



# Knife River Heritage & Cultural Center

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By Paul von Goertz - KRHCC Board Member

## A BIG MONTH FOR THE KRHCC AND KR.

In one week the biggest news to hit Knife River (KR) in decades, and biggest event at the KRHCC took place.

It all started on Sunday, July 31<sup>st</sup>, when the North Shore Scenic Railroad delivered a restored 1966 Soo Line caboose to the KRHCC as its contribution to “KR’s Mini-Festival of Sail & Rail,” which was the KRHCC’s tie-in event to the Two Harbors “Festival of Sail.” The caboose was able to be on the mainline for four days because the big “Thomas the Train” event in Duluth at the same time required the NSSR’s full attention. The Soo Line Caboose was a magnet for families. This model was one of the first to have a cupola that extended beyond the sides of the caboose for better viewing. Photo Credit: Paul von Goertz



On Tuesday the 2<sup>nd</sup>, a media event was held at the KRHCC to announce the Viking ship LEIF ERIKSON, homeless since 2013 and out of sight since 2000, had found a new home in KR. Both county and Duluth media covered the story as well as Minnesota Public Radio. It was great to see the media had not forgotten about this once Duluth icon that was featured on postcards in the Duluth area for decades. SOS board chair Neil Atkins and Randy Ellestad who serves on both the SOS and KRHCC boards, address the news media on the Viking ship’s relocation to KR. (Imaged left) Photo Credit: Paul von Goertz

In addition to a frontpage story, the *Duluth News Tribune* carried an editorial in its August 5<sup>th</sup> edition entitled “Norse Funeral Avoided in Knife River.” The editorial credited the non-profit SOS (“Save Our Ship”) committee for its perseverance in its decades-long search to find a welcoming home for the ship. The editorial concluded with “Skol to SOS, Knife River, the Knife River Heritage and Cultural Center, Sons of Norway, and anyone and everyone else who has worked so hard for so many years to make it happen.” Imaged right is the Viking ship exhibit in KR. It drew a steady stream of admirers and those wanting to learn about it throughout the four-day event during the ‘Festival of Sail & Rail’. Photo Credit: Paul von Goertz



Here is the link to the complete editorial – well worth reading! [Norse funeral avoided in Knife River](#)



On the Wednesday, the shrink-wrap on the Viking ship was removed by a crew from the Knife River Marina and a 20' x 20' tent arrived. Many thanks to Barker's Island Marina (Max Kolodziejczak and Rick Hill in photo) and operators of the KR Marina, for donating the labor to both remove the shrink-wrap protecting the ship for the past 20 years and replace it following the mini-festival.

A \$800-\$1,000 value.

Photo Credit: Paul von Goertz

On Thursday “KR’s Mini-Festival of Sail & Rail” kicked off and ran through Sunday, the 7<sup>th</sup>. Banners on the Express Way directed motorists to “See the Viking Ship,” and once here, tour the depot and caboose. SOS grilled brats, Polish and hot dogs in lefse or bun, lefse roll-ups and assorted soft drinks.

Viking shirts and gifts were also available – sales were brisk. And no admission charge!

Photo credit: Paul von Goertz





The depot had two new attractions the KRHCC was excited to show off. One was a very impressive diorama of the KR railyard that was painstakingly reproduced to scale by Todd Lindahl over a year's time, and which had been on loan at the Lake County Historical Society. It is now on loan to the KRHCC for an indefinite time. In a future newsletter Todd will explain all that was involved in creating the diorama.

Image left: Mini-festival-goers were impressed by Todd Lindahl's research and attention to detail that all went into the diorama he created of the KR railyard circa 1915.

Photo Credit: Paul von Goertz

The second item was Todd's velocipede (see July issue) which drew a steady audience and gave Todd reason to take many bows for his efforts in cobbling parts from two velocipedes to end up with a functioning one.

While at the time of this writing the jury is still out on the benefit of the TH "Festival of Sail" to TH and surrounding area. The KRHCC was pleased with a steady stream of folks attending our mini-festival.

Many thanks go out to all who contributed to "KR's Mini-Festival of Sail & Rail." Our sponsor, Loving Lake County, the destination marketing organization (DMO) for Lake County, covered all promotional costs including Express Way banners and directional signage, event tent and satellite toilet.

KRHCC docents studied depot "crib sheets" and so were able to greet depot visitors, give a brief history on the depot and the KHRCC, and toss the tough questions to ace KR historian Todd Lindahl who was present all four days. Many thanks to our docents: Jim and Lynn Storms, Joe and Barb Russell, Mary Shaw, Nancy Ojard, Hannah Weishaar and Bill Berg. Image right: Those fascinated by the velocipede learned about it first-hand from its rebuilder, Todd Lindahl. See story that follows. Photo Credit: Paul von Goertz



"KR's Mini-Festival of Sail & Rail" was the first event in which the KRHCC joined hands with our fellow SOS and NSSR non-profit friends to create a fun-filled and educational event for families and adults of all ages.





