



Preston Historical Society

PO Box 138
Preston, Minnesota 55965

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

NEWSLETTER

July 2023

Volume 17 Issue 2

President's Notes

By: Sheila Craig

My first article of the year in the March newsletter, talked about the commencing of a 'banner' year. That has certainly turned out to be the truth! The Masterplan committee has moved full speed ahead and held another extremely successful community meeting when the Plan was nearing completion. The final report will soon be out.

Hannah Wingert, Assistant Preston Librarian, has been progressing diligently through the list of names submitted for the 2023 interviews. See more about the cooperative grant in a later article.

The County Fair open house at the O'Hara School House had great attendance, the Facilities Committee is making progress on the boxcar refurbishing, the 2023 raffle will soon 'be in the books', plans are progressing for the 10th annual tractor ride, plus we continue to work on our goal of learning more about the Certified Local Government program.

Membership Update

By: Sheila Craig

Two new members have joined the Preston Historical Society. We welcome Tricia Allen and Trudy Horihan as yearly members.

Newsletter Correction

In the last newsletter it stated that the Fillmore Central Falcons played Minnesota in the game. It should have read Minneota.

Boxcar Refurbishing

By: Kerry Soiney

The company who will be painting the boxcar has been in Preston and has taken pictures and measurements in preparation for the painting. Also completed is the work to prepare for a different type of lettering. They will make stencils of each of the letters and numbers on the boxcar.

The contractor will begin by totally enclosing the boxcar with a tent-like barrier prior to starting the sandblasting portion. He will also provide a similar barrier to cover the caboose. Once the sandblasting is completed, he will apply a primer coat. Then he will apply white paint to the sections where the lettering will be.

The next step will be to apply temporary letters to the surfaces that are painted white. Lastly, he will apply the final coat of the "Milwaukee" official paint color.

When the paint dries, he will remove the stencil/temporary letters and wah-lah...the lettering on the boxcar will be white paint, not vinyl. He estimates that the whole project will take five days.

If anyone in Preston is interested in 'hosting' him, for lodging and meals, this would save a great deal of cost. When he painted the tank, he stayed in a motel and ate at the B&B here in Preston. That's expensive. I wonder if anyone would invite him into their home (for a "no cost" bed and breakfast situation) while he's here. He seems very nice.

Collections Committee Report

By: Joanne Hall, Committee Chair

The Collections Committee has received donations of many Preston related items over the past months. We are grateful to the families that have recognized the history of Preston as they sort through boxes, closets and drawers in their homes. Items donated recall businesses, photos and postcards remind us of past events and places. Our vision continues to build a museum in order to share Preston history with an interested public.

February 2023 donations

Dean Aug-Gunderson Motors small pocket knife
Wayne & Donna Dreier-complete set of Preston Historical Society crocks (11)
Eileen Linden-Class of 1944 Preston High School Graduation Photo; two Grant Honey Pails (Merlin Grant apiary); Farmers Exchange level; collapsible cup giveaway from Preston Motor Service-TV Sales & Service; pocket mirror and case from Anderson Motors, Inc.; Preston-Fountain Bluejays #1 pin; Preston Photography Studio photo cards- Holden, Sleyster, Weller & Crandall, Hammond, Calendars from Winter's IGA, 1964; Preston Oil Products, 1988; Anderson Chevrolet, 1973; Preston Equipment, 2000; National Bushing, 1987; Farmer's Union Co-op, 1971; Ebert Hardware, 1983

March 2023 donations

Muriel Hanson estate-10 Preston photos-Memorial Day parade, Vet Cemetery dedication-
Mary Harstad-3 vintage Preston street scene postcards
Diane Johnson-1 photo postcard of the old County courthouse
Scott and Linda Snyder-1 band uniform/1 FFA and 1 cheerleader jacket from
Eileen Linden-1 Preston Creamery milk can, 1 lb Preston Creamery butter box; 1 lb quartersticks Preston Creamery butter box; 1939 Ebert calendar; Johnson Hardware broom holder; Hampel's Plumbing fly swatter; Gartner's Café and Rose Room ashtray; leather document file from Anderson & Schumbaum; Fillmore County Fair books from 1958, 1962, 1963

