



# KANDI EXPRESS

Kandiyohi County Historical Society  
Newsletter



*Roger Laux  
Nelson*

**ART  
EXHIBIT**

## IN THIS ISSUE

- Norway Lake Historical Association Update
- When a Girl ...Homecoming
- Cemetery Walk at Tripolis Cemetery
- Roger Laux Nelson Art Exhibit

Roger Laux Nelson will be exhibiting his paintings in the Kandiyohi County Historical Society Community Room. The exhibit opens on Wednesday, September 13, 2023 and will run through December 31, 2023. Roger was born in 1945 and raised in Willmar. He graduated from Willmar High School in 1963. He moved to New York City in 1969. While in New York, he was a professional artist. He moved back to Willmar in 2019 and has a studio in Atwater.

KCHS will be hosting an artist reception on Wednesday, September 13 from 4:30pm-6:30pm.

We would love for you to join us!

# KANDIYOHI COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Willmar, MN 56201

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www.kandiyohicountyhistory.com

@kandihistory #kandihistory

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2023-2024

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## KANDI EXPRESS

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history can be submitted to :

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### Exhibits:

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## KCHS Wish List

### Office Supplies

- 8" x 14" white copy paper  
\$10.00 per ream or \$40.00  
per box.
- Address Labels 1" x 2 5/8" :  
\$10.00 per pack
- Shipping Labels, 2"x4": \$15.00  
per pack

### Research Library

- Top Loading Sheet  
Protectors, Semi-Clear:  
\$15.00 per box
- 1/3 cut, letter size file folders:  
\$10.00 per box

### Community Room

- Plastic tablecloths

### Thursday Crew

- Monetary donations to  
purchase tools and  
equipment for maintenance  
of the Historical Society.

### Archives

- Full 1" Tab Letter Archival File  
Folder (100): \$40.00
- Acid Free Tissue Roll (1000'):  
\$240.00
- Archival Storage Boxes:  
\$12.00 per box

*Monetary donations for the  
purchase of these items are  
also appreciated.*

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Gerry Nyberg  
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SEPTEMBER 1, 2022-AUGUST 31, 2023

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Risk Partners  
Peterson Brothers Funeral  
Home



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JUNE 1, 2023-AUGUST 31, 2023

## Collections

Clifford & Betty Johnson  
PEO

## Engine #2523

Doug Wilkowske

## General Donation

Mark Haugejorde  
Everett Wallin  
Richard Falk  
Kandiyohi County Sheriff Reserves  
Steve Lehman  
Dick & Sheila Bosch  
Harley & Evelyn Aalfs

## Memorial

In Memory of Ken Pauly  
Dale & Judy Johnson  
In Memory of Arland Viske  
Harley & Evelyn Aalfs  
Esther Viske  
Gayle & Linda Larson  
In Memory of Glennis Ter Wisshca  
Mary Beth Yarrow  
In Memory of Ken Kray  
Harley & Evelyn Aalfs

## Mona Nelson Endowment

Janelle & Paul Higdem

## Sperry House

Chuck & Nancy Gustafson



*With Sympathy*

- Dr. Roger W. Strand, 87, KCHS lifetime member since 1987, passed away on June 6, 2023. He is survived by his four children and three grandchildren.
- Marcella "Sally" Sheldahl Demgen, 103, KCHS member since 2011, passed away on July 2, 2023. She is survived by two sons, seven grandchildren and one great grandchild.
- Pastor Robert A. Friedrich, 88, KCHS member since 2004, passed away on July 8, 2023. He is survived by his five children, 21 grandchildren and 18 great-grandchildren.
- Janet Peterson Dokken, 77, KCHS member since 2011, passed away on July 19, 2023. She is survived by one son, two step-children, five grandchildren, and six grandchildren.



