

# Newsletter



## Knife River Heritage & Cultural Center

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By Paul von Goertz  
KRHCC Board Member

### **KRHCC AWARDED TWO MORE GRANTS**

The KRHCC is very happy to announce we are the recipients of two more grants, in addition to the Lake County Co-op Light & Power grant we announced in the April newsletter.

The first was for \$6,000 from the LaBounty Family Fund, which is managed by the Duluth Superior Area Community Fund. Focus of the LaBounty Fund is to provide assistance to projects which promote economic development in the Two Harbors area. Funds from the LaBounty Fund will be used to complete the depot interior and become part of the share of \$30,000 to restore/replace the cement apron that surrounds the depot and needs to be replaced/repared.

Thank you LaBounty Fund and LaBounty family!

The second grant awarded in early May was a \$10,000 STAR grant from the MN DNR/CMZ (Coastal Zone Management). The KRHCC will provide a required 20% match (\$2,000) to create \$12,000 designated for planning and engineering services for two shelters – one for boats and the other for family events and other events that serve the interests of the KR community. The DNR/CMZ makes funds available for planning and engineering drawings so organizations can apply for grants to complete planned structures. Our intent is to have funds in place to build the two shelters next year.

While it is great to have grants to carry out the mission of the KRHCC, we still need local donations from which to leverage grants that can require a 20% - 100% local match.

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Local donations are the yardstick funders use to measure local support. Remember the KRHCC is a non-profit 501 (c3) so all donations are tax deductible. To contribute: [info@krhcc.org](mailto:info@krhcc.org)

## **DEPOT, KRHCC SITE WORK TO CONTINUE JUNE 1**

On May 11, the KRHCC board voted to open the KRHCC site for work only after Governor Walz lifted stay-at-home restrictions. Soon thereafter the governor did just that, lifting stay-at-home restrictions that went into effect March 28. Those restrictions were eased May 18 allowing many retailers to open with limitations, and with social distancing still in place.

Gatherings of ten people more are still not permitted. Walz wants vulnerable Minnesotans to continue to stay at home and social distance to protect themselves from the virus. That includes those at-risk for severe illness, such as the elderly or individuals with underlying health conditions.

While we could not find any specific reference to construction work among the guidelines, we are interpreting that the reduced restrictions mean we can return to work as we are usually less than ten people, and we can practice social distancing by maintaining a six-foot distance and having volunteers working in different areas of a building and in different buildings.

Even though the governor's restrictions were lifted, in part, effective May 18, we will wait two more weeks, until June 1, to begin work in case the partial reopening on May 18 proves to need tweaking.

Last year, Larry Ronning, volunteer general contractor, started work on the depot May 13 and under his direction the depot was functioning and ready to greet train riders for Julebyen 2019 on December 6.

### **The work plan for 2020 is far less ambitious than 2019!**

Thanks to continued private donations and grants awarded to date, we have the funds to meet our 2020 construction goals:

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1. Complete depot interior: complete window installation; complete insulating, install and paint T&G paneling on the ceiling and walls; install coal burning period-correct coal stove; mount order board; install railway platform display

2. Finish depot exterior trim work

3. Restore freight building

4. Restore/replace depot cement apron. This will be determined by a major grant from the Lloyd K. Johnson Fund. The fund has been requested to provide about 75% of the estimated apron cost. They will not announce a decision until July. Two other funders we have approached to share in the cost of the apron have already granted funds. Concrete work will be done by an outside contractor and supervised by Larry.

Larry has called a meeting of volunteers, including those who just may have good intentions of volunteering this summer, to a kick-off meeting on Monday, June 1 at 9 AM at the depot to go over summer plans and hear from those present what tasks they would like to be involved with – for sure a lot of painting! Hope to see you all at the kick-off!

## **KRHCC BOARD ACTION**

The KRHCC Board of Directors at a May 11 meeting conducted through electronic media took the following actions:

1. Should the KRHCC open KRHCC site for volunteer work June 1 in compliance with Governor Walz's relaxed stay-at-home restrictions?

