The McLeod County Historical Society and Museum is celebrating all things Country School in 2015. For those who attended a rural country school, the photos shown here of Komensky School District #11 will bring back memories, but for younger generations, the idea of all eight grades in one or two small class rooms is hard to imagine. The Komensky school retains much of its original layout and design features that made it a very modern, for its time, country school. The history of the school is also rooted in the history of the cultural community that settled this area in McLeod County. District #11 is filled with historical artifacts displayed throughout the building, each telling a special part of the school’s unique history. Please join us for a tour of District #11-Komensky School, that will bring back some memories. Bring a child or grandchild and share your memories with them and make some new ones.

We hope you will join us for this open house program on the history of Komensky School, one of McLeod County’s surviving country school buildings.
**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**

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**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 4 P.M.

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**Magdalen Miller, long time MCHS Member & Donor Passes…**

...at the age of 91 years old. Magdalen, “Mag” Arndolf Miller was born Oct. 21st, 1923, on her parents’ farm, the daughter of Albert Sr. and Josephine Posusta Ardolf. Mag attended District 51 country school, St. Joseph’s Catholic School, graduated from Silver Lake High School and after one year of teacher’s training, at the age of 18 started teaching in several country schools. She taught in Lester Prairie for one year, Hutchinson for five years and in Edina for 29 years as well.

During her country school teaching, some of the 20 students from grade 1-8 were only one or two years younger than she and some were taller. She was required to start the fire, have clean drinking water, sweep the floors, act as a nurse, supervise recesses, prepare lessons for eight grades, make sure the outhouses were clean and have a little potty in the cloak room for the little kids. She drove to school in her 1935 Ford Coupe with bald tires.

On Aug. 11th, 1979, Magdalen and Marvin Miller were married at St. Joseph Catholic Church in Silver Lake. The Miller’s donated their 1929 Model A Ford Sport Coupe to the McLeod County Museum in 2003. This collection piece is on display in our Historical Gallery for all to enjoy. Thanks Mag!
Meet and Greet Brunch with the Author:
Meet the author, William Kent Krueger at our Author Brunch Fundraiser

$25 per person (limit 2 tickets per family)

Sunday, April 19th at 11 AM at the Village Co-op Community Room in Hutchinson, MN

Tickets available at the Hutchinson Public Library

Sign up for our Free drawing for a Signed Copy of “Ordinary Grace”

Author Presentation: William Kent Krueger -Author of “Ordinary Grace”
Date: Sunday, April 19th-2 PM
Location: Hutchinson Event Center

Visit heartofhutch.com/bookread to register and learn more.

“That was it. That was all of it. A grace so ordinary there was no reason at all to remember it. Yet I have never across the forty years since it was spoken forgotten a single word.”
History of the
Country Schools of
McLeod County

The McLeod County Historical Society is thrilled to announce our 2015 Historical theme, “History of the Country Schools of McLeod County”! The Museum will feature the development of free public education in the state of Minnesota and in McLeod County. We will feature our collection of country school artifacts, photographs and documents that help tell the story of rural McLeod County education. We are also looking for your memories of teaching and/or attending a McLeod County country school. Contact us or go to our website to share your story! I think I hear the school bell ringing...so don’t be late for class—and be sure to join us for a year long look at all things country school!

Taken from
“My Country School Experiences by Anne Plihal Hahn”-May 2003

Komensky School, District #11 located in the northeast corner of section 35 of Hutchinson Township, Hutchinson, Minnesota was my elementary school. I attended this school from 1944-1950.

Let me describe the physical environment. Komensky school is a two room red brick building, with a bell tower and front colonnades. A water pump is near the entrance and a playground comprised of a teeter-totter, giant strides, three swings, pull-up bars, and a softball field were on the south and west side of the school. Standing in the shadows of the grove to the west were the two outhouses. The front of the school faced east with a large concrete terrace and steps. Besides the grove, there were large trees on the north and in the front. These trees were native box elders, poplars, and elms. The interior included a wide staircase to the two schoolrooms, (the north room and the south room), the library, hallway and the mechanical training room. In the entry there were steps going down to the basement, which included the furnace room, a coal room, the tin room, and two playrooms with wire nets over the windows.

Now, for the emotional and academic aspects of the country school. I loved school because my parents, Fred and Rudy Plihal made education important and my teachers were dedicated to teaching. My teachers included: Kindergarten and First grade-Alice Portele, Second through Fifth grades-Mary June Christianson Stritesky, and Sixth grade teacher was Marian Prieve. School started with the teacher pulling the bell rope at 9 am. We hung our coats in the hallway, put our lunch pails on the shelf above the racks and took our assigned desks. Good morning exercises included the pledge of allegiance, singing songs from The Golden Book and the health check. The American Flag hung up high on the north wall alongside a picture of George Washington. The teacher played the big black upright piano while we sang America the Beautiful, Old Black Joe, My Old Kentucky Home, Home on the Range, etc. For the health check we spread our hands on the desktop and the teacher walked around and checked our fingernails, ears, hair, clothing and shoes.
Then, class began. In the front of the room was the teacher’s desk, chair and a long table encircled with chairs. The blackboards were the major teaching aid. There was a globe hanging from the tin ceiling and maps that pulled down. The teacher would call one grade at a time to the front. Our lessons included reading, spelling, arithmetic, the Palmer method of penmanship and geography. We learned our sounds, (Phonics). There were four kids in my grade and about twenty-five in the room. The upper grades were in the north room. When we were done with our lessons we would go back to our desks to study, work in our workbooks and then listen-in on the other lessons. We had a fifteen minute morning recess, an hour for lunch and a half hour afternoon recess. Depending on the weather, we’d play on the playground or in the grove and played softball, and had a rake day and family picnic. A neighboring school, Cloverdale, came over for a softball game. On Friday afternoons the boys went into the manual training room and made wood things, using their coping saws. The girls sewed, embroidered, appliqued and crafted at their desks. I remember embroidering my Mother’s initials on a linen hanky for a Mother’s day gift.

