

# Newsletter



## Knife River Heritage & Cultural Center

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MAY, 2019

### KRHCC Off To Fast Start!

By Paul von Goertz, KRHCC  
President

This is the first of at least monthly newsletters for friends, volunteers and anyone interested in the Knife River Heritage & Cultural Center (KRHCC).

I will try to keep these brief and just focus on the previous week's developments. There's lots on info here I hope you will find interesting.

I will try to keep these brief and just focus on the previous week's developments. There's lots on info here I hope you will find interesting. Otherwise just hit "Close" and "Delete." My thanks to Anne-Lu Hovis in helping me format the newsletter. As I get smarter with Apple page formats I will add more pictures.

For you with limited knowledge of the KRHCC, here is a quick timeline summary:



# Newsletter

Dec. 2016 – The KR community is surprised with the gift of the 35' fish tug CRUSADER II from the Lake County Historical Society. After owning it for 34 years, the LCHS realizes the KR community would be better stewards because of the tug's long ties to KR and they recognize we have the talent to restore it. The Knife River Rec Council (KRRC) agreed to temporarily accept the tug under its 501(c3) non-profit status.

Jan. 1, 2017 – Oct. 2017 – search for a site and funding for a shelter to restore and display CRUSADER II.

Nov. 2017 – Regional Rail Authority (RRA) decides not to renew lease with Randy Ellestad for the land upon which the Knife River depot rests. Randy owns the depot, but a disagreement exists between the RRA and Randy as to what was understood for depot restoration when Randy first leased the property. Depot is in jeopardy of being demolished. Although the RRA values it, they do not want to own it. Randy and friends develop concept of a non-profit KRHCC that would showcase both depot and CRUSADER II as two remaining KR icons that need a good home.

Dec, 2017 – A history center steering committee begins negotiations with the RRA to lease depot property under a five-year renewable lease at \$1 a year. If lease is successful, Randy agrees to sell depot, to what will become the KRHCC, for \$1.

Feb. – April, 2018. KRHCC holds three community open meetings to gauge KR community's interest in preserving its history with a center at site of depot. Surveys of about 35 attendees at each of two meetings show solid support for a center and at depot location.

July – Nov. 2018 – KRHCC applies for and receives IRS 501(c3) non-profit status. \$1,000 cost to apply is covered by gift from KR resident. Lease negotiations continue with RRA.

Jan. - 2019 – KRHCC successfully signs five-year renewable lease with RRA for \$1 a year. Fund raising begins.

Feb. 2019 – Anonymous KR resident offers \$20,000 local challenge match, which is met two weeks later by the KRRC. Suddenly the KRHCC has \$40,000!

# Newsletter

Mar. 2019 – KRHCC buys CRUSADER II from KRRC for \$1.

April, 2019 – KRHCC receives grant of \$2,000 from CPL and \$1,000 from TH Community Fund.

May 13, 2019 - KRHCC buys depot from Randy for \$1. Restoration of depot begins same day.

## Now to the present!

The KRHCC is most fortunate to have Larry Ronning, long time generational resident of KR as both KRHCC board member and General Contractor for depot and CRUSADER II restoration. Larry is a builder, restorer and remodeler of both homes and boats – just the experience we need!

As of this now we have about 20 men and women who have signed up to help restore the depot from nail pulling to construction to clean up. Larry has established hours as Mon/Tues/Wed. 8 AM – 1 PM with additional hours as persons may wish to spend. Four to six persons on site at any one time works well. So, if you would like to help, please let Larry know your availability and tools you may bring by emailing him at [Ljronning@gmail.com](mailto:Ljronning@gmail.com)

Since May 13 we have accomplished a lot: gutted interior, removed siding, removed floor, stabilized depot and jacked it up high enough so the two-foot gumbo hole under it can be filled with sand and a slab poured. Chimney has been inspected and is perfectly good and plumb! Future newsletters will keep you informed of depot progress.

## Photo caption:

Scene at depot on May 29, after seven half days into restoration. Depot has been jacked up and on blocks in preparation for covering gumbo hole underneath it with gravel, and then pouring a concrete slab over it. Tongue & Grove paneling in foreground is from inside walls and will be reused on depot exterior.

