

Newsletter



Knife River Heritage & Cultural Center

PO Box 240 • 180 Marina Road
Knife River, MN 55609
info@krhcc.org
www.krhcc.org

September, 2021
By Paul von Goertz

RAIL AUTHORITY UPGRADES KRHCC LEASE FROM 5-YEAR TO 20-YEAR RENEWABLE

A major obstacle for future KRHCC funding plans was overcome at the St. Louis & Lake Counties Regional Railroad Authority (RRA) monthly meeting held August 29 when the RRA approved the KRHCC's request for its 5-year renewable lease be replaced with a 20-year renewable.

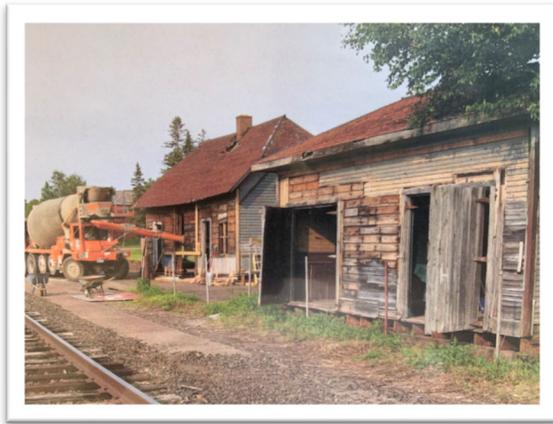
The request was made to make it easier for the KRHCC to apply for grants where the grantor had reservations about "site control."

"When the KRHCC came to the RRA and asked for a 5-year lease, we agreed to grant the lease with the challenge that the KRHCC show reasonable progress towards their end goal," said Rick Goutermont, Lake County commissioner and RRA board member.

Goutermont is one of two RRA board members from Lake County, the other is Jeremy Hurd. Three county commissioners from St. Louis county comprise the remainder of the board.

"In just a couple of years the progress has been outstanding. The community stepped up with donations of time, labor and an outstanding amount of monetary contributions. Also, cleaning up the site and proceeding with the first improvements to seeing this project through to the end. All this made it very easy for our board to grant a 20-year lease," said Goutermont.

Newsletter



May, 2019

Photo credit: Todd Lindahl



September 2021

Photo credit: Paul von Goertz

Paul von Goertz, KRHCC board president said, “With nearly every grant request we’ve made, the issue of “site control” has come up. “It’s a logical concern for a potential granter as they want some assurance that the land is under reasonable control of the grant applicant before they invest any money.”

“Up to now we’ve been able to skirt the site control issue raised with just a 5-year renewable, and that’s with thanks to help from Bob Manzoline, Executive Director of the RRA, who would explain our land lord (the RRA) is a state agency with a board comprised of elected county commissioners.”

“But, now the KRHCC is in another league with a six-figure request of at least one federal agency to fund our Phase II – which is to build shelters for CRUSADER II and for picnickers. In these situations, the 5-year would be a deal breaker, so we appealed to the RRA for a 20-year,” said von Goertz.

Part of the KRHCC’s letter to the RRA summed up its reason for a 20-year renewable lease:

“We hope the confidence placed in the KRHCC to create a major North Shore attraction as demonstrated by the support from the Knife River community, the Save Our Ship organization (LEIF ERICKSON non-profit which has

Newsletter

selected the KRHCC as a site finalist for the ship), state and federal funding agencies, and private foundations, will favor the RRA granting a 20-year lease.”

Von Goertz said the 20-year lease, which the KRHCC expects will be granted yet this fall, will go a long way in demonstrating “site control.”

We’d like to think this is one reason why the RRA upgraded the KRHCC’s lease. Two and a half years and hundreds of volunteer hours and tens of thousands of local donations accomplished what you see here.

THANKS TO YOU, THE KRHCC’S GEEZERS ARE GROUNDED!

The effort to “Keep Geezers Grounded” and off the freight house roof met with resounding success as just under \$2,000 was raised from sales of 720 ears of “The Best Sweet Corn Ever.” All corn was ordered in advance by September 1 and picked up the next day at the depot.

Many, many thanks to Jim and Lee Bujold who put the whole fund raiser together and traveled to Lee’s hometown of Ashland, WI, to get the corn the day it was picked and have it ready to sell by 5 PM the same day. Not only did they do all that, they donated all the corn to the KRHCC, so all sales went to the KRHCC.

Said Lee: “Jim and I enjoy being ‘corny’ and having fun with generous “corny” people, all the while raising money for a good cause – anything to keep our “Geezers” grounded! We have a lot of fun.”

