

OBHS News

Newsletter of the Old-Brule Heritage Society, Inc. ©2001
Founded in 1998 to Preserve and Share the Heritage of the Old-Brule Region.

Volume III, Issue 3

June 1, 2001

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**OUR NEXT REGULAR MEETING WILL BE HELD WEDNESDAY EVENING, JUNE 13, 2001
AT 7 P.M., AT THE LAKE NEBAGAMON AUDITORIUM.**

For our program, instead of having a speaker, we will hopefully all become speakers as we gather oral histories among those who attend.

We have within our membership and among those who attend our meetings a tremendous potential resource for local history, namely, our own life stories and recollections of the past. What we will be attempting is the beginning of a process that will organize the gathering of these memories and this experience.

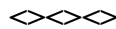
In advance of the meeting our Regional History Gathering Committee (RHGC) will meet very shortly to help focus our efforts and to try to anticipate the materials needed and the procedures we will use to make our effort an orderly process.

Our greatest need will be for recording equipment, cassette tape players and blank cassettes, which will be used to record our interview sessions with one another. It is good to take notes in the interview process so a notebook, or paper to write on for each is essential.

Present members of the RHGC are **Irene Brazill, Velma Doby, LaVerne LaPole, Jim Pellman and Jackie Plunkett.**

The evening will begin with our business meeting.

Alice Christensen has offered to coordinate the hospitality for the evening. **Donna Bergsten** has also provided much valuable material in support of gathering oral histories.



WELCOME ALL!

**and Please Bring a Tape Recorder, Tape, Notebook and
a Friend with an Interesting Life Story to Tell (They're all Interesting!).**

Thanks to Chuck Zosel for securing the Auditorium.

The Brule History 2001 Calendars are still available. Proceeds benefit the publication of the history of Brule. Please submit orders to Brule History Research Group, P. O. Box 114, Brule, WI 54820. Cost is \$7.50 which includes postage and handling.

OPINIONS EXPRESSED IN THE O-BHS NEWS ARE THOSE OF THE WRITERS ALONE AND ARE NOT INTENDED TO REPRESENT OFFICIAL POSITIONS OF THE O-BHS ORGANIZATION.

From the President

Life is fleeting. We had just safely returned home from our trip to Wyoming for the heartwarming graduation of my nephew, with an interesting stop en route at the Mammoth Site near Hot Springs in South Dakota. A knock at the door by relatives from Ashland soon put these events in stark perspective. My second cousin had been riding an ATV in the Ashland area with a group of friends last week, over the Memorial Day holiday, while we were gone. He was riding a borrowed machine and was an ATV novice, even though in his early thirties. The handling of an ATV is unique and at higher speeds can make the machines dangerous. My cousin knew these things, and he knew he would be safer with a helmet, but he rode without one and without sufficient caution. He missed a turn, landed wrong so that even a helmet wouldn't have helped, and he died.

To some he will become a statistic, helping to justify stringent ATV laws. To others he is a lost father, lost son, lost friend. He will be almost invisible to national or even state history. Still, his life was as precious as any other, any president or any king. As local historians we will remember, we must remember, and act in the arena of broader decision, policy making and personal decision making, too, so that his death will not have been in vain.

About the same time as my cousin's accident, a relative of another member of our group, a woman who lived on Long Lake near Iron River, just entering retirement and recently returning permanently to the region, left the safety of her cabin/house to walk outside onto a deck only 18 inches off the ground. Hundreds of times before she must have done the same thing, but this time the unthinkable happened. Somehow she lost her footing or balance, fell, and landed wrong on the ground below. She didn't make it either.

The tragedy of these untimely deaths and others like them provides a non-soothing backdrop to our frenzied lives. At the heart of our historical efforts is the courage and hope to face these dislocations of tragic existence, and to cherish and memorialize the uneven contributions of each one of us, as long as we are here, to the common good. The living victims of these events share my grief and have my deepest sympathy.

—Jim Pellman (715) 363-2453, <musketee6@juno.com>

Recent Donation of Documents from Donna Bergsten

As she promised at our last meeting **Donna Bergsten** has donated numerous items of historical significance to the O-BHS. Among these are clippings and articles from national and regional publications about the stay of **President Calvin Coolidge** at Cedar Island on the Brule River in 1928.

Among these are articles from the *New York Times* and the *Literary Digest*. She also provided colored copies of three photographs, one of young people on a weekend picnic at the Amnicon River Railroad Bridge site about 1907. There is also a photo of the **Rounsville** farm showing oxen pulling stumps from some time after 1885. Another is a picture taken by **Selon Bergsten** showing an airplane wreck in Poplar of a pilot from Kansas who was delivering President Coolidge's mail to the Pierce Cedar Island Lodge.

