



Preston Historical Society

Post Office Box 138

Preston, Minnesota 55965

A 501C/3 Non-Profit Corporation

NEWSLETTER

July 2014

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PAST TIME

Richard G. Petsch, President

Greetings to all,

Monday, June 9th saw the close of a business, Chic's Pizza. As things go, this sort of thing does not mean much. To a small town like Preston this means a lot. There is a story here both economical and personal. There is a real sadness like seeing a friend go away. But that is for others to write about.

My thought is the role Chic's Pizza building played in the history of Preston. Many years ago, Chic's Pizza was a bar. After, the building was the Rebound Cafe. After that it became Chic's Pizza. What will be in that building is yet to be determined.

It is quite interesting to learn the history of many of the buildings in Preston. Like the hospital located east of the Catholic church, now a private home. An automobile and implement dealer located behind Northwest Aluminum. There are many more buildings which have very interesting histories. The Preston Historical Society has recently completed a very nice brochure, which is a walking tour of Preston. It guides you to buildings around Preston. Easy to read. Easy to follow. The brochures are available at City Hall, Tourism Center, and various brochure racks around town. It would be a great way to spend a nice sunny afternoon. Hopefully, maybe sometime a more comprehensive history of Preston buildings will be put together.

AUTUMN TRACTOR RIDE

Elaine Maust, Tractor Ride Committee

We continue to get more participants for our September 13 & 14 Tractor Ride every week. Many are out-of-stators coming to Preston.

The Highland Prairie Church ladies (of rural Bratsburg) have agreed to serve our Saturday lunch and we will have a picnic lunch at the Forestville State Park on Sunday. Dinner will be served at the fairgrounds on Saturday evening as well as breakfast on Sunday morning.

We hope for a nice weekend and a safe ride. Watch for opportunities to volunteer with this fun event.

CABOOSE DEDICATION

Sheila Craig

Tentative plans are being made to hold a dedication of the caboose restoration. August dates are being explored with plans to have members of the Milwaukee Road Historical Association on hand for the dedication. Watch local newspapers for details.

WE HAVE A WEBSITE!

Beth Anderson

The Preston Historical Society now has a website where you can find newsletters past and present, the Preston Walking Tour, news & events, and more. Check it out prestonmnhistory.com. If anyone has information that they would like included you may send it to elizabethj1014@yahoo.com.

GRANT RECIPIENT RECOGNIZED

Sheila Craig

Preston Historical Society was one of two grant recipients recognized at the 2014 Preston Area Community Foundation Banquet held in March. President Dick Petsch spoke on behalf of the Society thanking the Foundation for the financial assistance that we have received.

The most recent grant was for updates on the Elevator (see related article). Other grants received over the years have been for lettering on the boxcar, upholstery and lettering for the caboose, windows for the O'Hara schoolhouse, etc.

WALKING TOUR

Jeanette Schmidt

Have you seen the new Preston Historical Society Walking Tour brochure for downtown Preston? The brochure is a self-guided walking or driving tour of the heritage of downtown Preston. It features very enjoyable descriptions of the history of Preston businesses of yesteryear, as well as old pictures of the businesses. It will take you back in time.

The brochure starts at the Historic Elevator and continues to the downtown around the Courthouse square and back down to the Fairgrounds and the old Preston Brewery. The old County Jail has also been included.

Cathy Enerson of the EDA has provided PHS with funds from the round-up of the Preston Public Utilities payments for the printing of this brochure. It was completed in May, with the help of Kelly Printing.

Brochures can be found around Preston in brochure display racks or at the Preston Tourism Center.

RAFFLE UNDERWAY

Sheila Craig

The 2014 fundraising raffle is underway. Great prizes have been provided by Preston Historical Society members. Dan Christianson and F & M Community Bank are matching each ticket sold with one dollar for a total of \$1,000. The raffle drawing will be held in conjunction with the August 7 meeting. To purchase tickets contact Sheila Craig at smeercraig@gmail.com or call her at 507.273.1481. If you would be able to help sell the tickets, also contact Sheila.

NEW ELEVATOR DOOR AND GRATE

Sheila Craig

The Preston Historical Society was the recipient of a \$1500 grant from the Preston Area Community Foundation to construct plexiglass doors on the elevator. This will allow the public to view inside the elevator even if it is not open for tours. Also fixed during the project was the restoration of the grate over the dump pit. This work was provided by Society member, John Carlin.

