

Newsletter



Knife River Heritage & Cultural Center

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November 2022

By Paul von Goertz – KRHCC Board Member

KR DEPOT READY TO GREET 2,000 JULEBYEN RIDERS

It's a bit overwhelming to visualize as many as 600 Julebyen Express riders arriving from Duluth over Julebyen weekend, and an estimated 1,500 Troll Train riders. That represents 1,200 Julebyen Express contacts (deboarding and boarding) and 3,000 Troll Train (deboarding and boarding). Total 4,500 rider contacts!

With that realization, the KRHCC has put in place several measures to help ensure visitor safety, speed ticket sales, and expedite boarding and deboarding.



Case in point, three Troll Trains on Saturday and two on Sunday may require 300 people to board and 300 deboard all in just ten minutes. The trains run on the hour and return 50 minutes later, just ten minutes between trains.

Image: Last year, those deboarding the Julebyen Express from Duluth were greeted by carolers under the now completed platform canopy kiosk. Photo credit: Paul von Goertz

New for train riders visiting the depot this year is a diorama of the depot and surrounding area, restored agent's office in the freight building, CRUSADER in its final resting place, completion of the platform canopy kiosk between depot and

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freight house (image right), and a security fence along the railroad right-of-way. The depot and freight building will be encircled with white lights.

SOS, the Viking ship people, will be selling Viking ship gift items from the restored freight house (“hus” is “house” in Norwegian). SOS also participated in the “Trees. Trains. Traditions” event on November 26.

Photo credit: Paul von Goertz



Inside the depot agent’s office will be ticket sales and hot cocoa. In the waiting room will be Koselig Designs. The artisan makes Sami-inspired salmon leather bracelets and earrings, an art form from Northern Scandinavia.



Many thanks go to Helene Hedlund, chair of the Julebyen committee, and all her captains who have been meeting monthly all year to offer this magical festival to the public. Thanks too, to Loving Lake County, the tourism bureau for Lake County, for their help in marketing the Julebyen experience, now a Holiday tradition for many families. For complete info on Julebyen trains – schedules and fares – go to Julebyen.us

“TREES. TRAINS. TRADITIONS” BECOMING A FAMILY TRADITION ALREADY

On Saturday, November 26, a week before Julebyen, the KRHCC hosted its second “Trees. Trains. Traditions” (TTT) event in conjunction with the North Shore Scenic Railroad’s “Christmas Tree Train.” The TTT train arrived with a four foot in diameter wreath on front of locomotive.

Photo credit: Melissa von Goertz

The NSSR came up with the idea last year. Families board the train in Duluth and come to the KRHCC to select their pre-sold tree at a large tree lot.



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Trees are wrapped and placed on a flatcar for the trip back to Duluth. Once there, folks can drive up next to the flatcar and load their tree. Trees, wreaths and greenery are also available to locals.



The KRHCC grasped the potential of the Christmas Tree Train and expanded it to create a festive kick-off to the Holiday season with live music, and hot cocoa, coffee, scones, soup, and sandwiches from Larsmont Trading Post.

A young lady was moved to dance to the music of “Dance Attic.” Photo credit: Paul von Goertz

Trees, wreaths, and garland are provided by John and Lynette Hanel of Northern Connections Evergreen Products, Two Harbors.

This year the NSSR expanded its number of tickets available from 60 to 125. All sold out by mid-October. Many of this year’s riders commented they had attended the TTT event last year and didn’t want to miss it this year!

A busy tree lot well organized by the Hanel family. Photo credit: Paul von Goertz



What a special and memorable way to start the Holiday season and in the traditional way with a fresh cut northern Minnesota Christmas tree!



TTT greeters gave gummies in the shape of Christmas tree bulbs to children arriving from Duluth. Children in photo are all our grandchildren. They only agreed to be greeters if I ran their photo in the newsletter

Photo credit: “Papa.”

Many thanks to “Loving Lake County” for again providing marketing support for a KRHCC event.

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We hope these children experience a family tradition of riding the train to KR every year to select the family Christmas tree and all who attended the TTT event were “Nice” (Dee Morris).



Photo credits: Paul von Goertz

An apology to those that came after 1 PM to find the TTT event over.

The advertised hours for the TTT event were 11 AM – 3PM, but a decision was made about 1 PM to close when local traffic slowed to just a trickle, the music over, food about gone, and in consideration to the Hanelts as they still had a busy day ahead.

The way the TTT event works is that the NSSR asks riders to pre-pay a Christmas tree of their choice when they reserve their “Christmas Tree Train” ticket. After riders select their trees, the tree lot is open to locals.

We deeply apologize to those locals who arrived after 1 PM. This is only the second year of the TTT and we are still learning. Next year’s hours for locals will be 11 AM – 1 PM.

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CRUSADER II MOVED TO PERMANENT SITE

On Tuesday, November 22, CRUSADER II was moved to its permanent site thanks to the Knife River Marina who made the move at no cost to the KRHCC.

