



Preston Historical Society

PO Box 138
Preston, Minnesota 55965

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

NEWSLETTER

March 2024

Volume 18 Issue 1

President's Notes

By: Sheila Craig

Exciting things are on the horizon for the Preston Historical Society! All of the research is done to take the Masterplan ideas to the next step. A feasibility study has been completed as requested by the Council. PHS members gathered input from several existing depot museums in MN, IA, and WI to help develop a realistic operating budget for a depot museum in Preston. Drawings are completed (see later article in this newsletter) for a reconstructed depot at the site of the former Dairy & Farm Building on Fillmore Street, across from the Historic Elevator. We will be taking the information to the various boards and committees in the City of Preston and back to the City Council for approval to move forward on negotiations and to start a fundraising campaign.

Collections Committee Report

By: Joanne Hall, Committee Chair

The 2023 Oral History project has been completed. Digitized and printed copies will be available soon!

We continue to present History Moments at our monthly meetings. A Cabinet shelf display is in place the Preston Public Library with items found in the Library and donated to the PHS.

A Preston Area Community Foundation grant in the amount of \$1000 was received to help with the purchase of a new laptop computer and external backup.

February and March Work Days were "major project catch-up" by a couple of core committee members (Sheila and Diane)! Lamination projects

were completed; pieces of the 1960's Preston High School stage curtain were made into table squares and runners; new inventory items were tagged and stored; the equipment inventory list was reviewed and updated to include several recent file cabinet donations.

Membership Update

By: Lexi Pierce

We welcome Carol Soland, Preston as a new Life Member!

Tractor Ride for 2024

By: Sheila Craig

The Tractor Ride committee announced the route for the 2024 ride. It will again be a two-day round-about ride leaving and returning to Preston each day. Day one will head toward Mabel by way of Harmony and back through Henrytown. The morning break will be in Harmony, lunch at the American Legion in Mabel prepared by the Newburg Methodist women, and afternoon break will be at the Henrytown Lutheran Church.

Day two will find the tractors heading to Highland for the morning break with the noon stop will be in Peterson with lunch prepared by the Peterson Legion Auxiliary, and afternoon break at the North Prairie Lutheran Church.

A new addition this year will be a silent auction.

2024 Raffle

By: Sheila Craig

The Preston Historical Society will again be conducting their annual raffle. This year there will be 1500 tickets available all matched by Dan

Christianson at F & M Community Bank. The match will be \$1 for each ticket sold! Tickets will go on sale at Trout Days with the drawing being held at the August 1 meeting of the Society. If you have an item to contribute to the raffle, please contact Sheila Craig, by April 15.

MRHA is visiting Preston at its 2024 Convention

By: Jon DeVries

The *Milwaukee Road Historical Association* (MRHA) is one of the largest U.S. rail history groups - its *The Milwaukee Railroader* magazine has 9,000+ subscribers and the 1st Qtr. 2022 issue featured Ila Mae Olstad's story of "Growing Up on the 'Extra Crew' Work Trains."

The MRHA 2024 Convention is in Winona and attendees will visit Preston on Friday, June 28th where PHS will be hosting lunch. Bob Storozuk, then MRHA President, attended the Caboose dedication in 2014 – he will attend with current MRHA President Jeff Goutcher.



The convention group picture will be in front of the PHS caboose/motor car/elevator/box car display (which will be open for tours) and will be featured in the MRHA magazine.

We will be forming a PHS committee to make open house and lunch preparations. ALL ABOARD!!



For MRHA info and registration go to:
<https://www.mrha.com/convention.aspx> or
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/milwaukeehistoricalassociation/>

PHS Depot-Museum Project Moves Forward

By: Jon DeVries

The planning work started in 2022 for the depot-museum project is now largely complete. The design by Shawn Saltou, the floodway application by WiDSETH, the depot survey and operating cost projections by PHS volunteers and WiDSETH staff, and construction estimates by Eickhoff Construction.

PHS is now scheduling presentations to all the City of Preston boards and committees for their review and endorsement in April. The next step will be a City Council presentation in early May accompanied by a request from PHS for the city to negotiate and execute a long-term lease/management agreement on the Dairy & Farm site and building with PHS.

Following City Council approval of an agreement, a fundraising drive will begin with an initial goal of completing Phase One resulting in a weather-tight and attractive exterior so future interior and surrounding site stages can proceed as funds are raised and/or grants received.