ELEVATOR PICTURE IN MAGAZINE

Sheila Craig

A color picture of Preston's Milwaukee Elevator was featured in the Question section of the Spring 2014 issue of the "Milwaukee Railroader", the magazine for the Milwaukee Road Historical Association. Historical Society member Jon DeVries

submitted a question to the magazine searching for pictures or information about the interior of the elevator to help document the bagging shed's construction. More documentation is needed to strengthen an application to the Minnesota Historical Society to obtain grant funding for the project.

'ELEVATOR' BIRD HOUSES

The Preston Historical Society announces the availability of 'Elevator' Bird Houses for sale. The cost is \$20 for a 13" tall bird house in the shape of the Preston Milwaukee Elevator.

They are available in natural wood or red stain. They can be used for home decoration, wine bottle storage, or as a bird house. If you would like to purchase one, please contact Dick Petsch, Preston Historical Society President, at 507.765.2559, to make arrangements for pick-up.

The bird houses are made by Jon Haugan, Preston on behalf of the Historical Society.

BAM

Sheila Craig

BAM stands for Bicycling Around Minnesota. This event will start this year in Preston on Wednesday, August 13 and end back in Preston on Sunday, August 17. Preston Historical Society is planning to have the Elevator complex and the O'Hara Schoolhouse open for BAM participants to view on Wednesday afternoon and evening with specific times still being determined. Volunteers are needed to staff the two venues. Please contact Sheila at 507.273.1481 if you are able to help. To learn more about the tour go to bambiketour.org.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Membership Committee

Preston Historical Society membership runs from July 1 to June 30. If you are an 'annual' individual, family, or business member, it is now time to renew your membership.

Individual membership are \$20; Family memberships are \$25; and Business membership are \$50. Lifetime memberships are also available at \$100 for Individual and Family or \$150 for Businesses.

FRIENDS OF THE SOCIETY

Donations are always welcome. Some special donation opportunities exist that include having your name or the name of someone else engraved on one of our special plaques. For a \$100 donation the name is engraved on our "Boxcar Plaque; \$200 donation on the "Caboose Plaque; and \$300 donation on the "Elevator Plaque". These can be "In Honor Of" or "In Memory Of" an individual, family, or business.

Preston Historical Society Officers

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I CAN STILL REMEMBER

This column was originally printed as a column leading up to Preston's Sesquicentennial on June 23, 2005. It was written by Dick Wildgrube and reprinted here with permission of the author.

RIDING THE PRESTON RAILS

Wander east on Main Street (starting at the Fillmore County Journal), past the Brick House (now a home), and down to the east end of the Foremost Packaging Plant in Preston.

Stand there a minute and try and get your bearings as to the layout of the railroad yard. It's not there. All is gone, but a few reminders of the hey-day of railroad history in Preston.

Three tracks ran in the yard, all fed from the one track that came in from the east. As one stands by the packaging plant, one is at the approximate point of the Milwaukee Road Depot.

Over a few hundred feet to the south was the water tower for the steam locomotives. Further on down the track one would locate the turntable and roundhouse that would accommodate two engines.

The track ran down to the stone mill by the river. Scattered along the track, in both directions, were supply and storage buildings of one shape or another, all related to railroad-connected businesses and operations.

A common sight on one of the sidings would be a few cars waiting for a load of fresh-cut ties from the sawmill north of town. The "tie buckler," with heavy spiked leather pads on his shoulder and arm, would be picking ties off a truck and dropping them into place on the flat or boxcar. It was precision work as very few had to be adjusted.

As one looks toward the elevator that is still standing, one would find A. G. Olson & Son coal bins, scale, and buildings for wool and feed. Now a west part of Preston Dairy and Farm Association occupies the same general area.

Across the street stands the elevator like an ever-present sentinel. The Standard Bulk tanks to the south are gone in exchange for more green space for a park. The coal sheds have been remodeled into the Trailhead Inn and the more dilapidated ones have been removed. The Phillips 66 and Sinclair bulk tanks are gone with just a concrete reminder of their presence.

Further to the north was a hodgepodge of animal holding pens and buildings representative of the hog and cattle buying and shipping activities connected with the railroad. Much of the acreage has been turned into green space providing a good setting for the Harmony-Preston Bike Trail. The military tank has an ominous presence reminding many of the cannon that was so proudly displayed on the Court House Square.

As one follows the bike trail out of town, one goes past a rock house that was once an active brewery. "Forget Me Not" beer never made it back after Prohibition. (to be continued)

More of "Riding the Preston Rails" will be brought to you in subsequent newsletters.