



Preston Historical Society

PO Box 138
Preston, Minnesota 55965

A 501(c)(3) Non-Profit Corporation

NEWSLETTER

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President's Notes

By: Sheila Craig

Success! The Preston Historical Society has reached its initial fund raising goal of \$400,000 toward the development of the Depot Museum & Riverfront Center (DMRC).

Fund raising is continuing with the sale of personalized patio bricks, company sponsorships, and family donations to add amenities, historic signage, landscaping, parking and activity areas to the riverfront DMRC site and "Historic Campus."

We can't accomplish all of these activities without your help. Your time and monetary gifts are greatly appreciated!



In addition to the contribution from the Christianson family, F&M Bank also provided a \$15,000 contribution to the DMRC, which along with an anonymous gift of \$5,000, brought the building fund to well over \$400,000.



\$100,000 Check Presentation - Christianson Family Fund for new DMRC on Preston Riverfront

By: Jon B. DeVries

On Friday, December 27th, Dan Christianson presented a \$100,000 check from the Christianson Family Fund for the DMRC. The check was presented at the F&M Community Bank public open house honoring Chuck Aug on his retirement from 40 years of public service at the bank.



Dan Christianson gives \$100,000 check from the Christianson Family Fund to Sheila Craig, President of the Preston Historical Society on December, 27, 2024.

The Preston Historical Society (PHS) has since applied to the City of Preston for a building permit (December 31st) and is working with WiDSETH on final application details. DMRC construction will commence by Eickhoff Construction in spring, 2025. In the meantime, Ron Scheevel is providing fill dirt for the building site – THANK YOU RON!

The end result will be a new permanent home for PHS, a trailhead museum and information center, a new riverfront performance portico stage, and an activity/event center for a wide range of public uses.

The launch of the DMRC is a culmination of 2.5 years of research, committee work, and fundraising by a dedicated group of Preston Historical Society and other volunteers. It will anchor the “history campus” which currently includes the caboose, box car, work scooter/trailer, restored “Milwaukee Elevator” and rail history sign.

The finished “campus” will provide a year-round amenity for Preston residents and visitors alike and a dramatic entrance to the community.

2024 Christmas Tree Dedication



Geradine Daley, a PHS member, was one of those honored by the annual Christmas Tree Dedication. PHS and Preston Chamber cooperated in providing the tree and decorations for the event. The other honoree was Tom Klomps.

Collections Committee Highlights

By: Joanne Hall, Committee Chair

Project Vacate

Anyone who has been involved in moving knows the multiple preparation steps involved. The past several weeks have involved organizing the collection, various furnishing and other items in preparation for construction at the D&F building.

Several times we enlisted the help of members and their vehicles to move boxes and artifacts to various storage locations. It takes a team to accomplish this “move” and I would like to acknowledge those who helped. Collection Committee members Sheila Craig, Sue Grooters, Joyce Hellickson, Diane Johnson, and Linda Wolf kept the project on track.

Norm, Andy, and Lee Craig, John Carlin, Jon DeVries, Rick Grooters, Steve Hall, Gary Hellickson, Tom Hogue, Carol Soland, Dick Wolf, Paxton Smith, and four Falcon football players- Ryan Schroeder, Joseph Otto, Connor Hovey and Atlee Hershberger - assisted moving.

A PHS temporary office has been made available by the Preston United Methodist Church. We have filing cabinets there and boxes of paper artifacts and photos to sort and file that will keep us busy.

Donations

We are not actively accepting donations to our Collection at this time. We do want to acknowledge the Preston High School Trophies that were recently accepted by the Society.

There were over 100 trophies for sports, speech, Thespian and music competitions, some dating back to 1920's, that had been moved to storage at the Preston Middle School location.

Membership Update

By: Lexi Pierce

We welcome Louis Underbakke as a new Lifetime Business member.

