

OBHS News

Newsletter of the Old-Brule Heritage Society, Inc. ©2023
Founded in 1998 to Gather, Preserve and Share the History and Heritage of the Old-Brule Region.

Volume XXVII, Issue 1

March 2026

Board Of Directors

Jim Mattson, President
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Donna Bergsten, Poplar, Secretary
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Bruce Bergsten, Poplar
Bruce Carlson
Basil Edgette, Lake Nebagamon
Brian Paulson, Poplar

Roger Johnson
Mary Ann Gronquist, Parkland
Jim Pellman, Maple, Alt



Bong Veteran Center VirtualTour

*Presented by Briana Fiandt
of the Bong Center*

Monday, April 13, 2026

6:30 p.m.

Amnicon Town Hall

*6:00 pm social ~ ~ ~ 6:30 pm Program
Business Meeting to follow*

From the President

As we near the end of the winter season, we now must turn our attention to working on and completing the outstanding Old Brule Heritage Society (OBHS) projects. We have a busy spring and summer and season ahead. Among our upcoming projects are the continuation and finishing of the work in the Research Center, Vault Area and new OBHS office. These areas need insulation, sheetrock installation, counters shelving and other setup work.

The Archives Committee will continue working on scanning and organizing our archival materials through this summer. Our goal will be to make many of records accessible to the public. The archives committee will move all of our stored items from the rental storage unit to either the Eskolin House or the Monticello School area. This move will save OBHS the rental cost of a storage unit.

We will continue cleaning the Eskolin House and plan on applying preservative material to the outside logs. Likewise, more work will be done on the Depot. Including painting, building a platform and setting down railroad rails to create the image of a train depot.

All of these projects require two things:

First, financial donations from our members and friendly supporters. We need additional resources to buy and install the necessary materials. Our members now have the option to specify which area they desire to contribute funds. These areas are: the general fund, Monticello School, Research/Vault, Office area, Windmill, Depot or Eskolin House. You may split your donation between them, if you desire. Please help us and donate if you can.

We also need volunteers. If you can donate some time to a specific area let us know. All of the above noted projects can use your help. Let's make this upcoming spring and summer a successful time for OBHS.

Panels have been installed in the attic area of the Monticello School. Special thanks to Keith and Jackie Plunkett for their work on this project.

James Mattson, President

**Unapproved General Meeting Minutes of February 9, 2026
Old-Brule Heritage Society ~ Amnicon Town Hall**

A Thank You! goes out to Jared Crozier for the very enlightening program on the Martinsen Settlement. Thank you for bringing Damien for assisting you with your presentation and putting tables and chairs away, so that the Executive Board only had couple to put away at the end of the evening!

Thank you to the Amnicon Town Hall for the fabulous AV Equipment!

Thank you, Dennis Hill for obtaining the plaque, and Nummi Jewelers for donation honoring the Lundberg Family for their generous donations towards the Davidson Windmill.

BUSINESS MEETING

The business meeting was called to order at 7:50 p.m. by President Jim Mattson.

Secretary's report: Motion to accept the report as printed in the January newsletter by Brian Paulson and seconded by Basil Edgette. MP Correspondence: 2 issues of Port Wing's Heritage Hall Hearld.

Treasurer's report was distributed by Ron Hendrickson. Motion to accept by Dennis Hill, seconded by Basil Edgette. MP Discussion of Finance Committee having met. Also, 2 accounts have been set up to split into two projects for the school and another for research center/office.

President's Report:

- Finance committee met and set up budget for next year and a new template was set up for Treasurer's report by Donna Bergsten. These meetings will coordinate with existing meetings.
- Archives – the committee has discussed its mission to move the archives out of the storage building to Eskolin House, Monticello School and the Research Center hopefully this June or July. This will save us rental at the storage unit. We will need plastic storage totes for the items. If anyone wants to donate these to us, we will gladly accept. John Tuura is planning to finish the system this week. The MSMA committee is still researching insulation options.

Committee Report:

- Membership: we have 50 memberships, which is up.
- Archive – the committee is continuing to meet on the first and third Thursdays of the month. We have just finished indexing the glass negatives from Kathy Erickson Lehman and are looking into options to print these negatives. We will next be looking at the scrapbooks, especially those taped onto magazines.
- Website: It is basically done. We will be contacting Jon Winter to assist with final pages that Dede Paquette is not able to build.
- Monticello School – Jackie Plunkett and husband Keith have placed the floor in the attic, leaving the north end of the floor open for access.
- Windmill and Grounds is buttoned up for the season. Dennis Hill has the plaque that will be placed at the Windmill.
- Blueberry Depot: The depot is buttoned up for the season. Brian Paulson is making plans for the platform and will present to Pat and Carolyn Grube to see if they are able to process the wood. Brian is also trying to contact North Shore Track to provide the material and labor for the track, but there are new people working there. A painter has been scheduled for warmer weather to come in paint the upper part of the building.
- Merchandise and Publications: no report.
- Pollari Memorial Douglas County Map: no report.
- Finance Committee: see above.

