2013 Pork Chop Supper Fundraiser

With Music by
Chuck Thiel

$10-Adults & $6-Kids

Monday, June 10th - 4:30-7 PM

The McLeod County Historical Society would like to invite you and your family to a special edition of our Annual Pork Chop Supper event! This year we are so very lucky to be entertained by one of the area’s musical talents, Chuck Thiel of Lester Prairie, MN. The “Jolly Ramblers” band, of which Chuck is a member, will be appearing from 5-6 PM in the Museum’s meeting room. At 6 PM, the Museum will be honoring some of our generous donors and volunteers who continue to make our Pork Chop Supper a huge success and help to support the preservation of McLeod County History.

As always, Master Griller, Bill Arndt and his lovely wife Joan will be serving up their special seasoning for our one-of-kind pork chops. Meals will be available for carryout all evening, with any extra chops and fixings sold to go. If you eat in and enjoy the music and great displays, an extra pork chop can be purchased with your meal for just $3. Each meal will include: A tasty Benny’s Meat Market Pork Chop, KFC Mashed Potatoes, Green Beans & Applesauce compliment of McCormick’s, French Bread from Subway, and a Schwan’s Ice Cream Sundae for dessert.

We hope you will join us for some good food, talented entertainment and a great cause!

Supplemental funds provided by Thrivent Financial for Lutherans
Our world is in a state of organized chaos! Yes, even in chaos, our volunteers still manage to keep all our collections alphabetized. I am talking about our recent grant project to install compressible storage. Although the construction portion of the grant is complete, the hard work will now begin for both staff and volunteers. The work of labeling and recording where each and every photo, document, map and book is housed in the new archival space. Not only will everything that was once in the space be returned, but a few hundred more items will also be added into the space. And yes, each of these newly added items will have to be given a home location in our searchable computer software system, so that when we are looking for that photo, document, map or book, we know right where to find it!

Below are photos from left to right of the progression of our project. The first picture shows the rails for the movable carriages being laid out, and ends with Marge Ruzicka adding the first artifact box to the new shelving units! There were many steps in between, as you can see in the photos below, and still many more steps and tasks to do, but our volunteers are the best in the world and I know there is nothing they can’t accomplish!!!

A true story about two sisters and their miraculous survival of one of the most powerful tornadoes in Minnesota history.

On June 13, 1968, the first F5 tornado ever recorded in Minnesota struck the town of Tracy around 7 p.m. Nine people were killed and over 100 injured. Newlyweds, Linda (Haugen) Vaske and her husband Clifford Vaske had been finalizing adoption paperwork on two-year-old Nancy Vlahos when Clifford left for military training in Washington. On the night of the tornado, Linda, her 8-year-old sister Pam and Nancy were at the Vaskes’ home south of town. Linda, holding tightly onto Nancy, and Pam were unable to reach the basement in time. All three were blown out of the house. Linda was unable to maintain her grasp on Nancy. Although the sisters suffered serious injuries, both survived. However, Nancy's lifeless body was found on a street a block away. The sisters will never forget that night and rarely a day goes by that they don't think about the little girl who was taken from them.

Please join us for a program, book signing and refreshments.

**“Out of the Blue”**

**Author Program & Book Signing**

**Sunday, June 9th 2-3 PM**

**Museum Meeting Room**

Books will be for sale and book signing available before and after the program.

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**McLeod County Historical Society Newsletter**

**Mission Statement**

The McLeod County Historical Society is dedicated to connecting with the past, understanding the present and making informed choices about the future by finding, preserving, explaining and sharing McLeod County history.

**Membership Fees**

- Individual $20, Family $35
- Business $200
- Individual Lifetime $500

**Board of Directors**

- Stan Ehrke, President
- Karen Hendrickson, Vice President
- Tara Russell, Secretary
- Gerard Stifter, Treasurer
- Dave Horrmann, Ray Pavlish, Anne Hahn, Scott Rehmann, and Lowell Ueland

**Executive Director**

- Lori Pickell-Stangel

**Assistant**

- Peggy Paulson

**Volunteer Staff**

- Stan Ehrke, Tech Support
- Bev Swenson, Collections
- Marlys Fredrick, Research
- Marge Ruzicka, Archivist
- Liz Schwarze-3-D Artifacts

**McLeod County Museum**

380 School Road NW
Hutchinson, MN 55350
(320) 587-2109
www.mcleodhistory.org
e-mail: info@hutchtel.net

**Museum Hours**

Monday: 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Thursday and Friday:
10 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
Saturday: 1 to 4 p.m.

