

O-B-H-S 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 3

June 1, 2000

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NEXT MEETING/PROGRAM WEDNESDAY, JUNE 14TH, NOON, AT CLIFF AND HOPE SWENSON'S IN LAKESIDE

YEAR 2000 NORTHWESTERN GRADUATE, RACHEL FRIEDRICH, TO SHARE RESEARCH ON OLD SCHOOLS IN THE OLD-BRULE OR NORTHWESTERN SCHOOLS' REGION

This meeting will be unusual in that it will also be a membership appreciation meeting held at the private residence of Cliff and Hope Swenson, who have a very large house and spacious grounds. We plan to start at noon with lunch (we will provide the sloppy joes, dishes and utensils, beverages, and we ask members to bring one item or a dish to share). Alice Christensen has volunteered to prepare the sloppy joes. We will play some traditional outside games, weather permitting (horseshoes and croquet).

To help get us in the mood and to be eligible for a door prize we ask men to come wearing suspenders and women to come wearing an apron, a hat, or both.

We will call our group to order about 1:00 p.m. when Rachel will present her research, and our business meeting will follow. We hope to finish by 3:00 p.m., and those interested in staying longer for more games may do so. The public and friends of our members are cordially invited. We do not charge for our presentations, but, for this meeting, because of the meal, we will ask those who plan to attend if possible to RSVP to Hope or Cliff Swenson, Margie Koskie, Alice or Cassius Christensen, Jerry or Irene Parenteau or Jim or Delores Pellman, to help them prepare. See our phone numbers at the bottom of the newsletter.

Hope and Cliff live at 9795 E. Moonshine Road about 3 miles north of Poplar.

From the President:

There have been important changes recently at Douglas County Historical Society. Your first vice president, Larry Luostari, and your president, Jim Pellman, have recently finished their terms on the board of DCHS. DCHS no longer "governs" City of Superior owned Fairlawn Mansion, but it still will hold four major events a year there, including Goblins to Reindeer, and still displays and stores much of its collection there. The DCHS has moved its offices and archives to the beautiful Old Post Office Building in Superior, and has newly hired help in the talented person of Office Manager Kathy Laakso, whose roots go back to Oulu, and whose mother lives in Poplar.

New DCHS board members, Jackie Plunkett (also our board member), Mary Robek, Robert LaBounty, Mae Johnson, and Phoebe Martens (with roots in Iron River), give the DCHS board a regional perspective. The senior historical group in the county, it has committed itself to the history of the full region at great cost and has plans for improved archive access and services to the community through the internet. O-BHS is one of four other

historical organizations in the county which have been invited to provide non-voting representation at DCHS monthly meetings. Nancy Minahan has moved from her role as acting president to that of president, and has done much to steady the course.

We wish the DCHS much success in this new era, as we welcome and wish success to Dr. Rick Sauer and the Superior Public Museums, Inc., which he directs, as they seek to protect all of the historic properties owned by the City of Superior which are so important to understanding the history of this county and even of our communities. Dr. Sauer and family reside south of Lake Nebagamon.

We are in an informal partnership with all of these regional organizations, together with the Area Research Center located in the Superior Public Library and the coming Bong Heritage Center. We look for a new day of cooperation and sharing as each of us with our varying emphases, all facing limited resources, picks up its important share of the historical record.

Jim Pellman (715) 363-2453 <musketeer6@juno.com>

BONG HERITAGE CENTER

Preparations are underway for start up of construction of the new Richard I. Bong World War II Heritage Center in Superior. We applaud the broader recognition that will be given to all of those local individuals and families, organizations and industries that dedicated themselves to ending, hopefully, the last world wide military conflict. The Bong Memorial in Poplar remains open, and, with local support, should continue to remind everyone in a more intimate way of the small town environment that produced the American Ace of Aces. We will continue our efforts to promote the Poplar site.

