

# Newsletter



## Knife River Heritage & Cultural Center

PO Box 240 • 180 Marina Road  
Knife River, MN 55609  
info@krhcc.org

**July, 2024**

By Paul von Goertz – KRHCC Board Member

### **CELEBRATE!** **KRHCC COMPLETES ITS RESTORATION GOALS**



Photo: Nearly completed shelter, on July 25. Tim Anderson Construction of Knife River was the general contractor. Iron Ridge Metal Roofing was the sub-contractor for the roofing. All those who worked on the shelter under Tim Anderson did excellent work.

Photo credit: Paul von Goertz

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Since the KRHCC was founded in 2018 we have had three goals:

1. Restore/rebuild the depot and neighboring freight building
2. Restore CRUSADER II
3. Build a shelter over the boat and its viewing deck with five interpretive displays

With the shelter complete (subject to some finishing work), I look at what the community has achieved in just six years, I am a bit overwhelmed!

## **How did we do it? The short story.**

It all started in the winter of 2018 when after a series of community meetings, it was agreed to create a heritage center at the site of the Knife River(KR) depot, which was in the last stages of falling down. A 501 (c) (3) non-profit was formed with a local board of directors. The board negotiated a five-year renewable lease with the property owner, the St. Louis & Lake County Regional Rail Authority, for \$1 a year. That lease was later revised to a 20-year renewable. Later that year volunteers began rebuilding the depot which was purchased from Randy Ellestad for \$1, and its neighboring freight building. Both buildings were restored by 2021.

In late 2022 a slab was poured for a shelter over CRUSADER II and the fish tug placed on it. In 2023 the exterior of the tug was restored and this year the shelter was built over it and the viewing deck with interpretive displays.

## **The longer and more important story is how all of this was accomplished.**

It took a couple dozen volunteers, many with building skills, and a board of directors passionate about the project. Board members are Bob Entzion, Vice President, Mona Linden, CFO, Larry Ronning, Project Manager for both depot and CRUSADER II restorations, David Grong, Randy Ellestad, Todd Lindahl, historian, and myself, Board Chair.

We raised and spent about \$250,000 that came from five different funding organizations, three \$20,000 donations, many other donations from \$15 to \$5,000, and sponsorships of various depot components like windows, the stove, order-board pulls, kiosk, the freight wagon and other items.

I don't like to list the names of those outside of our board of directors who contributed their time for the depot and CRUSADER II restorations for fear of overlooking someone. One person really needs to be mentioned though, is Doug Hill of the Larsmont family of boatbuilders who built CRUSADER II in 1938. Doug, who lives in Florida, gave the KRHCC his whole summer last year by working seven days a week under the direction of Larry Ronning, to restore CRUSADER II.

OK, I'm going to name one other person - one from behind the scenes - and that is Anne-Lù Hovis. I mentioned her in our May issue that celebrated the 4<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the newsletter. During those four years she devoted 4-5 hours each month to put the newsletter together for the enjoyment and education of our readers. Such devotion! Thank you, Anne-Lù!

You may be curious about the three \$20,000 donations mentioned earlier. One was a successful \$20,000 challenge match from a KR person that was contingent on an equal amount from the community. That match came from the Knife River Rec Council for which we will forever be indebted. The third \$20,000 gift came from a Two Harbors party.

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Sometime after Labor Day we will hold a dedication recognizing the restorations of KR's two icons and to celebrate the community that all made it possible.



Supporting 8 x 8" posts in place



Framed and ready for roofing,

Photo credits: Paul von Goertz

## THE AMAZING TODD LINDAHL DOES IT AGAIN

We were amazed a couple of years ago when Todd Lindahl requested his diorama of the south end of the KR rail yard, which was on loan to the Lake County Historical Society, be returned to him. Todd then gave it to the KRHCC under a similar loan arrangement.