New MNHS Legacy Grant Received

By: Joanne Hall

PHS was awarded a \$10,000 LEGACY grant from the MN. Historical Society (MNHS). The grant will fund an “interpretive plan” for visitor exhibits and displays that will be informative and interesting.



And it will also assist facilitate further MNHS consultation, project planning and funding support.

Tractor Ride 2024

By: Sheila Craig

The Tractor Ride was a success with new sponsors, 90+ participants, 35 volunteers, an auction earning \$950 and income of over \$10,000! See “crew” at Saturday meal & the departing tractors below:



2024 Raffle

By: Sheila Craig

The Preston Historical Society winners of the raffle fundraiser were drawn at the August meeting. The Society would again like to thank F & M Community Bank for providing matching funds of \$1500 (a dollar for each ticket sold). Preston businesses and individuals listed below were also gracious to provide the many prizes.

Golf Bag – Greg & Bonnie Davids (value \$200) – John Hall, Preston
Golf Driver – Greg & Bonnie Davids (value \$200) – Tim Maust, Prior Lake
Log Cabin quilt - Ann Sparks (value \$125) – Mark Maust, Prior Lake
Gift Certificate – 4 Daughters – Dick & Linda Wolfe (\$100 value) – Bettie Gulbranson, Harmony
Gift Certificate – Branding Iron – Rick & Sue Grooters (value \$100) – Angie Huntington, Lanesboro
Gift Certificate – Branding Iron – Gary & Joyce Hellickson (value \$100) - Bonnie Johnson, Preston
Golf Putter – Greg & Bonnie Davids (value \$100) – Rachel Welsh – Spring Valley
Oil Change Gift Certificate – Preston Service Plus (value \$65) – John Goutcher, Preston
2 boxes Golf Balls – Greg & Bonnie Davids (value \$60) – Anna Maust, Prior Lake
2 Gift Certificates – Preston Motor Mart (each \$50 value) – Matt Bradt, Chatfield and Mark Maust, Prior Lake
Framed (12x12) drawing of the PHS elevator. - Tom Hogue (value \$50) – James Maust, Prior Lake
Gift Certificate to Urban Artifacts – Jon & Christine DeVries (value \$50) – Rick Stockman, Preston
2 Pork Gift Certificates good at Harmony, Preston or Rushford Foods – Gulbranson Farms (each \$50 value) – Pam Ristau, Preston and John Hall, Preston
Preston Bucks – Jim Kuene & Mary Jane Glaser (\$50 value) – Bonnie Davids, Preston
Purse from Helen's Daughters – Steve & Joanne Hall (\$48 value) – Marcia Johnson, Preston
Purse – Helen's Daughters – Mariella Terbeest-Schladweiler (\$48 value) – Greg Davids, Preston
Garden Hod – John Carlin – (value \$30) – Ed Higgins, Rochester
Gift certificate to Sweet Stop & Sandwich Shoppe - Diane & Keith Johnson (value \$25) – Greg Davids, Preston

Gift certificate to Preston Floral – Diane & Keith Johnson (value \$25) – Autumn Collett, Preston
Wool mittens from recycled wool sweater – Barb Mielke – (value \$25) – Greg Davids, Preston
Gift Certificate to Preston Floral – Alison & Bradley Leathers – (value \$25) – Michelle Quanrud, Harmony
Gift Certificate to Driftless Fly Fishing Co. – Alison & Bradley Leathers (value \$25) – Kelly Shirah, Northfield

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History Moments

These remain a monthly feature of the Preston Historical Society meetings. Following are some of the recent featured topics.

History of the Frank B Wolf Family Also Known as Frank Brecunier Wolf or Also Known as F.B. Wolf

By: Richard Wolfe

F.B.Wolf, of Preston, was born in Lee County, Illinois in 1875, the son of John and Sarah (Brecunier) Wolfe. His father came from Somerset County Pennsylvania in 1852 with the Andrew Deardorf family and settled in Lee County, Illinois. His father was employed a short time and then went to Iowa but returned to Illinois and married Sarah Brecunier November 5th, 1861.