# When A Girl...Homecoming

Written by Bea Ourada

When school begins and fall colors start to show in the trees, there are many activities that have a long standing history, some having evolved and still enjoyed today, some perhaps just live on in the memories of the older among us. Once again, my memories center on the Willmar community, but probably are not a lot different in the neighboring towns. I hope my thoughts will bring back some memories of what it was like for you, as well.



*Students gather for pep fest at the Willmar Post Office in 1962.*

In the fall, there will be football, and this includes community recreation programs, junior high and varsity teams, all cheered on by family, friends, school mates, etc. As a part of football there will be a BIG game, the Homecoming Game. This involves a week of activities. When I was a girl, we were still recovering from the effects of WWII and our activities were not too elaborate but a good time was had by all. The big build up was for the election of a Homecoming Queen. A number of popular and attractive senior girls would be sponsored by different school clubs, and there would be a flurry of activity making posters to promote each candidate. The school newspaper, The Wilohi, would have a special edition, with a little biography of each girl. There would be an election, mirroring municipal elections.

On game day, there would be a big pep fest and announcing and crowning of the young woman elected. At some point the Homecoming Royalty was expanded to include a Homecoming King, as well. And still more recently, some schools also have junior royalty.

When I was in school, the senior and junior high were located in adjoining buildings, where the district offices and WEAC are now, so this was an exciting new experience for the seventh graders and it was an all-school event. During the week, there were buttons sold with the slogan for the game. Money raised from the sale of buttons supported the Homecoming Dance, which was held at the Willmar Memorial Auditorium. There was not a lot of learning during this week, and I suspect teachers and administrators were greatly relieved when it was over. That probably has not changed.

In later years, the pep fest was downtown, on the steps of the US Post Office, located on Litchfield Avenue and Fourth Street. There was a Homecoming Parade with floats, convertibles with queen candidates and marching band. The night before the game there was a huge bonfire on the parking lot next to Hodapp Field.



*King Jerome Larson and Queen Mary Ann Olson light the bonfire in Atwater in 1957*

Following the game, there was a school dance and party. (School dances were not permitted on school property until spring of 1953) Though the dance was not a formal affair, the young ladies shopped and planned for a very special new dress or outfit to wear. I don't know when the custom of toilet papering trees of team players and others started, but that has been a part of the week's celebration for a number of years all around the area.

The homecoming queen candidates were almost always sponsored to be Kaffe Fest Queen candidates. Homecoming was a bit of a "practice" so that perhaps the butterflies would be a little less, though Kaffe Fest was a big time with a big audience, so still a lot of excitement for the girls, and this event led to the Minneapolis Aquatennial as well as a summer of parades around the state. There was a lot at stake.

Another ritual of fall was the Kandiyohi County Fair. At that time, the fair was held a week or two after Labor Day. The Friday of the fair was designated Willmar Day and stores and schools closed at noon, allowing everyone to go to the fair. Upper class students issued threats to the incoming freshmen, that they would be dunked in Willmar Lake at the fair as an act of initiation. As a ninth grader, I was very cautious about where I was in the fairgrounds and kept my distance from the shore area. Whether this ever happened, or it was just an idle threat, I am not sure. I suspect there may have been an occasional dunking, but, not universal.

Another event of fall was National Book Week. As an incurable bookworm, this was an event I loved. It was pretty simple, but teachers would bring in new books and encourage us to visit the library and if we did not have a library card, get one.



*Homecoming Royalty Willmar High School  
2002-2003*

*Princess Gretchen Pauly, Queen Amber Schackman,  
King Matt Wetterling, Prince Nathan Hillenbrand.*

There was always a new book week bookmark handed out as well. The school district had one librarian, who selected books for the grade schools as well as maintain the junior-senior library. The new books would be ordered and prepared for shelving before National Book Week in November. To me, this unveiling was almost as exciting as crowning the Homecoming Queen. As a grade school student I remember that events like Book Week were accompanied by displays in shop windows in downtown Willmar. These displays were in shops like Raske Drug Store, Carlson Brothers Drug Store and Elmquists Jewelry to name a couple. Displays were also a part of Girl Scout Week and Boys Scout Week. Our teachers had a lot of work to do for these extra activities and we took it for granted—at least I did until was much older.



