

Newsletter



Knife River Heritage & Cultural Center

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JULY, 2019

By Paul von Goertz, KRHCC Board Member

FOR FIRST TIME IN 120 YRS., DEPOT IS SQUARE AND LEVEL

The most challenging aspect of the depot rebuild was overcome with the pouring of the cement slab on July 11. It took a crew of seven to accomplish the pour which was carefully planned and directed by Larry Ronning, and with the help of bothers Scott and Brad Reitan, concrete flatwork professionals from Two Harbors who donated their time. Thank you Scott and Brad!



Brad Reitan finishes the depot slab

Tubing was run throughout the concrete to accommodate in-floor heat should it be needed at some point.

On July 22, the depot was lowered on to the cured slab.

Next will be straightening the walls in preparation for rebuilding the roof. No more roof hole! Nearly all the work on the depot since the rebuild commenced on May 13 has been devoted to preparing for the slab pour. A great accomplishment!

Newsletter



With slab in place and depot squared, roof work began on July 30.

Left to right, Dan Little, Randy Ellestad, Scott Jaspersen and Larry Ronning. Soon no more hole in the roof!

We can use help keeping site clean of roof debris and free of nails.

WILL DEPOT BE READY FOR JULEBYEN 2019?

While it is mid-summer, plans for Julebyen 2019 are in full swing. Dates are December 6, 7 and 8. At this point we are cautiously optimistic the depot will be framed up and capable of holding heat – or at least keeping the wind and snow out.

Speaking of wind and snow, we are happy to report that our challenge in the June newsletter for nine people to purchase one custom window at \$1,000 each, has already resulted in one window being purchased towards the nine we need. Can you help? The KRHCC is a non-profit so your donation is totally tax-deductible. As a leap of faith, we have placed our order for nine custom windows that are period correct.

If we are successful in meeting our Julebyen depot goals, the depot will once again be the site for selling train tickets. Last Julebyen, nearly 1,000 people bought tickets to the “Troll Train to Troll Canyon” in search of mischievous trolls. Many stood in line outside for up to a half hour in strong NE winds to board the train. This year they can use the depot as a waiting area, as well as for purchasing tickets. There may also be room in the depot for another purpose as the Julebyen committee may decide.

Newsletter

MORE THANKS AND PRAISE

In each newsletter issue we try to recognize those who have contributed special needed talents or skills to the KRHCC. In this issue, we want to thank (again) Brad and Scott Reitan, mentioned in our lead story.

Additionally, we want to thank Anne-Lu (Basson) Hovis for designing our letterhead and masthead for our newsletter. She also formats this newsletter, which is a great help to your editor who just recently mastered the ball point pen.

NSSR “PICNIC TRAIN” BRINGS PICNICKERS TO KR

Over three Saturdays in June and July, the North Shore Scenic Railroad brought mostly families to Knife River for a picnic lunch on our Agate Beach.



The last train on July 13 had the novelty of being pulled by the steam locomotive. Thanks to KRHCC board members Todd Lindahl and Duane Madison who met the train and briefed visitors on our railroad history and the restoration of the depot. At least one other Picnic Train is planned for August.

This picture shows Picnic Train riders arriving at the depot and about to head for the agate beach. As a bonus, a steam locomotive pulled their car.

Thanks to the Knife River Rec Council (KRRC) for making the beach available to Picnic Train riders and all visitors to KR, and keeping it clean and welcoming. For those who might not be aware, the KRRC owns 300 feet of beach that it maintains and manages for public use.

Newsletter

Did you know?

Knife River was a popular destination for excursion boat day trips out of Duluth until a road was built along the shore in 1926. Knife River could be sailed to and back in less than a day for passengers to enjoy hunting, fishing and our treasured agate beach – yes, Knife River was known for agates since at least the late 1800s.



The picture shown is that of the OSSIFRAGE, a 123' long excursion boat tied to the north side of Knife Island. It could carry up to 900 day-trippers. The captain apparently knew Knife River well and that the OSSIFRAGE's ten draft would be accommodated in the deep water of the north side.

