



## 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

What a great year for the Preston Historical Society. So much progress has been made on many different fronts—including the cataloging of all the many donated artifacts, working with the Fillmore County Historical Society on displays, holding very successful fundraisers (raffle and tractor ride) and holding open events including the county fair booth at the O'Hara Schoolhouse, having the caboose and elevator open for tours, and the Community Engagement event for the Masterplan project. Read more about all of these in separate articles in this newsletter!!

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### Preston's Two-headed Car!

By: Steve Knoepke



*(The two headed car restored for the sesquicentennial parade in 2005. See the original car pictured on a subsequent page!)*

The History Behind Preston's "Always Go Forward" Two-headed Car as told by Steve Knoepke to the Preston Historical Society in Sept. 2022.

In 1965 LaVern Knoepke, who worked at Jerry's Body Shop in Preston, was approached by the Preston Booster Club with the idea of making a "clown car" for parades. There were several of the same type of "clown cars" at that time, so they were looking for something a little different. It is not clear who suggested the idea of a "two headed car", but it probably was the result of a few local men. Clyde Boysen worked at National Bushing and is remembered as one who helped LaVern with the engine of the car. As this story is shared, there may be other names added to the list of contributors.

It took about 5 weeks to build the vehicle. The two front halves were 1952 Oldsmobiles and provided the body of the car. The first half originated from a junk yard and the second half was LaVern & Betty Knoepke's wedding car. The rear end drive was from a 1947 Dodge power wagon. There was one engine and one accelerator in the front. It could be steered from either end in order to go in a circle or parallel park the vehicle. However, the rear steering could be locked with a pin so the vehicle could only be steered from the front and driven safely down the highway. There were flip out taillights on one end of the vehicle. LaVern painted the car and Allen Rustad did the lettering. It was used as a parade entry for several years before it was "lost". The car

was resurrected for the Sesquicentennial celebration parade in 2005, but only ran from the Fairgrounds to the Fillmore Street bridge before the journey ended. It didn't complete the anticipated parade appearance, to the disappointment of many. The car was eventually purchased by Jon Haugen of Preston. He donated it to the Preston Historical Society in 2021.

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### **Before it was the Historic Milwaukee Elevator**

(compiled by Joanne Hall)

**Preston times. Pub. Date July 30, 1902  
Preston's New Elevator  
The Largest on the Branch Can Handle  
One Thousand Bushels Per Hour.  
'Tis a Beauty.**

*The new elevator constructed at Preston by Mr. L. N. Loomis of Minneapolis, has just been completed and Mr. O. T. Huyck who has general charge of the construction of new elevators for him, and of the line operations generally, was here last Friday to examine same and accept it. The elevator is a beauty, strictly modern in every particular and is the first dump elevator to be constructed on this line of road and the farmers of this vicinity will no doubt appreciate it very much. We bespeak for Mr. Loomis a liberal share of the patronage in his line of business. Mr. Loomis was born within 20 miles of Preston and spent his boyhood at Chatfield, but for the past twenty-five years has been a resident of South Dakota, where he has held many positions of trust, having been State Senator for the past four years. He has recently moved to Minneapolis and is now operating a line of twenty elevators in Minnesota, South Dakota and Iowa and where ever he is operating he is foremost in introducing*

*improved methods of handling grain. His elevator at this place handles one thousand bushels of grain per hour and saves the farmers much valuable time and considerable hard labor as the grain does not have to be shoveled. We have never met the gentleman but he is reported to be a hustler, affable and energetic. L. O. Hickock of Minneapolis was the contractor who built the elevator and it speaks well for him as a builder. Preston is certainly a gainer in every way by the construction of this modern plant.*

**Preston times. Pub. Date December 10, 1902**

*One night last week both McMichael's and Loomis' elevators were broken into. Collett could find nothing missing, but a quantity of barley was scattered around in the Loomis elevator, which clearly indicated that somebody had helped themselves to a more or less liberal supply of the cereal from which beer is made. As yet there is no clew(sic) to the nightly mauraders.*



Louis N. Loomis



(elevator photo donated by Robert Marx)

## Items for Sale

By: Steve Hall

The Preston Historical Society finance committee has several items for sale. Copies are available of the 2005 “Images of Preston” book by Al Mathison for \$20. Also for sale are ‘Milwaukee’ elevator bird houses for \$20. New Preston Historical Society maroon colored t-shirts are for sale for \$18. (*Preston Historical Society logo on the front and the historic campus scene on the back*).



