

**LAKE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
AND  
LIGHTHOUSE BED AND BREAKFAST**

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**Summer Hours May 24th - October 20th:**

Museums	Mon. to Fri.	Sat.	Sun.
Depot	9-5	9-5	10-4
3M	12-5	11-5	11-4
Lighthouse	10-6	10-6	10-4

*The mission of Lake County Historical Society is to preserve the history of Lake County, Minnesota through the study and interpretation of artifacts, documents, and photographs that tell the story of our past and present culture.*

Lake County Historical Society  
520 Waterfront Drive  
Two Harbors, MN 55616

# The Iron Port

Spring 2019



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## Museum Happenings

LCCHS was awarded a \$75,270 legacy grant funded through the Minnesota Historical Society to inventory its 3D artifact collections. Two contracted inventory workers, Katie Witzig and Nick Riordan, are expected to process 10,000 artifacts by March 2020. They will be photographing, describing, organizing, and entering information into a database that will be searchable by Society staff.

The Society owns an estimated 12,000 artifacts,



Katie and Nick work on inventorying a collection of uniforms, Depot Conference Room

4,000 archival documents and over 7,000 photographs. The current work is just one of three phases planned to complete a full inventory of the Society's collections. Katie and Nick started at

the Historical Society March 25th and have already processed over 500 artifacts.

MeLisa, Kim, and myself are busy preparing the sites for opening weekend. 3M, Lighthouse, and Depot Museums will open for a preview weekend Friday May 17th through Sunday May 19th. The summer schedule will begin the following Friday May 24th. Remember to check our Facebook Page and Website for upcoming events.

## Steamships Vital to Development of Lake County



00.824: Ossifrage at Beaver Bay c. 1880s

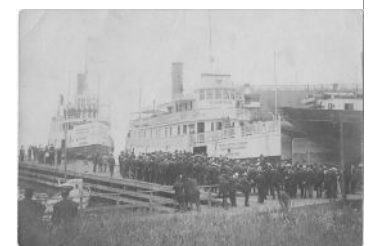
Ever since the Sault Sainte Marie locks opened in 1855, steam ships were making routine trips into Lake Superior. By 1856, Beaver Bay was a scheduled mail stop for steamers running between Grand Portage and Superior Wisconsin. In the early years, Captain A.A. Parker would sail the schooner Fort to Beaver

Bay from Ontonagon Michigan to trade supplies for a load of lumber from the Wieland's sawmill. In 1865, Ernest Wieland captained the Charley, hauling lumber from Wieland's sawmill in Beaver Bay to other Lake Superior ports. In return, the ship brought back supplies, people, and news back home.

An 1883 survey by the Minnesota Iron Company soon changed the landscape of Lake County. Although the Vermillion Iron Range was technically closer to Beaver Bay, the clay bottom of Agate and Burlington

Bays provided a more stable base on which to build shipping docks. Soon afterwards, construction of a passenger and merchandise dock began in earnest to support the influx of supplies and people to the area.

**Continued on Pg 2**



92.23.01 Merchandise and Passenger docks in Two Harbors c. 1900

## Steamships Vital to Lake County Development



00.926: Steamer Dove at Two Harbors c. 1886

By August 5th, 1884 the side wheel passenger boat Dove was making daily trips from Duluth to Agate Bay. A two and a half hour journey from dock to dock, the Dove provided supplies and workers to Agate Bay prior to the railroad. By 1889, the Duluth Missabe and Iron Range Railroad connected Duluth and Two Harbors, however reliable rail service did not continue up Minnesota's North Shore.

Steamer service continued to be one of the only reliable routes of transportation during the shipping season. One of the driving factors of steamship route expansion came from the commercial fishing trade.

Steamships would frequent fishing communities along the shores of Lake Superior collecting lake trout and whitehead from local fishermen. In exchange for fish, the steamboats would deliver people, news, and supplies to the otherwise isolated communities.

The most prominent company to operate steamers along Minnesota's

North Shore was the Chicago based Booth Packing Company. With a large warehouse in Duluth, the company had a scheduled run three times a week up the north shore to Grand Marais or Grand Portage and back down the coast. Starting in 1887 with the Hiram R. Dixon, the company continually improved its fleet of ships. The side-wheeler Dixon was retired in 1900 and replaced by the brand new steamer Argo.

To increase efficient collection of fish, the company purchased the steamer America in 1902. Built as an excursion boat to travel between Michigan ports and Chicago the vessel was not only fast but also luxuriously trimmed. When the company purchased the boat in 1902, they expanded the cargo space and added 60 state rooms capable of accommodating 180 passengers. Smaller than the Argo, the America was able to travel at 18 miles per



91.18.07 University of Minnesota Tour party with Two Harbors Commercial Club Guides July 24th, 1914



Left to Right: 00.1525 1890s road between Two Harbors and Beaver Bay; 00.1487 Lake Superior International Highway Sign at Lester River c. 1910

hour making the circuit from Duluth north to Isle Royale and back in less time than the Argo or Dixon. The Argo was placed on the South Shore of Lake Superior, collecting fish from Wisconsin fishermen along the shoreline.

Steamships continued to be a vital source of transportation until the 1920s when automobiles became more widespread. As the highways in Lake County continued to improve, fishermen relied more on trucks to get their fish to market.

The Lakeshore Highway opened in 1923 and provided a partially paved route north of Two Harbors. With the influx of automobile traffic on newly established roads, the resort and tourism industries took off in the 1930s and 1940s as the commercial fishing industry on Minnesota's North Shore began to decline.

## Two Harbors Iron News 7/23/1909

The Duluth Evening Herald has started its popular-priced excursions on Lake Superior, the first one of the season being run Tuesday afternoon of last week when the steamer America brought to Two Harbors a large number of visitors who made the return trip in the evening.

The Herald began running the excursions about three years ago and every summer they have grown more

popular with the people of Duluth and with visitors to that city who seldom have the opportunity of so magnificent a lake trip. In order to bring the pleasure within the reach of all the fare has been made a mere nominal amount, a sixty mile ride for one half cent a mile.

The Herald excursions are always welcomed by the Two Harbors people, for each week during the

summer season they bring several hundred visitors here to spend several hours. Not only do these visitors patronize the local hotels, restaurants and stores, but many of them have come from various parts of the country and on their return home are bound to advertise Two Harbors to a greater or less extent. The Herald's enterprise not only benefits the people of its own city, but also its north shore neighbor.

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As steamships brought increased traffic to the Two Harbors Passenger docks, businesses like the Scandinavian Co-op and the Racket store would sell souvenirs of landmarks in the area. Stores would commission designs from established dealers in Europe and on the East Coast. Above are an array of examples of souvenirs from the turn of the 20th century.