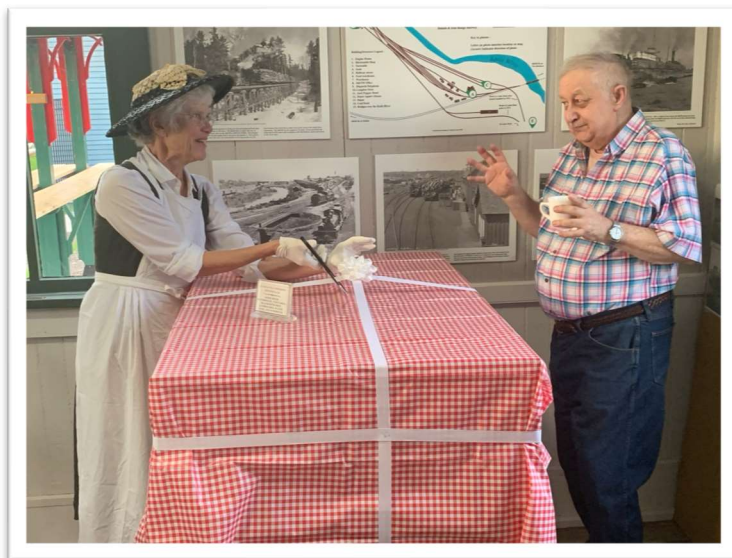
For the past three years he has been working on the counterpart to the south end diorama, and that's of the north end.

On July 5 that diorama was unveiled at the KRHCC by Deb Alert, his former doctor and good friend – and probably the only person he listens to.

The unveiling was in conjunction with a reshewing of Todd's presentation on north shore mining for snowbirds who missed it last winter.

Photo right: Deb Alert dramatically unveils the north end railyard diorama while builder Todd Lindahl looks on.

Photo credit: Paul von Goertz





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The KR railyard had a north and south end separated by a few blocks of track. The north end contained the repair shops and roundhouse. The south end was where the Duluth and Northeastern Minnesota Railway and what would be the DM&IR intersected. It was also the site of the depot.



The north end diorama. Todd's attention to factual detail is amazing.  
Photo credit: Todd Lindahl

## **BUILDING THE KNIFE RIVER NORTH END ROUNDHOUSE DIORAMA**

By Todd Lindahl - KRHCC Historian & Board Member

Building a historical diorama is a lot more complicated than most people assume. In the case of the Knife River roundhouse, the scaled-down size of the buildings and distances between them are accurate. This was thanks to an accurate map made by the railroad and a later one by the Highway Department documenting the length of each wall. A third map, also drawn by the railroad, shows building dimensions as they were in 1904. Over the years there were additions to some structures and others were moved from their original locations. The diorama is a culmination of all these changes. Windows, doors, outside tanks, pipes, roof lines, the shop whistle, and carbon arc outside light are where they were long ago.

The real Knife River turntable was 50 feet in length. The one for the diorama had to be built since nothing like it was available in HO scale. It is accurate even down to the number of angle iron braces

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on its side. The mechanism for hand-turning the turntable is a one-of-a-kind invention made specifically for the diorama. Special thanks go to Tom Koehler for help in fabricating the many moving parts and the extra needed hands to get it put together and operating smoothly. It took a lot of trial and error and testing to get it right.

Photo left: Building the operating mechanism for the turntable.