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ABOUT MEMBERSHIPS AND DUES

Our memberships are all annual running from January 1st to December 31st. We begin to collect payment well in advance of the new year at our annual meeting in mid-September. For new members, payment on that date begins membership that date which lasts until December of the following year. This amounts to 3 1/2 months free membership.

No formal grace period has been established for memberships not renewed by December 31st. Our dues categories remain \$15 individual adults, \$25 families, and \$5 for students or junior historians under 18 who are not part of a family membership.

LOCAL HISTORY WORKSHOPS - 2000

On May 6th several of our members traveled to the beautiful Northern Great Lakes Visitor Center near Ashland to attend State Historical Society sponsored annual workshops: Hope Swenson, Margie Koskie, Jim Pellman, Delores Pellman, Jackie Plunkett split up to cover all of the offerings: Collecting and Caring for Photographs, Fund Raising, and Oral History. Our thanks to the Local History Office for sharing their expertise, and to our hosts, the Historical Society staff at the center. O-BHS paid half of our participants' registration fee.

THANK YOU

Many thank yous are in order. To:

—Member Lois Pollari for her significant gift of money in memory of husband Charles Richard "Dick" Pollari (1927-1989). Dick was the son of Maple well driller Charlie Pollari and Aune Hill Pollari who served as cook at NWHS for many years. Dick was the grandson of Independent Apostolic Lutheran minister Rev. John Pollari and resided for many years in the St. Paul area. Lois was once employed as an aid to Minnesota's Governor, Wendall Anderson.

—Members LaVerne and Norman LaPole for their monetary gift in memory of Dorothy Killoran. The Brule region recently lost Dorothy. The mother of O-BHS member Pat Luostari, Dorothy and her family have been long time residents of this area. Our sympathies go out to the family.

—Sandy and Lloyd Hepburn of Maple for donated genealogical materials and other magazines and books on regional history.

—Terry Johnson and his T-Ball organizers for changing their meeting location to allow us to meet as scheduled in April.

—Oscar Anderson and his family who shared his life memories with our group April 12th. And to the many who took time to come to hear those recollections; —Hope and Cliff Swenson who shared two tables of their antiques at the same program.

—Members Charlene Harms and Lora Olson who purchased a half page ad promoting the Old-Brule Heritage Society, Inc., in the 2000 issue of the *Kalevainen*, published annually by the Knights and Ladies of the Kaleva, a nationwide Finnish-American heritage service organization

—and who have we forgotten?

Area History: No. 7

A Translation of the Historical Recollections of Valentin Aho, written for the *Workers' Cooperative News (Työväen Osuustoimintalehti)*, February 9, 1939, (Volume No. 6, page 3) by Jim Pellman.

Valentin (Korpela) Aho was born in June of 1866 (according to the 1900 Census) making him about 73 at the time of this writing. He and his wife had several children but no known direct family remains in Brule. His wife Liisa (or Lizzie) is remembered for her spunk. In 1906 Valentin lived on his 80 acre homestead just eastward, across the Brule river from Nels P. Johnson, on the south side of what is now Highway FF, and just northwest of the Cascade copper diggings. Several lines of bitterness and irony punctuate the details he offers here, and reveal scars of immigrant pioneer living. The fire of 1916, considered one of the worst in Brule history, came after family summer labors and just as winter was arriving, when Valentin was about 50. He endured with the help of friends and family.

When now I was herein asked to relate and write about the history of the old Finnish settlers, and when I was also encouraged to write about my own experiences, indeed I was moved and took heart to sketch those experiences from my life, especially about pioneering in Brule, Wisconsin.

I was born in Finland, in Vaasa province, in the Peräseinäjoki region, in Korpela house on June 21, 1867, and got married to Liisa Aho December 3, 1886. Son Victor was born November 22, 1887. I went in for military inspection in June 1889 and got number 8. I arrived in New York on June 19th, 1889. My first work place was Fortham, N.Y., going there to a quarry, where stone that was loosened from the bedrock was transported into a mill where it was crushed. The wages I received were \$1.25 per day. At that place they were not able to write Korpela correctly. My name became everything but Korpela and for that reason I took my wife's last name. When I said that my name was Valentin Aho, this was understood.