Yes – 7 vs. No – 0

2. Should the KRHCC allocate \$2,000 from general funds to provide a required 20% local match to DNR/CMZ STAR grant for design and working drawings for boat and picnic/event shelters?

Yes – 7 vs. No 0

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## **NORTH SHORE SCENIC TRAINS TO RETURN JULY 1**

We were pleased to learn the NSSR will resume train service July 1. As of the writing of this newsletter, the train schedule had not been released – so we do not know what is planned for KR. Last year four “Picnic Trains” were planned with box lunches on the beach; three were completed and the fourth cancelled because of a scheduling conflict.

The July 1 date was chosen by the State of MN as the day 26 historic sites open around the state, which includes Split Rock. The NSSR took its cues from this decision.

Social distancing guidelines for the various attractions are still being discussed with input from the State Department of Health and local county health departments.

## **NO DECISION ON JULEBYEN 2020 UNTIL JUNE**

At its board meeting held May 21, the KRRC, sponsor of Julebyen, discussed at length whether or not to cancel the festival because of COVID-19, before agreeing to table discussion until the June board meeting, which will be held June 18.

In the meantime, the Julebyen committee will explore options to determine if any component of Julebyen can be placed on line – also to see what the results of the loosening of Governor Walz’s restrictions may be.

We will report the decision of the KRRC June meeting in the June issue of the KRHCC newsletter.

## **KR’s “RIVERVIEW COFFEE SHOP” – A STORY OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND HARD WORK**

For many years this writer understood the neat home with the beautifully maintained yard kitty-corner from what was Emily’s Eatery had once been a coffee shop. As a purpose of this newsletter is to ferret out KR’s more interesting bits of history, I set about to get the story on the coffee shop, starting with the current homeowner.

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Joanne Lind along with husband, Norman (“Hack”), have owned the home since they were married in 1953. Hack, who was one of the many KR men who worked on the tug EDNA G., passed away in 2008. Joanne is a hunter, gardener, lover of KR history, and one who wore pants long before pantsuits became popular. Joanne is a delight to talk to and so gave me the story how the coffee shop evolved under the direction of her enterprising and hardworking mother – Emily Erickson.

In KR’s railroad glory days, the “go to” place in town was McPhee’s store, which was both a grocery store and post office. It was located up the river a bit from what is now Joanne’s home. By some means of jacks, rollers and horsepower, it was moved to the site where Emily’s Eatery was and placed on a partial basement. In 1927, Joanne’s parents, Sigwald Erickson and Emily Hanson married and started Erickson’s General Store at what was the McPhee store.



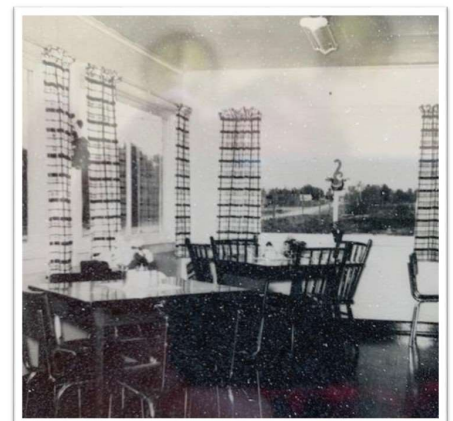
Joanne Lind: as delightful to talk to as she is in this photo!



Riverview Coffee Shop

In 1947, Sig and Emily sold to Joe and Edna Liberty and bought the property where Joanne currently lives. Sig had acquired the property in 1925 and at the time it extended west all the way to Church Road. There they built and opened the “Riverview Coffee Shop” in 1948. It was accessed from a parking lot off Scenic 61. People entered through a door on the east side, about where it is today.

Emily did almost all the cooking, which included mealtime favorites and pies that earned her quite a reputation. Minnie Rioux from KR peeled potatoes and vegetables as well as apples for pies. Alice Anderson helped in the kitchen and was a server. The shop served breakfasts, lunches and dinners seven days a week from 7 AM – 8 PM. It could seat up to 30 people at six or seven tables and more from a counter. One of the red and white tables remains and is still in use at the KR Lutheran Church.