The name OSSIFRAGE is rather a strange name for a boat as in Menominee it means "Old Squaw Duck."

The OSSIFRAGE was built in 1886 and only on Lake Superior from April of 1888 until late 1889. So this photo was shot during that time period. After some research, it has been learned that the all-male passengers are members of a Masonic Order and the trip was of such significance that they brought a photographer.

The OSSIFRAGE would eventually be converted to a barge in 1917. In 1919 it would sink with its cargo between Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island, Canada.

PLEASE BEES, BUZZ OFF. (WASPS, TOO)

A hive of honey bees is not happy that we will need to relocate them from the freight building to somewhere else. We know they were there first and your editor tried to reason with them to leave, only to be rebuffed with a sting. If someone knows how to peacefully remove honey bees and wasps, please respond to: info@krhcc.org

Newsletter

NATIVE PEOPLE – A FOCUS OF THE KRHCC

Our mission statement states we will preserve and protect the history of Knife River from its ancient and native peoples through today. We are pleased that Laura Stone and Peg Zahoric have offered to pursue the history of the ancient and native peoples' presence in the Knife River area in conjunction with Todd Lindahl, KRHCC historian. Start point will be to contact the Cass and Red Lake Ojibwa communities for help.

Thank you Laura and Peg for attending to this important aspect of the KRHCC!

GETTING CHILDREN INVOLVED WITH HISTORY AND THE KRHCC

Nine-year old William West of Edina, MN, was enjoying a father/son weekend on the North Shore, with a stop at the agate beach. While there, they noticed activity at the depot site. William, and dad, Bill, ventured over and your editor, who was at the site, proceeded to tell them what we were doing and gave them a brief history lesson on the depot and railroading in Knife River. William was captivated and asked if he could build a model of the original depot, to which I offered to provide him with pix and some of Todd Lindahl's drawings.

So great to see a child respond to what the KRHCC is creating! By the way, William wants to be a civil engineer.

Involving children and youth in "living history" is an important goal of the KRHCC. Let's give some thought to how we can effectively do this.

THE KRHCC OFFERS WAYS FAMILIES CAN MEMORIALIZE A LOVED ONE

We are very pleased at this early planning stage for a flag pole and granite memorial of some sort to honor Knife River veterans, including Merchant Marine that a Knife River family has already offered to cover the cost of a pole planned to be 30' in height and lit with solar. The height is necessary because the depot is approximately 26' feet tall. The family has chosen this way to memorialize a loved one, a Marine veteran.

Newsletter

Other opportunities the KRHCC has to memorialize someone, is financial help with the granite memorial, and building of a nearby gazebo. The intent is to work the flag, memorial and gazebo into a place of reflection.

WHO IS THIS 86-YEAR OLD VOLUNTEER?

This is an amazing worker and inspiration to all over age 40. He/she shovels gravel and sand, climbs ladders to scrape paint and pull nails, and does most anything required at the depot. He/she is 86-years old and puts many of us to shame with his/her enthusiasm and energy for the depot restoration. So who is this person? Email your guess to info@krhcc.org. Winner will receive one pound of historic square depot nails, which you can pull yourself from depot debris to validate their authenticity.

Answer will be printed in the August newsletter.

Things learned along the way....

(from Todd Lindahl's compilation of historical Knife River info)

In 1900, the Lake County Sheriff and the Two Harbors Police Chief arrested the occupants of a "disorderly house" near Knife River run by one Lizzie Wallace. She and a Mrs. Blair were placed in a Two Harbors jail cell. Lizzie pleaded guilty to being the landlady of "a house of questionable character." Mrs. Blair said she was only the cook. (Oh really? Cooking for whom?) They refused cigarettes when offered, claiming they were "too lady like" and preferred clay pipes. Both were fined \$5.00 and released. Oh my....

Your comments on the KRHCC online newsletter are welcome, as well as questions related to KRHCC plans and Knife River history. Additionally, if you have family or friends who may enjoy receiving the newsletter, please send their email to: info@krhcc.org If you do not wish to receive the newsletter, admit to being a curmudgeon and request to be dropped from the email list.