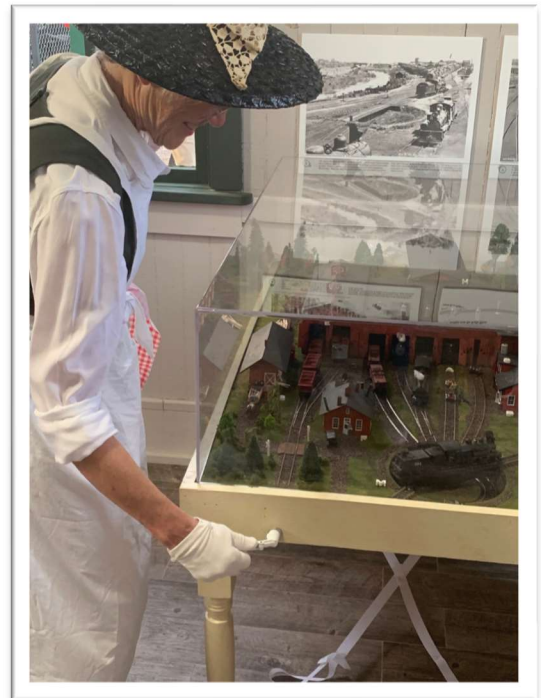
Photo credit: Todd Lindahl

Photo right: Deb Alert demonstrates how the turntable can be hand-turned from.

Photo credit: Paul von Goertz

The table the diorama rests on was built with the help of David Grong of Larsmont. He is a master woodworker and has a very complete workshop. The KRHCC is fortunate to have Dave and many other talented people associated with it. The KRHCC kindly covered the cost of the diorama cover made by Northern Acrylics Company of Duluth. Paul von Goertz helped coordinate this essential work.

The engine on the turntable is the Duluth & Northeastern Minnesota Ry (D&NM) #101. It was a three-truck Shay geared engine, the only one of this type on the Alger line and was purchased new in 1909. Engine #4 was a Mogul type (relates to wheel arrangement), which the D&NM received in 1902.



Sam Anderson modeled the three 24-foot wooden ore cars representing some that the Duluth & Northern Minnesota Ry bought from the nearby Duluth & Iron Range Ry (D&IR) in 1909 and 1910. They were made on Sam's 3-D printer and look great. The two (1883) 28-foot wooden ore cars were made by Mel Sando, formerly of the Lake County Historical Society. They are the same as 14 of this type of ore cars also purchased from the D&IR. The model cars have been painted the proper color scheme and lettered. The numbers on the cars are the numbers of actual cars the D&NM bought from the D&IR. The three loaded Russell cars which show where the mainline was in relation to the roundhouse, are also scratch-built.

Almost all the railroad cars owned by the D&NM were made of wood. The lumber shed held wood beams and lumber for maintaining and rebuilding these wood cars. All the company cabooses were built right at Knife River in the car shop.

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The roundhouse was by far the largest building to ever exist in Knife River and some traces of it can still be found today. From 1898 to 1921 the D&NM Ry and the logging industry created the economic base that helped the town prosper and grow. Without it and the commercial fishing industry, there likely would never have been a Knife River community. The ghost town of Buchanan might have been its only legacy.

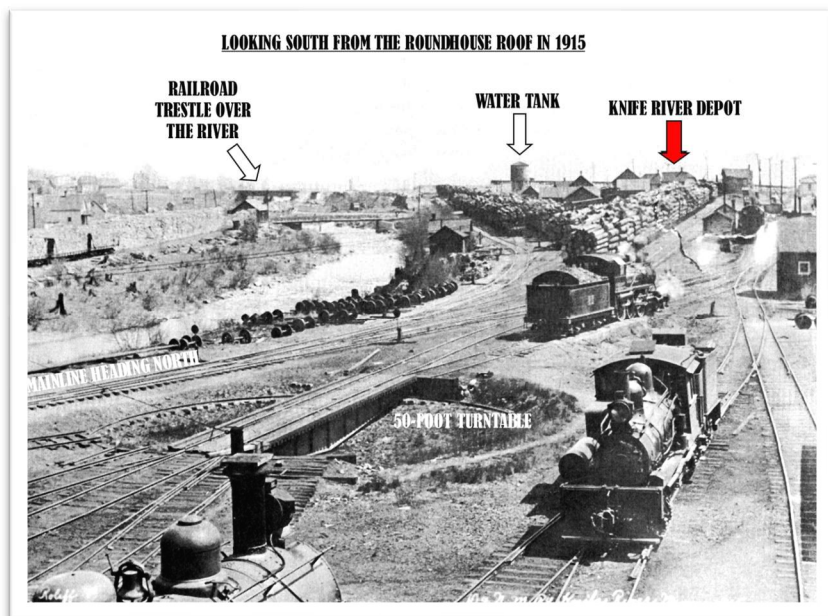
## THE DULUTH & NORTHERN MINNESOTA RY NORTH END ROUNDHOUSE

