

Newsletter



Knife River Heritage & Cultural Center

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

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By: Paul von Goertz, KRHCC Board Member

DEPOT “COMMISSIONING” A MILESTONE AND CELEBRATION

On Friday, November 22, we invited our friends from the local media and all those who helped with the rebuild, to record a depot milestone. With the completion of the exterior, we felt it appropriate to “commission” it with a ceremonial placing of the depot name board.

For many years, every small town on a railroad right-of-way had a depot that greeted visitors and gave them a first impression of the town. Much care went into the design, choice of materials and even some architectural embellishments. There are few of these depots left and so for those of us who once grimaced at the deplorable state of our depot for so many years, we can now point with pride to the new “front door” to KR, all done with local volunteers and 95% local donations.



Knife River Heritage & Cultural Center is a 501(c3) Non-profit organization.

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In the above photo, Larry Ronning and Randy Ellestad mount the name board on the depot with help from John Safstrom. A sign that acknowledges the depot is part of the Railway Express Agency, rests on a sawhorse and will be mounted beneath the name board.

Todd Lindahl, KRHCC historian, researched other signage on the original depot and will have it replicated and in place by Julebyen.



Larry Ronning, volunteer general contractor who planned and implemented the rebuild from start to finish, was interviewed by Renee Passal, WDIO Channel 10 reporter. Renee also interviewed Carol Ojard Carlson, Julebyen chair, on the important roll the depot will play in Julebyen. The WDIO news feature aired in the station's evening news blocks later that day.

<https://www.wdio.com/news/knife-river-depot-julebyen-train/5561188/>, here is a link to the WDIO interviews.

DEPOT DEBUT SET FOR JULEBYEN WEEKEND

Thanks to long hours by volunteers, the depot will make its debut Julebyen weekend, Dec. 6 – 8. While the interior will remain mostly unfinished, there will be heat and electrical power for the comfort of those buying Troll Train tickets, memorabilia, and instructions for the children's treasure hunt.

As a KRHCC board member, I remember the challenge the Regional Rail Authority gave your board as our lease for land was negotiated about a year ago, and that was "to show visible progress by the end of the 2019." Well! High five!

What makes the debut possible is the overwhelming support for the project both in volunteer hours and financial support. Larry Ronning stickhandled the whole

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rebuild process always with an eye to safety and as a result (“knock on wood”) no injuries other than a few bee stings and slivers.

An example of volunteer passion for the project is John Safstrom who can scamper up a ladder or scaffold like a man a fraction of his age (86 years). He volunteered to insulate most of the attic, finally emerging from the attic manhole with face and mask blackened in coal dust!

Last January, your board took a gamble and elected not to apply for major grants until Phase II next year (boat/picnic shelter), but rather rely on donations from the community to complete Phase I (stabilize and restore depot exterior).

This gamble paid off more than 95% of money raised to date coming from present and past community members. The amount of local money raised and volunteer hours donated will have a huge impact on grantors for Phase II when they review the amount of required “local share” for the complete center.

As an aside, ALL nine depot windows have found a sponsor – thanks to all nine people who responded to the challenge of making a \$1,000 donation for each window.

Now, for those who make charitable gifts by the end of the tax year, we have some suggestions:

- Two windows for freight depot - \$1,000 each
- Custom “barn door” for freight depot - \$1,200
- Period coal burning stoves for both depot and freight depot with stainless flue liner: \$1,500 - \$1,800 each (much less if one or both are donated and pass Todd Lindahl’s test for period authenticity)
- Granite monument adjacent to flag pole that honors KR area service members: \$3,000 - \$4,000

We hope all readers will have an opportunity to partake in the “Depot Debut” Julebyen weekend, and join with an expected 8,000 visitors to KR to celebrate the Christmas season through the magic of Knife River’s Scandinavian Julebyen!

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CAN YOU HELP DECORATE THE DEPOT FOR THE HOLIDAYS?

Volunteers will be busy preparing the depot, CRUSADER II and the “Troll Village” at the KRHCC site for Julebyen, and could use more help in the days preceding the festival.

If any of you have been to the Duluth Depot during the holidays, you have seen how the depot was magically transformed back to a celebration of Christmas circa 1900. Could we do something like that on a much smaller scale? If you can help with ideas, your time or extra ornaments, please contact: info@krhcc.org

In this photo, Mary von Goertz and John Safstrom adorn CRUSADER II with a wreath and lights along the gunnel to simulate waves. See result at end of newsletter!



CRUSADER II FINALLY ARRIVES AT ITS NEW HOME



Orphaned Knife River icon CRUSADER II was welcomed to its new home at the KRHCC site on Wednesday, November 13th. Knifer River was the stout fish tug’s home from 1939 to 1993 when, as a result of lack of interest in it, it was adopted by the Lake County Historical Society and moved to Lighthouse Point in Two Harbors. There she stood with no shelter over her deck, but cosmetically maintained until 2016 when the

Society gave the boat to the Knife River Rec Council with the hope the Knife River

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community would be good stewards. The boat was brought to the Knife River Marina by a marina crew without charge and now, three years later, finally at home.

