

# Newsletter



## Knife River Heritage & Cultural Center

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

### November 2021

By Paul von Goertz – KRHCC Board Member

### KRHCC'S "TREES. TRAINS. TRADITIONS." A BIG SUCCESS!

The KRHCC's "Trees. Trains. Traditions" event held Saturday, November 27, was a big success! So much so that the event will be expanded in 2022.

The event tied into the NSSR's "Christmas Tree Train," which brought 119 people to KR (mostly families) to pick up a pre-sold tree and/or greenery supplied by the Jon Hanel family of Two Harbors.



The NSSR came up with the idea of a Christmas Tree Train in June and asked the KRHCC what we thought of it. They explained riders would pre-order trees and greenery, pick it up at a tree lot in KR, then have the tree wrapped and placed in a boxcar for the return trip.

Once back at the Duluth Depot, folks could drive up to the box car and pick up their tree. The train would arrive in KR about 10:15AM. The tree lot would be open to locals once the train left about 11:30.

We immediately embraced the idea with the understanding that trees and greenery would be supplied by a Lake County business, and same for food service. The KRHCC saw the opportunity to build on the train idea to create a daylong event for KR and surrounding community.

# Newsletter

The day would involve trees, trains and a traditional Christmas celebration within the venue of a restored 1900s train depot. And so it was born: “Trees. Trains. Traditions.”

For its inaugural run, the NSSR capped train riders at 125 to make sure any glitches could be managed and in consideration for COVID guidelines. In total with “no shows” 119 people rode the train through a fresh blanket of snow to KR. NSSR Duluth Depot station manager Josh Miller, said the Christmas Tree Train sold out within two weeks of being posted in October on the railroad’s web site. “We could have sold another 125 seats,” said Josh.

The NSSR provided a band and Larsmont Trading Post the soups and sandwiches. Weather was perfect, selection and loading of trees went without a hitch and judging by the many happy faces and excitement among children, the day was a huge success.

All three Duluth television stations and the DULUTH NEWS TRIBUNE covered the day’s activities. Look for a much larger “Trees. Trains. Traditions” in 2022!



The “Christmas Tree Train” arrived right on schedule to the delight of onlookers and greeters.

Photo credit: Paul von Goertz

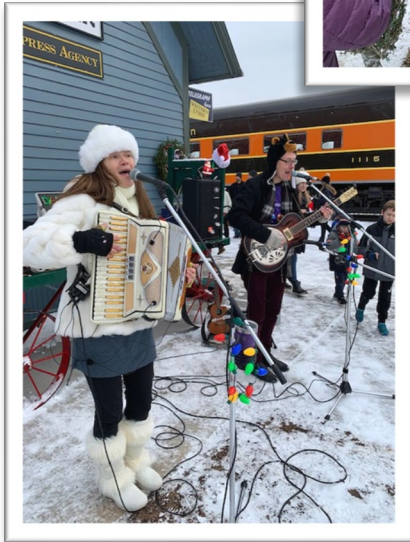
# Newsletter



A smile and candy cane greeted each rider.  
Photo credit: Paul von Goertz



Families select a tree that was pre-paid.  
Photo credit: Paul von Goertz



The NSSR arranged for music for the season and for a festive winter day.  
Photo credit: Paul von Goertz

Below are links to media coverage. Not all links may still be active. Thanks to the NSSR for making these links available to the KRHCC.

[Fox 21 Saturday: Christmas Tree Train](#)

[Duluth News Tribune: Christmas Tree Train](#)

[WDIO: Christmas Tree Train](#)

[CBS3: Christmas Tree Train](#)

[KBJR: Christmas Tree Train](#)

## KR FEATURED IN "MINNESOTA MONTHLY" MAGAZINE



KR and its Julebyen were a featured story in Minnesota Public Radio's MINNESOTA MONTHLY magazine that goes to about 212,000 MPR members (Image Left). For sure it will give Julebyen 2021 a boost as according to the magazine, 70% of its readers visited Brainerd Lakes, Duluth, the North Shore or Stillwater in the past year.