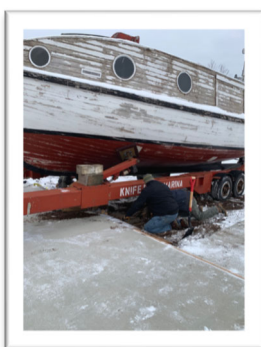
After days of rain and snow, we got a break in the weather early Thanksgiving week. The Marina crew deftly moved CRUSADER II to the precise location on the slab with consideration for space for the viewing deck into the inside of the boat.



We want to recognize Eric Thomas, who owns the company that operates the KR Marina under lease from the DNR, and to Max Kolodziejczak, KR Marina manager, and his crew with a big “Thank you!” This move was the third time CRUSADER II has been moved at no cost to the KRHCC. In 2016 they helped move CRUSADER II from Lighthouse Point in Two Harbors to Knife River (KR) where they stored it four three years, again at no cost. In 2019 they moved the boat to the KRHCC site and now to the slab.

Max Kolodziejczak (left), and Eric Thomas (right) prepare the trailer to lift CRUSADER II. Photo credit: Paul von Goertz

The KRHCC is working on grants that will help fund a shelter for CRUSADER and other elements of the commercial fishing exhibit in 2023.



(Left to right) Enroute to slab, with a few anxious moments to move trailer from grade up 12” to slab made more difficult by soft earth and “Home Sweet Home” (minus a roof). All photos by: Paul von Goertz

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TODD LINDAHL SHOWS HIS STUFF AS INTERIOR DESIGNER FOR A HISTORIC BUILDING

We were dazzled by our historian's vision for a historically accurate interior design for the depot. But, with the neighboring freight house, it is clear he is now showing off. Within just a few weeks of recovering from a bad fall, Todd has replicated the office of the depot agent, who would often work out of the freight house, right down to the desk ink pen.

The freight house office as it may have appeared around 1904 in Brimson. The office was in half the building and freight stored in the other half. The small office room could be heated with a caboose stove as you see here.



A hand cranked magneto phone is included in this accurate interior design. Somebody should have supplied the depot agent with a phone book because phone numbers can still be seen written on the wall, even though painted over. Photos credit: Paul von Goertz

The Duluth & Iron Range Railway built the freight house for its Brimson station in 1904. It was moved to Palmers (south end of Homestead Road) in 1910 when it was decided it was no longer needed in Brimson.

In 1959, all the facilities in Palmers were shut down and the freight house was sent to KR. In July of 1961, passenger service in the DM&IR ended forever. The KR depot remained open for freight service for another year, mostly for expressway construction and the two bridges over the Knife River. Eventually both the depot and freight house were sold to the Knife River Campground. In 2018 the buildings were purchased for \$1 from Randy Ellestad, campground owner, to create the KRHCC.

A more detailed history of the freight house will appear in a future issue of this newsletter.

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“WELCOME HOME”

The week of Veterans Day, Mary and I were in Rapid City, SD, visiting our daughter and family.

One day we were having lunch with our granddaughter's other set of grandparents when I noticed a man about my age wearing a “Vietnam Veteran” baseball cap. He was having lunch with what may have been his daughter.



Sometime during lunch, another man wearing the same “Vietnam Veteran” cap was about to walk past the first man. I was curious if/how they would acknowledge one another. The second Veteran paused at the table of the first, put out his hand, said “Welcome home,” shook the first's hand, and went on his way.

I thought about that greeting a lot after lunch and realized the less than welcoming reception our Vietnam Veterans received when returning from the war, still had its sting.

The Vietnam war was unpopular with many Americans, and we realize now what a horrible mistake it was, 58,220 service members killed. And, ironically, today we trade with the Vietnamese.

I was in the US Coast Guard at the time of the war and while on leave in New York City in Times Square, three of us were approached by a group of “Peaceniks” who attempted to shove flowers down our jumpers and take our hats. What started as fending them off soon led to a scuffle. A couple of Navy Shore Patrol arrived from somewhere and with batons at the ready, dispersed the peace activists.

Closer to home, a friend of mine in our USCG Duluth Group was roughed up in a Cloquet gas station bathroom, simply because he was a US service member.

After lunch I walked over to the Veteran and thanked him for his service. He looked up and gave me a very firm handshake and said “Thank you. I appreciate that.” I asked him in what branch he had served, and he said he was a Navy Corpsman. I told

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him I was in the Coast Guard, but “We could still be friends!” It’s no secret Navy service members looked down on Coast Guard members as “Shallow Water Sailors.” He laughed. I told him I would remember him on Veteran’s Day, he thanked me and so we parted.

On each Veterans Day we want to honor all Veterans, but especially remember those who served in a war many of their countrymen did not support and chose to express their displeasure with our country’s leaders by taking it out on those who were only doing their duty.