Also available by appointment

Closed:
Tuesday, Wednesday, Sunday

The McLeod County Historical Society Newsletter is published eleven times per year, monthly except for December/January.

**Board of Director’s Meeting**

Fourth Monday of each
Month at 7 P M
Museum Research Library
was a curiosity to the children. As this brother and sister pair looked around, they saw a sight that sent them screaming to the school for help. There was something lying in the edge of the waters of Buffalo Creek. It was a body.

Miss Sarah McAdams, the teacher at the country school, was alerted. She and several other children hurried to the creek. After Miss McAdams spied a bloody razor on the bank of the creek, she fainted, and the children fled to nearby farmers for assistance.

The first locals who arrived at the scene were: L.W. Calkins, Frank Chase, J. C. Root, Andrew Thompson, S.S. Beach (father of Alice and Walter), Frank R. Smith, Joseph H. Geroy, and Charles Evans. The men found the body of a man, as reported, in the shallow waters of the creek. The corpse was face down, partially supported by the knees and arms, and was located about eight to ten feet west of the bridge. On the bank was vast pool of blood, the bloody razor, a pair of shears, a pair of barber’s clippers, a razor strap, and a pipe. Calkins and Chase went to work and pulled the body out of the water and onto the bank. The rescuers made a ghastly discovery. Upon the dead man’s throat, from ear-to-ear, was a gruesome gash.

Beach immediately notified the coroner, Dr. Fred Sheppard, of Brownton. Dr. D.W. Bowles, a Brownton physician, was also summoned. Upon Sheppard’s arrival, he took the body into his care, and the corpse was removed to the schoolhouse.

A six-member jury was assembled that same day, and a two-day inquest began. Members of the jury, including Frank Sudgen, C. R. Donaldson, Ed Reinhardt, John Bradish, G. C. Canfield, and Fred Sudgen, attempted to find answers to this mystery. Who was this unknown, unfortunate man who came to his untimely death? The inquest revealed what was thought to be a reasonable answer.

The Mystery of the Man

The man, a 30-something-year-old laborer, who was 145 pounds, 5’ 8 or 5’9” tall and had a sandy complexion, had been found wearing a shabby, well-worn suit of clothing, Pongola shoes, a brown, soft felt hat, and underwear that was “…pretty fair quality and was almost new.” The initial search of his pockets by the local rescuers revealed a clay pipe, a pair of hair clippers, and two letters which contained no references in which to identify the man.

A later more thorough search retrieved $471 dollars in cash and a certificate of deposit from the First National Bank in Rochester, MN, for $2625 to
John Boehn, which was thought to be the victim’s name. Coroner Sheppard telegraphed the bank and received verification that the certificate was valid, but bank officials had no further information that could be used to identify the man.

Who could solve the mystery of this man? Fred Smith, a farmer and brother-in-law to Mr. S.S. Beach, living near the scene, had some answers. Smith testified that Boehn had eaten dinner with him and his family on Sunday night. Boehn, who seemed to be in a morose mood and answered mostly in monosyllables, told the Smith family that he had spent Saturday night at the home of a farmer in Gaylord, MN, and was making an overland trip to the Great Northern line of railway in Litchfield, MN, where he would take a train to Chinook, Montana, to see his sister. Boehn left Smith’s farm Monday morning.

Boehn had also been seen at Winthrop and Gaylord with another man, but he appeared in Brownton on Monday, alone. He was not seen by any other party until he was found dead on Tuesday.

**Death Ruled a Suicide**

The testimonies of the men involved, along with school-child, Alice Beach, were given. Dr. Boltes gave some expert testimony but did not have a decided opinion as to whether the three or more gashes to the throat were self-inflicted. At the scene of death, there had been no sign of a struggle. On the bank of the creek, there had been a depression in the grass where, apparently, someone had been seated, but Boehn’s own fingerprints were visible in the mud. The presence of the cash and C.D. found in Boehn’s pockets, did not seem consistent with theft or murder, and the manner of death of the victim contributed strongly to a verdict of suicide. There was virtually no evidence of murder, “...certainly none in the eyes of men concerned with the case, unskilled in detection of crime.” Thus, the coroner’s jury ruled the death a suicide, stating that Boehn, “...came to his death by a wound in the throat inflicted by a razor in the hands of himself.” It was concluded that, after the injuries were made, the dazed man crawled into the creek and died.

