



Two Harbors Iron Port



OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE
LAKE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

FIRE!

2015
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Portions of this article were previously published in the Lake County News Chronicle.

One of the recurring stories found throughout the historical record of our communities early history was the ever present threat of fire. Stick built structures heated with coal or wood and powered by early electrical systems combined with the lack of modern firefighting equipment created a high potential for disaster. Fire it would turn out would be one of the community's primary catalysts for urban renewal. I need to point out that firefighting equipment in the early 20th century was not the very effective. Despite the effort of the community, everyone was called on to help, response time and available water was often insufficient to fight a blaze.

In reading about several of the fires they were often attributed to electrical failures and un-extinguished cigarettes. One such fire claimed the lives of two young boys; Donald Freeburg age 4 and Carl Ringdor. They perished in a fire that started in the Rigdors barn hay loft on Sixth Avenue. Cause of the fire was attributed to cigarettes that some older boys were smoking in the loft when the hay caught fire. The older boys made their escape but left without thought of the younger boys. Firefighters did not discover the unfortunate victims until they had extinguished the blaze and were able to enter the barn. The mothers of the children became so distraught that they required the aid of local physicians.

When the D&IR rebuilt the coaling facility in 1907 it required them to tie into the Village of Two Harbors water supply to operate the fire suppression system. Having 150,000 tons of mine run coal on the waterfront was a risky proposition. During the install the plumbing contractors, Pastoret & Co. were allowed 12 hours to shut off the city supply to install the valves. Of course things did not go as planned and the city water was shut of for 36 hours. Thomas Owens was enraged by this "not only for the inconvenience but because it left the city without the means to fight fires". In a stern letter to village officials T.O. demanded that the contractors be charged with criminal negligence. I could find no record of charges ever being filed.

Due to the volume of large fires occurring across northern Minnesota State Fire Marshalls descended upon many communities. On September 30 1915 a state fire marshal condemned over a dozen buildings in the waterfront district and ordered many torn down. Included on the condemned list was the 1905 City Hall! Although a brick and mortar structure, its design did not allow for an escape route from the second floor. It did not matter that the fire hall was right next door.

Soon many insurance companies were offering reduced rates for property owners that would either rebuild or reinforce their structures with fire resistant materials. This is seen in evidence around the waterfront district as many buildings were reinforced or rebuilt with masonry construction.

When passing schools. take it slow.....

One fire of note occurred on January 10 1918; The D&IR YMCA (it would not become the railroad employee's clubhouse until 1923) caught fire due to faulty construction. A contractor did not properly enclose a chimney during one of the many additions. From the Journal News.

The local fire department responded promptly and its members were assisted by hundreds of volunteers. By 5:30 PM the fire had broken through the roof and it appeared to everyone that in spite of the heroic efforts the entire building was doomed. In the meantime however a call had been made to the fire tug Torrent and for volunteers to assist in dragging heavy hose from the tug up through the yards so that water from this fire fighting machine might be brought to the help of the city supply. Many willing hands responded and the hose was quickly laid and the order was immediately issued to the men manning the tug to begin pumping water at 200 pounds of pressure. With the immense volume of water from the tug added to the supply from the city the fire was soon under control.

It was a common practice to enlist the aid of the Torrent whenever possible. However starting in 1907 the D&IR would start rebuilding the docks with steel and by 1922 the Torrent, which cost 24,000 a month to operate, was no longer a necessary expense to the railroad.

Again the city would turn to the railroad; The city council approved the purchase of a modern fire truck through the purchasing department of the D&IR RR. The D&IR agreed to assume half of the cost of the new fire truck leaving the city with a bill of \$3000.00. Work on the new fire hall would be started in the near future with a cost estimate of \$6000.00 to the city. The city of Two Harbors has also installed a new high pressure water line along First Avenue specifically for fighting fires in the waterfront district.



Fire destroys an entire block of 1st Avenue.

One of the largest fires the city of Two Harbors experienced occurred in September of 1915. The fire consumed nearly everything on the south side of 1st Avenue between Maple (5th) and Poplar (6th) streets. Lost were the Commercial Hotel, Knights of Pythias Hall, a plumbing supply shop, the Star Theater, and the James Hotel (?).



The aftermath of the fire. The block would remain empty for 9 years. Note the front entrance to the Salvation Army building facing south. Also the original arch over 6th street.

Let the little...



Fire Tug *Torrent* 1910

Strutting her stuff most likely as part of the 4th of July Celebration. Her five monitors (water cannons) could deliver 3000 gallons per minute each. Once the wood docks were replaced with steel docks she was sold to the City of Milwaukee in 1925. Although the same rough dimension, a little wider at the beam (28 ft.) but the same length (110 ft.), the *Torrent* at 296 tons was nearly twice the weight of the *Edna G* under operating conditions.

Facebook Fun

Two Harbors Fire Department-1961. Mustering for a parade. That is Roger Pegelow next to the white 1951 Ford Civil Defense truck. I am told the county workers called that truck "Snowball". It is still driven on the streets of TH today. It is owned by Andy Johnson who has restored it and painted it blue. It can be seen at most of the car shows.





Disassembling the lens in Ohio.



The lens had to be assembled in the crate for transportation.



The lens comes apart in four panels and the base.