She also included much valuable material on taking oral histories. Thanks Donna!

NWHS Names OBHS Scholarship Recipient

Northwestern High School's retiring Guidance Counselor, Kathie Matushak, has just announced that Stephanie Buran of Hollander Road in Iron River is the 2001 recipient of the third annual O-BHS Scholarship. A check for \$250 payable to Stephanie and U. W. - Eau Claire will be forwarded to the Financial Aid Office in late August after registration is complete.

Stephanie, daughter of Charles and Betsy Buran, is an excellent scholarship recipient. She has been very active in her school career, serving recently as Superior Days representative, and as Peer Helper under Counselor Matushak's guidance in the Middle School. She has been co-president of the N-Club, and co-captain of the cross country team under Mr. Woodbury. In her well written letter accompanying her applications she reveals she has acquired valuable business and human relations skills and work discipline while serving as a waitress in the Iron River area. She will major in Business-Human Resources/Public Relations while at Eau Claire.

We congratulate her parents and teachers and wish her a world of success.

APRIL MEETING REVIEW

Our President called to order our latest regular meeting on Wednesday evening, April 11, 2001, at the Amnicon Town Hall at 7:20 p.m.

Program:

Writer and educator **Mrs. Mayme Sevander** was our honored guest, speaking on the theme "From Lake Superior to Lake Onega." Born in Brule to Oscar Corgan, she, while still a child, lived in Wisconsin and Minnesota and moved to New York. At age 10 her family emigrated to Petrozavodsk, Russia, during the years of "Karelia Fever," a time prior to the second World War when the Soviet Union under Stalin sought to modernize its industry and build the Soviet Workers' paradise," using as important resources, the money and skills of newly arriving immigrants.

Mayme summarized for us her unique body of historical research and her personal life experiences related to this exodus of the many Finnish-American and other workers enticed to emigrate. Once inside the former Russia she lost her father due to Stalin's paranoia, in experiences she described in her first book. Following *They Took My Father* she wrote *Red Exodus* which expanded on her personal experience and described the experiences of hundreds of other emigres, including identification and related statistics. *Soviet Bondage*, the sequel to *Red Exodus*, documents her meticulous and expansive research of Soviet records. Information from this research has enabled hundreds of

families to reunite or at least find a sense of closure to their sense of loss of loved ones.

Mayme spoke of her continuing love for the Russian people to this day, and she continues to maintain both American and Russian citizenship. She expressed profound gratitude to the staff of the College of St. Scholastica in Duluth which provided her the opportunity to share her experiences and to continue her researches dedicated to discovering the truth about what befell those who left this country and Canada with such idealistic hopes. She had been an Associate Professor of Languages for 45 years in Russia and lectured at St. Scholastica on the Russian language. She was granted an honorary Doctor of Law degree by the college.

Mayme showed some overhead transparencies near the end of her presentation which supported the themes of her talk, and she addressed an issue which has caused her some distress, a controversy with Dr. Alexis Podgorelskin, currently head of the Department of History at UMD. Mayme is adamant in insisting from first hand experience that the motivation of most of those leaving America for Russia was their high idealism as regards the creation of an ideal workers' state. She disputes what she understands to be Dr. Podgorelskin's claim that the spirit of nationalism was important in their leaving North America. These distinctions are more than just subtle nuances as they go to the heart of human processes, understandings of life,

and to the depths of the experience of Finns in America. Hopefully we will come to understand this issue much better.

Mayme has recently returned from Finland where she published her fourth book, *Vaeltajat* (Wanderers). And since her research is ongoing, she also spent time in Russia and Sweden.

Business Meeting:

After approval of the minutes, our Treasurer reported \$2,146.46 in our main checking account, and \$1,462.35 in our Davidson Windmill Fund. It was announced that Ilene and Bob Lundberg had generously donated \$1,000 toward the Windmill Fund.

We continue to pursue the “Heritage Park” site, with no action taken at this time. The Davidson Windmill Committee shared with those in attendance plans for the May 12th dedication event, and the Windmill promotional items that are available for sale, which include mugs, caps and tee shirts. Costs of these items came to \$1,728.40. Motion passed to allow payment on these items. A sign had been ordered and was to be readied in time for dedication day, Hope Swenson promising \$300 toward its cost in memory of Cliff. Eddy Walman would provide a flag pole when we are ready for it. A memorial tree was to be planted on dedication day donated by the Christensen’s. Special organization stationary and pamphlets had been ordered, ready for invitation and solicitation letters. Members of the Jarvenpaa Choir and local singers had been invited to perform, with lunch to be served at the Lakeside Town Hall. A new windmill display was to be prepared and the Old-Brule/BHRG portable stands would be on display.