Sizes range from small to 2 X. AND we still have a few t-shirts from the 2022 tractor ride – gold color with historic campus scene on the front and tractor ride sponsors listed on the back \$15. (Sizes available include: XL and 2XL)

We thank each and everyone who have supported us this year with your purchases. It’s still time for everyone to help us move forward with our historical site plans for next year. Your contributions are greatly appreciated. Contact us at [prestonhistoricalsociety@gmail.com](mailto:prestonhistoricalsociety@gmail.com).

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## Histrees at Fillmore County History Museum!

By: Joanne Hall

The Preston Historical Society collections committee provided a display for the

Fillmore County Historical Society Museum’s Christmas event, HisTrees. A Railroad theme was chosen for our tree, as Preston had a rich history with the Railroad!

The Caledonia, Mississippi and Western Company first built a narrow gauge track from Reno to Preston. As written in the Preston Times “Toward evening on December 26, 1879, the shrill whistle of a locomotive first greeted the ears of the people of Preston as the first train arrived in Preston”.

In 1901 the narrow gauge track to Caledonia was replaced with a broad “standard” gauge track and on November 11, 1901, the first broad gauge train arrived in Preston. In the summer of 1902, a spur line to the Isinours station (between Lanesboro and Fountain) was started and with its completion, on November 23, 1903, Preston was finally connected with the towns on the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul line between La Crosse and Austin – including Peterson, Lanesboro, Fountain, Wykoff, and Spring Valley.

Preston became a railroad hub. Train operation crews for the Isinours-Preston-Caledonia (and Reno until the late 1940’s) line were based in Preston. Roundhouse crews - “hostlers”- maintained the steam engine fires through the night. Track maintenance crews and the train engines and cabooses were based in Preston. The Preston Depot was also a major communication center. All postal mail moved through it and the Western Union telegraph center was there. The Railroad Express Agency was the “UPS” of that day as the shipping hub for packages and merchandise.

The wooden trains that surround our tree were made for Andy and Lee Craig when boys by their Grandfather.

The Milwaukee caboose was made for Lexie Pierce's father by his great-uncle, John Jaszewski of Winona, who was a freight conductor on the railroad.



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### **Sending Santa Off**

Help send Santa back to the North Pole to finish up his work before Christmas!

Write Santa a letter and drop it off between 3 pm and 4:30 pm at the Historica Train display at the Trailhead in Preston on Saturday, December 10<sup>th</sup>! Let's wish him the best as he heads back to the North Pole. He will be there to say good-bye!

Special treat bags will be given out, too!

Letter template may be found at [www.prestonmnhistory.com](http://www.prestonmnhistory.com) or at businesses around Preston!

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## **Collections Committee Report**

**By: Joanne Hall**

Think of the Preston Historical Society before you "throw away" a piece of Preston's past!

The following artifacts have been accepted into our collection the last quarter:

- \*Collection of 1951 Class Reunion photos and memorabilia
- \*postcards of Preston area scenes
- \*Photo of Preston High School 1967 Homecoming Queen Coronation,
  
- \*1960's Preston School concert programs
- \*Preston Telephone Book cover 1987-1988,
- \*F&M Community Bank zipper bag
- \*F&M Summit Club bag
- \*1940 "St. Paul's on the Hill" Confirmation bulletin,
- \*1935 Preston High School Commencement program
- \* 1927 PHS Graduation program and Class History
- \*Pine Tree Apple Orchard t-shirt
- \*Hellickson Steel Company memo holder (Arnold Hellickson owner)

And we thank the donors: Ann Ott, Geraldine Williams, Sue Grooters, Joyce Hellickson, and Arlene Staupé

We received 3 binders of the draft mock up of the "Coming Home" book from the Fillmore County Historical Society. The "Coming Home" book was developed in 1980 without the aid of Shutterfly!

Lexie Pierce donated a miniature Milwaukee Railroad Caboose which had belonged to her father. The caboose was made by his great-uncle, John Jaszewski, of Winona. John Jaszewski worked as a freight conductor on the railroad.



