



# Preston Historical Society

PO Box 138  
Preston, Minnesota 55965

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

## NEWSLETTER

December 2023

Volume 17 Issue 3

### President's Notes

By: Sheila Craig

As 2023 is coming to a close, we celebrate all that PHS has accomplished this year. Read articles in this issue about the successful tractor ride and raffle. The MasterPlan project is moving forward and the Collection Committee has been extremely active. To quote Joanne Hall, we are 'collecting history one piece at a time'! The only project on a delayed schedule is the repainting of the boxcar. That is now scheduled for spring 2024 due to more work needed on making the stencils.

### Collections Committee Report

By: Joanne Hall, Committee Chair



*The Collections Committee at Work*

Photo By: Linda Wolfe

We have recently received file cabinet donations from **Ann Ott**, **Preston Food Shelf** and **F&M Community Bank**. They are much appreciated!

Visit the Fillmore County Historical Society HisTrees display during November and December. We have created a "Preston Pin Tree" display.

### Browning Club Interpretive Sign September 7, 2023 Dedication



Photo By: Sue Grooters

### ....more from the Collection Committee

Recent donors to our PHS inventory include: **Fillmore County Historical Society** (letter opener labeled "Frank J. Ibach", O'Hara school books, Ulysses S. Grant memoir volumes); **Lavern & Betty Knoepke estate** (Fireman hat; Preston-Fountain School reunion mug, photos); **Diane Johnson** (Preston related photos, Standard Railroad Container box); **Rosalie Odden Bjorkman** (paper artifacts related to the Schultz family and German Lutheran Church, photo of Passe Brickyard workers); **Rick and Sue Grooters** (vintage Preston area postcards, Class of 1973 50<sup>th</sup> Reunion book, 1931 Read Brothers Grocery flier); **Julie Sogla** (LP record 1966 PHS Band); **Lanesboro Historical Society** (1975 Anderson Chevrolet and 1976 Thauwald Funeral Home calendars); **Jerry Grebin** (models he made of St. Columban's Catholic Church and the "old" Fillmore County Courthouse); **Steve Ristau** (framed ink drawing by

John Cartwright of the Preston Depot); **Geraldine Williams** (Preston related paper artifacts, Gartner's Victory Cafe toothpick holder); **Wayne Marzolf** (Preston FFA jacket, two Preston Feed Sacks, other area related items); **Preston Lions Club** (their Parade Lion)

## **Membership Update**

**By: Sheila Craig**

We welcome new members to the Society: Debbie Thompson, Preston; Les and Tammy Janssen, Ackey, Iowa; Dennis & Judi Walvatne, Hawkeye, Iowa; and Gerald Caulkins, Hastings, MN.

## **Certified Local Government**

**By: Tom Hogue**

Goal setting has been a popular organizational management technique for decades. It identifies specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound objectives an organization wants to achieve.

The Preston Historical Society (PHS) has set a goal to learn about the Certified Local Government (CLG) program for historic preservation. The CLG program is a national recognition program that helps communities to preserve their historic and cultural resources.

To become a CLG, a community must meet certain criteria, including having a local historic preservation commission and a comprehensive historic preservation plan.

PHS has taken several steps to learn about the CLG program, including distributing an information bibliography to the membership and inviting a speaker to share their experience in Lanesboro, Minnesota, a community that has been a CLG since 2003.

The Minnesota CLG program is designed to help communities to preserve their historic and cultural resources. CLG communities receive a number of benefits, including access to federal funding for historic preservation projects, technical assistance from the National Park Service, and recognition as a leader in historic preservation.

Small cities like Preston can save their iconic old buildings that define the valuable town character when citizens demand action from their government.

Become a Member

Active membership in the PHS is a great way to build community and careers. PHS is currently recruiting a new board officer and treasurer. This is a good opportunity for young adults to add leadership and management experience to their resume and help knit the community together at the same time.

Goal setting is an important tool for organizations of all sizes. PHS is using goal setting to learn about the CLG program and to preserve Preston's historic and cultural resources. I encourage you to get involved with PHS and help us to achieve our goals.

