

# Newsletter



## Knife River Heritage & Cultural Center

PO Box 240 • 180 Marina Road  
Knife River, MN 55609  
[info@krhcc.org](mailto:info@krhcc.org)

### August 2021

By Paul von Goertz – KRHCC Board Member

### HAVE YOU ORDERED YOUR “BEST SWEET CORN EVER?”

All proceeds go to the KRHCC in support of “Keeping Geezers off the Roof.” Pick up next day, Thursday, at depot 5-7 PM. Order from Lee Bujold:

Cell: 393-8795, e-mail: [leebujold@frontiernet.net](mailto:leebujold@frontiernet.net)

### KRHCC MAKES ITS PITCH FOR VIKING SHIP

The KRHCC made its pitch for relocating the Viking ship LEIF ERICKSON to the KRHCC site to the Save Our Ship (SOS) organization at a meeting held at the KR depot August 3.

As a result of action taken by the Duluth City Council on July 22, SOS now owns the ship that was gifted to the city in 1927 upon its arrival from Bergen, Norway. As now the steward for the ship, SOS can search out a site in or outside of Duluth.

The vetting process has boiled down to locations in Canal Park and the KRHCC.

Image right; Historical image of the Viking ship off Knife Island on its way to Duluth in June of 1927. Photo credit: Randy Ellestad collection.



# Newsletter

The KRHCC presentation acknowledged that the possibility of having the Viking ship at the KRHCC is an opportunity for the KR community that will probably never happen again. With that in mind, and the realization that a major North Shore historical and education attraction can be created through a KRHCC partnership with SOS, the KRHCC proposed the following:

## **A 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary region-wide celebration on the launch of LEIF ERICKSON with an assurance of its legacy:**

The KRHCC pointed out that the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the launch of the Viking ship in 2026 would present a unique opportunity to create new awareness for the ship as a point of pride for all those of Scandinavian descent in the tristate area.

From now to April, 2026, 100 years from its' approximate launch date, the KRHCC proposed the two work together as separate non-profits to create a North Shore attraction that celebrates the region's Scandinavian heritage through (1) the Viking ship and (2) the Scandinavian culture of the Minnesota North Shore represented by the fish tug CRUSADER II. The fish tug, built in Larsmont, was christened by Crown Prince Olav of Norway in 1939 while he was in Minnesota.

The Scandinavian-themed heritage attraction proposed by the KRHCC would generate significant awareness for both the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the launch of the ship, and its new home within a predominantly Scandinavian community where it would be visible and accessible to the public 24/7, next to Lake Superior, on public property (as opposed to private), and under the stewardship of a non-profit.

## **A new and exciting initiative of the KRHCC would feature the LEIF ERICKSON:**

An important part of the KRHCC's pitch to SOS was an initiative delivered by board member Larry Ronning, who said the Viking ship would be a key educational and environmental awareness component to demonstrate the evolution of energy used for transportation.

The evolution would trace energy from wind to coal, petroleum, and electricity. The Viking ship would represent wind, the depot for coal used in railroading, fish tug CRUSADER for petroleum (gas and diesel) and a planned on-site e-charging station for electricity whether generated by wind, solar, fossil fuels or nuclear power.

"A demonstration such as we are proposing would show the continuing evolution of energy used for transportation, and it must continue if we are to meet the planet's

# Newsletter

energy needs and in a clean and responsible manner. The KRHCC already has examples of energy evolution on-site, and with the Viking ship in place, the KRHCC would be in a unique position to strike home this point,” said Ronning.

KRHCC vice-president, Bob Entzion, said that the selection of a site was down to two very different venues – either as a visitor attraction in a Canal Park retail environment, or in a historical and educational center such as the KRHCC would offer.

The KRHCC made it clear that the proposal to SOS would require a commitment from them by November 1, 2021, to select the KRHCC as the site for the ship in order for site and funding plans to be in place and executed by spring 2026.

KRHCC board president Paul von Goertz, expressed optimism with funding, pointing out that “With both non-profits working together, we can leverage funding from multiple viewpoints: supporting culture, history, economic development (tourism) and responsible environmental stewardship.”

SOS president Neil Atkins has said SOS will try to select a site for the ship by the end of this summer. More info on site selection developments will be in future KRHCC newsletters.

## **HISTORIC TH SHIPWRECK SEEN FROM NOVEL VIEW POINT**

Up to now, the only way to view the wreck of the wooden sailing ship SAMUEL P. ELY was to see it from about 20’ beneath the surface of Lake Superior. Now, thanks to drone photo technology, you can see its entire form, or what is left of it.