Lee Bujold helps a customer with their purchase. Photo Credit: Paul von Goertz



The upside of this whole fundraiser was to raise enough money to hire professionals to roof the freight house with steel. Interestingly, the bid

Newsletter

from the roofers to roof the freight house and flash both the roof house and depot chimneys was \$2,800. In addition to the \$2,000 in corn sales generated, was about \$600 donated from those who couldn't take advantage of the sale. Close enough to the bid to "Keep Geezers Grounded!"

Thanks to all who purchased corn and we hope you agree it was "The Best Sweet Corn Ever!"

Brynn von Goertz age 11, the "Corn Queen" was OK wearing this outfit handed her by the depot agent. Wonder if she will regret this photo in her teen years? Photo credit: Todd Lindahl



Bags of corn ready for pick up. Siblings Brynn, Elin and Soren von Goertz were conscripted by their grandfather for the task of bagging 720 ears of corn – most were 12 ears to the bag.

Photo credit: Paul von Goertz

FIRST IMPRESSION OF KNIFE RIVER

by Paul von Goertz

This month marks the 50th anniversary of Mary and me being KR property owners. We built in 1972 and KR has been our home ever since.

I have been fortunate to live next to Lake Superior all my life. I grew up on the lake side of 26th east and London Road in Duluth. My dad was a

Newsletter

veterinarian and his hospital was next door. I pretty much spent all my play time on the beach that was right behind our house.

At age 21, I bought a one-bedroom home on 18th and Minnesota Avenue on Park point. It was a bachelor party pad for two years and later proved to be a perfect starter home when Mary and I married in 1969. We lived there until 1972.

We always knew we would move from that small home and so started to look elsewhere on the Lake. Lots on Park Point were small and taxes high. I knew Howard "Bud" Sivertson through local advertising circles and learned he had a lake lot in KR for sale and we grabbed it for asking price.

At the time had a sailboat in Bayfield at Halvor Reitan's boatyard, a most interesting place. See February issue of KRHCC news.

In the fall of '71, I was preparing my boat for winter storage and noticed Halvor trying to wrestle an old fish tug into a clearing. I asked what he was doing and if I could help. "No," he said, "I am just trying to get in a clearing so I can burn it. I need the space." I told him not to do that, as I would take it.

I had in mind to use it for a playhouse on our KR property if we were ever blessed with children. Halvor agreed and a week later, thanks to a borrowed IH Scout from a friend and trailer from Bud - the 27' INEZ of Sand Island was on our property.

The following weekend Bud offered to help get the boat off the trailer and on to a makeshift cradle. We jacked it up and stacked concrete blocks under it - like a three-legged stool - until it could clear the trailer.

It was a lot of work and Bud's suggestion for a break with beer and smoked fish from Kendall's sounded pretty good. While contemplating the effort to reverse the jacking process to bring the boat to rest on the cradle, a large pick-up drove up and an equally large man, who bore a striking resemblance to Jethro Clampett, unfolded from it. Two toddlers were with him.

Newsletter

Bud explained the while scenario so far and lamented at having to now reverse the process. “Hold on - there’s an easier way,” said Jethro. “Stand back!” With that he backed up a few feet and ran full force at the boat in an attempt to knock if off the stacks of blocks. Nope. He tried again. Nope.

He disappeared into his pick-up cab and returned with the largest pistol I ever saw – later determined to be a 44 magnum. No need to tell us to stand back again.

The next part of this story is pretty amazing.

Jethro took aim at the blocks and one by one moving in a clockwise direction, he shot each layer of block out from under the boat. With each layer shot out the boat dropped about 12”. In seconds the boat was on the cradle and I was left with a pile of 12” block ruminants (\$2.00 per block).

While I tried to figure out what I had just witnessed/experienced, Bud and Jethro exchanged pleasantries and Jethro left.

Fish tug on blocks ready to be lowered. Jethro had the answer. Left to right, Bud Sivertson, your writer, and helpers Todd Larson and Jeff Sivertson. Photo credit: Donn Larson



So that was my first impression of Knife River and I will leave it up to you what that might have been. I asked Bud who Mr. Quick Problem-Solver was and he said “Mike Ojard.” Strange as it may seem, that crazy episode was the start of a 50-year friendship with Mike.

It was not until we had lived in KR for a few years that I realized Mike’s act of helping a neighbor (such as it was) was pretty commonplace in KR. If your car was stuck in a snow bank, someone with 4-wheel drive would pull you out. Home sick? A hot meal would be at your door. Time after

Newsletter

time a person in need would find a simple act of kindness would take care of the problem – and often anonymously.

It was not long that both Mary and I realized that we would never leave KR.

TODD LINDAHL'S LATEST FIND

The KRHCC's historian, Todd Lindahl, has found another item that will be part of our recreated 1900s train depot. It is a ticket validator.