April 2023 donations

Diane Johnson- photos of Preston Post (2) and Auxiliary (1)
Ron & Pat Scheevel-11x14" framed photo of Preston Creamery Milk Haulers, 1940's or early '50s era
Arlene Staube-F&M Bank zipper pouch; Farmer's Exchange notebook; 1973 MN State HS Basketball Tournament program; Scrapbook pages with Preston Republican articles on dedication of Christ Lutheran Church in 1961 and "Dr. Nehring Day" in 1964; Pioneer Seed Corn pencil, Carl Mandelko dealer;

The oral history project

The 2023 version of this project is shared with the Preston Public Library with the Library Collaboration Grant. Hannah Wingert, Assistant Librarian is conducting the interviews of the 47 people identified by the Collection Committee. She is recording and transcribing the interviews with a community release in September.

O'Hara School Open During Fair 2023

By: Mary Jane Glaser

The school was open on Tuesday 4pm-9pm, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday from 11am-9pm and Saturday 1pm-9m. We had 523 visitors compared to 400 last year. Mostly local, but out of state visitors were from Arizona, Iowa, Wisconsin, Utah and Nebraska! We collected \$55.03 from bell ringing (\$30 last year), \$40 from donations (\$75 last year). Preston Historical merchandise sold, included 4 sets of note cards, 2 tee shirts, 1 Preston history book, and about 40 raffle tickets.

I would like to thank all the volunteers that helped clean, set up and take down the display, and those who worked at the school during the fair. They were Ila Mae Olstad, Sue Grooters, Joanne Hall, John Carlin, Joyce Hellickson, Lexi Pierce, Diane Johnson, Charlie and Ann Sparks, Linda O'Connor, Aaron Fox, Linda Wolfe, Tom Hogue, Bob and Elaine Maust and Sheila Craig. You all made over seeing this project a breeze! Norma would be proud!

Certified Local Government

By: Tom Hogue

Invited guest speaker Bobbie Hillery spoke about the Certified Local Government program in Lanesboro at PHS's July 6 meeting. Hillery, currently the Fillmore County Administrator, was previously the city manager in Lanesboro. Lanesboro has had a historic preservation CLG program for many years.

Hillery emphasized the importance of getting city leaders and the broader community on the same page when implementing a local CLG program. She said the technical aspects of implementing a historic preservation city ordinance are relatively easy. But it does require active engagement.

Hillery praised PHS for its robust meeting attendance, even during a week of a summer holiday. She generously offered to assist our efforts in the future.

One of the PHS's goals for the year is to learn about Minnesota's Certified Local Government program. CLG status enables the local government to apply for state and federal matching grants to preserve historic properties. This local-state-federal partnership encourages the integration of historic preservation into local government policy.

Hillery described the work of rebuilding the dam in Lanesboro to historic standards, repairs to historic buildings, and decisions to maintain the quality of life in historic neighborhoods.

Raffle 2023

By: Sheila Craig

All raffle tickets have been sold and everyone is awaiting the official drawing at the August 3 monthly meeting of the PHS. Many thanks to all of the wonderful donors and sellers of raffle tickets. We again thank Dan Christianson, F & M Community Bank for matching each ticket with a \$1 for a total of \$1,000.

Tractor Ride for 2023

By: Sheila Craig

Currently there are just over 40 tractors scheduled for the September 16 and 17 tractor ride. Watch for a special volunteer opportunity list to be sent shortly to the membership. This is our largest fundraiser!

History Moments

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

March 2023 History Moment

By: Joanne Hall

“When the County Seat moved from Carimona to Preston”

Collections received an undated, unlabeled photo of this house in Preston. It sparked local lore conversation that this house was the location of the first courthouse in Preston. The County seat was moved from Carimona to Preston in 1856. The Courthouse on the town square was not completed until 1864.