Writer Chris Pacone described KR as a "historic fishing village" and summarized Julebyen as "Overall the community spirit and lighthearted humor warms hearts at this traditional Nordic event." The story covers all Julebyen events and activities and touches on the Huldrefolk Trail above KR that will open in December 11.

Helene Hedlund, Julebyen Chair, said the feature story came about as a result of

the writer having attended a past Julebyen.

"He was writing a series of articles focusing on Minnesota holiday events and wanted to include Julebyen," said Helene. "He happens to be a friend of one of my neighbors.... who knew I was helping out with Julebyen this year. She contacted me and connected me with him. He had a short deadline so we arranged to do a telephone interview. The result ... a great Julebyen overview!"

## FISHCAKES AS SEED MONEY

It was a beautiful fall and many of us were able to enjoy some fall traditions like walks through canopied maples, caramel apples, pumpkin patches and corn mazes.

But, something seemed missing. It was the annual Knife River Lutheran Church fishcake dinner, which was scratched for a second year as a result of COVID. So, this



# Newsletter

year, we will have to settle for past memories of KRLC fishcake dinners, which go back many years.

Here's the story on KR's fishcakes as best I can gather from several sources.

Since the first fishcake fundraising dinner was held in KR in 1927, fishcake profits have been used as seed money. In 1927, Mrs. Tom Loining took the first steps in creating what would be the Knife River Lutheran Church (KRLC) by asking Rev. E. J. Tetlie to come to KR from TH to preach every other Sunday.

What is now the KRLC was a Presbyterian church and its members agreed to let the townspeople use their church. This arrangement worked well and when the church came up for sale in June of 1937, the still fledging congregation bought it for \$350 with mostly money raised by fishcake dinners. The first one was held on December 10, 1927 and generated \$185.

The dinners were a lot of work. There was no money to purchase food so fishermen donated their herring and others donated the meat for meatballs. The church's Ladies Aid was very active, up at sunrise frying meatballs and grinding and pounding herring into fishcakes.

The usual fare was fishcakes, meatballs, creamed peas and carrots, peeled potatoes, apple pie a la mode and coffee, pretty much the same menu served by the KRLC today.

Fishcakes served with tartar sauce. In Knife River they are served with white sauce.

Image credit: Internet public domain



## **The KRRC takes a page from the KRLC playbook:**

In the early 50s, a group of parents tried to form some kind of organization to create and maintain recreational activities for their children. In 1954, parents learned of funds being available for recreational activities through the Lake County Board of Education. The KR PTA applied for it. The PTA would act as the "Recreation Board" and for the 1954-55 school year KR received \$62.00 and for the 55-56 year \$76.50.

# Newsletter

Soon after the meeting with the Board of Education, members of the Knife River Rec Council (as it was now called), met to create a skating rink with seed money provided by - what else - a fishcake and meatball dinner which was held at the KRLC.

Once again fish cakes kicked off another KR initiative to benefit the community.

## **Knife River: Fish cake capital of the North Shore**

It only makes sense that fishcake dinners are to KR as is Kendall's. For starters, the herring was donated and secondly, townspeople didn't balk at the grueling process of preparing the herring that had to be ground, pounded and then beat into batter - now done with electric drills.

To the best of this writer's knowledge, there are three fishcake recipes in KR and I have never seen one in writing as they're carefully guarded. However, you can find recipes online, but I doubt they can match KR's secret recipe(s), perfected over generations.

*The KRLC's 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary book provided information for this story.*

## **PANNIER DISPLAYS FEATURES KRHCC'Ss OUTDOOR DISPLAYS IN COMPANY E-NEWSLETTER**

A year ago the KRHCC applied for a Cultural & Tourism grant from the Iron Range Resources & Rehabilitation (IRRR) to create four outdoor displays that in a total of 600 words give a capsule history of KR. We were awarded the grant and with a required 1:1 match from four local sponsors, we were able to order the displays.