Every depot had one for stamping the back of a passenger's ticket when it was sold. This particular validator is from the Great Northern Railroad. The date of the sale goes in the center and the name of the town in which the depot is located shows at the bottom.



Right: A ticket validator such as would have been found at the KR depot. Photo credit: Paul von Goertz

At a “flag stop” station where there was no depot agent, a passenger would purchase a ticket from the train conductor, who would then punch the ticket. Every punch had a specific shape that identified which conductor punched (cancelled) the ticket.



Left: A typical stamp that would be found on the back of every passenger ticket

*Flag stop” stations where passenger volume did not justify a full-time depot agent. At these depots a passenger wishing to ride the train would wave a flag, or at night a lantern, to tell the engineer he/she wanted the train to stop. As passenger traffic declined at the KR depot it too, became a “flag stop” station.

Thanks to Todd Lindahl for both this depot find and providing the historical information

Newsletter

PORT WING, WI: KR'S COUNTERPART ON THE SOUTH SHORE

For those who boat out of KR, or enjoy the Bayfield Peninsula by car, Port Wing, WI is a fun and quaint place to visit – like we hope KR is. Both towns have a population of about 350, and both can attribute their origins to commercial fishing,

Port Wing has two great restaurants, Dee's South Shore Bar and the Port Bar & Restaurant. Both serve comfort food and the Port serves a whitefish dinner worth a drive either along Highway 13, or a more unique way – by boat from KR.

There is a nice park and beautiful sand beach at the entry into the harbor and several “transient” docks for small boats. A bit of a downside is the walk from the harbor to the town, about a mile.

Both KR and Port Wing have an event that brings crowds to town. Ours is Julebyen and theirs is their annual Port Wing Fish Boil held each Saturday of Labor Day weekend.

The fish boil began in 1958 to raise money for a ball field and later uniforms for the team and lights for evening games. Ever since that was accomplished, funds have been used to support their volunteer fire department.

Interesting to note that the KR Rec council also started in the '50s and for the same reason as the Port Wing townspeople put on the fish boil – to raise money to support activities for the town's young people.

Their event maxes the ability of the town to serve all their guests, as does Julebyen max our capabilities. Last I asked, about 1,200-1,500 people attend the fish boil. An estimated 6,000 attended Julebyen 2019. But, Port Wing, like us, is able to generate the volunteers, and many from miles away.

Fish boil volunteers start about 6 AM heating huge black witch's caldrons with wood. There are separate caldrons for lake trout (all provided

Newsletter

locally), potatoes and onions. The meal consists of these items, plus coleslaw, rye bread and a ladle of genuine Wisconsin butter over the fish and potatoes. And, for some, the best part is a bottomless glass of Leinenkugels or Miller Lite Beer straight from unending kegs.

Several of us from KR make the annual run across the Lake going back as far as the early 2000s. Weather and wave conditions have to cooperate.

“Pixie” (who needs a last name when you go by “Pixie”) has made the crossing several times and this year was inspired to write a poem, which I reprint here with her permission:

“We’re Going On a Boat Ride to Port Wing”

*Gulls in the harbor are on the wing.
The summer is nearly on her last fling.
Life jackets. Cushions. What else should we bring?
We’re going on a boat ride to Port Wing.*

*The Lake is as clear as a mountain spring.
Riding the waves is just like a swing.
We’re going on a boat ride to Port Wing.*

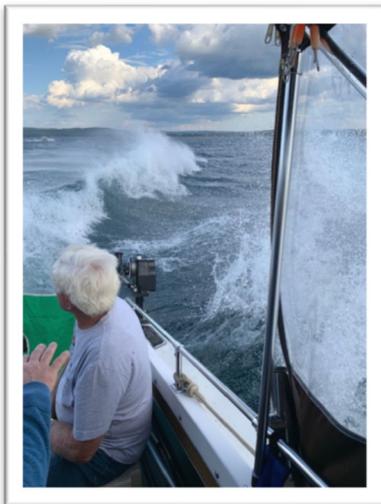
*They’ll have a fish boil that’s fit for a king,
There’ll be enough beer to make the guys sing.
Fun, food and friends – it’s a really great thing.
We’re going on a boat ride to Port Wing.*

© “Pixie” 2021

Newsletter

The dinner is served in an open shelter. Servers will top off beer glasses as one stands in the food line.

Photo credit: Paul von Goertz



Weather and wave conditions can torpedo plans for attending the fish boil by boat. The crossing exposes boats to both NE and SW winds. The Lake got a good lick at us on this crossing in a 24' boat.

Photo credit: Paul von Goertz

Some of KR's ambassadors at the 2019 Port Wing fish boil.

Photo credit: Paul von Goertz



Newsletter

WHAT THE COMMUNITY HAS DONE FOR THE KRHCC AND WHAT THE KRHCC HAS DONE FOR THE COMMUNITY.