While working with the transcriptions of the 1978 oral histories, facts were confirmed in the very first interview, which was with Julius Afseth and Tim Grebin together.

They identified in their conversation that this building was the first site of county courthouse business, until the courthouse on the square was built in 1864. This building no longer stands, but was located on Mill St.

April 2023 History Moment

By: Joanne Hall

“Preston’s Browning Round Table”

National Library Week, from *April 23 to 29, 2023*
1898-The seeds of a village public library were sown when Mrs. John C. Mills (Emma Allen) formed a local literary study club. She was the Fillmore County Superintendent of Schools. The group was known as the Preston Browning Round Table as they initially read and discussed the works of Robert Browning. It was the Browning Club’s continued efforts that resulted in the development of a public library in Preston. An interpretive sign which recognizes the efforts of the Browning Club is under development for placement in front of the library in 2023.

Timeline of Property at 316 Fillmore Street West (Lot 6 Block 12)

By: Diane Johnson

- 1855: John Kaercher obtained approximately 158 acres, which included Block 12.
- 1859: John Kaercher sold “Lot 6 Block 12 and other lots” for \$1 to the Board of Supervisors of the County of Fillmore with the condition that the County Seat shall remain and continue to be in Preston for 3 years and that within those 3 years a building was to be used and occupied at a cost of not less than \$6,000. If a building was not erected within that timeframe, the premises would revert back to John Kaercher. Evidently the building was not erected as the current courthouse is located in Block 10 – not Block 12.
- 1865: John Kaercher sold Lot 6 Block 12 to Jacob Schweitzer.
- Over the next four decades, the property changed hands numerous times.
- 1910: Manie F. and Edward B. Read purchased Lots 6, 7 and 8 of Block 12); they later sold Lots 7 and 8.
- 1954: Upon the death of Manie Read, her son (Donald E. Read) inherited the property.

- 1984: After Donald Read’s death, the property was purchased by Keith & Diane Johnson.

READ FAMILY HISTORY

By: Diane Johnson

William K. Read

William K. Read was born in Terrington County of Norfolk, England in 1836. He came to the US in 1857 to Janesville, WI at the age of 21. He came to Preston in 1858. William married Mary Latham in 1861. They lived in Carimona from 1862 to 1883 before moving back to Preston.

William enlisted in the Second Minnesota in 1864; he was 28 years old at the time. He joined the Masons in 1873 and was a member for 57 years.

William and Mary had 2 daughters (Laura & Nell) as well as 2 sons (Edward & Wilmot). In the early days he was a wagon maker. He operated a wagon shop, grocery store and post office, and also built coffins when they lived in Carimona. He continued to operate a wagon shop after moving back to Preston.

William died in 1930 at the age of 94. According to his obituary: *“He was of a genial disposition and his greatest pleasure in later years was to visit with those who happened to be at the store when he made his regular trips for a cigar. With his passing, another of the pioneers who helped to make our village and our county has gone to his reward.”*

Wilmot (“Will”) K. Read

Wilmot Read was born in 1876 on Carimona. He was their second son. He attended Preston schools. In 1906 he married Louise Schoenbaum; they had no children.

After completing his education, Will went to work as clerk in the grocery store operated by Fred Grahm. Later he worked for Gust Gartner. For several years Will clerked in a store in Elmore, MN before returning to work for Gust Gartner. He then went to work for George F. Mann & Company (“dealers in groceries and crockery); this business was located in the Hamre Building on the upper street.

In 1901 Will and his brother, Ed, bought out Mr. Mann and formed a partnership that continued until Will's death in 1942. Their store was located on Fillmore Street, below the Grand Opera House and was called the Read Brothers Grocery and Crockery. A few years later, the **Preston Times** newspaper wrote that their store had "*revolutionized the grocery business of Preston by introducing specialties and desirable features unheard of previous to their time.*" When the Odd Fellows Building was completed, they moved their store there until WWI. In 1919, they then moved to the building next to the Farmers & Merchants Bank on the lower street.