By Todd Lindahl – KRHCC Historian & Board Member

First off, technically speaking, the Knife River roundhouse is actually an “engine house.” A “roundhouse” is a 360° circular building or a part of one. An engine house, by contrast, is rectangular in shape and is usually smaller than a roundhouse. We will use the term “roundhouse” here to avoid confusion since it is what the public generally uses to describe this type of railroad facility.

The Knife River roundhouse was continually changing and modified over time as the parent Alger-Smith Lumber Company acquired more timber in northeast Minnesota, forcing the railroad to grow. Eventually, a second four-stall roundhouse (engine house) was built at the far north end of the track at Cascade, 100 miles from Knife River.

The company started building the Knife River roundhouse immediately in 1898 at the very start of their logging operations. The structure was used to protect, store, and maintain the expensive steam locomotives.



In the beginning, the machine shop, which was used to fabricate certain necessary metal parts, was a separate building next to the river. In 1905 it was incorporated into the main roundhouse building. The blacksmith shop was a separate building too, and remained so until the railroad shut down in July 1921.

Photo left: Historical photo of the north end of the KR railyard looking south taken from roundhouse roof in 2015.

Photo credit: Todd Lindahl Collection



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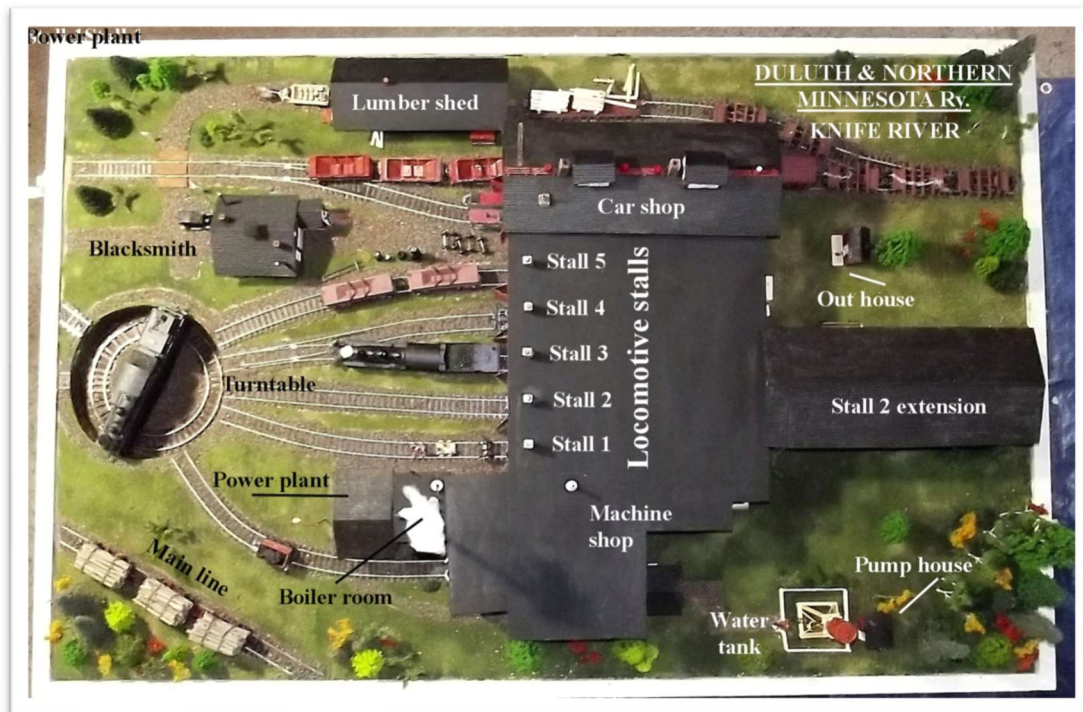