I got to Fairport Harbor, Ohio, in the summer of 1890. I was there emptying iron ore from the boats for another year or two summers. At that place in Ohio it was said that in Wisconsin one could get land totally free, 160 acres; that no money was needed. We left for there.

We arrived at the end of October in Duluth, but in that place no work was to be had. There we ran into Alex Beck (Back) of Brule, who said that in Brule there was a store where stick sawyers were wanted, and in that place land was available. So thus we went with Beck to Brule.

Beck went with us to see the land which he thought still would be available. He said that that land which he had taken was 6 miles from Brule. We thought it was at least 16 miles to that land which Beck had taken. The path which from Brule left straight to the north circled and wound around through the land. Sometimes there were muddy and watery places. Beck's claim was a hardly worked area; he himself still lived in Brule. With Beck we then left for Ashland to see further those lands which were yet available to go to see. The 160 acres had just been taken which my partners wanted, and with nothing else for them to take, they left back for Ohio.

I got 80 acres, on which I began to set up camp. Dark and deep were the forests. From Brule was up to 16 miles to the lake. Non-Finns had already taken all the lumbering forests. The Finnish people's forests were called "old forests." When non-Finns got land they sold their logs and their land and left.

Then came the lumbering camps, but they would not take Finnish workers. French-Canadians were wanted. But together in early spring the French went away from Otto (Upton?) Bell's and Reed Pape's camp. It was then that they were forced to hire Finnish workers for their camp and after that they later wanted Finns very much when they could get them. It wasn't long when the trees were gone. Only then were the forests suited for Finns.

The times then were bad. The camp's pay was \$8 a month for swamper and \$20.00 for sawyers who could cut 300 sticks per day and over that. It was a sawing contest and the sawyers were all Finns.

My wife arrived from Finland here in Brule, January 5, 1893, with son Victor.

Visiting someone in those days in a neighboring village, sometimes 5 miles away, for a day, always was along paths that went from house to house. Now people are slow to visit even near neighbors.

We had a large conflagration on November 24, 1916. It burned everything except the house; 10 cows and 3 horses; nothing remained but a saw and two axes. We had nothing left; food stuffs were in the *aitta* (storage shed) and other material were in the stable building.

Later on, some in our family were born here in Brule: Wilmar Edward, January 16, 1894; August, December 8, 1895; Hilma Utila, March 13, 1898 (died May 2, 1913), Emma Martha, December 25, 1899 (died September 1, 1900); Emeli, June 9, 1901, and Eino, May 26, 1908.

Valentin Aho, Brule, Wis.

FUND RAISING RAFFLE PROPOSED

Member **Gene Davidson** at our last meeting proposed using a raffle to raise money for our group. He had in mind a raffle package he had seen in a magazine that comes with a grandfather clock as prize. He was asked to investigate details of the process and Wisconsin State regulations. At the following Executive Committee meeting we looked at these findings and at other options. The raffle option has promise, but the effort of having tickets printed according to State regulations, and then selling them seems to demand as close to full return on ticket sales as possible. An option we have looked at is to check with artists and craftspeople within our organization to see whether they might be willing to donate their efforts, paintings, etc., that might take the place of the grandfather clock. Thus far Norma Lind, Jim Pellman, Paul Marvin Hakkila, Hope Swenson, Cliff Swenson have been contacted and all agreed to contribute something. We will raise the issue at our June 14th meeting and proceed if there is group support.

COMMITTEES ON HISTORIC SITES

The Davidson Mill Committee has not met yet but should be able to do so soon. Chuck Zosel, a member of the committee, recently got back from a trip to Alaska where he reports having visited several historical and cultural sites. Members named by the Executive Committee to serve on this important committee besides Chuck are Larry Luostari, Jim Pellman, Paul Marvin Hakkila, Alice Christensen, and Gene Davidson.