# Newsletter

*Did you know?*

*An Upper Midwest newspaper once referred to Knife River as the “Gloucester, Massachusetts of Lake Superior” in reference to KR producing huge quantities of herring as Gloucester did in cod.*

## From Larry Ronning on the KRHCC being earth-friendly-

How many people look at things that have been around while and have said “tear it down; start over.” I like to emphasize the need to reclaim what exists and look to what it can be.

The depot existed in the age of coal, CRUSADER II in the age of oil. The environment in which they will exist in the future will be much different. The restoration of both will acknowledge that fact.

To this end, wherever possible, we will use materials that are recyclable, reusable, sustainable and environmentally friendly. We will use fixtures and other devices that can be wired for sustainable solar power, LED lights and we will build permeable road surfaces to control run-off.

Currently we are partnering with the Two Harbors American Legion Post on a flagpole of at least 30 feet in height with a granite memorial to our KR veterans. If it is decided to fly the flag 24/7, it will be use solar lighting directed up and over the flag.

Look for more earth-friendly initiatives – and suggest others – as we make our Center a model for preserving history in an environmentally friendly manner.

## Update on Plans for CRUSADER II -

CRUSADER II will be moved from the KR Marina to the Center site once depot concrete work is done. It will be placed prominent to Marina Road.

# Newsletter

The KR Marina will move it at no cost to the KRHCC. We thank the Marina for its help in bringing the boat from TH and storing it for 2 ½ years.

Phase II of the three phases of the KRHCC will take place in 2020 when a shelter is built over CRUSDADER II and a separate approximate 40' x 60' community picnic shelter built.

FYI...PHASE III will take place in 2021 and determine use of indoor space of both depot and freight building, and construction of outdoor historical displays.

*Did you know –*

*Knife River was a busy railroad town because it was the only town on the North Shore where two railroads intersected – the Alger Smith coming from inland, and the forerunner of the DM&IR running NE and SW.*

## Fund raising –

We were most fortunate to have a KR resident offer a \$20,000 local challenge match in February. This was met two weeks later when the KRRC matched it - \$40,000! Since then we have had private donations and grants of \$2,000 from CPL “Round Up” funds, and \$1,000 from the Two Harbors Community Fund. We are very grateful to all. As of date of this newsletter, we have approximately \$43,000 in the bank. How far that goes will depend upon the talents of our volunteers.

Several people, who are not in a position to provide volunteer services, have indicated they would like to help financially. Please do! We need nine custom windows at \$1,000 each. Do we have nine people who would like to buy one??? Donations are all tax deductible and can be sent to the KRHCC at PO Box 240, Knife River, MN 55609. Any questions can be emailed to: [info@krhcc.com](mailto:info@krhcc.com)

## Know your board members -

# Newsletter

A condition of some of the grants for which we apply asks for names and brief bios of board members. This we are happy to do because the combined talents and interests of our board are up to the task of creating a KRHCC.

Our By-Laws state that we can have from five to seven board members. Terms are two years and board members can be re-elected for unlimited terms. Board members receive no compensation other than reasonable expenses.

Here are the bios of your board as they relate to the work of the KRHCC. We will spare you their photos:

Paul von Goertz – Board president

Knife River resident for 48 years. Retired small business owner. Past President of Lake Superior Marine Museum Association and Duluth Rotary Club. Former board member Two Harbors Area Fund. Current Board member Knife River Rec Council. Classic and antique wood boat rebuilder. U. S Coast Guard veteran.

Robert Entzion, Secretary

Knife River native. Owner (Island View Resort); Board member Lake County Housing & Redevelopment Authority; Chair, Knife River Larsmont Sanitary District; Past part owner Duluth Pack; former Director of Athletics North Dakota State University.

Duane Madison – Board Member

Born and raised on the North Shore by Norwegian immigrants. Owner of water well and water treatment small business for 30 years. Actively databasing North Shore history. Registered historian under auspices of Duluth Township. Facilitator for Duluth Township Arts & Heritage Group.

Larry Ronning – Board Member

# Newsletter

Native of Knife River. Residential custom building contractor 1985 to retirement in 2018. Specialty in preserving and restoring buildings of historical significance, including four in Knife River. A boatwright, Larry has rebuilt ISLE for Tofte Commercial Fishing Museum, LEIF ERIKSON Viking boat and replaced all the exterior woodwork on tug EDNA G. Served on boards of TH Folk Festival, Lake Superior Kayak Trail and TH Chalk Festival. US Navy veteran.