The Archives Room in the Maple Community Center was nearing completion with some sheetrock mudding and sanding remaining. All invoices were to be in to Douglas County which will be reimbursing O-BHS half of construction material costs (\$1,176.08/2=\$553.80). The Town of Maple has also promised a donation to our organization this year.

The program for next meeting was discussed. A History Gathering Committee will meet in advance of the meeting day to make preparations. Participants would be asked to bring a filled questionnaire, photos and historical documents to share. Session results will be processed and will go into our archives.

Under new business the President announced this September’s annual meeting of the NW Region Local History societies. A \$15 donation was made to the Wisconsin Council for Local History. The SHSW grant applications were tabled for the present.

Our website committee is making arrangements to move the site out of Dave Short’s site and into one we own ourselves. Dave has been hosting our site at no charge. Donna Bergsten and Audrey Hakkila have been working with Dave to transfer the site. The change will entail a monthly charge for the site in the future.

The CESA web site project in the Maple District can now be viewed on line at <www.hereathome.org>, The O-BHS Scholarship was soon to be announced. The President Calvin Coolidge video is now available and can be checked out. Donna Bergsten promised copies of many historical items. We are expecting historical materials from Steve Andrews at the NW Regional Planning Office. Marc Hershfield of the Wisconsin DOT requested historical information on a project on the Roy Johnson farm in Cloverland.

The meeting adjourned at 10:10 p. m.

Thanks again to Mayme, and a special thanks to Velma Doby who took care of the arrangements for Mayme’s presentation.

Thank you to **Elvie Agacki, Jerry Bong Fechtelkotter, Irene Brazill, Alice Christensen, Audrey Hakkila, and Eddy Walman** (forget anyone?) for providing the meeting “hospitality.” Also, many thanks to the **Town of Amnicon** for use of their town hall.



PRESIDENT COOLIDGE BIOGRAPHICAL VCR TAPE

The tape we ordered from CSPAN on the life of President Calvin Coolidge has arrived and is available to check out for use. For those not familiar with this chapter in our region's history, "Silent Cal," in 1928 while President during his last summer in office, stayed at the summer retreat of a New Jersey friend on Cedar Island on the Brule River. Superior Central High School became the Summer White House. American Aviation Ace of Aces, Richard Ira Bong of Poplar (one of the communities carved from Old-Brule), as a young man on the family farm, watched the government mail planes flying overhead on their way to the Brule River landing strip, inspiring in him the desire to fly.

The tape is close to two hours long, with fresh insights into the life of a much more complex figure than is generally portrayed. This was the time in our region's history (1930) when a Quaker (Hoover) would soon take the White House, and when the total Douglas County vote for Governor was 1,470 for Democratic candidate Hammersley, 10,557 for Republican Bob LaFollette with 821 for their Progressive opponent, Taynton. In Maple the vote was 4 for Hammersley, 1 for Taynton, and 152 for LaFollette. The Village of Poplar was more Democratic, voting 19 for Hammersley, 4 for Taynton, and 95 for LaFollette. Cloverland was even more Democratic voting 25 for Hammersley and 85 for LaFollette. This was an election in which the Socialist candidate Metcalfe received 75 votes in all of the county, two in Maple, three in Lakeside, two in Brule and three in Cloverland.

We would strongly encourage the tape's showing in our schools to the higher grades. It will help bring a neglected period in our nation's history to life. Please see or call Jim P. (363-2453) to check out the tape.

DAVIDSON WINDMILL DEDICATION CEREMONY HELD MAY 12 A MEMORABLE SUCCESS.

The Old-Brule Heritage Society is now the publicly recognized custodian of the Davidson Windmill Site. The ceremonial passing of the original key from **Gene Davidson** to O-BHS President **Jim Pellman** solemnized a transaction that took place on paper this past winter. About 150 people joined us in celebrating the Davidson's gift to the region's history. After a collective moment of silence the event opened with the planting of an ash sapling to memorialize this moment of recognition of both the pioneers who settled the region and of O-BHS members who have passed on to the "Great Miller of the Universe." Several local dignitaries were recognized: Pearl Swanstrom, Town Clerk, Lakeside; Mr. Kyle Torvinen, Attorney, Lakeside; Mrs. Eve Zosel, Board Member, School District of Maple; Mrs. Audrey Hakkila, Retired Village Treasurer, Poplar; Mrs. Delores Hakkila, Town Clerk, Maple; Mr. Dennis Smet, Chairman, Town of Brule. Some honored us with their remarks: newly elected Lakeside Town Chairman, **Gary Peterson**, welcomed the crowd; Douglas County Sheriff **Richard Pukema** recollected the personal place of the windmill in his life as resident of the Amnicon Valley. Douglas County Board Chairman, **Doug Finn**, read from his warm Certificate of Appreciation commending the Davidson's and the O-BHS for preserving and protecting the site.