Unfinished Business:

- Fundraising for projects – there has been discussion of options. We are looking at a letter to go out to members and specialized groups for donations.
- 100th Anniversary of Coolidge in Brule – Brule Presbyterian Church is still interested but have not been able to contact Douglas County Historical Society, as they are closed for a period while painting building.

New Business:

- Ron Hendrickson is planning to look into placing a tour of the Windmill, Eskolin House and Depot on YouTube with a link to a QR code that will be posted by the project. This way people can take a virtual tour. He would also like to

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set up a screen with push button to take the tour at the site. He is looking into who may be able to help. It was suggested to contact Matt Miller.

- Brian Paulson also suggested that a staggered split rail fence, similar to the one by the woods, be placed at the edge of the parking lot. It would be a couple of rails, then an opening, a couple of rails and then opening.
- We have a vacancy on our board. Please think about joining the board.

Upcoming Dates:

Board Meeting: March 9 at 6:00 p.m. at Amnicon Town Hall.

General Meeting: April 13 at 6:00 pm at Amnicon Town Hall

Program: pending

Sympathy and Encouragements:

Encouragement goes out to Mary Ann Gronquist and her daughter Julie, Roger Johnson, Keith Plunkett and Bruce Bergsten.

Meeting adjourned at 8:15 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Donna Bergsten, Secretary

Old-Brule Heritage Society

**Unapproved Minutes for March 9, 2026, Board Meeting
Old-Brule Heritage Society ~ Amnicon Town Hall**

The March 9, 2026, meeting was called to order by President Jim Mattson at 6:10 p.m. Roll call was taken Jim Mattson, Ron Hendrickson, Brian Paulson, Mary Ann Gronquist, Bruce Carlson, Basil Edgette, Bruce and Donna Bergsten. Motion to accept the minutes of the January meeting as printed by Basil Edgette, seconded by Bruce Bergsten. Motion passed. No correspondence. Treasurer's report. Ron Hendrickson passed around the report. He stated that all the transfers that were suggested by the Finance Committee are not in this report; they will show in March. A lot of the dues coming in are also coming with donations. Ron and Donna are working on a new format of the treasurer's report. Ron is working on the Annual report with the Wisconsin Historical Society. Motion by Basil Edgette, seconded by Mary Ann Gronquist to accept the treasurer's report. Motion passed.

President's Report:

- Jim Mattson discussed that the Archives Committee is discussing the insulation for the research center and vault. The road at Monticello has been plowed 3 times. Jim Mattson's goal is to have the storage unit items moved to either the Monticello School or Eskolin House by June 1. After April 6, dates will be set up to start moving items. Bruce Bergsten showed a set of accordion fold stairs. Jim Mattson would like to purchase 'furniture movers' for items stored in school (for easy movement).
- Eskolin House needs to have an application of a preservation for the wood outside. The attic needs to be cleaned and we need to decide what to do with any loose wood upstairs: keep, sell or burn.
- Jim Mattson reminded everyone to track their time spent volunteering for OBHS and get them to Donna to keep track of hours.

Committees:

- Membership: 58 members for 2026.
- Web site: Donna Bergsten reported the web site is real close to being done.
- Archives: Continuing to go through scrapbooks from the Storage Unit. Thank you to Brian Paulson for identifying many of the pictures. Donna was able to find someone to print the glass negatives for \$4/negative, which includes digitizing. We have about 40 negatives that we do not have a print.
- Research Center: John Tuura needs to finish installing the Wersbo system.
- Monticello – A big thank you to Jackie and Keith Plunkett for installing the floor in the attic. Jackie has resigned with the death of her husband. We will keep Jackie in the loop.
- Windmill and grounds: Ron stated that Matt Miller may be able to help him set up QR code applications for the Windmill, Depot and Eskolin House, so that people can get the story of each facility. He would also like to get a sign with a button to push and the video would play right there. These tours could also go on the web site.
- Eskolin House: Need to clean the upstairs of excess wood, shear up the holes and apply the preservative to the siding.
- Depot: Brian Paulson reported that reported that this spring the exterior of the building will be painted. He would also like to see the interior painted to lighten up the inside. He has been in contact with Pat and Carolyn Grube re: getting wood to build the dock on the north side of the building. Once this is done, the track panel will be built to simulate a rail line.