*Homecoming Court New London Spicer  
1968-1969*

# NORWAY LAKE LUTHERAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

6338 County Road 40 NW

New London, MN 56273

[www.nllha.org](http://www.nllha.org)

[www.facebook.com/nllha.org](https://www.facebook.com/nllha.org)



## Letter from the Norway Lake Lutheran Historical Association (NLLHA)

Greetings!

It's too late now for us to put in a plug for attendance at our Annual August Anniversary celebration. But the history we focused on doesn't have that kind of shelf life. It's still good; still fresh. 150 years ago there was a cataclysmic weather event in Minnesota and Kandiyohi County. It was the Blizzard of 1873. The storm was the theme at the Log Church August event.

Carolyn Sowinski, a historian and author with local roots has written two books on the subject: *The Great Storm: Minnesota's Victims in the Blizzard of January 7, 1873*; and *Almost Saved But Lost: The January 1873 Blizzard in Kandiyohi County, Minnesota*. She spoke about them to a packed house last spring at KCHS. Her work inspired our efforts. A sample follows:

Imagine the travails of the immigrant farmers. They were new to this land. Still getting used to it you might say. Between grasshoppers, droughts, prairie fires, wind storms, biting cold and blizzards there was a lot to get used to. The Native people, who had lived here for thousands of years, had adapted. The immigrants who came here, were in many ways unprepared. Many of them were not at all ready when a blizzard struck in January of 1873. The descriptions of life in Minnesota were often a bit distorted: "Minnesota is the most healthful, beautiful, fertile and attractive State in the World for Eastern and European immigration. Health, prosperity, and education are accessible to all. A delightful climate and exceeding richness of soil, combine with favorable natural and artificial means of transportation, to insure the success of all industrious and enterprising settlers in Minnesota." - *The LaCrosse Republican*, 1868.

"In Scandinavia, America Letters fell like leaves from the land of Canaan. ...The result was that the most fanciful stories were circulated about the wonderful country across the Atlantic - a land of milk and honey." - George Stephenson, *When America Was the Land of Canaan*, 1929

They didn't ask the people who had lived here for many hundreds of years: "Mni Sota Makoce (Minnesota: Land Where the Waters Reflect the Clouds) was the birthplace of the Dakota peoples, with evidence back to 1150 CE...The historic lands of the Dakota on the prairies of western Minnesota was the setting for the ...1873 blizzard." -Carolyn Sowinski, *The Great Storm: Minnesota's Victims in the Blizzard of January 7, 1873*.



But nature is full of surprises: “A blizzard, the most destructive to human life in the history of Kandiyohi County, occurred in January, 1873. The ground was covered with snow and the weather was so balmy during the first part of Tuesday, January 7th, as to encourage farmers to make trips to town or to the woods for fuel. About two o’clock many were wending their way with their sleds and teams of horses or oxen. At that hour there were no indications of a coming storm.” -*Illustrated History, Kandiyohi County, Minnesota*, 1905

Most of the stories that came from that storm weren’t very funny. This is an exception: “Another tale was told of a Swan Lake settler. It had been such a nice day that he set out on his trap line. The storm hit and he stumbled blindly about – that is until he went through the roof of a dugout. Needless to say, the woman who occupied the dugout was startled at the sudden appearance of the snowy figure. But she was so happy that her husband, who had left home earlier in the day, had returned - that she gave him a tight embrace and a kiss. It wasn’t till a few moments later when the man brushed off the snow that she realized that it was not her husband...” -*The History of Stevens County; The Great Storm*, Carolyn Sowinski.

