

# Newsletter



## Knife River Heritage & Cultural Center

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

NOVEMBER, 2020

By Paul von Goertz, KRHCC Board Member

### **VETERAN'S DAY 2020 IN KR WILL BE REMEMBERED AS HISTORIC, MEMORABLE AND FOR MANY, DEEPLY MOVING**



On Veteran's Day 2020, a flag was raised for the very first time in a memorable "First Flag Raising" ceremony at the Knife River Heritage & Cultural Center. The Two Harbors American Legion Post 109 supported by UMD Air Force ROTC cadets conducted the ceremony.

The event was historic for Knife River as now the community has a flagpole it can claim as its own. It was donated by a KR family, the family of Albert Wieme, and is on land leased to a KR non-profit by a state governing body comprised of elected officials.

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Fresh snow and blue skies formed the perfect backdrop as Old Glory was slowly unfurled, and when released by an attending ROTC cadet, a perfectly-timed gentle gust of wind allowed its full 7' x 10' breadth to be admired by all as it was slowly raised. A moment of unplanned silence followed as all in attendance reflected on the moment.

You can see the whole ceremony using this link: <https://youtu.be/jLae5Empnrc> If the link does not open, use this title in YouTube "Search": [First Flag Raising: Knife River Heritage and Cultural Center](#)

What the video does not capture is the emotional essence of the moment felt by

those in attendance.

Many thanks to Jim Allert for shooting and editing the video and making it available for all those unable to attend, or concern for COVID safety.

The KRHCC asked Jim Latvala, Post Commander, to take charge of the ceremony and the KRHCC would help in any way. Post members knew exactly what to do from opening prayer by Chaplain Chris Belfield, to rifle salute, to collecting shell casings for presentation to members of the Albert Wieme family.

Chaplain Belfield eloquently explained why we honor and celebrate our veterans and all who served. He reminded those in attendance of the important and somewhat unique ways the KR community supported our country's efforts in its World Wars.

"It was those from Knife River who served in the Merchant Marine, built the wooden boards that helped win the Battle of the North Atlantic, and the fisherman that kept the nation supplied with fresh herring, throughout the wars," said Chaplain Belfield.

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In addition to about 20 Post members and eight cadets, an estimated 60 – 70 people from KR and surrounding area attended practicing social distancing.

A formal dedication of the flagpole to service members of the Wieme family will be held on Memorial Day, 2021.



## **SPECIAL THANKS TO CL&P FOR GIVING KR A LIFT WHEN WE REALLY NEEDED IT!**



The KRHCC and KR community expresses its deep gratitude to Co-op Light & Power of Lake County for providing the crew and equipment to up-right and set both our new 30' flag pole and just restored 29' order board railroad signal pole at the same time.

The CL&P man-lift was able to lift the 240 lbs. flag pole into place on a 6½' deep x 2' wide concrete footing, while Dave Grong looks on.

Photo credit: Paul von Goertz.

This was all done without cost to the KRHCC, the savings of which we can apply to restoring our depot back to a functioning 1900s train station.

Both the flagpole and the order board pole have added considerable personality to the depot, and will add even more when the flag is illuminated at night, which should be accomplished by December 1. The order board projects a welcoming green light to all passing trains. The light will remain locked on green as the railroad remains a commercial railroad and all signal lights must be obeyed.

CL&P used a bigger aerial lift to mount the estimated 650lbs. order board pole onto 1" diameter bolts imbedded 2ft into a 2' x 4½' concrete footing. Bed rock was hit at that depth. Photo credit: Paul von Goertz



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## **...AND THANKS TO OUR VOLUNTEERS WHO GAVE US AN UPLIFTING EXPERIENCE!**

With eyes focused on the goal of having the south side of the depot concrete apron poured and flag pole in place by Veteran's Day, volunteers with the help of CL&P mounted the flag pole on Monday of Veteran's week, grouted the surface of the concrete mount on Tuesday, and were ready for the "First Flag Raising" ceremony on Wednesday.

Concrete pours of the depot apron required fast action on the part of many volunteers. Photo: Paul von Goertz



We should add we were very thankful for the warmer weather that allowed the 6 ½' deep by 2' wide concrete flag footing to cure along with a finishing surface grout. Congrats to all who pulled this off without a hitch (Fact-check: grout was still soft on Veteran's Day).

## **IRRR AWARDS KRHCC GRANT OF \$5,750**

The Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation (IRRR) has awarded the KRHCC a Cultural & Tourism grant for \$5,750 as its 50% share in creating four outdoor educational display panels, and production of depot interior and exterior period signage.