We encourage you to talk with others to update them on our progress and to lay the groundwork for City approval and subsequent fundraising. Our

thanks to all the firms, volunteers, foundation grantors, and PHS members who have brought us this far. ALL ABOARD!!

Please see the back page for pictures and the drawing of the proposed depot museum!

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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.

The Preston to Mars Connection

By: Joanne Hall

Ethel Veronica Healy was born in 1884 at Grafton N.D. Her father died when she young, and her mother, Mary Healy, moved to Preston and married Louis Kruppenbacher in November of 1892. Ethel graduated from Preston High School in 1904. She taught in Fillmore County rural schools for at least a couple of years following graduation.

In 1910 Ethel married Frank C. Mars, presumably in the State of Washington. Frank Mars attempted several times to start a candy business selling homemade chocolates but each attempt failed. They returned to Minnesota in 1920, again selling candy from a one room factory in Minneapolis. In 1923, he made the Milky Way formula and by 1930, Mars Inc. of Chicago was one of the nation's largest candy makers. They enjoyed great wealth as a result.

Frank Mars died at age 50 in 1934. Ethel, as president of the company, turned the operation of Mars Co. over to her half-brother William L. (Slip) Kruppenbacher of Preston. Ethel developed a racing stable and in 1940 her horse, Gallahadian won the Kentucky Derby.

On Christmas Day, 1945, Ethel Mars died at age 61 in LaJolla, CA. A high mass was held in her memory at the Catholic Church in Preston, where she had given a new altar and furnishings in memory of her mother, Mary Kruppenbacher

Zilisch, who died in 1938. Ethel Healy Mars is buried in Lakewood Cemetery in Minneapolis with her husband.

After her death, William Kruppenbacher was elected President and Chairman of the Board of Mars Co. He was born in Preston in 1894 and graduated from Preston High School in 1913. The nickname of "Slip" was earned when he played semi-pro baseball as a young man. He had the ability to "slip" onto the base, thus the nickname. He died in River Forest, IL on Nov. 28, 1963 and his body was buried in Crown Hill Cemetery in Preston.

A side story includes Ethel's stepson, Forrest Mars-the son of Frank Mars' first marriage. Around 1940 he returned from England with a plan to mass produce sugar coated pellets of chocolate like those that were made in Europe. Forrest invited Bruce Murrie, a son of Hershey's president, to join in the venture of making the candies they called "M&M's" after their initials. Ruth Liverance said in her 1987 newspaper article, "*M&M Candy Has a Double Link with Preston*" that "*M&M Candies in Chicago are the largest users of the (dry) milk powder produced in the Preston plant*"...(of Wisconsin Dairies).

Two sources for this information are from articles written by Ruth Liverance for the Preston Republican and Lanesboro Leader (*M&M Candy Has a Double Link with Preston* June 17, 1987) and by Debra J. Richardson, former Director of the Fillmore County Historical Society.

Collection Donations received from Ann Ott

By: Joanne Hall

Over the past year the Preston Historical Society has received articles too numerous to list from the Preston home of Ann Ott. These objects and paper artifacts are a recollection of Preston public schools, businesses, the Milwaukee Railroad and local events. Ann was born and raised in Preston. Ann's grandfather was Peter Ott, the Preston Milwaukee Road depot agent for 47 years. He started his position in Preston on June 6, 1885 and held the position until his death in 1932. Ann's father, Lester

Ott, was born and raised in Preston. He was also a Milwaukee Railroad assistant station agent for several years. Ann's mother, Eva Fields Ott, was born in McConnell, IL. She graduated from the University of Minnesota in 1924 with a degree in mathematics and taught high school math in Preston. Preston Historical Society appreciates the efforts of all involved in connecting objects and artifacts with the Society.

Sharing History Across the Miles

By: Joanne Hall

A satisfying moment in the course of Collections is when items not suitable for our local collection are matched with an appreciative family or group. The Preston Historical Society received several Preston related items from the home of Ann Ott, a Preston native. Among items offered were several old charcoal portraits.



This photo was identified as John C. Fields and his wife, Florence Shippee Fields, McConnell, IL. Ann is the daughter of Lester and Eva Fields Ott. A bit of searching revealed this couple was the parents of Eva Fields Ott and the grandparents of Ann Ott.