View of Knife River. One of the tables Still remains & is in use at the KR church.

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The malted milk blender from Emily's has been passed down to grandson, Dennis, to his brother, Richard, to now Richard's son, Bjorn. It is a prized family possession and still makes great malts.

Carol (Ojard) Carlson has fond memories of her grandmother's coffee shop: "I was maybe about three or four years old when my mom would bring me down to the coffee shop every afternoon dressed in a freshly ironed dress, patent leather shoes and curled hair topped with a huge bow. She would help my grandma Emily make pies and I had a dish of ice cream."

In 1952 Emily recorded serving 1,425 meals from May through September. Folks came from 24 states and three countries. "The North Shore was really popular back then," recalls Joanne.

In 1953 Emily and Sig were tiring of running the coffee shop seven days a week and so for the summer of '53 Alice Anderson ran it. When Joanne and Hack married in the same year, they bought the shop and began converting it into their home. Emily, meanwhile, never one to rest, went to work at the new Shorecrest Restaurant, now the defunct Nikomis Restaurant. She started at dawn making all the bread, rolls and pies. After four or five years of this she retired from the food bizz for good!



Coffee shop converted to Joanne & Hack's home

First order for Hack and Joanne in converting the coffee shop into a home was to jack it up and temporarily move it closer to the river so they could build a full basement where it once stood. Once that was completed, they moved the building back and over the new basement. They then added a bedroom, larger kitchen and a porch and this is what you see today.

So there you have it – the evolution of the Riverview Coffee Shop from McPhee store, to Erickson's General Store, to Riverside Coffee Shop, to now a comfortable home with a fabulous view of the Knife River.

Many thanks to Joanne Lind for her help with this story and providing the historical photos!



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## THE FAMOUS (AT LEAST TO TROLLERS) COOLIDGE “TROLLO-PLANE”

When I was a kid growing up in Duluth in the mid-50s, my dad bought a 40’ cabin cruiser that he would on occasion bring to KR to fish along with friends. I was sometimes allowed to go along. My only recollection besides being bored and tossed around by the NE and SW, was an ingenious rectangular sheet metal “plane” that would dive deep in seconds and then “trip” and surface when a fish hit the spoon attached to it. That “trip” would reverse the dive of the plane and bring it to the surface along with the fish. On the plane was stamped “Coolidge Trollo Plane, Mfd. By Coolidge Bros., Knife River, Minn.” along with a patent number.

I treasured that “diving plate” (as I called it) because of its ingenious, but simple design that did not rely on heavy weights to get to 100 – 150’ depths, would almost instantly let you know when a fish was on, and then conveniently bring it to the surface for you – no need to crank both it and the fish up.

KR native Steve Carlson, whose dad was once a charter captain, showed me how the Coolidge Plate could be very effective by dropping it off the back of the boat into the prop wash until it could not be seen. Seems like an unlikely place to put a spoon, but it worked!



Dave Coolidge demonstrates the Coolidge Trollo-Plane in the “dive” position (left) & the “tripped” positions (right)

Many years later I still have the plate, but for the last 15 years or so it has been lying on the bottom in about 150 feet of water off the east end of KR island.

For years I wanted to know more about the plate, so who better to ask than Dave Coolidge, whose dad, Francis (“Dutch”), designed and patented it.

By background, Coolidge Brothers was founded in 1925 by brothers “Dutch,” “Irish,” and “Punk” as a gas station and service garage. By consensus of local gear-heads, the Coolidge brothers were nothing short of brilliant and soon evolved from mechanics into master machinists and even inventors, and without formal education. Punk even

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went so far as to build his own ultra-lite airplane, mostly from scratch. Dave Coolidge, part of that same gene pool, is the founder, owner and president of Serco knuckle-boom loaders in Two Harbors.

Dutch would troll the big lake and during boring moments came up with the idea of the diving plate. Through numerous attempts he finally invented the "Coolidge Trollo-Plane," patented it soon after The War, and made it in three sizes, the largest being about 4" x 6." The larger one sold for about \$4.00 in the '60s.