There were stories of great perseverance: “They drove up against what they thought was a straw stack. Maria got out and clung to the straw stack following around to the south side with no other chances in her mind than to freeze to death. She was happily surprised to find an open door and it proved to be a straw stable full of stock, where she was safe. When the farmer came to see his stock, he found her and brought her to the house...Jacobson tried to unhitch, but the horses became unruly, turned with the wind and were lost and froze to death...Jacobson was also lost and wandered about until dark, when he observed something like a star. That was a lamp light through a farmer’s window. He got in and saved his life...but he froze his feet so his limbs had to be amputated below the knees. People yet remember Jacobson who walked on his knees the rest of his life over a period of about 40 years...And - he continued to do his farm work.” -Gabriel Stene, Willmar Tribune; *Illustrated History of Kandiyohi County, Minnesota*.

There were many whose stories ended tragically: “On the morning of Tuesday, January 7, 1873, being very ill I sent my only son, who was 18 years of age and ... on whom I depended to work the farm... to the store ... at Pomme de Terre for medicine. On his attempting to return he was frozen to death.” - letter from Ole Peterson Fougner regarding his son, Gustav, from: Records of Governor Horace Austin.

Near their Whitefield Township farms, brothers Claus and Jorgen Strand died in the blizzard. Soon after Lars Nelson, who farmed next door to them, also died after having been severely frozen in the storm: “Anna Greta Nelson died on February 2, 1922 and is buried in an unmarked grave at the Svea Lutheran Church cemetery. Many of Anna’s dreams died with her husband, Lars. They did not grow old together, did not laugh or cry in old age together, or enjoy the birth of grandchildren together. Anna experienced life as a widowed homesteader and single mother on the Minnesota prairie. In her grief she may have sought conversation and compassion from two neighbors who understood her pain and loss: widows Hanna and Johanna Strand. - Carolyn Sowinski, *Almost Saved But Lost: The January 1873 Blizzard in Kandiyohi County, Minnesota*.

# Annie Mary: Buried, But Alive!

Written by Julie Neubauer

Ghost stories abound in Minnesota and one of my grandsons is a true believer in the supernatural. His grandmother (me) is a borderline believer but having experienced one up close and personal for 35 years has brought me closer to my grandson's way of thinking.

I was shocked when I learned that the very ghost story that I was acquainted with in Brown County followed me to Kandiyohi County when I moved here upon retirement from teaching in Sleepy Eye. I was reminded of an old nursery rhyme that was sung while children at our school jumped rope and it reawakened so many memories of stories shared, research papers I corrected about this shocking story and a video tape of a one of my students interviewing their grandmother recounting her own experience at the gravesite.

So here is her story and how she now resides in Kandiyohi County. In a small town in this county there is a gravestone that marks the entombment of a very young six-year-old little girl by the name of Annie Mary, her last name is withheld to protect her burial site.

Annie Mary's father Richard was 20 years old when he married Elizabeth, who was 16. Both husband and wife resided in the state of Kentucky for several years and had three daughters in quick succession before deciding to move to Minnesota and farm in Albin Township in Brown County.

Annie Mary was born October 14, 1880 in Pendleton County in the state of Kentucky, the second daughter born to Richard and Elizabeth. Her older sister was named Mary Adeline, born March 24th 1878 and died in

Her stay out of the hay barn  
Her mother surely said  
You'll fall through  
And end up dead  
DEAD, DEAD

Annie Mary didn't listen,  
Went up there anyway  
Fell through and hit her head,  
Was buried right away  
DEAD, DEAD

Her momma saw the ghost of  
Annie  
Walking here and there.  
Her daddy dug her up,  
Saw she tore out hair  
DEAD, DEAD

Poor Annie Mary  
Screaming in her grave  
Scratching at her coffin  
A dark and deadly cave.  
DEAD, DEAD

1932. This older sister married, had a family and then at the age of 54 committed suicide. Did she carry some of the same traits as her father, Richard? Today she resides in the same cemetery as Annie Mary. Another sister by the name of Elizabeth(Lizzie) Henrietta was also born in Kentucky in 1883, when Annie Mary was 3 years old. In 1888 Emma Alverna was born and Lena, the fourth daughter was born in 1894 in Hanska, Minnesota. Sources do not confirm whether Lena was a sister to Annie Mary or a half-sister, since at the time of her birth, her father Richard was a patient at the St. Peter Asylum.