The McConnell Area Historical Society was contacted to determine if they would have interest in the photos and other items related to this family. That Historical Society responded with enthusiasm that the Shippee family is and was very much a large part of McConnell, Illinois history. A cemetery, a mile east of McConnell that the

Shippee/Shippee family established, is still used as their primary burial ground today. In addition to this photo, other photos believed to be from the same family, a Shippee family history book, a small Bible with John Fields name written inside and the marriage certificate of John and Florence Fields were all sent to the McConnell Area Historical Society. Preston Historical Society is pleased to know these items are now in a museum that represents and preserves their history!

The Memoirs of Ulysses S. Grant

By: Joanne Hall

The PHS received two leather bound volumes from the Fillmore County Historical Society. They were given to S.A. Langum by his wife in 1885 as a Christmas gift. It was felt the PHS was the appropriate location as they were a personal gift to him. The Fillmore County Historical Society has maintained his books and records representative of his years in the State Legislature.

A short anecdote quotes Grant as saying "This morning I thought I was worth a great deal of money, now I don't know that I have a dollar." The statement was made in May, 1884, the day he was swindled out of his life savings, which eventually led to his writing of his memoirs.

Wikipedia provided the following information on **The Personal Memoirs of U. S. Grant**: two volumes of autobiography by Ulysses S. Grant, the 18th President of the United States. The work focuses on his military career during the Mexican-American War and the American Civil War. The volumes were written during the last year of Grant's life, amid increasing pain from terminal throat cancer and against the backdrop of his personal bankruptcy at the hands of an early Ponzi scheme.

Grant and his wife Julia took a trip around the world in 1877 after his second term in office. Personally financed, this tour left him short on liquid assets on his return. He was nearly 60 and he looked for something to engage his time and replenish his finances. In 1878, he moved to New York City and entered into business with his son Buck (Ulysses S. Grant, Jr.) and Ferdinand Ward.

The firm of Grant & Ward did well at first, bolstered by Ward's skills and Grant's name. The former president bragged to friends that he was worth two and a half million dollars, and family members and friends poured money into the firm. But Grant was largely disengaged from the company's business, often signing papers without reading them. This proved disastrous, as Ward had used the firm as a Ponzi scheme, taking investors' money and spending it on personal items, including a mansion in Connecticut and a brownstone in New York City. Grant & Ward failed in May 1884, leaving Grant penniless. That fall, the elder Grant was diagnosed with terminal throat cancer.

Concerned about his family, he accepted an offer from Mark Twain, a close personal friend of Grant, to publish his memoirs. He completed the memoirs five days before he died in July 1885. The set was published shortly after his death.

Understanding that sales of the book would restore the Grant family's finances and provide for his widow, Twain created a unique marketing system designed to reach millions of veterans with a patriotic appeal just as the famous general's death was being mourned. Ten thousand agents canvassed the North for orders, following a script that Twain had devised. Many were Union veterans dressed in their old uniforms, who went door-to-door offering the two-volume set at prices ranging from \$3.50 to \$12, depending on the binding (\$110 to \$390 in 2022).

These efforts sold 350,000 two-volume sets in advance of the book's actual printing. This made the Memoirs one of the bestselling books of the 19th century,

In the end Grant's widow, Julia, received about \$450,000 (\$14,700,000 in 2022) from Twain during the first three years of publication...

Despite being explicitly written for money, and with a focus on those aspects of Grant's life most likely to induce sales, the Personal Memoirs of U. S. Grant received universal acclaim on its publication and has remained highly regarded by the general public, military historians, and literary critics. The combination of an honest man exploited and then

marked for death by throat cancer lent the Memoirs immense contemporary interest.

An interesting backstory for the two-volume set in our PHS collection!

Luella Ballard Corbett

Better known as Lolly, she was one of the spirits portrayed for the 2005 Sesquicentennial Cemetery walk. The following is the story about Lolly that Ann Sparks presented for that event.

My resting place here is only yards from where I spent most of my 91 years before coming to this resting spot in 1995. My simple home was behind you, very near the mausoleum from which you started your cemetery walk. My father lived nearby also. The western part of this cemetery was our family property until I sold it to the cemetery association in my latter years.

I attended the Preston school and then mostly just took care of my goats and chickens and my garden. Except for a few of my closest neighbors and the congregation of the Baptist church, nobody really knew me very well. I mean, I was *well-known* in town and around, but not *known well* by very many. People may have thought I was 'eccentric' because of the way I dressed and the way I lived, but I got along very well, thank you.