The mini-festival was a great opportunity for picture taking. Here Alger, the Collie, poses with his owner, Dena Ryan of Two Harbors (right), and Katie Tibbetts of Knife River. Photo credit: Paul von Goertz

## THE RESTORATION OF VELOCIPEDE V-2

By Todd Lindahl

*Editor's note: In the July issue we briefly told you what a velocipede was and how Todd Lindahl was able to cobble together parts from two to create a functioning unit. Here now are the historical and restoration details.*

Legend has it that George S. Sheffield of Three Rivers, Michigan, became quite annoyed by the insufficient and lax daily train service that was provided by the railroad close to his home. All too often he was forced to grudgingly walk the seven miles to work.

This problem inspired him to invent a light three-wheel, hand-powered, vehicle that became known as a "track velocipede." With it he could easily and quickly travel the seven miles from his home to work and back with ease.

The story goes on to say that one day he discovered a broken rail and notified the railroad in time to prevent a train wreck. Supposedly an appreciative railroad financed the patent of the first velocipede for Sheffield in 1879. Eventually G. S. Sheffield & Company was acquired by the Fairbanks Morse & Company. In 1915 a velocipede cost \$35 and thus was a cheap way to move an employee over the track.

Buda Foundry & Manufacturing Company was founded in 1881 in Buda, Illinois. They too, began building a similar design velocipede in four different models along with other various types of railroad equipment. The three-wheel velocipedes were commonly used by one person such as a section foreman, B&B Department water service man, or a signal maintainer.

In the days prior to radio communications, each of the baggage cars on the Duluth & Iron Range RR passenger trains carried a velocipede. If the passenger engine broke

down, the conductor could use the velocipede to run quickly to the closest depot and telegraph for help.

The larger four to six-man pump cars (hand cars) were used by section crews, telephone & telegraph crews, or other small work crews. These were capable of pulling a four-wheel push car loaded with tools or track materials.

By World War I the hand-powered cars began to be replaced by more expensive gas-powered speeders. The small one or two-man speeders, sometimes known as “one-lungers” for their hit and miss engines, replaced the velocipedes. Larger motor cars with larger engines replaced the hand cars. In 1921 the Duluth & Iron Range RR still had 59 velocipedes and 99 hand cars in service.

The Duluth & Northern Minnesota RR based out of Knife River had at least two velocipedes. One of these had been converted into a gas-powered car and can be seen in the photo taken at the roundhouse in Knife River about 1915.

Photo credit: Todd Lindahl



In 1989 a friend located an abandoned velocipede about 150 feet from the old abandoned General Logging Company Railroad grade. On July 2, 1989, I brought it back and stored it for future restoration. The entire car was there including the wheels. The only thing that was missing was the engine. Someone had apparently stolen the car while the railroad was in place between 1927 and 1938 when the track was taken up.

In 1922 the combined Weyerhaeuser companies of Cloquet purchased the remaining timber owned by the Alger-Smith Lumber Company in Cook County and their Duluth & Northern Minnesota Ry logging line. In May, 1923 the Duluth & North Eastern RR of the Cloquet Lumber Company and Northern Lumber Company began to tear up the D&NM RR from milepost 73 near Wanless down to Knife River.

This track material was used to construct the General Logging Company Railroad to connect the Duluth & North Eastern RR at Hornby to the severed part of the D&NM at Wanless. The General Logging Company was created in 1926 to carry out the logging in Cook County all the way to the Canadian border at Rose Lake.

The D&NM locomotive coal loading dock near the mouth of Knife River was dismantled and rebuilt at Hornby. Other abandoned equipment was also reused by General Logging. One of these items may have been the motorized velocipede seen in the roundhouse photo. It has an unusual small wire-spoked outrigger wheel as did the car from the General Logging grade. On the side of the car was a brass tag stamped "V-2," velocipede #2.

There is a good chance this car is the former D&NM car. The V-2 had evidence of five different colors of paint on it. They included dark red, yellow, orange, gray, dark blue, dark green, and black on some of the metal parts. The last color seems to have been dark green. Some of the parts were stamped "Buda."

I acquired two other partial velocipedes in March 2022 and used the gears, bearings, and various other parts to complete the restoration on June 29, 2022.

When it was still all in pieces, I commented to a friend that it reminded me of putting together a dinosaur skeleton. He said, "I guess it must be a velociraptor then." Ever since the V-2 has been known as the *velociraptor*. Fortunately, this one does not eat tourists like the ones in Jurassic Park.