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- Merchandising: no report
- Pollari Map: no report.
- Finance Committee – pulling together information for upcoming grants, etc. Please also get your volunteer hours to Donna.

Unfinished Business:

- Fundraising – no report.
- 100th Anniversary/Coolidge – Donna has contacted the Douglas County Historical Society with suggestions of events during the celebration. It was suggested that Radio Superior (UWS) and the Library may have some footage and information on Coolidge's visit.

New Business:

- Vice President – this position is open, as Jacki Plunkett has resigned.
Does anyone know of anyone to nominate for this position? Donna Bergsten was asked to ask Charlene Harms to join our board.
- Wisconsin Arts
- Discussion of upcoming programs – any suggestions? Lake Nebagamon Boys Camp, Ron has 2 videos of a gentleman that lived in the deeps of Alaska.

Encouragements go out to: Bruce Bergsten, Barb Mattson

Meeting Adjourned at 7:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Donna Bergsten

O-BHS Secretary

Sympathy and Encouragements:

Encouragement goes out to Mary Ann Gronquist and her daughter Julie, Roger Johnson, John Deterling, Barb Mattson and Bruce Bergsten.

Marilyn Woerle of Brule, Wis. passed away on January 6, 2026

Carlene Ann Kavajecz, passed away on February 2, 2026

Linda Botten, age 71, passed away on February 5, 2026.

Loren V. Lusikka, 70, Maple, Wis. died Wednesday, February 18, 2026

Richard (Dick) Keith Plunkett, 76, of Maple, Wis., passed away on February 20, 2026

Thomas J. Becker, 74, of Brule, passed away February 21, 2026,

John E. Lundeen, 80, Poplar, Wis. passed away on Sunday, February 22, 2026

Karin M. Colby, 85, Maple, WI, passed away on Friday, March 6, 2026

Ed Luoma, formerly of this area, passed away on march 3, 2026



Eskolin House Update

Listed below are some of the projects completed from last summer (2025):

Cleaning the backroom area, removal of excess OBHS calendars, organizing the items, and working with a pest control company to reduce and eliminate pests.

Listed below are the projects planned for the Eskolin House this summer:

Move items currently in the rental storage unit to the Eskolin House, organize & remove boards stored in the attic, repair holes that have allowed rodents and insects to enter, apply preservative 'sealant' to protect the log walls, plan to have photos, maps and other items on display.

Monticello School

Listed below are some of the projects completed this past year:

Removal of old boards etc. from the grounds, trimmed brush and branches, organized and cleaned up boards and other items from the main floor area, installed an indoor electrical outlet on the main floor, and set up panels to make a floor for the school attic.

Listed Below are the projects being planned for this year:

* Install additional electrical outlets and lights, install insulation in the walls, develop plans for the use of floorboards & wainscoting in the school area, and install an outside door at the front entrance.



Next newsletter, we will highlight the Windmill and Archives

History Stories

About the Towns and Villages of Douglas County

During the Centennial year, 1948, the boys and girls of the Douglas County Schools wrote the following stories about the different communities in the county. Many people, especially the old settlers, helped by giving information, which formed a nucleus around which these stories were written.

Town of Amnicon

We tried to find some people in Amnicon who were “old timers,” but no one was successful, so we wrote mostly stories our teacher could tell us of the old days in Wisconsin.

Someone told us that the Howards were old settlers who lived near the Bob Carnes’ farm, and that they named the community near them Wentworth in memory of Mr. Howard’s old home in the British Isles. The Howards came to Amnicon from Canada.

The Christensons, three brothers, are “old timers” near Wentworth.

Mr. Henry Abrahamson’s father was one of the first settlers near Rockmont and had a little store not far from the Rockmont stopping place. These stopping places only a few miles apart on the railroads, were just boxcars where families could bring their milk to ship to Superior. People also took the train into Superior because in the early days there were no roads, just trails into Superior.

The A. N. Youngs used to live in a little log cabin back in the woods, where they first moved into the country, and afterwards built a home on Highway 53.

Lidells were old timers who lived near Middle River when highway 53 was being paved. Richard Lidell, then about two years old, walked in the soft cement and his footprints can still be seen in the paving.