In 1883 the family moved to Iowa and lived there 10 years with Frank attending school and helping on the farm and later became a carpenter. In 1893 the family moved to Idaho, Frank stayed behind; he was a farmer, carpenter and served as a Brethren Minister from 1896 to 1926.

He married Emma Daberkow May 16, 1897. In 1903 and 1904 he worked in the City Roller mills in Preston and two years later purchased the historic old mill which was built in 1857 by Waybright and Schweitzer for a woolen mill and in 1874 was converted to a feed mill.

The Mill was located on the East side of the Root River, North of Fillmore street and was powered by a wooden dam which was used to divert water to

run the mill, Frank raised the dam in August 1909 for two reasons, 1 to get more power for the mill and 2 to create a backwater for ice. He raised it again in August of 1910 by 18 inches with cement.

The Mill was good and bad. While the mill was a thriving business it also had its setbacks. On the morning of July 24, 1907, a man going by noticed smoke and armed with a couple of pails of water broke in and managed to put it out saving the structure. *The full story can be found in the Preston Times of that date, Article (A Close Call).*

Just a few days later, shortly after 2:00 A.M. someone notices a fire, but by the time the fire bell could be rung the mill was totally engulfed with flames already through the roof. Total loss was insured to \$1300.00; the estimate to rebuild was 2500 to 3000. *Preston Times July 31, 1907* The decision was made to rebuild on August 21, 1907. The mill went back in operation November 6, 1907.

Frank expanded his dairy herd in March of 1909 and in July of 1912 he started Riverside Dairy delivering milk and cream in Preston for 32 years. In 1913 he bought more pasture and in 1914 more purebred Jersey Dairy cows.

1915-1916

In April of 1915 Frank Wolf's barn and silo were completely consumed by about two o'clock in the morning but for a timely discovery the mill would have also burned. *Preston Times (April 28, 1915) Article*

INCENDIARISM

Fire marshal investigated and swore out a warrant which was served on Frank who was taken before a Spring Valley Justice and bound over to the grand jury. *Preston Times May 12, 1915.* The Grand Jury found two indictments and Frank was charged with Arson in the third degree, the case was tried and he was found guilty after an all-night session of the trial jury. Sentence deferred until the Judge returned in June. *Preston Times June 02, 1915*

The Judge heard the case, but did not rule due to a pending motion for a new trial. Meanwhile Frank is out on Bail. *Preston Times June 23, 1915.* Due to

conflicts with the Judge being available on August 04 and then finally on August 11, the motion for a new trial was taken under advisement, which resulted in the granting of a new trial. *Preston Times (August 25, 1915) Article WOLF GETS NEW TRIAL.* The Judge for the May 1916 retrial of Frank was delayed. *Levang's Weekly May 25, 1916. Article DISTRICT COURT POSTPONED.*

Finally, District Court resumed September 14, 1916 with a new judge and the indictment set aside by the court was again investigated and the grand jury this time refused to return an indictment ending the case. *Preston Times September 14, 1916. (ARTICLE DISTRICT COURT).*

Going forward things were pretty normal, the mill closed in the 1920's Frank added to his dairy herd and I have no details on the rebuild of the Barn. My Uncle Veral (Bud) took over the farm eventually and Frank and Emma moved to a house they built on St Paul St. *Frank B Wolfe March 20, 1875-May 29, 1953 Obituary Preston Republican May 28, 1953.*

A Biography of F.B. Wolf can be found in THE HISTORY OF FILLMORE COUNTY, MINN BY CURTISS-WEDGE PUB. H.C. COOPER, JR & CO. CHICAGO, ILL. 1912 VOL. 2, PAGES 584 AND 585.

Clifford Nelson

By Joanne Hall

Clifford C. Nelson was the subject of a 1978 Preston Oral Interview due to his knowledge of the stone house which was built by his grandfather, Lars Hemma, in 1858 on his farm 4 miles east of Preston. Clifford was the third generation owner of the farm. Lars built the house by hauling 60+ loads of stone picked up on the hills.