Will died in 1942 at the age of 66. According to his obituary, "*Will Read was a man who was thoroughly liked by all who knew him. He was always pleasant and kindly, even during recent years when he was by no means well. His passing will be mourned by a most of friends.*"

Edward B. Read

Edward Read was born in 1874 in Carimona to William and Mary Read. He was their oldest son. In 1904, Ed married Manie Florence Mercereau from West Salem, WI. They had one son, Donald.

Just like his brother, Will, Ed began clerking in George Mann's store at age 17. He also later clerked in Gust Gartner's store, and then returned to Mann's store until he and his brother opened their own store. They worked together until Will's death. Ed and Will's wife continued to operate the store until 1946 when they sold it to Mr. & Mrs. Alton Olson. The Olson's later sold it to Byron Ingvalson, who was the owner at the time of Ed's death.

Ed was in the grocery business for 55 years, 45 of which he was in business for himself. He was always active in civic affairs. He was also active in the Masonic Lodge.

Edward died in 1950 at the age of 76. Listed in his obituary as pallbearers were William Klein, Moppy Anderson, Chris Evenrud, Henry E. Peterson, C. B. Holland, and Frank Ashton. I am not sure about some of them, but William Klein, Moppy Anderson,

and Frank Ashton would have been neighbors of the Reads.

Manie B. Read

Manie was born in 1875 at Union, New York. As a small girl, she moved to West Salem, WI. She graduated from Whitewater Teacher's College at Whitewater, WI. She also attended the University of Minnesota, the University of Chicago, and the University of Southern California.

Manie taught school at West Salem, Minneapolis and Preston for 36 years. She was in charge of the teacher training department in the Harmony school for 3 years, and of the teacher training department in the Preston school for 25 years. It is estimated that her teacher training students would total around 500, and her kindergarten students around 1,000.

In the book "**A Teacher, A Rooster, and an Outhouse**", Carol Hahn Schmidt's story describes her experiences while attending Normal Training with Mrs. Read as her teacher. The Normal Training Department was housed in the Preston School Building so the class was able to observe and practice teaching at every grade level. "*As for the twelve students in the class of '32, we all matured and grew under the tutelage of Mrs. Read. Looking back, I can see she was the ideal teacher. She was a strict disciplinarian, but always there for her students and had their best interests at heart. She sent us out with great confidence in ourselves, a necessary asset for Rural School teachers in that era.*"

Manie was responsible for the village library in Preston, was the first librarian, and served continuously as president of the library board until a few years prior to her death. She was a charter member of the Browning Club in Preston.

During WWI, Manie organized a Red Cross chapter in every town and rural community in Fillmore County as well as part of Houston County. For her efforts, she received a presidential citation signed by President Woodrow Wilson for 15,000 hours of Red Cross work.

Manie was also active in politics. She served as Fillmore County Republican chairwoman for 12

years, and also served as a member of the state Republican committee. Twice she served as president of the Fillmore County Federation of Women's Clubs. She was also a member of the Eastern Star for 58 years.

As mentioned previously, she married Edward Read in 1904. They had one son, Donald. Manie died in 1963 at the age of 77.

Donald E. Read

Donald was born in 1905 to Manie and Edward Read. He never married. Donald graduated from Preston High School in 1923. He went on to attend several colleges, including Carleton College, the University of Minnesota, the University of Southern California, the University of Chicago, and Sorbonne of Paris.

Donald spent 5 years in the United States Air Force during WWII. He spent time in Australia, New Guiana, Leyte, Okinawa, and Japan. He taught school for several years in Duluth and Des Moines, IA before moving to Austin, where he taught music, art appreciation, history, and foreign affairs for 25 years.

Donald was a member of the Preston Masonic Lodge, Eastern Star, Lions Club and VFW. He died in 1983 at the age of 78.