The KRHCC was fortunate to have four families each respond to a KRHCC challenge to commit \$1,000 towards the cost of a display. Cost of period building signage will be shared 50/50 with the IRRR and the KRHCC.

The panels will be mounted in cantilevered metal frames and give an overview of KR's historical periods from indigenous peoples through today.



Photo: Pannier Graphics

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Messages of the four 24" x 36" panels will be succinct and be as follows:

Panel #1: Near where train passengers deboard.

Welcome to Knife River, Minnesota: Brief mention of historical periods from indigenous peoples to present. Focus on early indigenous fishing camps to French fur traders to copper exploration – all prior to settlement of town.

Panel #2: Near depot.

Devoted to depot history and significance of KR as only North Shore town where two railroad companies' lines intersected.

Panel #3: Near tracks.

KR as railroad town. Volume of pulpwood and saw logs that arrived and were shipped from here along with herring; mention of hundreds of thousands of tons of iron ore that passed through KR between Two Harbors and Duluth.

Panel #4: Near CRUSADER II.

Focus on commercial fishing. KR as most prolific provider of herring from the Lake Superior North Shore to Upper Midwest markets. History of CRUSADER II and pertinent specifications. Christened by Crown Prince Olav of Norway in 1939.

Copy for the panels will be researched and written over the winter months with images selected to support the text. The Minnesota State Historical Society will approve all content.

The KRHCC is very thankful to the IRRR for the grant received and the confidence they have in the KRHCC as a valuable educational resource and an additional North Shore attraction.

## **KR'S GROCERY STORES – ONE IN A SERIES: THE CONGDON STORE**

With this issue we will attempt to tell you as much as we have learned about one of the five (?) grocery and general stores that at one time served KR families. The first will be the Congdon Store as it is one I can remember.

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The story of the Congdon store starts with Pascal “Pete” Rosso who was KR’s depot agent from 1900 to 1934. Pete had a store directly behind the depot where railroad passengers could get supplies, hot lunches and even ice cream.

Photo: Congdon store circa 1930’s.

Pete was married to Mary DiMarco, also from KR. Their daughter, Grace, while visiting in Michigan, would meet Harold Congdon and the two would marry and move to KR. Harold bought the store and the former Alger-Smith railroad warehouse from Pete and moved them to the northwest corner of Scenic 61 and Marina Road. The store is now a residence.

Harold and Grace were quite the entrepreneurs even while raising three children, daughters Lorraine and Evelyn, and son, Harold. The store was a general store as well as a post office with Grace the town’s postmaster.

The store was a favorite meeting place for townspeople where they could get groceries and fresh meat, check their mail on one side of the store, and buy beer and play 1 and 2 cent slots on the other. Children had a broad selection of penny candy.

Photo: Circa late 1940’s/1950’s.



The Congdon store included a bar and slot of machines.

Photo: L to R at bar Harold Congdon, Margaret Kisserow (friend of Mary) and Mary Congdon.

I remember the Congdon store from when Mary and I moved from Park Point to KR in 1972. Along with groceries, our Duluth Sunday News Tribune would be picked up

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there, which gave us a chance to visit with Harold.

The store served more than KR families with other customers coming from nearby Palmers (three miles west) and from the 1930's CCC camp at the site of what is now Tom's Logging Camp.

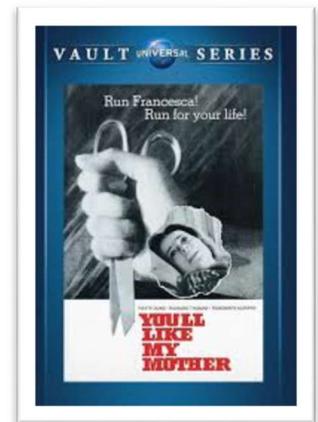
The three Congdon siblings all attended the KR school through grade eight and then took either a bus or train to high school in Two Harbors. All worked at the store, and lived above and in an addition behind it.

Grace Congdon died in 1950; Harold continued to run the store until giving it up in the late '70s and moving in with Lorraine. He died in 1981 at age 84. The Congdon store property was sold to KR native Peter Bugge who converted into a home for his family. The paved area in front became a lot for used cars. It has been a residence ever since.

## Harold's moment of fame:

In 1972 both Harold and KR had bit parts in the suspense thriller "You'll Like My Mother," a film directed by Lamont Johnson and starring Patty Duke, Rosemary Murphy and Richard Thomas.