George L. Webster purchased a section of the Town of Amnicon in 1912. It was cut-over land but had never been cleared. He cleared 100 acres all at one time by hiring a land clearing crew from Duluth to do the job. They came in, cut down the trees, blew out the roots with dynamite, piled the stumps in huge piles, and burned them and then plowed the land for the first time. For many years, the Websters picked up rocks off this piece. The soil in the Town of Amnicon is often spoken of as the very best farming soil in Douglas County; some clay and some sandy loam.

The Clarence Websters came here in 1914. There were no roads around the vicinity of Hines, just trails. They had to go out to old “number 11” twice a week to get their mail, brought R. F. D. in a horse and buggy from South Range. At Hines were several large wooden buildings and a spur of railroad tracks going to hillcrest,

and this vicinity was called the Hines Lumber Camp. For many years, lumber was shipped out of Hines.

Fred Smith had the first store in Hines. Mr. Smith later went to Bennett and then to Solon Springs. Mr. Smith and Mr. Webster, with Mr. Hiles help got a post office at Hines, also helped the community establish a little telephone exchange of Hines so the people had a telephone exchange at Hines so the people had a telephone exchange long before the other communities had them.

In 1914, the Seven Day Advent people had a “Walden Academy” where the Middle River Sanatorium now stands. The academy had a sawmill and the farmers or early settlers near Hawthorne, Rockmont and Hines hauled logs to the Academy and helped saw these logs into lumber, which was used in the buildings about their places.

It was not until 1924 that there was really a road into Hines, and then for years even this road was impossible in the fall and spring.

In the early days there were no snow-plows and neighbors used to get out and help each other shovel trails so they could get their milk to the railroad stopping places.

The first school house was built in Hines about 1920, after Miss Rehnstrand became County Superintendent.

Amnicon has one beautiful park called Bardon Park. In this park the river-bed is so beautiful and has such a beautiful falls that it is sometimes called the “Grand Canyon of Douglas County”. We think Lakeside got its name from its location; it is situated along the south shore of Lake Superior.

It has a wonderful old landmark. This is an old mill built by the Davidson family about sixty years ago. It was used to grind wheat into flour and many Finnish neighbors came to have their meal ground.

Lakeside has many hills and beautiful valleys.

From the Seventh and Eighth Grades – Wentworth School
May 1948 (Copied by Josephine Templeton)

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Blueberry Depot Update

Written by Brian Paulson

Built in 1900 by the Northern Pacific Railway, this depot served the community of Blueberry, Wisconsin for over 60 years. Many early rural depots served their communities in several ways. Before the first settlers could construct adequate municipal facilities the railroad depot would sometimes serve as the first classrooms, post office, store, meeting place or even as a place of worship.



Blueberry Depot – October 2025

Listed below are some of the past summers projects we have completed:

- * Replacing all windows and removal/plugging of a window and an entry door that were not original to the buildings construction.
- * Removal and replacement of the compromised lower exterior siding and replacing with horizontal lap siding and painting of the lap material.
- * Spot repair of upper vertical siding.
- * Repair and replacement of vertical batting.
- * Prep and paint walls, ceiling and floor of “agents office”.

Listed below are the projects planned to begin this spring.

- * Make necessary repairs to the large sliding freight doors.
- * Paint entire exterior surfaces including soffits and fascia.
- * Build a platform which will run the entire length of the depot (8'x37').
- * Build a 40 foot track panel parallel to the platform which will provide a realistic setting for the depot exhibit. Both the platform and track panel will be on the north (highway) side.
- * Install period style rain gutter on north side of depot for protection.
- * Landscaping for parking lot are in vicinity of depot work.
- * Acquire display cases for exhibits inside the depot.
- * Signage and interpretive material for the structure and exhibits.

As with any historical preservation project we are always looking for volunteer labor and financial donations so we may successfully complete this worthy project. Anyone wishing to help may contact a board member and financial donations may be made to the Old Brule Heritage Society – Depot Fund.

Do you know who we are?

The Archives Committee received a wonderful gift of 120 glass negatives from Kathy Erickson Lehman. Her grandfather, Walter Erickson, took pictures of the area and area people in the early 1900s. We have been gifted these pictures and negatives. The committee is trying to identify as many of the pictures as possible. We are struggling with identifying the people and locations of many of the pictures. We will also be bringing pictures to our meetings for people to look at and identify.

If you can identify anyone in this picture please contact us at: oldbrule.hs@gmail.com or contact a member of the committee: Jim Mattson, Donna Bergsten, Brian Paulson, Mary Ann Gronquist or Jackie Plunkett.

Thank you!