Our son and family were enjoying a ride around Agate Bay in their small boat this month and decided to pass over the sunken ELY, just off the north side of the west break wall. Our granddaughter is fascinated by shipwrecks as I have told her and her siblings, by demand, about shipwrecks I visited when I was diving back in the 70s.

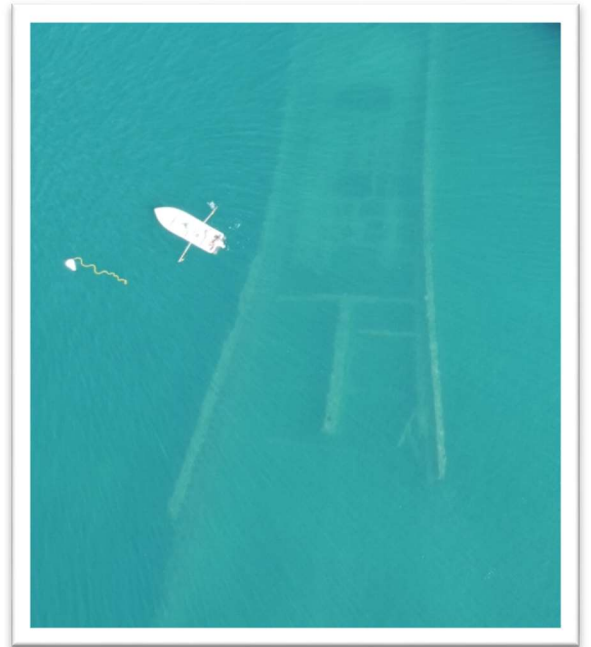
The water was clear and they were able to see the ship, but not very much of it, so they pulled up to the break wall and swam from there. When they got out of the water, they met a lone kayaker from the metro who showed them a drone photo he shot over the ELY’s location while they were frolicking nearby.

# Newsletter

Our daughter-in-law thought the picture of the outline of the ship and her family above it was pretty cool and asked for a copy, which we share here.

If you look closely, you can see what appears to be the forward section of the ship, with its bow buried under the break wall.

The 200-foot SAMUEL P. ELY left Duluth on October 29, 1896 under tow of the 250' wood steamer HESPER. The HESPER was to tow the ELY to TH for a load of iron ore. After bucking 50 mph NE winds for two hours, the two ships finally reached the shelter of the harbor when either the tow line broke, or was cast off prematurely, and suddenly the ELY was at the mercy of the wind and waves, eventually impaling herself of what was the original west break wall, and started to break up.



The crew took refuge in the ship's rigging. A life-saving crew was sent from Duluth, but the train carrying them was impeded by debris on the tracks and washouts from the NE blow. It was then decided to commandeer a small boat in the harbor and through numerous trips all 11 crew from the ELY were shuttled to safety. Within a short period the ELY broke up and sank alongside the break wall. When a new break wall was built years later, it was built right over part of the wreck.

While her value was undisclosed, the 27-year old ELY was likely valued at more than \$15,000.

The ELY is probably the most dived wreck on the North Shore because it is in relatively shallow and protected water, and easily reached by boat from the DNR Agate Bay launch site. It is not accessible from shore as the break wall does not extend all the way to shore and the land around it is privately owned.

# Newsletter

As a result of its easy access, the ELY has been picked clean by divers of anything that can be ripped from its bones. Your writer dove on it several times in the 70s and found it rather uninteresting as what remains hardly resembles a ship, and as stated, is picked clean of anything that would help identify it as a ship.



*ELY historical information from the book "Lake Superior Shipwrecks" by Julius F. Wolff Jr.*

The SAMUEL P. ELY. Very few photos of it remain as it was not a particularly photogenic ship and in 1896 photographers were relatively few in the western Great Lakes region.

Photo credit: Paul von Goertz from Ken Thro Collection

## **LEE & JIM BUJOLD ARE BACK WITH THEIR FAMOUS "BEST SWEET CORN EVER"**

What has to be a very sweet deal is the offer from Lee and Jim Bujold to bring 50 dozen ears of Ashland, WI, sweet corn to KR with all proceeds designated to "Keep Geezers Grounded!"

Lee and Jim are among several who responded to last month's KRHCC newsletter plea to raise enough money so that the roofing of the freight building can be done by professionals, as opposed to sending Geezers (retirees) up on the roof.

The Bujolds introduced "Best Sweet Corn Ever" several years ago to those who attended the KRRC's "Community Night Out" claiming "It will be the best sweet corn you'll ever taste!" They were right! Even skeptics were impressed, and one was seen putting down six ears!