Photo above: Elements of the diorama of north end.  
Photo credit: Todd Lindahl

A steam locomotive with its high boiler pressure is essentially a bomb on wheels. In 1914, engine #7, sitting unattended outside of the roundhouse blew itself to pieces in a spectacular boiler explosion. The heavy smoke box door at the front of the engine blasted through two walls of the blacksmith shop and landed on the ground beyond the wrecked building. Luckily, neither John Erickson, a blacksmith, nor anyone else, was in the shop at the time. Tragedy had already stricken the Erickson family in early December 1907 when John's 9-year-old son broke through the ice while skating on Knife River and drowned. The new blacksmith shop was relocated a little to the west so as not to be in line with the tracks to the roundhouse stalls.

The first five stalls were where the locomotives were kept out of the cold and bad weather. Later, when more than five locomotives were added, Stall #2 was extended from the north end of the building so it alone could hold up to three locomotives. Stall #1 was next to the machine shop and was where the more serious engine repairs were done. Routine maintenance and basic minor repairs could also be done in any of the other four stalls as needed.

One drawback was that they did not have an overhead crane for lifting a locomotive. When repair work exceeded their capabilities, D&NM locomotives were sent to the nearby Duluth & Iron Range Ry shops at Two Harbors. The D&IR would complete the work and charge the D&NM to cover the costs.

All the heavy shop machinery was powered by an overhead line shaft with long leather belts and run off a large stationary boiler. The boiler room was on the south side of the machine shop and had a tall smokestack soaring high above the roundhouse. A small four-wheel railroad dump car was

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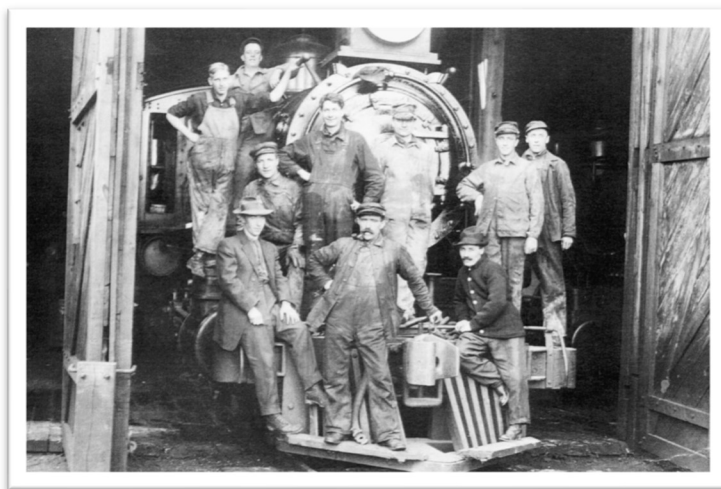
used to deliver coal to a bin next to the machine shop to fire the boiler. This car was taken down to the locomotive coal dock by the lake to be filled with coal to refill the bin. The “coal dock” should not be confused with the dock in the lake which received coal from lower lakes ships. The real “coal dock” was on land where coal brought by locomotives was discharged into chutes to waiting locomotive tenders below.

When the stationary boiler was shut down for repair, maintenance, or inspection, a locomotive was hooked up to provide necessary steam temporarily. **John Sandwick** was one of the stationary boiler engineers and was required to have a first-class boiler license. **William Kendall** and **Harry Van Dyken** were two of the machine shop foremen. Harry lived in Knife River but worked for the D&IR in their machine shop during the day. At night he also worked for the D&NM at Knife River along with other D&IR machinists like **Charlie Wistrom**, **Joe Barnes**, and **Axel Lyons**. Axel Lyons made enough money working these two jobs to quit railroading and buy a pool hall.