The photos show the temporary location of the boat until it can be moved under a shelter with picnic area at the completion of Phase II next year. The temporary location was chosen to maximize space for the KRRC's Troll Village as part of Julebyen.



Did you know...?

KR'S ORIGINAL "HARBOR"

KR did not have a real harbor until the early mid-fifties. Prior to then, commercial fishermen had docks and skids on either side of the river, and a "harbor" of sorts up the river to just below the Scenic 61 bridge. In the photo, you can see boats tied behind what was once Emily's. You may recall from an earlier newsletter that there really was an Emily who owned Emily's. Carol Ojard Carlson, Emily Erickson's granddaughter, provided this photo.



The river harbor gave excellent protection from the Big Lake, but boat owners had to deal with spring break up and high water caused by heavy summer rains. In addition, the Nor'easters would rearrange the river mouth. It was always a challenge for the resourceful Norwegian fishermen to keep the entry open and navigable.

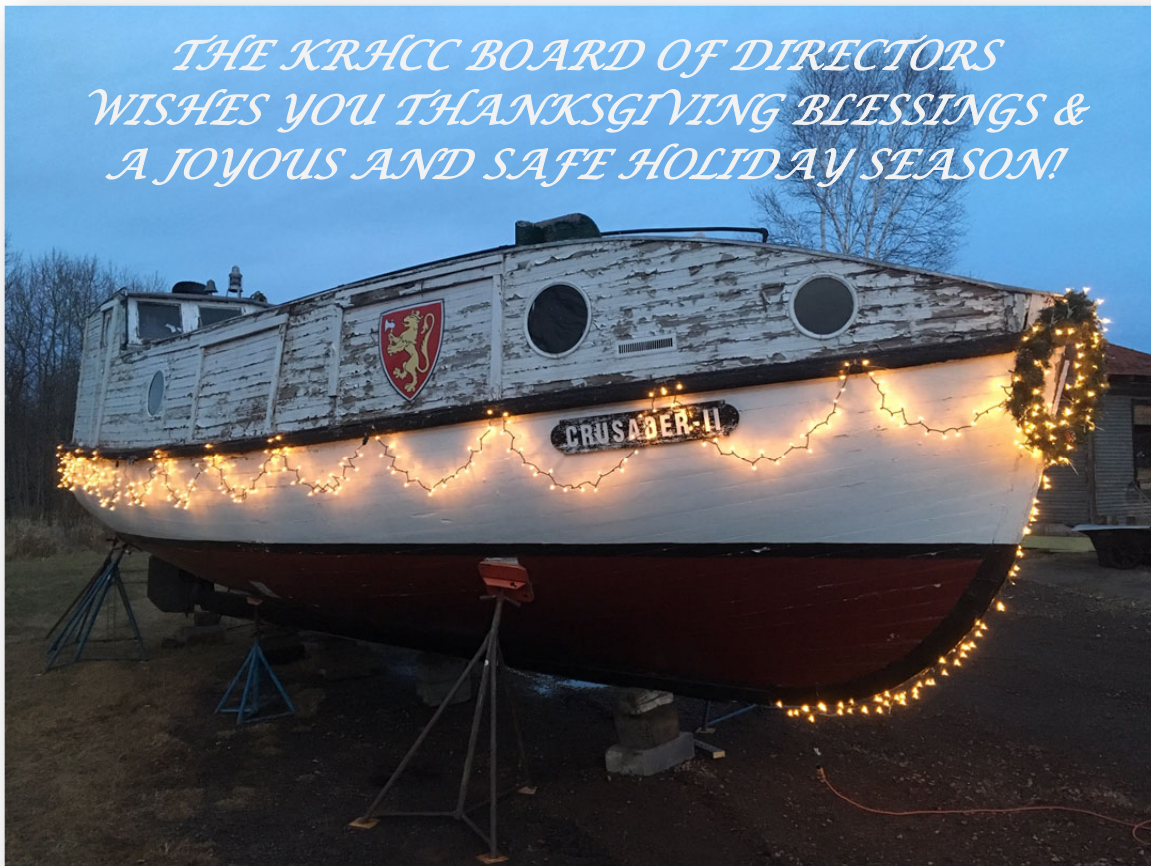
A notch in the shore line where the harbor is now, was made after The War with the formation of the Knife River Harbor Cooperative. The co-op sold \$100 shares to mostly local fishermen who by the mid-fifties were able to extend the "notch" inland through a bog to about where the haul out slip is today, and then west from there. The US Army

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Corps of Engineers would then build the break wall, the design of which has long been a point of discussion among boaters. Pilings from the original harbor still remain.

In 1971, the Harbor Cooperative deeded the harbor land to the county so the county could use the value of the land as “local share” in applying for an EDA (Economic Development Administration) grant that would build the marina as we know it today. Ironically, by the time the harbor was built, commercial fishing has declined to where few fishermen could enjoy the efforts of so many that had made the new harbor possible.

The MN DNR today owns the harbor/marina which contracts management to Sailboats, Inc. of Superior, which also manages Barker’s Island.



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Coming in the December KRHCC issue – the Depot’s Debut at Julebyen 2019 captured in photos

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 receiving it, please forward to them, or send their email addresses to same email address and they will receive their own copy.