

OBHS News

Newsletter of the Old-Brule Heritage Society, Inc. ©2000
Founded in 1998 to Preserve and Share the Heritage of the Old-Brule Region.

Volume II, Issue 2

April 1, 2000

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LONG TIME RESIDENTS OSCAR ANDERSON AND THE SWENSONS TO SHARE LIFE EXPERIENCES NEXT MEETING/PROGRAM WEDNESDAY, APRIL 12TH, 7 PM, AT THE MAPLE COMMUNITY CENTER

We will hold our next meeting at the Maple Community Center on Wednesday, April 12, beginning at 7 p.m. For our main program we have asked octogenarian Oscar Anderson to share his rich memories of earlier days in Brule and Cloverland. From his days as a student in the earliest Cloverland school, where students stacked their rifles in the corner of the classroom to hunt with on their way home from school, to his role as farmer and participant in town government, to his current contributions to the Brule History Research Group's writing efforts, Oscar has been an active participant in the life of his community. Complimenting this theme of early local community life, Cliff and Hope Swenson will have a table of historical tools and artifacts which they will share and interpret. Such efforts hopefully will become a part of our Society's outreach into the local schools. Please join us as we study and share our local heritage. Our normal business meeting will follow.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

As I listen to the violent newscasts I am beginning to feel more urgent about our preservation and sharing of local history...and local government. Local government...local history. How do we penetrate the cliches and the platitudes?

"History is an untidy affair," retiring UWS historian Dr. Ron Mershart said at a meeting I recently attended. Regardless of the scale upon which it is written what might make history untidy? People. Free people. People living in their small circles, their bands, their clans, their tribes. People moving at odds with the dominant trends of the time. People holding differing opinions on events. People as throw backs to earlier times, or harbingers of coming patterns of life. People acting on their local stages.

There can be no greater problem than writing the untidy history of a truly free people, but in the same voice I would argue there is no more important record to gather. We need to be continually reminded of the local sacrifices freedom demands. And the young need to be reminded of freedom's obligations and essential sacrifices, especially at the local level as we work to define and to govern ourselves.

The most important lesson in the free public schools has to be this: How do we govern ourselves as a free people, individually, locally. It is plain that modern American culture is not providing this most important lesson as we slip toward totalitarian attitudes of mass control in the face of recent school shootings. The lessons of self governance, community involvement, and the hopes of true freedom did not reach the hearts of these poor pathetic souls, and one wonders too about what should have been their principal models, their parents.

And where were the lessons from the generation of self sacrifice? The generation that last knew the pure meaning and freedom in small community life. The generation that won World War II for freedom.

The United States won that war firstly as a nation of small, cherished, free, locally responsible communities, defending themselves as they sacrificed their sons and daughters, and not as a regimented military camp and totalitarian order run by patriotic slogan and click of boots. Americans had to be awakened to that totalitarian danger as a Harvard educated high Japanese admiral early on recognized. And awaken she did. Let us hope these frightening school shootings become an internal wake up call to a people in danger of losing their freedoms as they lose local community life and their ability and willingness to govern themselves.

It is also my hope that the modest efforts of the Old-Brule Heritage Society will serve to help remind our local communities, in this age of mergermania in so many areas, of their own continuing integral importance to the survival of this free land.

RECENT PROGRAMS

Our latest meetings have moved from the Town Hall of Amnicon to the Town Hall of Brule. Sister Genevieve Schillo reminded us in Amnicon of changes in the area of worship as she spoke to us about Roman Catholic "Faith Communities" that no longer exist within the Old-Brule region. Mike Denny described for us a commercial village of Brule that little resembles the Brule of today. The building in which we met in Wentworth was once a cooperative store. More than anything these talks brought to mind the unrelenting processes of change.

But can we find anything unchanging from this past as we move into the present? We still find all manner of religious

congregational life. Our town and village governments still exist, but without some of the cohesiveness once seen. Commercial life still goes on, but far less centered around our local communities. Child rearing still goes on but the many schools, so much a part of it, that once dotted the countryside, are now all gone. We defer to a consolidated system that reflects the largeness and standardization of our times, and much broader job markets and prospects. We still have entertainment, but, instead of local adult talent and performances, more and more mass entertainment has become the common fare. How much in this "progress" might be quietly contrary to our well being? Local history can help provide an answer to this question.

Our thanks again to those who have made our earlier programs possible, among them the town and village governments in our area, our presenters, and attorney Kyle Torvinen who donated his time and legal expertise to the Davidson Mill program. Finally a "Thank you" to Sister Genevieve for her encouraging words and recent cash gift to our organization.

Jim Pellman, Maple (715)363-2453 or e-mail: <musketeer6@juno.com>.