Our committee has discussed a schedule of taking photos of the Preston streets and houses. The Courthouse Square, highway businesses, other business areas and neighborhoods change over the years and we would like to document those changes. Any volunteers to help with this project?

The oral history recordings in our collection will be transferred to a flash drive which will soon be available to check out from the Preston Public Library.

Remember today is tomorrow's history!

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## Tractor Ride

By: Elaine Maust

Seventy-five tractors were in line for pictures at the Pilot Mound Lutheran Church on day one of the 8<sup>th</sup> annual Bluff Country Tractor Ride held September 17 & 18<sup>th</sup>. All colors of tractors were represented as they wound their way through Fillmore County from Preston to Pilot Mound, to Peterson, to Henrytown and back to Preston for the trip on the first day.



*(Lining up the tractors in Pilot Mound)*

The second day found the tractors traveling from Preston to Cherry Grove and on to Spring Valley; then Fountain and back to Preston. Lunch on Saturday was hosted by the Peterson American Legion Auxiliary and on Sunday by Spring Valley United Methodist Church.



*(Royal Neighbors provided us with a \$200 grant and t-shirts worn by our kitchen crew)*

We thank all of the great partners including stops for our breaks in Pilot Mound, Henrytown Lutheran Church, the Cherry Grove Community Center, and the DNR Trailhead in Fountain.

The ride for next year has been scheduled for Saturday and Sunday, September 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>.

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## Membership Update

By: Sheila Craig

A new member has joined the Preston Historical Society since our last newsletter. We welcome Tom Hogue, Preston!

## What's on Facebook!

By: Lexi Pierce

### The Preston Co-op Creamery:



Posted September 7, 2022

A photo from inside the Preston Co-op Creamery taken in May of 1963! No one on our Facebook page knew who these two were. The photo below, posted on September 20<sup>th</sup> generated some conversation! Many stated it simply could not have been taken in Preston and was likely taken during an acquisition of another plant, but an exact location could not be identified.



The next photo was posted on September 22<sup>nd</sup> of a Creamery truck driven by Loyal Woellert. The photo is dated 1/15/1951 and it was noted that the truck had 72,000 miles on it when the picture was taken.



### The Two-Headed Car



Posted September 29, 2022

The beloved two headed car! When I think of "Preston" this car is always on the list of things that come to mind. This article is from the summer it made its debut - 1965. Barb Scheevel, Sharon Woellert, Chris Utley and others all shared memories of road trips, parades, and wild rides in this car!

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT EVENT – OVER 50 ATTENDEES

By Jon B. DeVries

On Wednesday, October 26<sup>th</sup>, 50+ citizens gathered at the Preston Methodist Church to hear progress on the *Historic Campus-Riverfront Masterplan* and to provide input.

PHS President Sheila Craig shared the work that the Steering Committee had done since spring 2022 – all the committee members were in attendance.

The planning consultants from WiDSETH–Craig Britton, Ryan Hermes, and Jillian Reiner - shared maps of the riverfront from U.S. 52/16 (East) to the “Pines” (West).

Ms. Reimer presented the results of the “Community Survey” - a majority reported using the riverfront trail often and said they would use the area more if improved.

A depot/museum/welcome center, a public performance area, and recreation uses were identified – plus expanded playground, seating benches, and riverbank stabilization.

A need for a “museum” and home for the PHS was ranked high. Robert Vogel of Pathfinders answered questions about the elevator and proposed depot restorations.

Examples of depot/museum facilities in Peterson, Canton, and Marquette were shown with a range of public uses as well as historic items, records, and pictures.

All attendees were invited for refreshments and to discuss the maps with the consultants. A picture exhibit was provided by the History Committee showing earlier decades.

The public input will be included in the 2nd stage of the plan – the “masterplan” which is scheduled for completion in 1<sup>st</sup> quarter 2023.

The “masterplan” will include four subareas: River East, History Campus/Rail Yard, Town Riverfront, and River West. Projects, costs, and timetable will be included.

The event ended with a video funded by the Preston Area Community Foundation (PACF): *Bringing Us Together Through Our History and our Riverfront*.



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