In the movie, Patty Duke is the wife of a man killed in Vietnam and, while pregnant, follows her husband's insistence that should he die, she live with his mother in her mansion (Glensheen). In one of the earlier scenes, a bus with Patty on board is seen crossing over the original bridge on Church Road and stopping at the Congdon store. It is snowing heavily and the bus driver asks Harold about road conditions (?) and he gives a one-sentence response. Image: Internet public domain.



His fleeting moment of fame is recorded on the IMDb website where he is acknowledged as "an actor know for [You'll Like My Mother](#) (1972)". IMDb claims to be "The world's most popular and authoritative source for movie, TV and celebrity content." There you have it!

In a future issue of the KRHCC newsletter we will tell you about another KR store.

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Many thanks to *Lorraine Ojard* for providing much of the information for this story – *also the photos.*

## **KRLC SHOWS ITS SUPPORT FOR OUR FIRST RESPONDERS**

By Lee Bujold

We all benefit from the diligence of first responders in keeping both residents and visitors safe throughout the year, assisting in emergency situations and making sure that events like Julebyen and our 4<sup>th</sup> of July kid's parade to the candy store are without incident.

To show our gratitude, Knife River Lutheran Church treated first responders to sweet treats from Great! Lakes Candy. Eighty-eight individual bags of sweets (along with totes of apples for those that don't eat sugar) were delivered with thank you cards to each department including the Lake County Sheriff's Office, Lake County Dispatch Center, Two Harbors Police Department, Minnesota Conservation Officers and Lake County Fire Department and the Lake County Rescue Squad.

"It was fun," said Lee. "... and I learned a lot about the number of folks who look after us in Lake County."

### *Editor's note:*

*I asked Lee to provide this information for our newsletter as she coordinated this initiative on behalf of the Knife River Lutheran Church. "It was fun," said Lee. "And I learned a lot about the number of folks who look after us in Lake County." As a point of interest, Lee's husband, Jim, is a former Duluth Police officer and their grandson, Andrew, is a current member of the force.*

## **JULEBYEN 2020 GOES ONLINE AND INTO THE WOODS**

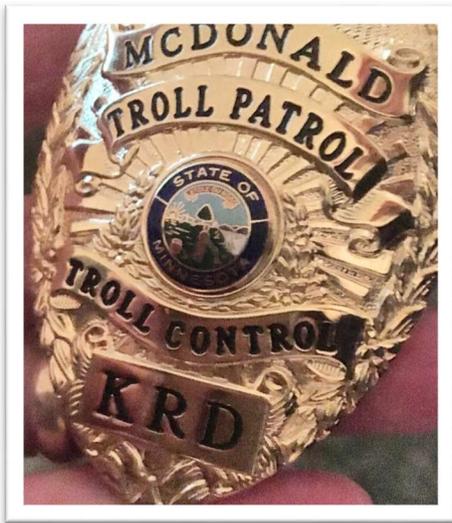
This year's annual Knife River Julebyen Scandinavian Christmas festival takes place online and in the woods.

Julebyen chair, Carol Ojard Carlson, said that in spite of the COVID pandemic, the spirit of Julebyen will continue with an online showcasing of the talent and creativity of local artisans and entertainers who have been part of the outdoor market and Troll Village in past Julebyens.

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Carlson said new this year is a self-guided walk along the Knife River hiking trail above Knife River. Families may hike along the 0.9 mile Hidden Folk Trail throughout the holiday season to a tree waiting to be decorated, while being watchful for mischievous trolls, or dare to tackle a challenging obstacle course.

A story written by Scandinavian story-teller, Lise Lunge Larsen, can be read along the way. It stresses a theme of kindness, compassion and other qualities needed in today's world. Once at the tree, hikers will find a bin of biodegradable and edible ornaments for animals to use in decorating the tree.



According to Carlson, a Troll Control video produced by officers of the Minnesota Department of Troll Control will have the latest reports on troll sightings.

The virtual Julebyen markets are online throughout the holiday season. The Hidden Folk hiking trail will open from Dec 4 - Jan 1. The trail head is at the end of Shilhon Road which heads north from HWY 61 Express way above Knife River. It ends at the lower trail outlet also on Shilhon Road. People then walk back to the trail head to their cars.

Photo: A. Hovis.

Complete information and details on all Julebyen 2020 activities are online at [Juleben.us](http://Juleben.us)

Please practice COVID health guidance as provided by the CDC and Minnesota Department of Health while hiking on the trail.

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