**The Coolidge Troll Plane stamp with patent number. Thousands were sold across the country.**

Dutch and sometimes with young Dave would drive around the lake looking for dealers, who were eager to try out a plate once they understood it. Eventually the Coolidge Trollo-Plane could be found on all five Great Lakes and both coasts. Thousands were sold and all made in KR, with Dave helping until the 20-year patent ran out and knock-offs began appearing. A popular knock-off today is a pink plastic plate called the "Pink Lady." I have one of those off Stony Point.

So what happened to the Coolidge Trollo-Plane? According to Dave, in addition to the patent running out, "It was hard to pull up if a fish did not trip it. Some people thought it created too much drag – like a small sea anchor. But in the end, it just got out-designed." From my own experience, it was difficult to judge the depth of a Trollo-Plane as it depended upon amount of line out and speed of boat. If it did hit bottom, it would

either trip and need to be reset, or get snagged on something - hence my lost plates.

By 1970, the Coolidge Diving plate passed into KR history, but its story will be carefully recorded, documented, and have a special place in the KRHCC as part of KR's rich fishing heritage.



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## KR LOSES ONE OF ITS BEST SUPPORTERS

We were both saddened and disappointed to learn recently that the LAKE COUNTY NEWS CHRONICLE (LCNC) will end its 130 years of service to Lake County at the end of May.

For many years your writer has been the liaison for all three of KR's non-profits (KR Lutheran Church, KRRC, KRHCC) with the LCNC for news about their events and activities. The LCNC has always been generous with its coverage of KR by informing county residents of KR news and info, and by doing so help present KR as an active, vibrant and welcoming community (in your writer's opinion).

We are hoping the void left by the LCNC will be filled with a print or electronic news format created by people who understand that community papers are the glue that holds communities and its societal structure together.



The LCNC was always good about covering KR activities.

## Memorials and Honorariums

It is the intention of this newsletter, starting this month, to recognize individuals who have been honored by memorials, honorariums or just to celebrate an important life event, with gifts designated for the KRHCC. In respect to the privacy of donors, we will not list their names or amounts contributed.

Please consider designating the KRHCC for memorials or to honor loved ones. We are a 501(c3) non-profit so all donations are tax deductible. To donate: [info@krhcc.org](mailto:info@krhcc.org)

### In memory of Wendall (Skip) Bissell:

Skip died of natural causes in January. He was a native of Knife River, commercial fished for a while and was present as a nine-year old when King Olav of Norway christened fish tug CRUSADER II in 1939.

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## In memory of John Safstrom:

John died unexpectedly in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico, in February where he and Gail were wintering. John and Gail have been residents of KR since 1989. A structural engineer by training, John was active in all three Knife River non-profits and loved working on the depot.

## ***Did you know....?***

Most could not know this interesting bit of fact because it is current history! Yes, COVID-19 is a historical event and KR is part of it.

For starters, seven members of the KR Lutheran Church have been busy making COVID masks for anyone who needs one and at no cost. All are made at members' homes. As of mid-May, sewers have made over 500 masks! About 250 have been given to the KRLC church family and their friends and family members. Another 250 went to Lake County Health & Human Services to be distributed to nursing homes, assisted living residences and social services. There are at time of this writing 60 in stock and more being made each day! Most of the material is scrap the sewers have and much has been donated as well, particularly the elastic, which is in high demand.

Joanie Lee, one of the sewers said, "I plan on just keep making them as elastic is available and my machine continues to work!" Joanie can be contacted by email at: [joanielee14@gmail.com](mailto:joanielee14@gmail.com) if you would like a mask or help make masks. Joanie said she and husband, Ed, will even deliver to your home if your mobility is compromised.

A huge "THANK YOU" from the Board of Directors of the KRHCC to all these sewers who have created this compassionate and humanitarian moment in the history of KR!

*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 receiving it, please forward to them, or send their email addresses to same email address and they will receive their own copy.*

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