Lens panels ready to be reassembled.



The panels are heavy and need to be handled with care.



Mr. Chad Kaiser with the lens in Two Harbors.



On display in the dinning room of the Light Station Keepers Quarters

Long Journey Home

I would like to share these photos with our members. A few images chronicling the lens' journey back to Two Harbors.

Things I learned:

To clean the glass portion of the lens use a solution of one capful of Woolite in one gallon of water.

The caulk used to hold the prisms in the brass fittings is made up of powdered lead and linseed oil.

Look for an Exhibit Open House sometime during Heritage Days.

Special Thanks

The following people and families have made donations to the Society and I have applied them to our lens project. They will be recognized on a plaque next to the lens display in the Keepers Quarters of the Light Station.

- Anonymous
- Jeffrey and Dawn Daehn
- Louise Thureen
- Dan and Bobbi Larson
- Dale and Joan Congdon
- Erickson,
- Lee C. Johnson

Shavers grow!

Thank You to Our Supporters

APRIL 2015

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I have any old furniture that still has some life in it? We need furniture for the B&B.

Specifically two reading chairs for the parlor, two small chairs for the Forest Room and a nice mirror for the Harbor Room.

There is still lots of space available on this page. Memberships make great gifts for people that don't need more "stuff".

Family

Aleff, Gary and Nancy
Battaglia, David and Jeanne
Bjorum, Patricia and Richard
Cumpton, Larry
Daehn, Jeffrey and Dawn
Detlefsen, JoLynn and Michael
Egger, Gerald and Louise
Ehlan, Rene
Erickson, Beverly and Kenneth
Erickson, Irene and Paul
Fritz, Chelle and Tom
Ganser, Barb and Gary
Gustafson, Eugene and Gwenne
Hanson, Roy
Harrington, Ann - H&R Block
Hartley, Phil
Hastings, Ann and Gary
Helgeson, Richard
Jacob, Marybeth and Scott
Jeronimus, Mary and Pete
Johnson, Mary and William
Jumer, Jim and Margie
Knight, Lisa and Jeff
Lorntson, Art and Therese
Lujan, Tim and Lisa
Lund, Elizabeth and Sander
Mancini, Nancy and Hoops, Michael
McGilligan, Micky and Koehler, Tom
Moen, Elaine Melby- and Morris
Munson, Shirley
Nelson, Stan and Judy
Northey, Lyle and Trish
Raycroft, Joe and Linda
Ronning, Brad and Luann
Rosetter, David and Jo-Ann
Russell, Barbara and Joe
Saeger, Judy and Tom
Sando, Vince and MaryLou
Sigel, Richard and Susan
Swanson, Jean Erickson
Truax, Michael
Widen, Jim and Julie
Widen, Ray and Muriel
Zastera, Ann
Zinter, Gary

Individual

Aae, Gigi
Alanen, Arnold
Anderson, Gloria
Berg, Bill
Bjorum, Bob
Church, Joanne
Couture, Candice
Cruikshank, Kirsten
Dahlberg, Emil (Mic)
Eide, Marie
Grudnosky, Audrey
Himes, Ruth
Hoffman, Deel
Holisky-Crets, Vicki
Hopper, Nancy
Hoseth, Mabel
Johnson, Aileen
Johnson, Emmert
Johnson, Lenore
Kolberg, Elsie
Koss, Florence
Labelle, Irma
Lillegard, Margaret
Martell, Judith
McGregor, Carmen
Rothberg, Jan
Sando, Mel
Sperling, Robert
Swanson, MeLisa
Thureen, Louise
Truscott, Beverly
Wahlberg, Ruth
Woehrlin, Molly
Zastera, Jody

*This is the
Society's
90th Year!*

Acquisitions

(since the last newsletter)

The following people have donated to the permanent collection. We would like to thank them for their generosity.

Bill DeRoche

Missabe RR Historical Society
Bob Anderson & Family

I have been making changes to how we manage the membership lists. If I have missed someone please let me know ASAP.

Donations In Memoriam

Elsie Kohlberg for V.J. Kohlberg
Emmert Johnson for Dorothy Johnson
James and Margie Jumer for D. James Jumer Family
Jody Zastera for Joe Zastera
Ken Sandvik for Alfred and Margaret Sandvik
Maggie King for Richard P. King

Membership Categories

Individual	\$20 _____
Family	\$30 _____
Business/ Friend	\$55 _____
Sponsor	\$100 _____
Patron	\$250 _____
Lifetime	\$600 _____
Benefactor	\$1000 _____

Membership Benefits include:

- Free Passes to the Museums
- 10% off gift shop merchandise
- 10% off stays at the B&B
- Invites to Open Houses
- Newsletter

THE LAKE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY IS A 501c.3 NON PROFIT ORGANIZATION
DEPENDANT UPON THE GENEROSITY OF IT'S MEMBERS AND PATRONS.
THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT

Burma Shave!

LAKE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
PO Box 128
TWO HARBORS, MN 55616

Place
Stamp
here

Mapkin

(map-ken)

noun

1. a square piece of cloth or paper used at a meal to wipe the fingers or lips, to protect garments, and to serve food on.
2. a handy piece of paper used by Todd Lindahl to create maps describing historic locations and events of interest over coffee or lunch.

Thanks Don M.!

