independence, however, did not come easily.

Due to the aftermath of the Revolution in Russia, in 1916 Finland received a new Senate, a coalition Cabinet with the same power distribution as the Finnish

Parliament, and Social Democrat Oskari Tokoi was elected the Prime Minister. This left Finland politically split, and though the newly elected senate was willing to cooperate with Russian government, no agreement was ever reached as Finland considered their union with Russia to be over after the dethroning of the Tsar.

A standoff then began between the Finnish Social Democrats and non-Socialists in a reach for power within the Parliament and Senate. While the Social Democrats strived for parliamentarianism with the "Power Act", the non-Socialists rejected the proposal, considering it to be too far-reaching and provocative. The act restricted Russia's influence on domestic Finnish matters, but didn't touch the Russian government's power on matters of defense and foreign affairs.

This of course was considered far too radical for the Provisional government of Russia, so the Russian government dissolved the Parliament. The dissolution of the Parliament left a minority of non-Socialists within the Parliament and Senate, content and hopeful for change, with a chance for them to gain a majority with new elections, which in turn also left them hopeful to improve the chances of reaching an understanding with Russia as they feared the growing power of the Social Democrats.

The majority, however, were not happy and did not accept the Provisional government's right to dissolve the Parliament. Because of this, the Social Democrats held onto the Power Act and opposed the dissolution. The ongoing disagreement of the Power Act finally led to the Social Democrats leaving the Senate, which led to a non-Socialist majority takeover and reconciliation with Russia.

The non-Socialists had finally won the standoff, but the suppression of the Power Act, and

once again cooperation with Russia, left Socialists bitterly angry. After a series of politically motivated attacks and murders, a revolution sparked, giving way to the October Revolution of 1917.

The October Revolution of 1917 flipped Finnish politics upside down. The new non-Socialist Parliament now desired complete independence, while the Socialists came to favor the Russian example. On November 15th, 1917, the Bolsheviks, a faction of the Russian Social Democratic Party, declared the general right to self-determination for "the Peoples of Russia", this including the right of complete secession. On the same day, the Finnish Parliament issued a declaration that temporarily took power of Finland. The Non-socialist Senate, worried of developments in Russia and Finland, proposed that Parliament proclaim Finland's independence, which was later voted on December 6th, 1917.

Following the Parliament, on December 18th, the Soviet government issued a decree recognizing Finland's independence. Finally on, December 22nd, 1917 it was approved by the highest Soviet executive body.

In 1918, after Finland had claimed independence, Finland was bitterly divided along political lines. The Whites (anti-socialists) had a conservative outlook and rejected socialism, unlike the Reds. The Reds (Socialist-Communists) had a radical outlook and rejected capitalism. Since Finland was divided, from January to May 1918, there was a brief, yet bitter, Finnish Civil War between the Whites and the Reds. The Whites defeated the Red guards with support from Imperial Germany, and afterward the White peasantry rose to political leadership. This led to an influx of Socialist-Communist Finns in the United States.

When Finns arrived in the United States, many came to the Upper Peninsula because there was cheap

land. Logging companies would turn land over to counties for taxes and the counties would sell them to settlers cheap because they were logged. Some of the earliest Finnish immigrants arrived in 1859, when what is now the Firesteel was nothing but fields and dirt. There were no trees for miles from the logging companies and there were no roads at the time. Once Finns began to arrive in the Upper Peninsula, they began to make their homes and start to build their farms.

Over the course of a few years, there began to be quite a few settlers living in what now is the Firesteel area. As the population of the area grew, things were being built all over the Firesteel community. When the Firesteel was in it's prime, there was a Firesteel Hall at the corner of Beck Road, two schools, a store, and several farms.

Today on the Firesteel, it is very different from what it once was. There is no longer a Firesteel Hall, or a store, and there is only one former schoolhouse standing -- the Beck School. The Firesteel today is occupied by residents spread throughout the road, and there are a few farms still in operation. Driving around the Firesteel community, you can get a glimpse of what it once was by seeing the old vacant homes, barns, and shacks. Who would have thought a road could have so much history behind it?

Since the Napoleonic Wars, history has been shaping the community of Ontonagon Township in many ways. It has lead many great Finnish immigrants to the Upper Peninsula and it has made our great town what it is today.