Joe Barnes chose a very different career change. In 1903 he too quit both machinist jobs and moved from KR to the Stanley Road. He worked odd jobs for about a year, but then was arrested by deputy sheriff L. P. Christiansen for burglarizing another home also on the Stanley Road.

Other men working in the machine shop were **Fred Kendall**, **William Kettle**, **Charles Layborg**, **Charles Nelson**, and **Sam Christenson**. Axel Lyons once told **“Spike” Jones** that if there were no engines in to work on, the night machinists could catch a nap behind the stationary boiler where it was cozy and warm during the winter months.

Photo right: Roundhouse workers pose for a group shot at entry to an engine stall.  
Photo credit: Todd Lindahl Collection



Boilermakers included **Chester Anderson** and **Charles Warner**. Some of the general shop workers were **S. J. Peak**, **Albert Alseth**, and **Peter Bugge**. **Gunnar Carlson** was in the air brake department. Tragedy struck the Peter Bugge family when their three young daughters were lost in a fire when their home burned. The fire was discovered by the crew of a D&NM log train. The roundhouse shop whistle sounded the fire alarm.

The car shop, which had two stalls, was at the west end of the roundhouse. Two large coal stoves between the tracks provided heat during the winter months. Eventually one stove was removed and then the other. They had been replaced by steam heat from the stationary boiler. The west wall of the car shop had many windows to let in as much light as possible during the daylight hours. Two cupolas on the peak of the roof also helped with more light and provided ventilation on hot summer days. Four water barrels were placed on a walkway on the roof for fire protection.



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A separate large lumber storage building was at the southwest corner of the car shop for some time until moved to the northwest corner in later years. Most of the rolling stock (railroad cars) were made of wood and the lumber shed held the materials for repairing them or building new ones.

**John Johnson** was the car shop foreman with **Andrew Casper**, **Jack Causley**, **Herman Mindestrom**, **Chauncey Uptegrave**, and **Mert Wilcox** as car repairers (commonly known as “car knockers”). Painting and lettering of the cars was done inside the car shop in winter and outside in summer. A limited car repair facility was located at Case just beyond Cramer at milepost 63.40 (63 miles up the track from Knife River) and other repairs could be carried out at the Cascade roundhouse (Milepost 99.8) as well.

The KR shop forces, usually 25 to 35 men, came under direction of the one master mechanic. They were **John Buchan** first, followed by **C. D. Kunnerth**, then **J. D. Lowe**, and finally **Herb Kimball**. The average monthly payroll for the shops was \$2,500.

Engine hostlers would tend to the locomotives when they were at the roundhouse terminal either sitting outside or inside. They were allowed to run the engines down to the water tank for water or the coal dock, but had to stay inside of the yard limit. Some engine hostlers were **Ralph Anderson**, **Fred Allard**, **Red Curry**, and (unknown first name) **Hasford**. Unlike the strict security at D&IR at Two Harbors, the D&NM was pretty carefree and laid back. Local kids often rode along with the hostlers who let them occasionally run and fire the engines. As Ralph Anderson once told me, “There was not a kid in Knife River that couldn’t run a steam locomotive.” The hostlers had to keep the engines ready to go for the train crews when they were called out for a run up the line.

The shop men mentioned here were only a few of those that served the D&NM over the years.