NEW, BUT HISTORIC

By Duane Pagenkopf Madison
(Edited by Paul von Goertz)

When we began the restoration of the KR depot in May of 2019, one of the first things we had to do was remove the mostly rotted floor so we could begin the process of raising the building about a foot and pouring a slab under it.

We ended up with a pile of two by four-inch, tongue and groove, hard rock maple floorboards. There is no actual rock maple tree. The word “rock” is usually an advertised reference to the strength of the wood, but the term does always refer to the sugar maple or *Acer Saccharum*, which is the hardest of the maples.

Despite the rock qualities, the boards were in rough shape with rot, warping and full of nails. They were nailed into the sub flooring with 3-inch finishing style wire nails, so it is likely the floor was installed after the building was moved to Knife River in 1899, which was during the time that cut nails were being phased out in favor of the less expensive wire nails.

The boards looked like nice firewood to some and like depot project lumber to myself and others. There were about 50 boards of various lengths and quality and probably headed for the landfill. If a project was to happen, some rescue was needed – fast!

A bit later when I went to the depot to salvage the boards and they were gone! But, we were fortunate that Frank Bernhardt, a project craftsman in his own right, had removed the boards to the safety of his home. He graciously gave them to me when I explained I intended to use them somehow in conjunction with the depot. I put them in storage until I could figure out a project or projects for them.

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I had thoughts about making a bench or benches for the depot waiting room. I called Paul, our KRHCC board chair, for his thoughts on the bench idea. Paul said we already had two that Todd Lindahl had found, but what we really needed was a strong table for Todd Lindahl's diorama of the early lower railroad yards and Knife River business district. I agreed and started the project early in October of 2022.

Looking back, I think that after pulling hundreds of nails (one every foot), I should have started the project by leveling, planning, and re-milling the tongue and groove boards. After warping and deteriorating for years, the boards had twists and bends. I wanted to work on the boards with the more beaten and used appearance but ended up doing a lot of planing to even them up. Fortunately, the maple had a lot of character built in, including knots, tiger stripe rays, bird eyes, nail holes and lots of core/sap wood color changes.

The tabletop was laid up using the tongue and groove flooring format with gluing and clamping. Afterwards came trimming edges and leveling with an electric hand plane. The apron was screwed to the top with deck screws and the leg assembly built from boards with the tongue removed, but most of the grooves retained for accent – a bit of log cabin Art Deco!

The leg assembly was constructed and fastened to the apron with carriage bolts for future removal if needed. The finish, for now, is linseed oil which will breathe enough for the wood to adapt to the depot environment. After a while a more durable finish can be applied, or just cleaned and wiped down with oil once every few years.



I bought the finished table to the depot on November 11, where Paul met me. The table is heavy and definitely a two-man job getting it in. After placing it in the northeast corner, we gently placed Todd's diorama on it. It looked great!

A perfect complement to Todd's exquisite diorama.
Photo credit: Paul von Goertz

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I've enjoyed the idea of using the flooring for this table project. When I work on the personal profiles of those who worked in or used the depot, it is comforting to recall that they used to walk on these boards.

Duane gives the table surface a final wipe-down.
Photo credit: Paul von Goertz

Editor's note: Duane did a beautiful job on this table that will hold many times the weight of Todd's diorama. I feel much relieved it is no longer on a six foot \$80 Wal-Mart foldable table. Best part is knowing that part of the depot floor now serves a noble purpose in supporting a diorama that so accurately depicts the south end of KR's glory railroad days. Thank you so much Duane!

As an aside, Duane is also the KRHCC's genealogist.



THE "NO MEMBERSHIP" MEMBERSHIP

Has it occurred to you the KRHCC does not push memberships, or yet have a foundation?

The reason is we rely on folks like you who value the work we do in preserving KR's past before it is lost forever, and I'm sure receiving the KRHCC newsletter is highly valued, too! It must be because now more than 270 people receive it and no one has ever asked to be dropped from it (yet). Plus, both Lake County papers reprint our news (with permission) and I read the entire newsletter to listeners of KTWH community radio twice a month. All this info about our quaint little town for FREE!

So, if you value what the KRHCC has accomplished, enjoy the newsletter and would rather not be pestered to be a member of the KRHCC, then PLEASE keep those gifts coming, particularly now as you are renewing your membership in other organizations.

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So, while you're writing a check to renew a membership to a favorite organization, remember the "No Membership" Membership, and write a check to the KRHCC. Send to KRHCC, POB 240, Knife River, 55609.

We are an IRS-recognized 501(c3) so all gifts are tax deductible. Thank you!

NOVEMBER DONATIONS, MEMORIALS, HONORARIUMS AND SPONSORSHIPS

Donations:

- Diorama table crafted by Duane Madison using repurposed depot flooring.
 - Knife River Marina moving CRUSADER from back of KRHCC site to new home close to Marina Road.
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