Headstone Restoration Brings Reverend Terwilliger Back to Life

By: Tom Hogue

The historic cemetery headstone of Reverend Terwilliger, a traveling minister for several churches in SE Minnesota, including the Preston Methodist Church and the historic church in Lenora, has been restored to its former glory thanks to the work of Mike Karsten, owner of Winona Monument Services, a headstone restoration and leveling company.

The headstone, located in the Preston Crown Hill Cemetery, had become covered in dirt, moss, and lichen over the years and damaged by mowers. Karsten used a combination of soft brushes, water, and D/2 headstone cleaner to remove the growth and reveal the original inscription.

The results are truly remarkable. The headstone now looks as it did when it was placed in the cemetery almost 150 years ago.

Reverend Danielle Bartz, a UCC minister in Winona, is a great great great granddaughter of Reverend Terwilliger. She was thrilled with the results of the restoration. She said that cleaning her ancestor's headstone would make her grandmother happy.

"My grandmother used to clean the family headstones in the cemetery when she was alive," Reverend Bartz said. "She would use a wire brush, which is something that you should never do. But she was always so proud of the work that she did." Bartz hopes to take a turn in the Lenora pulpit in honor of her ancestor soon.

Karsten, the headstone restoration professional, said that the latest methods for cleaning headstones are much more gentle than the methods that were used in the past. "We use soft brushes and non-ionic cleaners," Mike said. "These cleaners are safe for the stone and won't damage the lettering."

Mike also warned against using harsh chemicals or power washers to clean headstones. "These methods can actually damage the stone," Karsten said. "It's important to use gentle methods that will preserve the headstone for future generations."



The restoration of Reverend Terwilliger's headstone reminds us of the importance of preserving our historic cemeteries. These cemeteries are home to the stories of our ancestors, and it's our responsibility to ensure that their stories are preserved for future generations.

Town and Country Sewing Club (provided by the family of Betty and LaVern Knoepke)

The following article was taken from a written history compiled by Doris Leeseberg in 2012 when the club was featured in an article in the Republication Leader newspaper.

“In August of 1958, neighbors and friends formed a sewing club of which most of them lived on the South Hill. All were young mothers, so there was plenty of sewing and mending going on. Some worked outside the home, and later everyone worked outside the home at some point over the years.

Original members were – Alice Cummings, Betty Knoepke, Donna Gartner, Doris Leeseberg, Geri Hellickson, Barbara Benson, JoAnn Miller, Phyllis Woellert, Mary Tomesche. We met once a month in each other's homes. Joyce Bremseth and Shirley Freiheit joined us in a few years. Lillian Fay also was a member for a brief time when Mary Tomesche moved away. Then Lillian also moved from Preston.

There were no records kept between 1958 and 1964, so I am relying on memories to fill in that time period. In 1964 it was decided to have monthly dues, starting at 25 cents per member. Over the years this continued with increases along the way until it was discontinued in 2009 with dues at that time at \$2 per member. Dues were used for expenses incurred at special occasions of the club, such as the annual family picnic in July and a Christmas party in December. We also decided to give our club a name, which is Town and Country Sewing Club, as Shirley lived in the country.

At our first Christmas parties were held in the homes with a gift exchange. Then we decided to

include the spouses at the Christmas party by having a card party and playing whist, and having a special lunch. In later years we decided to go out to eat, previous to having our Christmas party. Sometimes we included our spouses and sometimes not. The last 15 years we have met without spouses and gone out to eat at noon, and gathered at one home for dessert and conversation.

As the children grew up and left home, the sewing and mending ceased and the sewing club became more of a social gathering, although Donna would bring crocheting or fancy work.

Other special events the club took part in as a group, over the years were baby showers, graduations, wedding showers, birthdays, anniversaries, flowers for hospitalized members and funerals. One event that we had as a group was a second hand sale in May of 1967. What fun we had purchasing each others items! As we are nearing 54 years of gathering together once a month, it is time to refresh our memories with years past, and record some of the things that we do remember. Phyllis passed away January 20, 1999, Shirley on August 6, 2008, and Barbara on February 4, 2010. There are still seven of us gathering once a month.