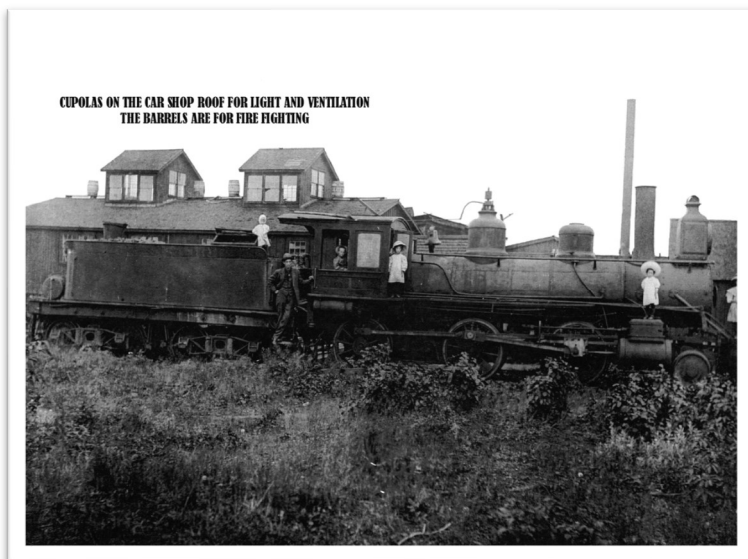


Photo left: Water barrels were placed on both sides of car shop cupolas as a preemptive caution against fire. Note several children on locomotive. How will they explain the coal dust on their Sunday best?

Photo credit: Todd Lindahl Collection

In 1903 a 50-foot turntable was installed at the roundhouse for turning locomotives. Prior to this, engines had to be turned on a wye track north of town. Another big improvement was the installation of an electric generator in 1905. It was in a new addition to the

roundhouse on the south side of the boiler room. The generator ran off steam from the boiler and provided electricity for lighting and power inside of the shops and other railroad buildings.

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Outside lights for the yards were carbon arc lamps, which were used as streetlights in many communities. They gave off a bright blue-white light much like an arc welder. Power was also sold to about half the homes in the town. Coal could be purchased from the company for heating and cooking. The company provided a stable foundation for the local economy, but also seemed to have its hand in most of the residents' pockets at the same time.

In addition to their own locomotives and cars, the D&NM would often lease engines, cabooses, and cars from other railroads when business picked up. Most of this equipment came from the Duluth & Iron Range Ry and Duluth Missabe & Northern Ry. The winter months were the busiest time for logging and many D&IR and DM&N trainmen worked for the Duluth & Northern Minnesota Ry during the off-ore season rather than relocate to somewhere else since there was no unemployment funding at this period in time. The D&IR alone had over 300 Russell log cars and flat cars for lease. All the leased equipment had to be in perfect shape when returned and it was up to the shop men to make sure everything was in perfect condition.

After the logging operations ceased in 1919, the Knife River car shop was closed, and the tracks were removed. There were only two locomotives left along with a few work cars, cabooses, and passenger coaches. The reduced car shop work was now all done in stall #5.

When the railroad shut down in July 1921, it was a severe blow to the Knife River community. Some believed it would become a ghost town, but the community survived the boom-and-bust logging era. It had started out as a commercial fish collection station for the American Fur Company and now it returned to its roots of commercial fishing. **If there is one thing that can be said about Knife River, it is that its people have always been resilient and remain so to this day.**

## STAR WINS MORE ADMIRERS IN "YOOPER" COUNTRY.

Gas boat STAR, formerly of KR, is now firmly entrenched in "Yoopers" Country - that would be Michigan's Upper Peninsula or "UP", land of "Yoopers." Great people!

New owner Erik Kivela in an email to me wrote "We first made the (Fourth of July) Lake Linden parade (Erik's hometown). Then, to a few neighboring towns Hubbell and Dollar Bay. Hubbell is about two miles from Lake Linden and Dollar Bay is about seven miles from Lake Linden. They were all relatively close, so we figured once we were out with the boat - we would just go to them all!"

Photo right: STAR on parade in one of three communities in Michigan's Upper Peninsula.

Photo credit: Erik Kivela

Erik said he had received several comments from parade-goers that



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they had read in the *Houghton Mining Gazette* about STAR's return to the UP and the builder's family, and enjoyed seeing the boat up close.

It pleases me as STAR'S previous owner that STAR is helping the UP connect with the Kivela family of boat builders and the role they played in UP boat building and jobs that were created.

## LADY SLIPPERS ON THE NORTH SHORE



Mary (my dear wife) and friends often bicycle from Knife River to Larsmont to Two Harbors and return and report they have seen Lady Slippers (photo left), our state flower, just off the road. They have not seen a lot of them, but enough to know the flowers have taken to the North Shore and our cool weather.