State Representative **Gary Sherman** commended the group, and O-BHS host **Jim Pellman** read from a Certificate of Commendation and Salutation from Wisconsin Governor **Scott McCallum**. This read in part: *"It is an honor and privilege to commemorate the historical significance the Davidson Windmill brings to the people of Wisconsin. The Davidson Windmill, part of the National Register of Historic Places, captures the spirit and creativity of the Finnish and Scandinavian immigrants who chose to make Wisconsin their new home. I am both pleased and proud to salute all those in attendance for this special ceremony as it recalls the trials and triumphs of our ancestors and will continue to enhance the lives of the people of Wisconsin."*

Bob Aho unveiled for the Davidson Windmill Committee a new interpretive sign placed in memory of Lakeside resident, Cliff Swenson, and after the passing of the key and remarks by **Gene Davidson** and another former Lakeside Town Officer, **Arnold Saari**, the crowd then dispersed to regather at the **Lakeside Town Hall** for **Brule History Research Group** and O-BHS historical exhibits, for lunch served by the Parking Lot Committee of **Peace Lutheran Church** in Poplar, and for musical selections by members of the **Jarvenpää Choir** and other local musical talents, accompanied on the keyboard by Mrs. **Pearl Swanstrom**.

Our thanks to everyone who attended, and to everyone who in any way contributed to this wonderful happening. We want to thank again those whose generous money donations will help us in our efforts to preserve the site:

Ilene and Bob Lundberg, Barnes
National Bank of Commerce, Superior, Poplar, Solon Springs
Bayfield Electric Coop., Inc., Iron River
Stout Mechanical, Inc., Duluth
Alice and Cassius Christensen, Wentworth
National Finnish American Festival, Inc., Hurley
Mr. and Mrs. Arvo Walimaki, Maple
Poplar Auto Refinishing, Poplar

Mrs. Hope Swenson, Lakeside
Superior Comm. Credit Union
Paul and Delores Hakkila, Maple
Finnworks, Maple
Mrs. Dolores Lundberg, Superior
Ms. Jyll Moore, Virginia, MN
Mrs. Jackie Plunkett, Maple
Mrs. Lorraine Autio, Maple

A special Thank You! to the **Twin Ports Young Architects Forum; Joan Vorderbruggen, Terri Butler, Greg Cooper, Elden Lindamood, and Bob Aho**, who braved the wet, cold and droppings on clean-up day. Letters of recognition have since come in from **U.S. Rep. Obey, Senators Kohl and Feingold**, and from **Mr. George Vogt**, Director of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, which we shall share at our next meeting.

Fundraising Merchandise for Sale

The Society now has available regional history magnets, plus Davidson Windmill memorabilia: mugs, caps and tee shirts for sale. Magnets are going for \$1 each or 6 for \$5.00, proceeds to our general fund. The Windmill mugs are \$8.00, caps, \$9.00 and tee shirts, any size, \$10, all proceeds going into the Windmill Fund.

Wisconsin tax is included in all prices. All items will be available for purchase at our meetings, or by contacting your President at 363-2453.

Area History: No. 18

CUT BRULE IN TWO.

**The County Not to Be Outdone By The City Demands a New Town
AND WANTS BRULE DIVIDED.**

The Project Brings On a Warm Discussion at a Meeting of the County Board.

The county board met this morning and were entertained, rather than entertaining for a change. The first thing that was sprung was a petition presented by Fred Southern, whose place of residence is in the town of Brule. The petition prayed for a division of the town, owing to the peculiar manner in which the present town has been peopled. It appears from the petition and all

that could be gathered that the population of Brule is about 600, and that it is divided in a fairly equal manner between eastern and western extremities of the town. The petition was signed by seventy-eight persons, and it is claimed by Mr. Southern that Mr. Nephew, the representative of the town, will support the move for a division. Frank A. Ross appeared as a representative of