Group Holds “Second Hand Sale by the Group's Reporter, Donna Gartner as told the ‘next day’.
“Sunday, May 21, 1967

The Town and Country Sewing Club members, Joyce Bremseth, Alice Vitse, Doris Leeseberg, Phyllis Woellert, JoAnn Miller, Shirley Freiheit, Donna Gartner, Barb Benson, Betty Knoepke, and Geri Hellickson had talked for a few months about a second hand sale and decided to advertise on KFIL Radio and in the Preston Republican on May 11 and 18th the following – *‘The Town and Country Sewing Club will have a second hand sale of clothing, household articles, toys, etc. in the basement of the home of Mrs. John Leeseberg on Saturday, May 20, from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. Coffee will be served.’*

On Thursday evening May 18th the gals met at the Leeseberg home and sorted, marked, and tried on things and bought things. Joyce served a very good punch that had absolutely no gin or vodka in it and

lunch at her house at about 10:30. John said he hoped all the gals would pack up their junk when Saturday evening came so he didn't have to haul it to the city dump. He told Doris may if you can't get 10.00 dollars out of the old davenport you should knock the price down \$2.00 every hour. Doris was the only one that got a new davenport for Mother's Day so she could sell hers at the sale.

Neil just couldn't stay away either he went over Friday evening and got a belt for .50 cents. He said 'Hell I didn't get a buy I got a steal.' Noticed Lyle showed up on Saturday before the big hour and bought some mittens. Guess he just couldn't stay away either.

OH! Here comes Shirley with her cake and she had it with such a lovely frosting, but it seems that when she came over the damn hill her arm slid through the frosting to make an extra design in the middle of it. Doris and Alice sure talked big about making doughnuts and guess they got lazy. I'm sure you all noticed they came from the Spring Valley Bakery. JoAnn just must have been real pleased and done everything just right. Phyllis she was our best buyer, 'Thanks' Phyllis you sure stood behind us all the way.

Shortly after I got home and we were ready to eat here came Betty wearing the old green ear muffs that didn't sell and Keith and I were just talking about it all and that we heard Gerri say just before we left 'My God now I've got to pack all this junk up and take it home.'

It seems the question now is 'WHO HAS GOT WHAT AT WHOSE HOUSE AND WHERE DID IT COME FROM?'

There was a small profit from the lunch so the gals thought they might just as well go all the way and got Doris and John a case of good Old Grain Belt Beer for their friendliness, kindness, electricity, water, dressing room, toilet paper, and their garage. It was wrapped and tied with a large red bow and delivered by Keith. When Keith got there with it he had to wait a minute as Doris still was selling things, like her davenport to the minister of Wykoff.

Everyone had a good time and am sure that we can think of something to do in Oh! Maybe five years that will be just as much fun.



Front row (left to right): Joyce Bremseth, Donna Gartner
Back row (left to right): Doris Leeseberg, Gerri Hellickson, Betty Knoepke, Alice Cummings, JoAnn Miller

Footnote: Since the article was written in 2012, there are now only two members still living – Alice Cummings and Doris Leeseberg. Gerri Hellickson passed away April 29, 2015, Donna Gartner on June 24, 2017, JoAnn Miller on December 31, 2021, Betty Knoepke on August 4, 2022, and Joyce Bremseth on August 10, 2022.

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Preston Historical Society Officers

President: Sheila Craig (507.273.1481)
smeercraig@gmail.com
Vice President: Steve Hall
Secretary: Elaine Maust
Treasurer: Charles Sparks (507.765.4785)
charlessparks@mediacombb.net
Newsletter Editor: Sheila Craig
E-mail: prestonhistoricalsociety@gmail.com
Mailing: Box 138, Preston, MN 55965
website at www.gethookedonpreston.com.
Web Master: Lexi Pierce: aglenzinski@yahoo.com