I suppose I was pretty recognizable around town. I drove an old Ford car and always had my dog with me. I enjoyed talking with people on the street or in the stores when I went into town. When I was about 40 – rather old for such things, I suppose – I married Jeddy Corbett. He had a cabin near Forestville, and that's where we made our home and did some truck gardening. After awhile I came back to Preston to live, but Jeddy didn't come until after my father had died. You see, Jeddy was a 'man of color' as they called it in those days, and my father didn't exactly approve of my marrying him.

I never had much in the way of worldly goods – and neither did Jeddy – but I had good friends. Arlene and Sanford Staupé, my nearest neighbors, were always helpful to me, especially when I wasn't feeling well. There was one time when I suppose I felt sorry for myself and took it out on Arlene. You

see, on Christmas Eve, Arlene and Sanford would always bring me a box of baking and a gift of some sort. But one Christmas Eve they didn't get it delivered until Christmas Day. I'm afraid I gave them a rather cold reception that day. They just didn't realize how much their Christmas Eve visit had meant to me. From then on they made sure they came on Christmas Eve.

Marie Roberts, who lived down the hill, by the river, was good to me, too. I loved her pies. Erma Chilson was another special friend. When she died, I didn't go to the funeral, but I stood at the edge of this cemetery when the family came for the interment. Her daughter, Gary, saw me and came over and gave me a hug. That meant a lot. I may not have been the most social person, but I never missed going to the Baptist church on Sundays. I'm happy to say that I was able to contribute to the purchase of the organ there.

After a fall when I was in my late 70s, I entered the Harmony Care Center and spent my last 13 years there. Those people were so good to me. They'd do my hair so pretty and even gave me some jewelry. The ladies from my Baptist church gave me a special party on my birthday every year. Why, I was even crowned Valentine Queen. What an exciting time that was!

During my funeral service – at the Baptist church, of course – my pastor, Frank Moore, read a poem that he had written about me. Now I will read some parts of it that I especially like:

She was a humble and quiet type of person, ..
 And she had a love of God's holy word.
 She liked all kinds of animals,
 And she was kind to each one of them...
 She did not have much of earthly possessions,
 But she possessed all things through saving grace.
 May we learn some things from Lolly.
 She took life each day as it came
 And because she knew Jesus as her Savior,
 This one thing – most important – will remain.

November 2023 Donations accepted by Collection Committee

Arlene Staupe, Fillmore County 6th Call July 26, 1918 photo: **Fillmore County Historical Society**, Preston area 1978 Oral History collection records and notebooks, Preston School book-Tennyson idylls; **Lexi Pierce**, Photo of 4 girls in a car with Preston pennant attached (?fair photo-set of twins); **Knoepke estate**, F&M Community Bank medallion noting 100 years; **Joanne Hall**, Three 1950's parade photos-VFW Auxiliary float in line on Pleasant St.; **Lynn and Barb Scheevel**, Preston Development Corp box of records, 1980 Preston Oil Products calendar, Aerial photo of Preston (framed).

Wayne Marzolf, 1 Fillmore County Feed sack, screwdriver from Dick's Automation Preston Oil Products, Recognition plaque for Preston Hilltoppers 4-H Club, Green Thumb seed tester from H.R. Spies Milling Preston, Preston United Methodist Church coffee mug, 2000 Preston Fountain All School Reunion mug, White I (heart) Preston mug, 1992 All School Preston Fountain reunion mug, 1958 Preston High School reunion mug.

Ann Ott home, 1984 Minnesota Historical Railroad Calendar, Newsletter from Meadow Land Dairy January 1971, Peter Ott bank note from National Bank of Preston, Day of Dedication Christ Lutheran Church Aug. 20, 1961 (2 copies), Preston Apple and Berry brochure, Photo by A.L. Sleyster (Preston Photographer), Preston Sesquicentennial 2005 gold ornament, Preston school letters "P" sm, med. Lg, Fillmore County Fair ribbons-Rose Show, first and third premium, Preston Oil Products window scraper, Potosi beer bottle labeled 1852-1952, Class of 1957 Preston High School Commencement Exercises bulletin, Richard Ott photo (2), Stock Certificate from National Bank of Preston (Peter Ott -April 13, 1908), Card from D.E. Broadwater, Agent for California Insurance Company, 50th Anniversary booklet from Preston Creamery Assoc. 1960, Notice of Special meeting to the Stockholders of the Preston Creamery Assn. (July 16, 1970) (Cooperative became Meadowland Dairy), 1957 Annual "Blue Revue", Photo of Ann Ott, 1965 Preston Oil Products notebook in gold plastic folder, Ann Ott's Lion's Club Shirt, F&M Bank

(green) fly swatter, PHS Class of 1951 Commencement program, invitation, blue/white tassels and Ann Ott High School diploma, 1986 calendar from Farmers & Merchants Bank, 1992 All-School Reunion booklet, 1951 "The Bluejay" annual, PHS Class of 1951 composite photo, Photo of class play-undated, 1950 "Jayette" annual, assorted candid photos.