the people interested in securing the division, while James Bardon, as a heavy property holder in that region, vigorously opposed the proposed measure. He was assisted by Attorney B. F. Hutchins. The opposition pronounced the project as a political move to increase the power of the board in the county and to satisfy the cravings for office for a few other of the residents of Brule. Mr. Bardon declared that it would increase the rate of taxation and could see no reasonable excuse for making the proposed change. Besides Brule is one of the smallest of the outlying towns, he said, and subsequently proved that it was the smallest in area and second smallest in population. Mr. Ross argued against the alleged increase in taxation, stating in effect that it was a matter of no especial interest to any one outside

of residents of the town. Commissioner Clymer moved that the matter be referred to a special committee of three, comprised of two delegates from the country and one from the city. Commissioner Ostrander opposed this selection and straightway Commissioner Clymer held a whispered consultation with the opposition and then amended by making the selection two from the city and one from the country. This motion was adopted. The motion provides, in addition, that the committee consult with the district attorney and report at the next meeting. Considerable routine business of minor importance was transacted before adjournment. Commissioner Messingham presided in the absence of D. R. Long, president of the board.

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The above article first appeared in the Superior Evening Telegram, March 4, 1892, page 5, col.4, contributed here by Ms. Teddy Meronek of the Area Research Center in the Superior Public Library.

It is plain that questions of political representation, and issues of balance of power between the City and the County have been

with us from the beginning. But more interesting from the standpoint of Old-Brule is the characterization of the existing split within the large early town as it then already existed, only five years after its formation. Division would finally come, but not until the end of 1906, fourteen years later.

The Fred Southern mentioned had come very early into the region with the establishment of the remote and ill-fated Clevedon Colony in the 1870s, but with Clevedon's demise he would remain to make his name as an abstractor of property with an office in Superior. Samuel Budgett's colonizers had built Clevedon at the mouth of the Brule, a long thirteen miles away as the crow flies north of a new Brule station on the Northern Pacific established in 1884.

The Chairman of Old-Brule at the time was Thomas Nephew (Demas Neveu), of French-Canadian origin, "Maple Hotel" owner, farmer and logger. His homesteaded lands contained the depot in Maple, lands now owned by Cooperative Services, Bret Zimmer, Jerry Makela, Rosa Horst and others. They also contained the early Maple School and Maple's first Town Hall, at the time Old-Brule's Town Hall. To the north of Nephew lived most of the earliest Maple portion of the "Finnish colony," contemporaries of Jacob

Davidson on the west, the windmill builder on the Amnicon, and the Tuuras, Johnsons, Ekstroms and many others who would form Waino to the east. This stretched but interacting Finnish colony was as yet quite small and had not yet heavily asserted itself politically. The Brule townsite around the station in the far southeast of the town was in the process of being boomed, with its own sawmill and surrounding camps, and the earlier settlement around the station of Poplar at the other end of the town rivaled it in density of settlement and commerce, with names like Chase, Doherty, Jones and Peterson prominent.

The name of influential early Superiorite, James Bardon, would come up again and again later in the life of the town, especially in the settlement of a bustling Blueberry, in serious copper mining explorations and speculations, timber sales and land transactions. Thanks to Teddy for bringing this important article to our attention. Ed.

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Calendar:

June 6, Wednesday, 7 PM

Regional History Gathering Committee at Delores Pellman's; Preparation for our bimonthly meeting.

June 11, Monday, 7 PM

Davidson Windmill Committee to meet at Delores Pellman's. Phase II: Planning Ahead.

June 10, Sunday, 2 PM

DCHS History Sunday, Summit Town Hall

Joel Sipress historical presentation, "Superior's Labor Wars."

June 13, Wednesday, 7 PM

Regular Bimonthly Meeting, Lake Nebagamon Auditorium.

Workshop on oral histories. Hospitality coordinator, Alice Christensen.

July 1, Sunday, 2-4 PM.

Brule History Research Group Music and Dancing Event, Brule Town Hall.

"Curtis, the Music Man" will provide some selected recorded music to help us recall the music history in our area. Admission is by donation to the Book Fund to publish the History of Brule. Musicians present that day will be honored. Please contact Velma Doby in Iron River for more information.

July 4, Wednesday, Independence Day**July 27, Friday, O-BHS News deadline.****August 8, Wednesday, 7 PM**

Regular Bimonthly Meeting; Program and location to be announced.

WEB SITE ON LINE

Again a reminder that computer volunteer, **Mr. Dave Short** of Poplar, has designed our web site and has kept it running. It's web address remains for now <http://discover-net.net/~dshort/> . Check it out! **Donna Bergsten** has volunteered to help with site changes. **Thanks Dave, Audrey, Jackie & Donna.**

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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