The only lumber he purchased was from the mill in Preston for door frames and flooring. He hand-hewed the wood shingles and joists with a broad axe. In the interview, Clifford related the family story of the US-Dakota War of 1862 when people in the Preston area feared the Dakota were coming toward Preston. Sixteen neighbors took refuge in the stone house one night, but their lives were never in danger.

Lars and his wife Karen remained in the stone house until their deaths in 1902 and 1910. Clifford was born in 1900 on this farm in the first frame house. His parents, Fred and Emma Nelson built the large house that still stands on the property in 1912. Clifford and his wife raised their family here. Clifford's life reflects that of many of his contemporaries of the day and would be considered somewhat normal but the farmers of that time experienced great changes in farming practices and methods.

Clifford was a farmer, he was employed by the Fillmore County Soil Conservation Dept. and was a Northrup King Seed Co. salesman. He married Marian Bakke and they were the parents of a son and two daughters. He died two days after his 80th birthday in 1980. The little stone house remained standing until 1983 when it was torn down.

Howard Gustav Gartner

By: Diane Johnson

Howard Gartner was born on October 24, 1911 in Preston. His parents were Gustave and Mary Ann (Grebina) Gartner. Howard had 3 brothers and 3 sisters. He was the youngest child in the family.

Howard's father and family came from Germany and purchased the farm now owned by Jerry Gartner. Jerry is the fourth generation of the Gartner family to own the farm. Howard's mother's family came from France. They eventually homesteaded in Carimona Township. His father and his uncle Joe started a grocery store in 1888. In 1891, Joe moved away and Mike (another of Howard's uncles) became a partner for some time. Gus and Mike ran the store from 1890 to 1903. His father then ran the store alone for a while.

In 1905, they erected a new brick building, and during construction of the new building, they did business out of the old Masonic building on the corner where the Standard Station was later located. In 1918, Gus formed the Preston Co-operative Mercantile Company; it was located in the former Oddfellows Building. He also had a large interest in the Grand Opera House located on the second floor of the building. The Mercantile included a restaurant, meat department, and groceries as well as men's and women's clothing. The first gasoline

pump in Preston was also located in front of their store. The restaurant closed in 1935. Howard and Leo took over what was left of the business and in 1937 moved to the Harold Hopp Building (where Urban Artifacts is now located). That store was known as Gartner's Foodland (or Gartner's Cash Store) for the next 20 years. They moved to the location of what is now Preston Foods in 1957. It was called Gartner's Supermarket. It later became Dahl's IGA Supermarket.

When in grade school, Howard helped his father at the grocery store. Most items arrived at the store in bulk - so Howard's job was to weigh such things as sugar, coffee, or oatmeal and package them in smaller quantities. He also candled eggs.

One of Howard's childhood memories is of his first train ride. When he was 4 years old, he went with his parents to California. While there they attended the Panama-California Exposition in San Diego. This event was to celebrate the completion of the Panama Canal in 1915. During the county fair in the 1920's, Howard and a cousin operated a shoeshine stand in front of his dad's store. People came to the Grand Opera House from the fairgrounds so their shoes were dusty. They charged 10 cents per shine.

Howard graduated from Preston High School in 1930. He served in the United States Air Force from 1942 to 1945. He was a cook in England. He returned to Preston after the war and he and his brother Leo operated Gartner's Supermarket. After he went out of the grocery store business, Howard ran the Victory Café as well as a small garden center in the back alley. He sold the Victory Café in 1976 and discontinued the garden center in 1978. Howard also lived above the café until 1978.

Howard married later in life. He married Evelyn Ibach on June 30, 1973 at the age of 62. He owned the Victory Café at the time and she was a waitress there. Howard was an avid gardener.- other hobbies included cooking, fishing, and photography.