Get your corn orders in now so you can be assured of getting some for your Labor Day picnic. Jim will be driving to Ashland to pick it up as it comes out of the field on the morning of Thursday, September 2. Distribution is the next day, Friday, from 5 – 7 at the depot. Any extra ears will be available until gone – but don't count on any....

# Newsletter

Price is what you care to pay. Last year's average was \$20/dozen. In deciding, please consider price of sweet corn at a farmer's market, 160-mile round trip to Ashland, WI for Jim with coffee and donut(s) on the day it's picked, the not so pretty picture of a Geezer teetering on the freight building roof, and "Best Sweet Corn Ever" for your Labor Day picnic! Cash or checks only. Bring your own bag.

**Lee cell: 393-8795**

**Lee email: [leebujold@lakeconnections.net](mailto:leebujold@lakeconnections.net)**

Thank you Lee and Jim!!!

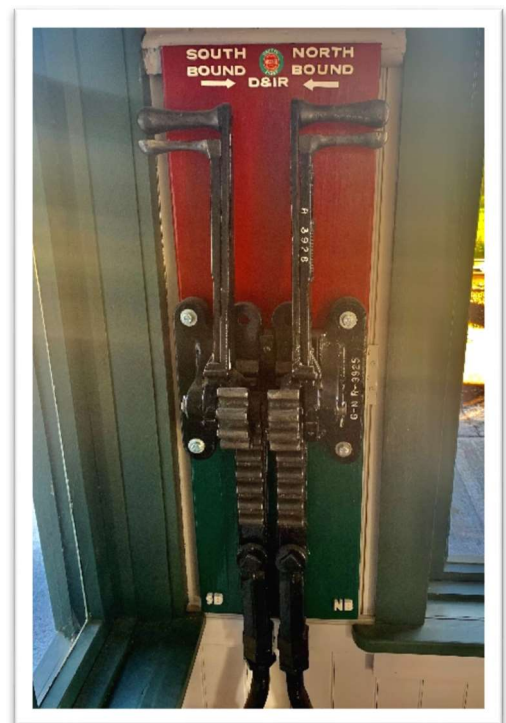
## **KR DEPOT PROBABLY ONE OF VERY FEW WITH SET OF ORDER BOARD OPERATORS**

KR historian Todd Lindahl continues to amaze us with what he procures for the KR depot in our zeal to replicate it back to the 1900s. Latest find is a set of order board operators (or "levers") that are much like, or identical to, those that were original to the KR depot.

The hand-operated levers operate the boards on the order board signal pole. The pole was a gift from the North Shore Scenic Railroad and the boards and light apparatus on the top of the pole a donation from Tim Zager, MD. Both were carefully restored last fall with parts fabricated and cannibalized. A CL&P crew, who donated their time, set the pole in place and within inches of the long removed original pole. Thank you CL&P!

Image right: Order board levers fit perfectly in the space we had available. Photo credit: Paul von Goertz

While the order board levers are moveable, they do not operate the signal boards. This is because the railroad remains a federally designated commercial railroad, and so the boards and light at



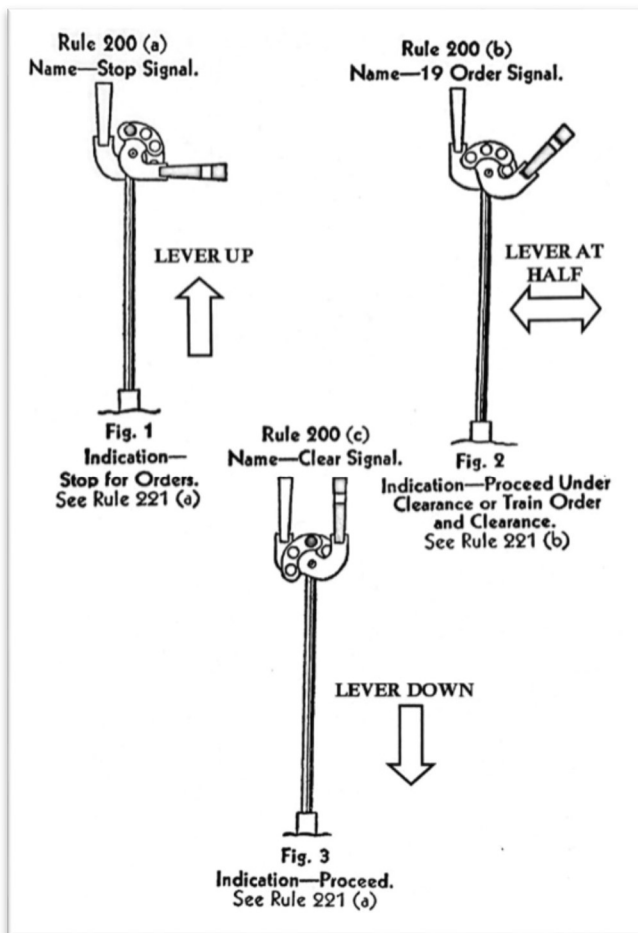


# Newsletter

night are always in the “Proceed” position. If you view the order board at night you will see its green light and from a significant distance.