The Heritage Park Site (the first Old-Brule Town Hall site in Maple) Committee will be meeting this summer to assess prospects there. Jackie Plunkett, Chuck Zosel and Jim Pellman serve on this project's committee.

WEB SITE/CESA

Mr. Dave Short assures us that he has space available now for establishing our web site. We will need help keeping the site updated once we are on line. Audrey Hakkila and Jackie Plunkett have helped move this project forward. Are there others with creative input and computer technical and software skills who might be willing to help?

Michelle Suo informs us that a year extension has been granted on the CESA virtual museum project, if needed. She and the committee will need continuing support within the Northwestern School District and within the community to create a quality project. Much creative work remains to be done as we build our region's history. Teacher Pat Luostari and senior student Rachel Friedrich have taken active roles. Thanks to all.

MAPLE COMMUNITY CENTER FIRE PROOF ARCHIVE ROOM

Construction of the fire proof room at the Maple Community Center should begin before long. The deadline for submission of invoices for the project is December 31, 2000. We will shortly be putting out a call for help in framing walls and floor, and for hanging sheetrock.

THE CONNECTION

We hope you have seen reprinted articles from our newsletter which now routinely appear in *the Connection*, published by Barbara Gardner in Port Wing. Publicity Chairperson and Group Historian Audrey Hakkila has been skillfully handling these arrangements. Among the valuable features in *the Connection* are minutes from the meetings of our local governments, and historical articles about our communities. Although the paper is distributed free to Brule, Cornucopia, Herbster, Ino, Iron River, Maple, Oulu, Poplar and Port Wing, we encourage "support subscriptions" to the newspaper which will help the publisher keep up this unique forum on happenings and history in our far northern and often news-dark region. Thank you Barbara Gardner.

The publishers address is 4590 State Highway 13, Port Wing, WI 54865; phone: (715) 774-3847.

Area History: No. 8

THE WAINO STORE

by Lydia Tuura

These recollections were written for an article that appeared in the Iron River Pioneer, March 26, 1960, which included a photo that recently appeared in the Brule History Research Group's 1998 calendar. Dorothy Killoran's mother Jenny was a Lustig. Thanks to Norma Lind who contributed this article.

Finding this old picture prompted me to write about the pioneering days in the community of Waino. In the picture is the first grocery and general store in the area and the post office of Waino.

It was in 1887-88 that the first homesteaders settled in this area, about six miles north of Brule. The area most thickly settled was in a two mile square, mostly Finnish nationality. First came the men folks to stake their claims and build their cabins. When their homes were ready they sent for their families, some of them coming straight from Finland, others who lived in Superior, Duluth and other cities in the U.S.A.

At that time there were no roads, no stores, nothing but wilderness around them. All provisions had to be gotten from Brule where there was a store.

You can imagine what the coming of a store into the community meant to the pioneers! I think the country storekeeper did a great service to all our pioneer communities in believing in the growth of the community enough to put up their business in the wilderness.

Before the coming of the country store into the area many of the women never got to do any shopping. It was the men folks who brought back the provisions. With the coming of the store it was in a walking distance so the women folks could see what they were buying. This store also gave them an outlet for their only product they had for sale - homemade butter. It was packed in crocks or made into molds. The storekeeper stored it in a cellar until he could ship it by freight to Superior. Imagine the women of today churning their butter, making it into molds or packing it into crocks and tying it up in a clean towel and walking to the store to get a few yards of calico or some badly needed groceries. It wasn't easy.

This first store was owned and operated by a Mr. Matt Harju in about 1896. When the post office was organized in 1899, it was given the name Waino. Mail was brought from Brule to Waino three times a week and later on every day. The community of Oulu also got its mail from the Waino post office before it got its own post office.