Howard was active in the Preston community; he belonged to the Preston Commercial Club, was a member of St. Columban Catholic Church as well as the American Legion and VFW posts. Howard passed away at the Preston Good Samaritan Care Center on June 26, 2004 at the age of 92.

Art Schibursky Shoe Store

By John Carlin

Art Schibursky was born in 1897. Art's father was Herman Schibursky. Herman was born in Prussia, Germany. Herman stopped in Preston on his way to Rochester because the stagecoach could not cross the Root River because the Root River was flooded.

There was not a shoemaker in Preston at the time so Herman stayed and started a boot making shop in Preston in 1880. Herman did not have any machinery at that time so everything was made by hand. Herman only made boots to start with, no shoes.

Later Herman got a sewing machine and started to make shoes. Later Herman sold a line of shoes manufactured in Massachusetts. The cost was \$2.50 to \$4.00 a pair. Herman made his last pair of boots in 1912 for Dr. Love.

Art quit school when he was 15 because Herman said that Art could learn more working in the Shoe Store. Herman died in 1927 and Art took over the Shoe Store.

I started working on Saturdays for Art in the Shoe Store in 1955. I was 14. I started out just polishing shoes after Art would put on new soles or heels. Then I started nailing on the soles and heels doing the trimming and running the big sewing machine. I worked in the Shoe Store for 2 years.

Art always treated me like I was one of his kids. On a lot of Sundays Art would take Roger (his son) and I fishing or shooting or some other adventure. That is another story!

Art really wanted me to take over the store, I guess because I was good at it. But who wanted to stay in Preston when the world was waiting and good jobs were everywhere. Art had the shoe business in that store till 1967 when the creamery bought the property. Art bought his first sewing machine for \$100.00. The last sewing machine Art bought was for \$900.00. Now the same machine would cost \$6,000.00.

Art had a motorized bicycle. I don't know if he bought it or built it. Knowing Art, he probably built it himself. Art bought a 1958 Pontiac Bonneville. Boy that was a boat, but could it go. I really wanted that when Art sold it, but I think I was a little short of cash at the time!

Preston Historical Society Officers

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Be a Part of Preston History! **Purchase Your Memorial Brick Today!**

The Preston Historical Society is announcing the start of its "Brick Campaign" to raise funds for the Depot Museum and Riverfront Center (DMRC) for furnishings, exhibits and site amenities. You can purchase a brick and have it custom engraved with your message.

The brick will be placed in the front entry patio of the future Preston DMRC. See **Order Form** below or visit F&M Community Bank in Preston or visit our website at prestonmnhistory.com.



Kerry Soiney prepared a display about the 'Brick Campaign' for the Mistletoe Market held on Saturday, December 14. It was a great opportunity to tell many people about the Campaign.

The bricks provide support for the DMRC project and offer a unique way to honor your family or business in a permanent and historical setting. The brick can be purchased in one of two sizes – a 4" x 8" or an 8" x 8". The 4" requires a donation of \$100 while the 8" is \$200.

Help raise funds for the Preston Depot Museum & Riverfront Center by purchasing a custom, laser-engraved brick!

These custom engraved bricks are 4"x8" and 8"x8" and make an excellent gift, memorial, or dedication. The donation requirement is \$100 for a 4"x8" engraved brick and \$200 for an 8"x8" engraved brick. For multiple brick orders, please complete the brick personalization portion on additional forms and mail all forms and payment together in one envelope.

Name(s): _____ Phone: _____
 Address: _____
 City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
 Email: _____

Please mail this order form and
 payment to:
 F&M Community Bank
 Attn: Preston DMRC
 PO Box 467
 Preston, MN 55965

- 4"x8" bricks have up to two lines with up to 12 characters in each line.
- 8"x8" bricks have up to four lines with up to 12 characters in each line.
- All characters are capitalized and centered.
- Please clearly print what you would like on your brick in the table below, including spaces.

4"x8" brick - up to two lines
 8"x8" brick - up to four lines