Area History: No. 4

THE WAINO EVER-REST CEMETERY

by Norma Lind ©2000

The Waino Ever-Rest Cemetery is located near the Waino Pioneer Chapel on Tuura Road. Norma (Tuura) Lind has been translating cemetery records from the Finnish language and summarizes for us here the results of her long efforts. Norma is a resident of Oulu and besides being a member of our organization she is a member of the Brule History Research Group, the Western Bayfield County Historical Society which meets in Iron River, and the Douglas County Historical Society. The John W. Tuura, Sr. she mentions was her grandfather, and Britta Johnson, wife of N. P. Johnson, was her great aunt. Norma is a respected local artist, producing a widely distributed annual calendar which features her art work and helps preserve the Finnish culture of the region. Her sister, Maryann Gronquist, was recent president of this region's Homemakers organization. Editor

Land for the cemetery was purchased from Alex Beck in 1896. The Waino Ever-Rest Cemetery was organized on January 16, 1897. Board of Trustees were elected. President, N. P. Johnson, served for three years; Secretary, August Wentela, for two years; Treasurer, John W. Tuura, Sr., for one year.

Lots were sold in 1897.

The first person buried was a lumberjack hurt in the woods. No name is available.

The oldest person buried, John Johnson (Adamson, Jolma), father of N. P. Johnson, was 102. He is buried in the northeast corner of the cemetery. Irene Johnson and Impi Yrjänäinen lived to the age of 99.

There are many stillbirth babies buried, but many do not have markers.

Oldest marked graves are:

Katri Peterson 1901
Baby Elsa Sophia Wentela 1900-1901
Baby Elsa Tuura 1901-1902
Euphrina Johnson 1902
John Tuura Sr. 1904
Julius Bikki 1904

There were many veterans' graves. One, John Koski, from the

Spanish-American War, five from World War I, 29 from World War II, and four from the Korean War. George Beckman was killed in action during the Normandy Invasion in 1945.

Many tragic deaths have occurred, one being Mike Johnson, killed in an explosion of gasoline. He had a sawmill near the Waino Hall. He was known for always having a cigar in his mouth.

Julia Mikkola was the first person in the area to be killed in an automobile accident.

Joseph Alexson, Edwin Alexson's father, was killed in a dynamite explosion while clearing land. He died on the way to the hospital.

Because of the remote location, and having to travel by horses to Brule and then by railroad to either Ashland or Superior, many died en route to hospitals.

To earn money for the upkeep of the cemetery, each Memorial Day coffee was served at the cemetery. Later the community held a ham dinner at the Waino School. After the Waino School burned down, the dinner was moved to the Co-op Park. When the Co-op Park was closed, it moved to the Brule School. When the Brule School closed, the dinner then moved to the Brule Town Hall where it is still held each year. The Memorial Day Dinner has been held for 70 years or more.

WEB SITE/CESA STATUS

An Internet web site remains a high priority for our group. We have resisted starting a totally independent site hoping to link with the site now run by the School District of Maple. We await word on final district policies that might make this possible. The CESA virtual museum project is just getting off the ground, and within the school district has to compete with the many other demands placed upon students and staff. It will take continuing efforts to bring local history to local youth and to the world outside our communities via the internet. Computer technology offers great opportunities for local history and deserves grass roots support. We will continue our efforts.

Northwestern Elementary School Media Specialist (librarian) Michelle Suo deserves credit and our support for carrying the CESA effort within the Maple School District. In a separate but related effort your president has been in touch via computer e-mail with Northwestern senior Rachel Friedrich who under Teacher Pat Luostari's direction has been researching early schools in the Old-Brule region. The O-BHS organization has been a primary information source in Rachel's challenging project. We are fortunate that Rachel has agreed to share her findings with our group before she heads off to college.

ARCHIVE ROOM OF THE MAPLE COMMUNITY CENTER PROJECT

The Town of Maple alerted our organization to \$2000 in matching funds made available to non-profit organizations by Douglas County for "capital improvements" that will serve the public good. At our Feb. 9th meeting we approved application for these funds for the construction and fireproofing of an archive and records storage area within the Maple Community Center where we already have O-BHS materials stored, contingent upon approval of the project by the Maple Town Board and the Douglas County Land and Development Committee. We carried this to the Maple Town Board Meeting of February 10, 2000, where the Town Board formally approved the project. Application was then sent to Susan Sandvik, Douglas County Clerk, for review and approval by the Land and Development Committee. We await word on County approval. If our grant request is approved and we finally elect to go forward with the project, labor, which was not eligible for match under the grant, will have to come in significant part from volunteers. We will be looking for further community and organization labor support at that time.