Donations accepted in February 2024

Barb and Joe Mielke: Preston Creamery milk can; **Preston Oil Products bldg.:** 1988 Accounts ledger, Preston Servicemen's Club banner, Postcard Aerial photo of Preston Farm Service-Warehouse, Mill and Elevator-1974; **Owners of Townsquare Media bldg-former home of KFIL, J.F. Anderson Lumber Co.:** J.F. Anderson Lumber Co. wooden advertising sign, Metal sign-"KFIL True Country-AM 1060 FM 103.1", Map of KFIL broadcast region, Proclamation of June 27, 2016 as "KFIL Day in Preston" and awarding of the Key to the City, Key to the City of Preston, Aerial photo of City of Preston dated 10/16/2014, 4 photos taken on 6/27/2016 (2 of decorated windows, 1 of Proclamation document and key, 1 of KFIL staff - Devon Krueger, Brian Dawson, Shari Hanson, Brian Aberg, Ilene Edwards, Bill Benson, Dan Tiffenbacher, Bruce Fishbaugher, Kurt Reicks (City Mayor), Notepad from Kiel Anderson American Family Agency, Preston Area Ambulance Service coffee mug, 7 file cabinets.

Other donations included:

Eileen Linden: Fillmore County Fair Books from 1968, 1971, Preston Creamery milk bottle-pint size, Preston Creamery milk bottle-1/2 pint size, Pat's Bootery - small match box, 2 Branding Iron of Preston small matchboxes; **Sheila Craig:** Fillmore County Plat Maps for year 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, Newspaper article from 2012 regarding Civil War 5th MN regiment-John Marsh from Preston; **Diane Johnson:** F&M Community Bank 2023 Holiday give away spatula, F&M Insurance Services 2024 pocket calendar, Branding Iron Supper Club insulated mug; **Norman Olson** Postcard Aerial View of Preston Farm Service Warehouse, Mill & Elevator-1972.

Also accepted for our collection were additional items from: **Gary Feine:** Postcard sent to Emily



Dayton from the M.E. Church stamped 1910 "Seven Evenings with our Young People"; Postcard posted from Preston dated June 5, 1883 from G.W. Hard; USDA return address envelope - pre stamped to County Agent, Preston, MN; Sealed envelope with letter, posted Preston 1903, from P.M. McTeague, Preston-2 cent stamp; sealed empty envelope -2 cent stamp, addressed to Emma List, Preston; 1896 postmark; 1926 postcard from Preston Nursery, C.E. Snyder, Prop.-customer delivery notice; Postcard "Notice of Forfeited Real Estate Tax Judgment Sale" dated 1900, from John C. Mills, Fillmore County Auditor; Postcard addressed to A.W. Thompson, 1917; 1 cent stamp; from Farmers and Merchants State Bank noting a credit to his account for \$20.50 from T.I. Garrat, Cashier; Opened, empty envelope addressed to A.D. Gray, Preston; 1883 postmark from Canton; Opened, empty envelope addressed to Thomas J. Meighen, postmark Preston, 1919 from H.L. Bassett; Envelope from M. T. Grattan with 1891 Preston postmark; Envelope, addressed to Rev. J.A. List in Preston, 2 cent stamp, 1893 postmark; Envelope, marked "Fishing License issued by Charles V. Michener, County Auditor", inside is 1978 Resident Firearms Deer License and deer tag issued Nov. 1978 to Juan Moen; 1 cent postcard from Rev. F.C. Bailey, dated 1892 with message; Empty envelope with 1890 Preston postmark, return address of Carl Hast, Lutheran Pastor, Preston; Empty envelope addressed to Probate Judge, Preston, 1881 postmark; Preston Oil Products bill sent to Ray Ristau, Preston, 1960 postmark with 6 cent stamp.

Preston Historical Society Officers

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PRELIMINARY DESIGN DRAWING
NOT INTENDED FOR CONSTRUCTION

WALL SCHEDULE	
	EXISTING WALL
	NEW WALL