Mr. Matt Harju was the first postmaster at Waino; Mrs. Alma Ranta (former Alma Tuura) was assistant and also clerked in the store when Mr. Harju operated it. Later on a store company was formed and started operating in the same store. The members of the

company were Mrs. Lizzie Luoma, Oscar Ekstrom, August Wentela, Leonard Wentela, Charles Johnson, Nels P. Johnson, Valentin Aho of Waino and Henry Huotari and Henry Maryland of Oulu.

Mr. Nels P. Johnson was manager of the store and was also appointed postmaster after Mr. Harju left. His assistant was Mrs. Hilja Salo (Johnson's daughter). The post office was closed with the coming of Rural Free Delivery. After the store company was dissolved, Mrs. Nels P. Johnson operated the store for some time. Other storekeepers in the later years were Victor Korhonen, J. E. Koho, and Christ Lustig, the last one.

The building still stands in the Waino corner and is used as a town garage by the Town of Brule. *[True in 1960]*

The country store at Waino wasn't any supermarket of modern days but if we could turn back the time 60 years or so, we could see the men folks sitting around the pot bellied stove arguing their political and other problems and maybe having hot arguments sometimes and in the end maybe getting together on what would be best for the community. Also lanterns, sweat pads, harness, milk pails, skidding chains, etc. hanging from the ceiling, and cracker barrels, sugar barrels, bologna barrels, nail barrels, kerosene barrels, calico, ribbons, needles and thread and so many articles needed by the people in the area. It had more variety than the modern drug store.

The school wasn't very far and many times when we had a nickel, we could run to the store and get a package of Uneeda crackers for a nickel. They tasted better than any candy we get now.

The log building to the right of the store was a saloon owned and operated by Alex Back during the logging days. Whiskey at the time came in barrels. You could get your favorite brand of whiskey from the same barrel.

The kids could make a little spending money by picking up and returning empty whiskey bottles - one penny for 1/2 pint and two pennies for 1 pint bottles.

The team of horses in the picture was owned by a logger, Tom McMann. The teamster is John Nagel. He is delivering supplies to the lumber camp three miles north of Waino.

The other men in the picture are Henry Huotari and John Kurkinen, Oulu pioneers. The fellow peeking from the saloon attic

is unknown.

remember. Anyone wishing to correct me may do so. It's the general picture of those far away days.

This article I have written from what I have heard and what I

MEMBERSHIP CARDS

If you are a paid up member of O-BHS a membership card from the State Historical Society should be enclosed with this newsletter. This entitles the bearer a 10 percent reduction at the gate of the State sponsored sites throughout Wisconsin and in their bookstore.

AIMEE WALBERG, O-BHS NWHS SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT

According to Kathie Matushak in the guidance office at Northwestern High School the recipient of this year's O-BHS scholarship is Aimee Walberg. Aimee, the daughter of Dennis Walberg and Patricia Demoure, has been a strong and active student at Northwestern, participating in drama, forensics, DECA and choir. She has plans to attend UWS, will major in biology, and plans to study archaeology. Aimee "wants to make a difference in the world." We wish her much success on her challenging path of service.

CONGRATULATIONS TO AIMEE AND HER PARENTS!

BHRG SPONSORS AN HISTORICAL AND MUSICAL PROGRAM AT WAINO PIONEER CHAPEL

The Brule History Research Group wishes to announce a special event to be held at the Waino Pioneer Chapel on Sunday, July 2nd at 2 p.m. Duane (Aho) Westfield of Salem, MA, former resident of Brule, will lead the program with highlights of the church's history. Members of the Järvenpää Choir will entertain and coffee will be served with rieska and pulla to enjoy afterwards. We invite all to attend. The Brule History calendar for the year 2000 will be available. The Järvenpää Choir includes several residents and former residents with Finnish heritage from the Old-Brule area, and several of these are strong members of our organization.

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, payable at the time of our annual meeting in September. Higher levels of support are also available.

New Members and Visitors are WELCOME!

Old-Brule Heritage Society, Inc.

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