Area History: No. 5

JACOB DAVIDSON'S WINDMILL

by Gene Davidson © 2000

Mr. Gene Davidson is the current owner of the Davidson Windmill site, and grandson of the builder. As happened with so many Finnish and Scandinavian immigrants, Jacob Tapola changed his name, in his case to Jacob Davidson. Salomon Ilmonen tells us Jacob Tapola came from Lappajärvi, in Vaasanlääni, that small region of Finland where such a large number of the settlers in Old-Brule, in the Lake Superior region, and in the New World, came from. Davidson homesteaded on the Amnicon River, ten miles east of a Superior still clustered on the Nemađi River. In 1880 the Census showed 655 people in all of Douglas County and by September 1889, 14,239. The Davidson mill is on the National Register of Historic Sites. Gene has sought an organization that would care for this regional landmark once he was no longer able. Our organization has agreed to seriously examine this prospect, and a committee has recently been named which will make these judgments. This committee would be precursor to a permanent committee under the Old-Brule Heritage Society, Inc., that would be given responsibility for mill maintenance, fundraising and promotion. Editor

The windmill was constructed about a hundred years ago. The exact time depends on how you measure time. Was it when the idea was conceived or is it when it was completed and put into operation? When Jacob came to Wisconsin in the 1880's he was the first settler in the area and came by foot from Superior. There were no roads, only an animal trail and all that he could bring was what he could carry on his back or later with a team of horses and a wagon.

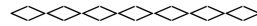
It is no surprise that when he decided to build a flour mill that he favored the use of as much material that was native to this immediate area. The granite stone to make into mill stones were taken from the Amnicon River near the Amnicon Falls and pulled

down the ice on a sleigh in the winter and then cut. The pine for the gears was from burned stumps and the tamarack for the main structure came from a swamp in Section 17. The birch gear teeth were a black birch that had a very dense grain.

Windmills were common in all parts of the world that were too cold to use water wheels or there were not useable streams to dam. Finland had its share of these mills. He had thought of building a gristmill for some time before he finally decided on the type of structure to build. He saw a coffee pot that had the right proportions and scaled it to get the dimensions for his mill. When he began to work on it he had the help of his sons and several other people including a brother-in-law, Andrew Nordberg.

The actual construction took about four years and when it was completed it would grind wheat, corn or oats or whatever anyone had. It was a fairly successful business. The capacity was about three hundred pounds an hour. Farmers came from as far as Iron River to have their grains ground. They would of course get whole wheat flour, middling for cattle feed and cracked corn or oats for their livestock. The customers that came a considerable distance would bring their grain in a wagon one day, spend the night and return home with their flour and animal products.

In the fall of 1925 Jacob died of a heart attack and his sons ran the mill until the following year. His death was not the only factor that led to the demise of the milling business. Two other factors that led to the end of his windmill as a viable operation were the advent of automobiles and roads that made it possible to transport products over a large area. The other was the introduction of electricity as dependable power source. They could not compete with progress. But the use of wind power did fill a gap in the evolution of the area



The Old-Brule Heritage Society will again award a scholarship to a deserving Northwestern student going on to higher education. All seniors are encouraged to see Guidance Counselor Kathie Matushak to apply.

Area History: No. 6

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE FAITH LUTHERAN CONGREGATION OF MAPLE

O-BHS member Mr. Paul M. Hakkila donated to the O-BHS a copy of the centennial anniversary program of the Finnish National Evangelical Lutheran Church of Maple, now the Faith Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod, which contained a brief history. Paul, on the Church Council, has been an active member of the Faith congregation. The following article relies heavily on that summary. Editor

Charter members were Jacob and Tilda Pellinen, Abraham Harju, and Herman and Maija Koukkari. Herman Koukkari and Tilda Pellinen were brother and sister. At the time of his death in 1985, John Pellman, born in Maple in 1894 and son of Jacob and Tilda Pellinen, was the last surviving "charter member" of the church.

The first church building started out as a temperance hall. Beginning at the site where John and Shirley Urbaniak now live it was moved with some struggle to the present cemetery site about 1901 by Leander Korhonen. The work crew had a hard time getting over a tributary of Bardon Creek. Stuck in the bottom of the valley Korhonen had to ask for more money to complete the crossing and drag the building up to its final site on the hill top.

The building was remodeled several times. A front porch and steeple tower with a cross on top were added. At one time there was a railing surrounding the edge of the steeple roof with a cross placed at each of the four corners, perhaps symbolizing the four points of

the compass.

As years passed it was decided that a new building needed to be built. In 1959 the congregation purchased a three acre piece of land from Mr. Hugo and Mrs. Evelyn Salomaki.

Ground was broken and construction soon followed. The new church was dedicated on May 24, 1970. But on a dark stormy summer day, the 12th of July, lightning struck and lit a fire that destroyed the structure in about an hour. The congregation decided to rebuild on the same site.

Two years and two months later, on September 24, 1972, the current building was dedicated.

The first seminary trained clergyman to serve the congregation was Matt Kivi beginning in 1897. In 1902 he was succeeded by Eric V. Niemi who served its Finnish speaking members forty-five years, until 1947.

Anyone interested in joining the Old-Brule Heritage Society is encouraged to attend any of our meetings and programs. To join they may contact any member or the President at the return address below, or call him at (715) 363-2453, our Secretary, Hope Swenson, at 364-2296, or our Treasurer, Alice Christensen, at 364-2535. Our annual dues are \$15.00 for individuals, and \$25.00 for families, due at the time of our annual meeting in September. Higher levels of support are also available.

New Members and Visitors WELCOME!

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