## **GET YOUR "CHRISTMAS TREE TRAIN" TICKETS NOW!**

**TICKETS GO ON SALE SEPTEMBER 1; SOLD OUT IN TEN DAYS LAST YEAR.**

I don't like rushing the Holiday season any more than you do, but this train is destined to be another sell out after seeing the response from last year's train - and frankly, I would like readers of this newsletters to get first crack on what will be a limited number of seats.

This year the train will leave The Depot in Duluth Saturday, November 26 (day after Thanksgiving), at 9:00 AM with its destination the Christmas tree lot at the KRHCC, arriving about 10,30 AM. There riders will find a broad selection of trees and garland supplied by the Jon Hanel family of Two Harbors. Selected trees will be wrapped and placed on a flat car for the return to Duluth. Families will be able to drive up to the flat car and load their tree. Locals are welcome to select trees that day as well.

The KRHCC is using the "Christmas Tree Train" as the focus of a day-long event called "Trees. Trains. Traditions" to include live Christmas music and hot food and beverages catered by Larsmont Trading Post. The depot and CRUSADER, which will be in its



permanent location, will be decorated for the Holiday season. The event is sponsored, in part, by Loving Lake County, the destination marketing organization for Lake County.

The “Trees. Trains. Traditions” festival in 2021 was very much enjoyed by many young families who selected their Holiday trees and may very well become a family tradition for years to come. Photo caption: Paul von Goertz

You can reserve tickets for your family beginning, September 1, by going to: <https://duluthtrains.com/event/treetrain/>

## JAMMING AT THE DEPOT

One of the early visions the KRHCC board had for the depot site was hosting music festivals – anything but rock concerts.

That vision came true to a small degree in late June when Lee Cohen asked if he and some string-playing friends could on occasion jam among themselves at the depot playing old time and some Celtic music. Of course, we said “Yes,” because we want to encourage music at the depot and Lee is also one of the KRHCC’s most reliable (and meticulous) volunteer painters.

Lee said it was just friends enjoying their music in the ambiance of a historic 1900s train depot, and not really for the public, other than passers-by. Photo credit: Lee Cohen



The KRHCC belongs to the KR community that supports it and is available for events, or just relax and pass the time away on one of our benches, or under the platform canopy kiosk. To reserve an event: [info@krhcc.org](mailto:info@krhcc.org)

## LEARN TO ENDURE THOSE PESKY STABLE FLIES.

Those of us near the Lake Superior shoreline need no introduction to those bothersome batches of “stable flies,” biting insects that feast on human and animal blood. The flies are sometimes called “ankle biters” and tend to attack during daylight hours.

A check of the internet revealed that experts say that stable flies often appear in July and August in Minnesota, though they don't know why one year's fly population may be worse than the last.

But what about bug spray? Unfortunately, entomologists say stable flies are a hearty breed and not easily deterred from a meal. And there is really no repellent effective against them.

Stable flies like to breed in damp organic matter, such as animal bedding and seaweed. They are often found near livestock, but some material in the Great Lakes may be responsible for this year's shoreside crop of pests.

Strong breezes can help, but until late summer those wishing to enjoy the North Shore may have to brave the flies.

### **"BEST SWEET CORN EVER" IS BACK!**

For the past two years Jim and Lee Bujold have made "The Best Sweet Corn Ever" available to KR residents at the KRHCC with 100% of proceeds going to the KRHCC. This year's proceeds will go towards a viewing deck that will run parallel to CRUSADER II and allow visitors to see the interior of a working fish tug.

KRers have now had time to learn how good this corn is. It comes from south of Ashland, WI, where Lee grew up so it is known mostly to Ashland locals. Your corn will have been picked that morning. Jim makes the run over and back all in one day. This year we are limited to 60 dozen ears, although Lee will ask for more. Lee's farmer planted three acres less this year, and birds have taken a toll on the corn as well.



You must order in advance by emailing Lee at: [lee.bujold@gmail.com](mailto:lee.bujold@gmail.com) Do it now as it is "First come, first served." Distribution will be between September 6 and 9. You will be notified by email which day. This will probably be a sell out so it is unlikely any corn will be available to those who do not pre-order. Price is what you care to pay with suggested donation of \$20 for a dozen ears. Checks made out to the KRHCC.

The Depot Agent's "Corn Queen" will help you fill your order (granddaughter Brynn von Goertz). Photo credit: "Mimi"

Thank you Jim and Lee and all those who buy corn for your support of the KRHCC!



## AUGUST DONATIONS, MEMORIALS, HONORARIUMS AND SPONSORSHIPS

### Donations

- **Phil and Helen Hartley** two framed historical photos – D&ME train entering KR circa 1915 and Yellowstone Malley locomotive underway. The Yellowstone was the most powerful steam locomotive made; one is on display in TH.
- **Barker's Island Marina**, operators of the KR Marina for donating the labor to both remove the shrink-wrap for LEIF ERIKSON and replacing – an \$800-\$1,000 value.

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