## **Tractor Ride for 2023**

**By: Sheila Craig**

The tractor ride was again a big success for the Preston Historical Society! 87 tractor drivers went through the picture line to kick off the 2023 ride. The first day they traveled to Cherry Grove, Lime Springs for lunch, then to the Larry Peterson Farm, rural Harmony for the afternoon break before returning to Preston for dinner. Day two after breakfast at the Fairgrounds, found the tractors heading first to Lanesboro for the morning break, then on to Rushford for lunch, then to the Preble Town Hall for a break before heading back to Preston to conclude the ride.

## **2023 Raffle Winners Announced**

**By: Sheila Craig**

The Preston Historical Society conducted the drawing for the winners of the recent raffle fundraiser at their August Society meeting. Proceeds from the raffle will be used for Historical Society projects.

The Society would again like to thank Dan Christianson, F & M Community Bank for providing matching funds of \$1000 (a dollar for

each ticket sold). Preston businesses and individuals, listed below were also gracious to provide the many prizes.

Golf Driver – Greg & Bonnie Davids (\$299 value) – Pat Scheevel, Preston

Wilson Golf Bag– Greg & Bonnie Davids (\$200 value) – Steve Hall, Preston

Golf Putter – Greg & Bonnie Davids (\$199 value) – Dwight Luhmann, Preston

Gift Certificate – 4 Daughters – Dick & Linda Wolfe (\$100 value) – Ashley Winslow, Preston

Skol Basket (Viking mittens, felt wool garland, set of 4 SKOL dinner napkins, & a SKOL neck gaiter) – Barb Mielke (\$75 value) – Ryan Throckmorton, Preston

Oil Change Gift Certificate – Preston Service Plus (\$60 value) – Gary Feine, Preston

2 Pork Gift Certificates good at Harmony, Preston or Rushford Foods – Gulbranson Farms (each \$50 value) – Doug Ristau, Preston and Julie Maust, Wayzata

Branding Iron Gift Certificate – Gary & Joyce Hellickson (\$50 value) - James Maust, Prior Lake Boots & Badges Book – Fillmore County Journal (\$50 value) – Ann Donovan, Fountain

Gift Certificate - Driftless Fly Fishing (\$50 value) – Dave Gardner, Preston

Gift Certificate – Armour Computer – Jon DeVries (\$50 value) – Martin Rinnhofer, Preston

Preston Bucks – Jim Kuene & Mary Jane Glaser (\$50 value) – Blaine Coyle, Mabel

Two Titlest pro v golf balls – twelve packs - Greg & Bonnie Davids (each \$50 value) – Mike Stein, Chatfield and Liz Lynch, Preston

Purse from Helen’s Daughters – Steve & Joanne Hall (\$48 value) – Mandy Seekamp, Preston

Purse – Helen’s Daughters – Mariella Terbeest-Schladweiler (\$48 value) – Bonnie Davids, Preston

Pack of 10 Handmade Greeting Cards with Stamps – Gail Bunge (\$42.60 value) – Dwight Luhmann, Preston

Garden Hod – John Carlin (\$30 value) - Martin Rinnhofer, Preston

Gift Certificate – Preston Floral & Gift – Alison and Bradley Leathers (\$25 value) – Britney Viske, Preston

Gift Certificate – Driftless Fly Fishing – Alison and Bradley Leathers (\$25 value) – Joanne Hall, Preston

2 Golf hats – Greg & Bonnie Davids (each \$25 value) – Bev Hagedorn, Preston and Greg Davids, Preston

Gift Certificate - Urban Artifacts – Keith & Diane Johnson (\$20 value) – Julie Maust, Wayzata  
Gift Certificate to Preston Floral & Gift – Keith & Diane Johnson (\$20 value) – Joyce Hellickson, Preston

## ROLLING AHEAD ON THE DEPOT-MUSEUM AND MASTERPLAN

By: Jon DeVries

The PHS Depot-Museum took two major steps ahead recently. Firstly, Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation (SMIF) affirmed its support with a second \$10,000 grant for Phase II Implementation Planning – to be matched by funds and donated labor by PHS.

Secondly, Preston City Council on November 6<sup>th</sup> authorized negotiations between the City and PHS for a partnership agreement regarding the use of the Dairy & Farm (D&F) building and site.