If you see one, just admire it. It has been noted that someone took a cutting from one, which leaves the donor plant at risk.

Photo credit: Paul von Goertz

## BANKIN PICNIC IN KR CANCELLED

The BankIn Association of Independent Banker's picnic, scheduled for the evening of Wednesday, July 31, at the KRHCC has been cancelled. Between 250 and 300 independent Minnesota bankers had been expected to arrive by the North Shore Scenic Railroad (NSSR) for burgers and bratwursts under a very large tent pitched in the KRHCC's public green space. The NSSR and BankIn handled all the arrangements with the KRHCC providing a historic site.

NSSR Executive Director, Ken Buehler, explained the event was cancelled in early July "due to equipment issues and supply chain interruptions for the number of people they are planning for us to carry."

As it stands now, the KRHCC will not host any events in 2024 except for the NSSR's/KRHCC's "Trees. Trains. Traditions" event November 30 and the KRRC's Julebyen weekend December 7 & 8.

## OTTERS ENTERTAIN KR SHORELINE RESIDENTS

Mary and I and others living along or near the Granite Point shoreline, have been entertained by the antics of an otter family this summer. To learn more about them, I asked our resident retired DNR biologist Bill Berg for what he might know about them.

"First, there could be more than one mated pair. During winter there is always otter sign, track, slides, etc. in the marina. Two or three is normal litter size, and pups stay with their parents at least into the fall.



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“A few years ago, the den was in a rock pile visible from the railroad bridge, but I have not seen that in use since then. Otters have a voracious and vicious appetite, and about the fastest moving jaws I have ever seen. As you know, otters are fun to watch, even though most of their "play" is actually hunting. But they do ‘play,’ as evidenced by their sliding down hills or mud. But what we call ‘otter play’ may actually be a form of self- maintenance.”

Thanks Bill, for your report!

(Please note, the railroad bridge is part of the NSSR right-of-way and people must stay off).

## **MARK YOUR CALENDAR FOR JULEBYEN 2024!**

Julebyen 2024 will be held again the first full weekend in December which this year is the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>. According to Helene Hedlund, Julebyen chair, here are some of the highlights:

- Bakeri - homemade baked goods with Scandinavian focus. Will include lefse and Krumkaka demonstrations
- Indoor market - original crafted items by local residents
- Two Harbors Farmer’s Market will showcase up to 15 local vendors
- Outdoor Market - 17 to 20 local artisans whose products have been juried for inclusion
- Troll Trains – 5 “Troll Trains to Troll Canyon” over the weekend in search of trolls
- Local food truck vendors
- Live indoor and outdoor entertainment: music, dancers, puppet shows, skits and more
- Live Nativity Sunday morning sponsored by the Knife River Lutheran Church
- Outdoor activities and games for youth
- Indoor craft activities for children

Full details available at [julebyen.org](http://julebyen.org)

Julebyen is the primary fundraiser for the Knife River Recreation Council. Proceeds are used to maintain a public beach, hiking trails, tennis/pickle ball courts, community picnics, celebratory activities and more. Admission and parking are free.

This is an all-volunteer event. If you can help, email Helene Hedlund at [hhedlund.dl@gmail.com](mailto:hhedlund.dl@gmail.com)

“Lovin Lake County” is the primary financial sponsor of Julebyen 2024.

## **“BEST SWEET CORN EVER” RETURNS AUGUST 30**

Thanks to Lee and Jim Bujold, KR will again be treated to “The Best Corn Ever” with all profit going to the KRHCC. Details will be coming later in August. Order date is usually a day or two prior to August 30 pick-up date.

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## **CORRECTION:**

In the June issue we listed Gary Stetson as having donated to the KRHCC. We misspelled Gary's last name. Should be Stenson. Your writer regrets the error.

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*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)*

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