Todd Lindahl – Board Member

Native of Two Harbors with statewide reputation for historical archaeology, preservation, and documentation through fieldwork with Lake County Highway Department and DNR Forestry. Member of Iron Horse Railroad Museum for 46 years involved with historical and restoration of an 1895 railroad depot, various historical rail cars, and steam locomotives. Lectured and trained students at UMD, UWS and LSC in the fields of archaeology and anthropology.

Randy Ellestad – Board Member

Native of Knife River and town's-recognized unofficial mayor and historian. Retired from DM&IR to become owner/operator of Knife River Campground to present. Co-chairman of the LEIF ERIKSON Restoration Committee. Licensed USCG Captain. Chair of Knife River Larson Sanitary District, member of the Norseman's Federation and Sons of Norway. Working historian and presenter to various groups.

## Exciting donation from the NSSR! –

In the 1914 photo of the KR depot that we reference in restoring the depot, there is a 25-30' signal pole on the far right. It has long since been removed and lost, but the NSSR has one in restorable condition and will donate it to the KRHCC.

Your newsletter editor is a boat restorer, but is quickly learning railroad language. According to Todd Lindahl, KRHCC board member and walking railroad reference library, the signal pole is actually an "Order Board" used by the depot agent to communicate depot info with

# Newsletter

approaching trains like “mail pick up,” “passenger pick up”, or “freight pick up.” A semaphore was used to communicate rail traffic between depot and trains like “stop,” “proceed” or “caution.”

Volunteer David Grong has offered to store and help restore the 30' Order Board to working condition under the guidance of Todd.

## Volunteer weekly work updates –

All volunteers should be receiving weekly updates of work accomplished the pervious week and the work plan for the coming week. If you have indicated to Larry Ronning or me that you want to volunteer and are not on this special mailing list, please email me at: [vongoertzpaul@yahoo.com](mailto:vongoertzpaul@yahoo.com)

We have several husband/wife teams and many new(er) residents to KR volunteer. Great to see this and what a wonderful way to meet and make new friends!

## *Did you know?*

*The original KR depot had separate waiting areas for men and women not only because of the rude behavior of loggers and railroad men, but loggers we invested with fleas and ticks from months in the woods.*

## Reincarnated KR depot agent Pascal (Pete) Rosso to greet NSSR picnic train riders -

What is an apparent incarnation of KR depot agent, Pete Rosso, suddenly appeared at the depot last week and was so excited to see what is taking place that he offered to help! Given he was the depot agent for 36 years (1900 – 1936) we gave him the job of welcoming North Shore Scenic Railroad picnic-train riders beginning Saturday June 29 and following Saturdays through July 20. If you would like to help Pete greet and tell people about the KRHCC, and can find clothing from about 1914, let Paul von Goertz know ([vongoertzpaul@yahoo.com](mailto:vongoertzpaul@yahoo.com))



# Newsletter

## What could be....

Wednesday the 28<sup>th</sup> your editor took a break from the depot and drove to TH to get lunch stuff for the eight volunteers we had that day. Driving back I noticed several classes of elementary school children reenacting a 1920 school day at the Little Red Schoolhouse in Larsmont. What a fun way to learn!

Then, driving by the Great Lakes Candy Kitchen, I noticed a school bus parked in front and a huge line of school children waiting to enter the store. How great it would be if we could include our Heritage Center in this North Shore field trip experience! Kids could see a functioning depot from 1914 and even operate an Order Board! Then learn about commercial fishing from a relative of a commercial fisherman, while gathered around CRUSADER II.

## June Newsletter feature stories –

- Unburying KR's railroad history – What and where are KR's railroad remains, now covered by dirt and brush
- Looking ahead to Phase II of the KRHCC
- More on the Order Board pole signal
- Initial plans for re-creating depot agent's office and waiting area
- Your comments and suggestions on this newsletter

If you know of others who might enjoy receiving this newsletter, and may not already be on the mailing list, please let me know and I will add them. If you would like to be unsubscribed from the list, please also email me: [vongoertzpaul@yahoo.com](mailto:vongoertzpaul@yahoo.com)