By Paul von Goertz

The KRHCC was officially launched on July 30, 2018. That's the date the IRS approved our application for a 501(c3) non-profit status.

Work on restoring the depot began in mid-May of 2019. Since then, the community invested hundreds of volunteer hours and about \$80,000 in donations to restore its depot and neighboring freight house, which together form the core of the KRHCC. That's what the community did for the KRHCC.

Now, there is a flip side and that's "What the KRHCC has done for the community." Let me explain.

Larry Ronning was our volunteer general contractor and did an amazing job in racking the depot back into a square shape, with plumb walls, concrete floor, steel roof, period correct windows and siding and putting the depot agent's "bump out" back to where it was in 1896.

The agreement Larry and I had from the get-go was that if he would oversee all that I described, I would find the volunteers to help with the work and raise the money for materials. It was an arrangement that worked out quite well as we look at what has been accomplished.

What the KRHCC has given KR is a real sense of "community" in bringing together KR's generational families, with those who chose to move here for the quality of life, seasonal residents, and I must include the RVers from the Knife River Campground who saw what we were doing and wanted to help. All worked together to achieve a goal and with that a lot of friendships developed.

It's been said many times – "Want to make more friends? Want to meet some interesting people? Then volunteer for something that appeals to you." The KRHCC has been blessed with many people who understand that and one I really want to call out is Jan Robertson.

Newsletter



Left: Jan Robertson, KRHCC volunteer enjoying what she likes to do – swing a paint brush (and she’s very good at it).

Photo credit: Paul von Goertz

Jan is a friend of Lee Cohen and both enjoy tennis, so Jan, who lives in Woodland in Duluth, started playing at the KR courts. Lee volunteers at the depot and told Jan how he enjoyed working there and Jan became interested, too. Says Jan, “I had been looking for something to do and this seemed like a good fit. I ended up getting to do something I enjoy doing – painting - and it seemed like a

worthwhile project.”

Throughout the summer Lee and Jan work at the depot in the mornings on a day they play a tennis four-some.

What makes Jan so interesting to all of us is that she is a graduate of the Great Lake Maritime Academy in Traverse City, MI. Upon graduation she served on the US EPA research vessel LAKE GUARDIAN performing water and sediment sampling, and searching for invasive species. She then began sailing all over the five Great Lakes and soon became a licensed third mate.

Over her 15-year career she achieved second mate status and served on several Great Lakes Fleet boats including the GOTT, CLARK, CALLAWAY and ANDERSON.

She then tried working “Deep Sea” and made several trips across the Atlantic to England, France and Germany. She also sailed the Pacific on a cable-laying ship from the West Coast to Japan. The last six years of her career she worked for American Steamship Co. and served on the ST. CLAIRE, AMERICAN MARINER and McCARTHY.

She met her husband, Richard, as they sailed together as licensed mates.

Newsletter

“It was tough going for me for a while on the boats,” said Jan about her career. “Most of the men I served with came up through the ranks, while I was an academy grad. Then there was the fact I was a woman. But, in time we all got along. It was a great career.”

As we near the completion of restoring both the depot and freight house, let’s all celebrate how the community has been made stronger and even more welcoming through a diverse group of volunteers all with a common goal of preserving and presenting KR’s history.

WHAT IS THIS?

Hint: This was in regular use 85 years ago.



Photo credit: Paul von Goertz

Answer in next month’s KRHCC newsletter.

Newsletter

MAY DONATIONS, MEMORIALS, HONORARIUMS AND SPONSORSHIPS

Donations:

- From Mark and Claudia Stenson to “Keep Geezers Grounded.”
- Several people made donations in amounts equal to a dozen ears of corn to “Keep Geezers Grounded”

READ ALL PAST KRHCC NEWSLETTERS AT krhcc.org

Our site was recently updated to include all newsletters through August, 2021. We estimate "pass along" readership of the newsletter at about 30% of those who receive it on their own devices. So pass the word that anyone who wants the newsletter can read it online.

The KRHCC is a 501 (c3) non-profit so all donations whether in the form of a memorial, honorarium or sponsorship are fully tax deductible. Your comments and suggestions for this monthly emailed newsletter are always welcome. Email to: info@krhcc.org

If you have family or friends who may enjoy reading this newsletter, they can access the current and all past issues on the “Current News” page of our website at: krhcc.org

©Newsletter published and copyrighted by Knife River Heritage & Cultural Center. Editor/Writer: Paul von Goertz, Historians/Researchers: Todd Lindahl and Randy Ellestad, Graphic Design and Production: Anne-Lù Hovis. No portion of this newsletter may be reproduced without written permission from the KRHCC. Contact info@krhcc.org