While in past issues I have commended Todd on his negotiating skills in acquiring historical items for the depot, he may have met his match, as the previous owner of the levers knew, as that crafty Todd did too, that the levers were a rare find. The price was presented as “non-negotiable” and so Todd choked and agreed to it.

The KRHCC is making the order board levers available for sponsorship for \$600. Like other items sponsored, the sponsor’s name is engraved into a 1” x 4” brass plaque and placed near the sponsored item. To sponsor, email: [info@krhcc.org](mailto:info@krhcc.org). Your sponsorship is tax deductible as the KRHCC is a 501(c3) non-profit.



What the order-board positions and lights mean:

The illustration shows the different board positions and what they tell the train engineer. A pole has two boards; one for each direction a train may be headed. Lights give the signal at night: red means stop, green proceed, and yellow means there is a change in train orders.

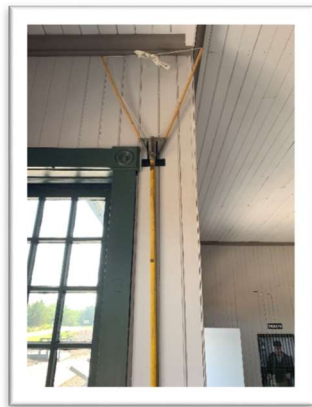
Having a change in orders does not mean the train has to stop, thanks to a rather novel way of getting written orders to the engineers.

Artwork credit: Todd Lindahl

# Newsletter

As shown in the painting, the depot agent holds a hoop or fork with the orders held tightly in place on the string with a slipknot. The trainman's arm will pass through the hoop or fork and carry away the orders. If the trainman misses, the train will need to stop and retrieve the orders.

If the orders do not slip free from the hoop, and the hoop goes with the orders, the depot agent will need to run down the track to find where the trainman tossed it. Artwork credit: Todd Lindahl collection



An order fork can be seen at the KRHCC depot near the order board levers.

Photo credit: Paul von Goertz

## **SPEEDERS SPEED THROUGH KR**

**Here they come! ...**

If you happened to be looking at the right moment on the afternoon of Monday, July 19, you would have seen 14 speeder “putt-putts” passing through KR.

Brightly colored MOW (Maintenance Of Way) speeders, commonly called “putt-putts” because of their engine sounds, traveled from Two Harbors to Duluth and back on the North Shore Scenic Railroad. The speeder collectors and restorers are all members of the North American Railcar Operators Association.





# Newsletter

They were called “speeders” because they were a lot faster than the manually operated “handcars” that preceded them.

While some of the speeders can achieve top speeds near 50 mph, most travel a more relaxed 20-25 mph. Railroad workers used speeders to get to work sites. There were lightweight and easy to lift off the tracks to let trains pass, or to turn around.



According to KRHCC historian Todd Lindahl, the DM&IR was the first railroad in the nation to install VHS radios on their speeders in 1959.

Many thanks to Todd for following the speeders on their return trip to Two Harbors and capturing them in these photos as they passed by the KR depot.

**...and there they go!**

Speeder photo credits: Todd Lindahl

## **AUGUST DONATIONS, MEMORIALS, HONORARIUMS AND SPONSORSHIPS**

Donation:

- By Mark Stenson to “Keep Geezers Grounded.”
- Jim and Lee Bujold donation of sweet corn for fund raiser to “Keep Geezers Grounded.”

The KRHCC is a 501 (c3) non-profit so all donations whether in the form of a memorial, honorarium or sponsorship are fully tax deductible. Your comments and suggestions for this monthly emailed newsletter are always welcome. Email to: [info@krhcc.org](mailto:info@krhcc.org)

If you have family or friends who may enjoy reading this newsletter, they can access the current and all past issues on the “Current News” page of our website at: [krhcc.org](http://krhcc.org)

# Newsletter

*©Newsletter published and copyrighted by Knife River Heritage & Cultural Center. Editor/Writer: Paul von Goertz, Historians/Researchers: Todd Lindahl and Randy Ellestad, Graphic Design and Production: Anne-Lù Hovis. No portion of this newsletter may be reproduced without written permission from the KRHCC. Contact [info@krhcc.org](mailto:info@krhcc.org)*