A traveling man, who had been Boehn’s schoolmate and who worked for a La Crosse, Wisconsin firm, first identified Boehn’s remains in Brownton. He telegraphed Coroner Sheppard from Milbank for a description of the deceased man and was almost positive he could identify the remains. He noted that Boehn was a “particular sort of character always, and delighted so much in hoarding money, that he would beat his way any time sooner than pay his fair.” This traveling man also gave the address of Boehn’s aunt who lived in St. Paul, MN. A telegraph was dispatched, and Boehn’s aunt arrived on the Thursday evening train. She positively identified the body as John Boehn. The body was transported to St. Paul on Friday afternoon for interment.

The case of the laborer, found dead in Buffalo Creek, was wrapped up. The body was buried, the money was bequeathed to relatives, and File #22 of the coroner’s reports was complete and closed.

**File #22 - Suicide Turned Murder**

Five to six years later, a man lay dying, in a Minneapolis hospital, of acute appendicitis. As his life ebbed away, he made a confession that turned the verdict of this small-county case upside down. This unnamed man revealed a long-kept secret to his prominent Minneapolis surgeon. It was actually he, who was now dying himself, that murdered John Boehn on that fateful Tuesday in May of 1897.

This dying murderer reported that he had encountered Boehn and learned of the large sum of money that Boehn was carrying. Deceiving Boehn into believing that he wanted to shave, the perpetrator slit the victim’s throat with Boehn’s own razor. The perpetrator then stole a large amount of cash from Boehn’s body, and planning to indicate suicide, left the remaining $471 and the C.D. He remained in the neighborhood for some time, unsuspected and undetected. Later, he engaged in business with the money in a nearby town.

What would become of File #22 - this suicide turned murder? Dr. Sheppard, the coroner in the case, reflected on the earlier verdict, “…I readily agreed with the jury’s finding. The bloody razor and the wound in the throat, as well as collateral evidence in the case seemed to indicate convincingly that the man had taken his own life.” Conversely, now five to six years later, the surgeon that received the confession was firmly convinced that John Boehn was murdered: “There is no doubt about it whatever, in my mind.”

This final and unforeseen chapter in the murder of John Boehn does not appear in courthouse records. Boehn had no life insurance which would have “figured importantly” in the case. Additionally, one newspaper record states: “…there is no need, as the murderer’s death saved him from worldly punishment and made reopening of the case unnecessary.” Thus, coroner file #22, representing the tragic end of John Boehn, would remain closed.

**References**

*Glencoe Enterprise*, May 15, 1897.
*Glencoe Register*, May 15, 1897.
*Glencoe Enterprise*, October 23, 1930.
Donations & Memorials:

Log Cabin Home:
In memory of Dennis Kosek from Pat Schmidt
In honor of 100th birthday of Evelyn McGraw-Burich from Bev & Mike Wangerin

General Fund:
Hutchinson Women’s Club; Red Hat Club

Archives:
In memory of Maureen Hantge from Bill & Liz Schwarze and Murray & Bev Swenson

Heritage Garden:

Endowment Fund:
In memory of Mary Lee Nelson from Ron & Karen Sommerdorf

Genealogy Fund:
In memory of Maureen Hantge from Margaret Hoffman

Technology Fund:
Lowell Ueland

Restoration Fund:

Annual Support Fund:
Reba Radtke; Thomas Daggett; Randall Thalmann; Silver Lake Lions Club

Welcome New and Life Members:

Ruth Peik, Moundsviue, MN and Janice Rehman, Minnetonka, MN

Museum Artifact Donations: The society thanks you for your donation!

Larry Karg         Gerard Stifter         Jeff Shufelt         Shirley Lindeman
Curtis Amdahl     Flagship Bank         Karen & Glenn Paehlke  Dave Horrmann
Floyd Horrmann    Robert Peterson       Elaine Black          June McLean
Donna Anderson

Artifact/s of the Month:

Donor: Unknown  Accession #: 1987-1031-001

History:
Framed grouping of five sepia photographs, a revolver & bullet, and an explanatory sheet about the murder of Mrs. Franczesca Fajmon near Silver Lake on December 4, 1910 by Joseph J. Herzon along with his confession. Three photos taken by Jerabek, Silver Lake, show the Fajmon house and farm.

A photo of Joseph J. Herzon is at center beneath the gun. Another photo taken outside the jail shows Herzon handcuffed to possibly Frank Klaus, Sheriff, with two other men alongside, possibly Attorney F. R. Allen and County Attorney Sam G. Anderson.

The entire piece is in a brown & black wood picture frame and is on display in the Silver Lake Town display in the Museum’s Historical Gallery.
McLeod County Historical Museum’s Historical Happenings Radio Show

Tune into AM 1260 KDUZ the last Friday afternoon of each month to catch the latest in Museum Programs & Events, Local History, and special topics on Preservation

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