The Tale of the Stolen Church



Written by Walter Jacob Kukkonen

In 1991, I received from an anonymous party, a copy of page 45 of a mimeographed booklet that told the story about “The Stolen Church of Waino.” The theft was supposed to have happened in September 1913. The report claimed that an eyewitness to the event was still living in May 1990. The thief was identified as “Mr. K” for anonymity. The man was my father, who in 1913 was living in Superior. John Tuura, on whose land the church stood, had died in 1904. He had left his wife and five small children to “protect” the property. John, the oldest of the children, was too young to “take on adult ‘church raiders’ armed with a rifle, so the church was raised, loaded and carted off to an area west of the Brule River.”

The tale has an element of truth. In 1922 annual report of the Brule National Church to K. E. Salonen, president of the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran National church, written by my father at the request of Pastor Krankkala, contains a few brief notes gleaned from the parish minutes on the founding of the independent National church.

The other National congregation in Brule was organized October 31, 1919, largely by people living on the west side of the Brule River. During the previous summer, students from the National Church seminary in Ironwood, Michigan, had conducted services in the area. As a direct result of this summer ministry plus the coming of Krankkala as pastor of the independent congregation, this third Lutheran church in Brule was organized. At the organizational meeting the eight charter members voted to unite with the National Church.

The first officers of the new congregation were John Kukkonen, president; John Rantanen, secretary; and Charles Boroo, treasurer. By the end of the following year the membership had increased to eleven men, six women and forty children. A site for the church had been acquired from Boroo. At the time of the 1922 report John Kukkonen was still the president, but the secretary was Jacob Erkkila and the treasurer Johanna Kukkonen. Pastor Krankkala had been called as the pastor also of this new congregation.

The 1922 report, written during the spring of 1923, closed with the remark that the two National congregations were cooperating, even though they had not officially merged. Merger, however, was anticipated that spring, after which the church building would be moved about four or five miles to the new site west of the Brule River. The state reason was that it was more central to the combined baptized membership of forty of the two congregations.

I was a child of six when the congregations merged and the church building was to its new site. I am not aware of what the “moving” meant; very likely the old church was dismantled and some of the lumber used to build the new church. I remember, however, the day in September 1923 when Father hauled in our farm wagon the chairs, organ, and wood stove to the new site. The following fall I entered the first grade in the two-room N. P. Johnson School built in 1905 on land donated by N. P. Johnson.

All who are interested in joining the Old-Brule Heritage Society are encouraged to attend any of our meetings and public programs. To join please fill out the form below for us. Membership is for the calendar year. Higher levels of support are always welcome and appreciated. Thank you! ***New members and visitors are always welcome!***

OBHS Membership

Name: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

Would you like to receive newsletters by:

☐ email ☐ USPS mail

Are you able to assist with any projects?

☐ serving on the Board

☐ Davidson Windmill

☐ Monticello School

☐ Eskolin House

☐ Blueberry Depot

Return to: Old-Brule Heritage Society
PO Box 24, Maple, WI 54854

Do you have any ideas for local historical programs that you may want? Any suggestions for speakers?
Please send suggestions to OldBrule.hs@gmail.com.

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RETURN ADDRESS:

Old-Brule Heritage Society, Inc.

P.O. Box 24

Maple, WI 54854



We are looking at cleaning up our newsletter mailing list. If you are receiving a newsletter and do not care to continue, please let us know. (You may email our secretary at donnabergsten@gmail.com) Also, please check your mailing label. Listed on label is your membership dues expiration date.

April 13	6:00 PM	General Membership Meeting	Amnicon Town Hall
	6:30 PM	<i>Program: Virtual tour of the Bong Veteran Center</i>	
May 11	6:00 PM	Executive Board Meeting	Eskolin House/Depot
June 8	6:00 PM	General Membership Meeting	Amnicon Town Hall
	6:30 PM	<i>Program:</i>	
July 13	6:00 PM	Executive Board Meeting	Eskolin House/Depot
August 10	6:00 PM	General Membership Meeting	Amnicon Town Hall
	6:30 PM	<i>Program:</i>	
September 14	6:00 PM	Executive Board Meeting	Eskolin House/Depot
October 12	6:00 PM	General Membership Meeting	Amnicon Town Hall
	6:30 PM	<i>Program:</i>	

We are in the process of updating our web site www.oldbrule.org, but has not yet been completed. If there is something that you would like to see in the newsletter, please let us know at OldBrule.hs@gmail.com. Thank you!

All who are interested in joining the Old-Brule Heritage Society are encouraged to attend any of our meetings and public programs.