The “Phase II Implementation” phase of the project is now beginning in three steps:

- Obtaining federal approval (LOMA) for construction in floodway zone for the D&F site;
- Estimating feasibility considering operating costs of other depot-museums and tourism growth - \$6.0 million for Harmony-Iowa and Preston- Carimona trails (WiDSETH);
- Completing building design (Midwest Design & Drafting) and estimating development costs (Eickhoff Construction).

Phase III will begin upon completing a partnership agreement with the City. It will include launching a public fund raising drive, seeking continuing foundation support, and applying for state bonding bill and legacy grants. **ALL ABOARD FOR 2024!!** P.S. In the meantime, we have been visiting and photographing other depot-museums in our area – see photos.

The following photos are of the restored depot and other amenities in Panora, Iowa (pop. 1085).



Above 3 Photos: By Shawn Saltau



Photo By: Jon DeVries



Photo By: Jon DeVries

## Send Off Santa at the Caboose

Come to the caboose on **Saturday, December 9 from 3:30 – 4:30 p.m., 2023** for Sending Santa Off. Kids can bring their letters to Santa. Photos from 2022....!

## History Moments

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

### The Shanti Peace Festival

By: Diane Johnson

The infamous rock festival in Preston was scheduled for October 1972 at Singing Hills Ski Slope. It was located at the top of the “South Hill”

on the south end of Preston. The ski slope and chalet were designed by Ross Graves. Shortly after it opened, two locals broke their legs: Rolf Huggenvik and Brian Runningen. The chalet was located at the top of the slope, so anyone that was injured had to be hauled back up the slope to the chalet. "It was a great name, great idea, great location – there was only one small flaw – it faced the wrong direction – the sun beat on it, causing ice to form and making a slippery slope – probably causing people to fall and break legs." I am not sure how many years Singing Hills was open for business.

The Shanti Peace Festival did not turn out the way it was planned. Producer Jack Bauer and promoter Bill Shereck, both of Milwaukee, lost a total of \$60,000. The rock festival was supposed to draw between 10,000 and 15,000 people. As you can imagine, many of the local Preston people were concerned about the influx of people and what they might do to the town. Fillmore County Sheriff Carl Fann also had concerns about the event and had tried to stop the festival from coming to town. When he was unable to get a county ordinance passed, he brought in 40 additional police officers from Mower and Olmsted Counties. Early that Friday morning, the Preston City Council passed a lengthy ordinance, which was designed to prevent any similar events in the future.

The festival was promoted as a "peace festival with religious overtones". One group that was expected to perform was "The Byrds" – but not the internationally known group. Many spectators felt that they had been ripped off. According to an article published in the Rochester Post Bulletin, the producer had other problems prior to the Preston event. His event in Wisconsin the month before had been shut down by a court injunction. Ticket holders for that event were told to come to the Shanti Peace Festival in Preston where their tickets would be honored. There were 2 Tax Department agents from the State of Minnesota present at the fest on Saturday to supervise the ticket sales and refunds.

However, the residents of Preston need not have worried. Mother Nature would prove to be a major factor in the failure of the event. Heavy rain on Friday and the threat of more rain on Saturday

prompted the festival to be cancelled by 1:30 pm on Saturday. It was estimated that only about 200 people showed up for the event. An article from the Winona Daily News shows vehicles stuck in ankle-deep mud.

Early on Saturday afternoon, an elaborate sound system was set up in a field on Singing Hills and the expensive equipment stood out in the drizzling rain for many hours. However, no bands showed up to use it. Taped rock music was piped over the speakers and a few kids sat on the wet ground and stared at the empty stage.

Mr. Bauer blamed the weather for keeping people away from the Festival – but less than 10 miles away over 100 area residents provided that a little rain does not keep them from going outdoors. Approximately 80 vehicles lined the highway just south of Fountain where a farm auction was being held that day.

Ironically, in November of that same year, the Preston-Fountain High School Junior Class Play had a similar theme. It was called "Big Rock at Candy's Mountain". Robert O'Reilly was the director and he had no idea that a rock festival would be planned for Preston when he picked the play - that had been decided months before! The play was about another unsuccessful rock fest event.