We looked for a local vendor of the displays and not surprisingly, there was none. We went online and chose Pannier displays because of their very professional website, impressive portfolio, and because they were a family-owned business in a small town in Pennsylvania (we like small towns).

Pannier was great to work with and took a real interest in our displays, because once in place, we could activate our educational program while we completed the depot and our artifact collection. The displays arrived in April and later installed by Dave Grong and Larry Ronning.

# Newsletter

We were surprised when Pannier's Marketing Director, Emily McKinney, asked our permission to feature the KRHCC in their November, 2021 issue. Of course we said "Yes!"

When asked "Why us?" Emily responded "Each month, Pannier is proud to feature a stand-out project in the News Story section of our E-Newsletter. In November, we highlighted the (KRHCC) educational signage project. It was executed with such passion and research to educate this tight-knit community and its visitors. It is such a joy to see our panels displayed at the historic train depot and know they will educate people for years to come."

The Pannier newsletter goes to about 12,000 existing and prospective Pannier clients. Click on this link to read what was written about the KRHCC. [Educational Signage Tells the Story of Knife River](#)



The four Pannier displays give the chronological history of KR in four panels.

## **JULEBYEN 2021 EXPECTED TO SET RECORD ATTENDANCE**

The KRRC is gearing up for a record attendance based on web site hits over past years, train ticket pre-sales, statewide publicity, sold out Metro tour bus, and a \$5,000 regional marketing campaign funded through "Lovin' Lake County," marketing arm of the Lake County Chamber of Commerce.

The KRHCC partners with our friends at the KRRC to make our site and depot available for the weekend. While there will be plenty to see and do at Julebyen, do take time to see the now completed restoration of the depot.

# Newsletter



In our depot you will find a most fascinating exhibit that has been a labor of love for Lee Bujold. It is a “Tiny Village” depiction of KR in great detail that Lee has created over several years in her home. While you should be able to make out KR’s most notable sites and landmarks, Lee will help you understand some of the detail and with that some interesting KR history. Thank you Lee for creating and setting up this amazing display, and to your helper Jim, too.

Lee Bujold’s labor of love over several years.  
Photo credit: Paul von Goertz

## **YOUR GIFTS TO THE KRHCC DURING THE HOLIDAYS WILL SUPPORT ACTIVITIES FOR FAMILIES TO ENJOY - AND LEARN.**

This is a giving time of year and like all non-profits, the KRHCC wants to be remembered, too.

If you’ve followed the work of the KRHCC, you will note that a lot of our activities are those that families can enjoy. These include June “Picnic Trains,” November “Christmas Tree Trains” in conjunction with our friends at the NSSR, Julebyen partnering with the KRRC, and new this year, “Trees. Trains. & Traditions.”

The KRHCC has also taken the initiative to help maintain our country’s core values with respect for our flag and gratitude towards our veterans. Our 30’ flagpole and nearby veterans memorial are moving symbols of our values, and particularly when illuminated at night.

All gifts received from now through January 31, 2021 will be directed to offsetting costs of KRHCC initiatives that families can enjoy and also learn. The KRHCC is an IRS recognized 501(c3) and so all gifts are fully tax-deductible.

Many of the KRHCC’s activities are with families in mind. This young family was fortunate enough to grab Christmas Tree Train tickets before they sold out shortly after being posted on the NSSR web site. Photo credit: Paul von Goertz





# Newsletter

## **DONATIONS, MEMORIALS, HONORARIUMS AND SPONSORSHIPS**

Sponsorship:

Dave and Jan Jacobson order board levers (pulls).

Donation:

Mike and Nancy Ojard for a large and beautiful Christmas wreath for our depot.

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](mailto: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](http://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](mailto:info@krhcc.org)*