Although information about the family while living in Kentucky is scarce, documents tell us that in 1884 the family probably took a train to Minnesota to start of new life and they settled on 164 acres ,which they purchased for the price of \$1,140, not far from the town of Hanska. In 1885 Richard designed and built an elaborate granary on the farm site. The granary was listed on the Registry of National Historic Places because of its design. This granary was an oversized three stories high structure. It was totally unique from anything found in Minnesota at the time and instead of ladders to access the upper floors it had stairs leading to the haymow. The building was constructed of wood, stone foundation, clapboard siding, a scale for weighing, and elevating equipment to fill the overhead bins. Besides grain, it also housed Richard's farm equipment. Because of this creative structure, some of the people in the area labeled Richard as rather odd, but others declared him a genius. This granary stood until it was taken down in the 1970's.

This granary is important because it was the site of his daughter, Annie Mary's accident.

And here in lies Annie's story. Life on the farm in the 1800's was hard and the little girl would be called on to help with simple chores, such as helping mom with the cooking, cleaning and gardening. Since Richard was not only a farmer, but also had a profitable granary and tree nursery business, he most likely called upon his young girls to help him outside, hence it would not be unusual that Annie Mary was familiar with the three story granary. So one day in October of 1886 she ventured into the granary. Why? We don't know. Was she exploring on her own? Chasing a kitten? Maybe. What is known is that she climbed the steps to the third story and took a hard fall in the hayloft and slipped into a coma.

Sources tell us that Richard was not a trusting man and therefore did not call a doctor and they attempted to treat Annie Mary at home. Mother Elizabeth took beautiful care of her comatose daughter, but sadly after five or so days on October 26, 1886 they presumed that the little six-year was dead and prepared her for burial. The family laid her to rest in Iberia Cemetery, which today is known as Oak Ridge Cemetery. This cemetery is now only accessed with permission from a private owner.

The cause of death is speculation but the death certificate says lung fever (pneumonia) that may have resulted from the little girl lying in a coma. In addition some articles say that it might have been scarlet fever that developed into lung fever.



This was during a time period when it was difficult to ferret out the true story, but the death certificate says lung fever.

And now the story gets a bit crazy. It was not Richard's idea to dig up Annie Mary! Despite the fact that Richard was the one with crazy manic and anger issues, it was actually her mother Elizabeth who wanted her daughter's body exhumed just days after the burial. Several articles tell us that mother Elizabeth was tormented by feelings of sadness, dread and nightmares with visions of her daughter screaming, creating a feeling that her daughter Annie Mary was not dead. So her husband to pacify his wife, accompanied by two neighbors named Fischer and Haala (two families I'm very familiar with) headed to the cemetery with a pick and shovel to dig up her coffin. Haala and Fischer couldn't believe what he was doing and actually thought it was shameful to disturb the dead, but they went along with him.

What the three men found is the foundation of the legacy of Annie Mary. It is said that the scream that Richard emitted was something unearthly. When he broke open the coffin, Annie was no longer encased in her shroud. It lay around her young body torn to pieces. She no longer lay on her back, but rather on her side. Her eyes were open in horror as was her mouth frozen in a scream. Her face was scratched. Her fingers bloodied. Her fingernails broken with wood splinters and dried blood clinging to them. Clumps of her blonde hair had been torn out of her head clenched in her tiny hands. The lid of the coffin, as well as, the insides walls of the coffin were covered with scratch marks. It was said that Richard grabbed her by her

by her shoulders thinking that she may still be alive and shook her. Wrapping his arms around her he brought her into a hug only to discover that she was stone cold. Realizing what he had done to his daughter, he wailed and shook. Fischer said her eyes still looked like she was alive, but her father had buried her alive.