Photo Courtesy of Diane Johnson

In the play, the promoters plan to stage their folk rock festival on an island off Connecticut, owned by Candy Weaver, a pretty, sensible young girl with a financial problem and two dear, sweet old New England-type aunts. There is a seeming disaster when the bridge to the island washes out and a New

England squall virtually drowns the entire festival. But the play and the festival come to a happy conclusion.

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## Who Was Reverend Terwilliger?

By: Joanne Hall

The July 2023 issue of the Preston Historical Society newsletter had an article titled *Headstone Restoration Brings Reverend Terwilliger Back to Life*. The title led to the question, "Who was he?" The September membership meeting History Moment helped us learn more about him.

Ezra A. Terwilliger was born in Prince Edwards County, Canada in 1835. He married Margaret Wilsie in 1863. He joined the Niagara Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church and came to Minnesota about 1869. After two years in LaCrescent, he came to Fillmore County and served churches in Hamilton, Fillmore, Granger and Lenora. He died in 1876 and was buried in Crown Hill Cemetery in Preston. His widow remained in Preston with their two daughters until her death in 1907.

One of their daughters, Effa May, married Thomas I. Garratt. They were the parents of Wilson "Wils" A. Garratt, who in 1930 became president and CEO of the Farmers and Merchants State Bank of Preston, a position he held until his retirement in 1967. "Wils" was a prominent member of the Preston community, involved in many areas of community service. In his free time, he was the long suffering neighbor of the many children of a certain Preston neighborhood called "Fertile Valley"! "Wils" died in 1988.

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## A Building in the Middle of St. Paul Street?!

By: Joanne Hall

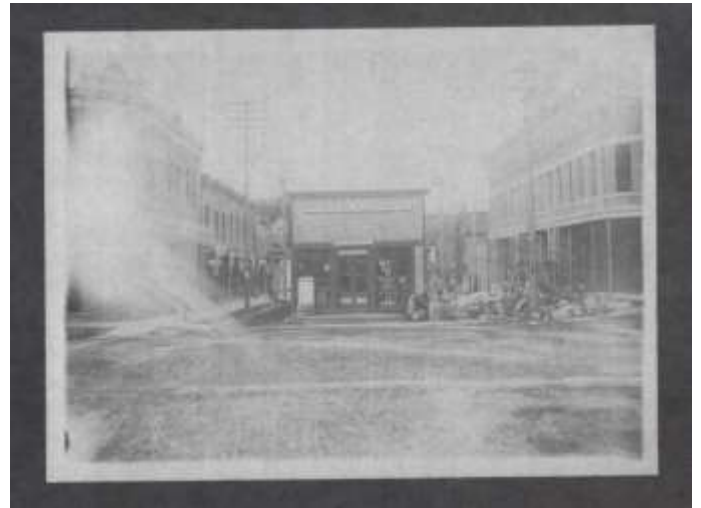


Photo from: Preston Historical Society Archives

Marion Marquis Blunt moved to Preston in 1897 and bought what remained of the old Bennett & Heinrich hardware store inventory, in the building on the SW corner of St. Paul and Main St.

The Preston Times of Oct. 1906 noted the Blunt, Conkey and Grebin block was going up next *spring*. In April, 1907, during the construction, Mr. Blunt moved a temporary building into the middle of St. Paul St. and continued his business from there.

In July of 1907 the Times noted: "*Those who happened to be in front of the Corner Store, (SE corner of St. Paul & Main St.) about eight o'clock Sunday evening... saw a frantic horse dashing wildly down St. Paul street with two ladies tugging at the lines and a little girl, on the seat between them.... The wheel struck a corner of the platform in front of the Blunt hardware store... throwing the occupants high into the air and hurling them with crushing force against the stone curbing... Just what caused the runaway is not clear, but it started further up St. Paul St. It being down grade from there to the Corner Store, great momentum was attained and the narrow passage way between Blunt's store, which stands temporarily in the middle of the street while he is building, and the curb, made escape from a serious accident well nigh impossible under the circumstances.*"

Sept 11, 1907 M. M. Blunt was doing business in his new store. The temporary building was moved and used for a store room and the street was again clear. In his new building he had "the greatest hardware store in Fillmore County" according to the Times.