Around Christmas time we put on a program for our parents. I guess this was our theatre-arts part of the curriculum. We spent many hours practicing songs and plays and “pieces”. I remember going over to the Bohemian Hall for the programs. This was a very cold place, but it had a stage and a curtain! When the 7th and 8th grades went to Hutch, the north schoolroom was used for our productions. My Dad, Fred Plihal, was chairman of the school board, Jim Pessek, treasurer and Frank Ruzicka was clerk. One night before the big program the school board and their wives would get together and “fill the bags”. These bags were filled with apples, oranges, nuts, ribbon candy, chocolate humps, popcorn balls, Bessie Pessek’s taffy and my Mom’s fudge and divinity. Each student got a bag at the end of the program. Anyway, during the last rehearsal the teacher said Millicent Murphy was sick and could not make the program. “Could anyone take her place in the play?” Well, as a captive and naïve 2nd grader, I said I could. (Remember that we learned by listening to the “older ones”.) I did the stand-in and the play went on.

We all took turns bringing in water for the water cooler, which stood at the back of the room. We also took turns being the librarian, shoveling coal into the furnace, sweeping the floors and cleaning the outhouses.

We had no phone in school, so we walked across the road to use Carl Drahos’s phone—but most of our homes were without phones at that time. The teacher was head janitor, playground supervisor, nurse, counselor and boiler operator. Once in a while the county nurse would come and give each of us a red bar of soap called Life Buoy. The County Superintendent of schools came once in a while. Sometimes, when we had the spelling bee.

Leaving country school for seventh grade in town was a huge step. I was right in step with the “Town Kids”, academically, but the bus rides and the combination of the padlock for my lockers caused some anxious times. All in all it was a great time.
Spotlight on the Collection/Artifact of the Month:

Donor: Anne Hahn    Accession #:  2004-0164-002

**History:** Photo of Komensky Country School, District # 11, Hutchinson Township in McLeod County, Minnesota. The people outside of the school are not identified. The group is possibly the final class of school children and their families. This building existed from 1876 to 1912. On the right is the 1892 eight foot addition to the original building with the center door, four windows, bell tower and bell. John Drahos bought this building and moved it to the pasture northeast of the new brick school that was later built.

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Donor: Ron and Eileen Pulkrabek    Accession #:  2015-0035-016

**History:** 1897 School Souvenir from Komensky School District # 11. The school was located in North Hutchinson township in McLeod County, Minnesota. The Souvenir was presented to students by Mary A. Hudec, teacher of the school at that time. School Trustees were: B. Timey, J. Miska, J. Kucera. Pupils were: Emily Hasek, John Marvan, Abbie Telecky, Frank Micka, Louisa Urban, Joseph Muzik, James Krejck, John Bednar, Mary Kouba, William Picha, Mary Kucera, Rose Miska, John Kouba, Matilda Pulkerabek, Emily Kopecky, Albin Miska, Frank Cacka, Emily Marvan, Emily Muzik, John Pichak Anna Sobeslavsky, James Zavoral, Fred Krejci, Josephine Pekar, Paul Kopecky, Joseph Kouba, Fr Frank Marvan, Joseph Fajmon, Anthony Kouba, Matilda Kasper, Blanche Miska, Fred Lauzer, Josephine Hager, Rose Marvan, Agnes Marvan, John Boukal, Eugene Kosek, Thomas Kosek, Fred Zavoral, Frank Urban, Frank Miska, George Fallon, Julia Kopecky, Edward Fajmon, Mary Zasmeta, Joseph Cacka, Mary Smahel, Lucy Pulkrabek, John Drahos, William Miska, Anthony Cacka, Joseph Boukal, Blanche Micka, Blanche Kipecky, Anna Fajmon Josehine Zasmeta, Joseph Smahel, James Sobeslavsky, Fred Drahos, Frank Smahel, William Kucera, Lydia Micka, Josephine Boukal, James Zasmeta, Josephine Lukas, Susan Pulkrabek, Katie Marvar, Josep Lauzer, Joseph Zavoral, Mary Herzan, James Kouba, Josephine Smahel, Josephine Kucera, Edward Freolf, Frank Fajmon, Frank Lukas, Joseph Herzan.
Welcome New and Life Members:

Ron & Jill Knick, Brownton, MN and
Allen & Jane Gislason, Hutchinson

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

Milton Totusek
Robert Streich
Ron & Eileen Pulkrabek
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Elizabeth Schwarze
David Schwarze
Dennis Wendlandt
Marion Baysinger
Donn Birkholz

Donations Needed for the Collection:

The Museum is missing photos from the following Country Schools: Dist. #10 Schoolhouse photo, Any photos for Dist. #21, 23, 28, 43, 44, 45, 50, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 61, 62, 65, 66, 68, 70, 71, 75, 82

McLeod County Historical Society Newsletter 7
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 Guests!

McLeod County Historical Society Business Sponsors:
(Please support the local businesses who support the preservation of McLeod County History)
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