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## **Preston Fire Department**

By: Joanne Hall

### **Timeline Highlights taken from minutes of the Preston Fire Department as recorded by respective Secretaries.**

**May 1885** was the beginning of the organization with the first officers elected. The By-Laws, adopted on June 30, 1885, stated in part:

1. "This Fire Department shall be known and hailed as Preston Fire Co. No. 1."
2. "The regular meetings of this Co. shall be held on the second Monday in each month and commence at eight o'clock from April to October and seven o'clock from October to April. Specials may be called by the Chief and Foreman and the Captain when necessary. Five members shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business."

**November 1885**, the first Fireman's Dance was held for the purpose of raising money for uniforms.

**August of 1886** the Village purchased land on St. Paul St. from the Louis Frank estate for City Hall and Fire House. Fire apparatus was housed here until 1911. (Note: this Fire Hall appeared in one of the St. Paul St. photos posted earlier)

**January 1887** "All business of the fire Co. is hereby suspended until the Village Council procures a fire bell for the use of the said Co."

**June 1916** "Special meeting to talk about a picnic. It was decided there will be one and the necessary items to be provided by the wives and young bucks."

**October 1935** "Two teams were chosen to hunt squirrels for a feed to be held next meeting"

We displayed a "fire bomb" but after research, decided it would not be accepted into our collection as it did not clearly state it was filled with salt water!

"The earliest glass fire-suppression devices or "fire grenades" were hand-blown, patterned, often colored round glass bottles, usually filled with salt water until about 1900. These were intended to be thrown at a fire and the thin glass container would shatter and disperse the water to extinguish the flames.

With only a very small volume of liquid in the bottles -- about a pint, can't imagine they were very effective. Fire Grenades filled with salt water were used until about 1900, when they moved over to filling them with carbon tetrachloride...which at room temperature is a liquid but when heated to about (169 F) becomes a gas.

The gaseous carbon tetrachloride has a higher density than air so it sinks and helps smother the flames. However, carbon tetrachloride was used in lots of different processes including industrial dry cleaning as a de-greasing agent and they found through studies that people using it had higher rates of cancer and that you could get lung, kidney and liver damage from it through inhalation or touch.

At (200-700 F) carbon tet also reacts with water to form phosgene gas, which was used as a chemical weapon in World War One. They were sold through direct marketing and magazine ads from just before 1870 until about 1940.

When a fire suppression grenade is found in an old home and it doesn't clearly state that it contains salt water... assume it contains carbon tetrachloride. Have it disposed of professionally. (**About the Author** *William Kibbel III is a home inspector and restoration consultant specializing in historic residential and commercial buildings*)



Photo from Google Search

Fifteen minutes later, our bridge of sighs was safely down on its bed.

Now, the difficult, dangerous, heavy lift begins. Now, we have to insist that our elected officials do everything necessary to secure the funding to restore that bridge to its starring role in the popular attraction that the state park and historic store plays in the local tourism economy. There are always a few who think they can cash in with a road and an ugly modern bridge blasting through the valley to pave paradise and put up a parking lot. They are the few; we must be the many.



Photo By: Tom Hogue

## An Editorial

Forestville Bridge Lift  
By Tom Hogue

The restoration of the old bridge at Forestville is underway. That's my optimistic view. Oh, I know that nothing is ever safe from greed, avarice, politics, and bureaucracy. Still, I choose to believe that wise people will insist that an iconic historical artifact be saved from the scrap heap. It helps that it is a contributing structure to a national landmark and is protected by state and federal law. We shall see. Respect for the law seems to be in short supply these days.

On Tuesday, November 14, the bridge was lifted from its moorings by a crew from Icon Construction, a local company out of Mabel. They spent a week getting ready. The wooden road deck was removed, and a supporting cradle was built to reinforce the old 1899 beauty on its swing off the river to a gravel pad waiting on the south side of the Root River.

It was a windy day, but the crew was not worried that they had a heavy kite to fly. At high noon, the signal was given, the crane roared, the cables stretched tight, and the bridge started to move.

## Preston Historical Society Officers

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