On that day in October of 1886 the hauntings began. Farmers Fischer and Haala were haunted by what they had witnesses for the rest of their lives and the story of what they saw was passed down to their relatives and neighbors in Albin Township and all of Brown County. Richard, the father, never truly understood or well-liked by his neighbors, in fact some feared him, was forced to spend years in St. Peter's Asylum, but that was not before he took Annie Mary's body from her grave in Iberia and brought her back to his farm. He apparently became obsessed with keeping her body safe so he moved her. He chose the highest piece of land on his property, buried her under a tree, placed her original headstone there, and built a massive stonewall with a locked gate around the grave.

There is very little information about Annie Mary's mother's reaction, but we do know that Richard became obsessed with Annie Mary's grave maybe to the point that it drove him to have a breakdown. Or maybe he had some mental issues prior to her death, maybe paranoia, which would account for the fact that he was mistrusting of getting a doctor for Annie. Facts not known. What we do know is that in November of 1887, one year after Annie Mary's death, Richard was committed to the St. Peter Asylum in St. Peter, Minnesota.

His new daughter Emma was born in 1888. He was paroled one year later in 1888 and his official discharge came in February of 1889. Unfortunately his mental health did not last and he was brought back to the asylum in September of 1889 and this time he stayed there for five years, discharged in October of 1894. Although we don't know if Richard and Elizabeth divorced, we do know that she left the farm with her daughters, a fourth daughter, Lena was born in July 1894 in Raymond. There are conflicting accounts as to who her father was, but probably not Richard.

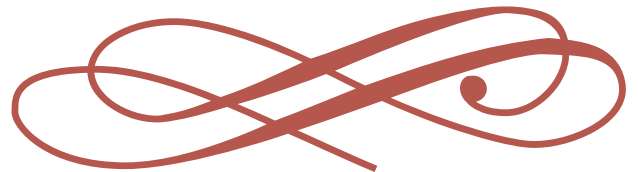
After Richard's release from St. Peter, from 1895 until 1914, he most likely resided on his farm in Albin. In May of 1914 he sold his family farm to a farmer named Fischer for around \$19,000. Sources say that none of the money was given to his family. In May of 1915 Richard arrived in Ontario, Canada. Why Canada is not really known. Historical 1917 records show that Richard was a Mormon and had joined the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He published a book about planting fruit trees in 1918. At the age of 67, in November of 1922, he died in Ontario from a heart attack while cutting wood.

Annie Mary's sister Elizabeth (Lizzie) the oldest, married and adopted two children, the youngest a son and a daughter. The children's parents were victims of the influenza epidemic. She and her husband farmed near Clara City until 1939 and then retired and moved to Clara City. She died at the age of 86 at Rice Hospital in Willmar. Her sister Lena married and had five children. Her oldest child, Esther lived past the age of 100.

Her granddaughter described her as not particularly affectionate, an introvert, but always kind. She loved her husband, her children, grandchildren, flowers, cooking and baking. She resides in Lakeview Community Church Cemetery in Hillman. Mary Adeline, who was born in 1878, also married and had five children. In 1932 she committed suicide and was buried alongside her sister Annie Mary at her final resting place in this county.

After Richard leaves, Annie Mary's grave site was neglected and although it was surrounded by a wall with a locked gate, teenagers found it fun to scale the wall, leave their trash and on many occasions move her headstone only later was it retrieved and put back in the enclosed area. It was either the county, the state or the family that decided to move her body to protect and dignify her grave. Since her mother and some of her sisters had residence in Kandiyohi County, Annie Mary was moved in 1990. May she now rest in peace.

And now the fun part! The HAUNTINGS! Since I lived in Brown County for 35 years and very close to the grave site, I have always been aware of the strange unexplained things that were reported but now in doing the research I realize that those that were reporting the strange incidents were some of my former students, parents and grandparents. Yikes! That has made it all more real.

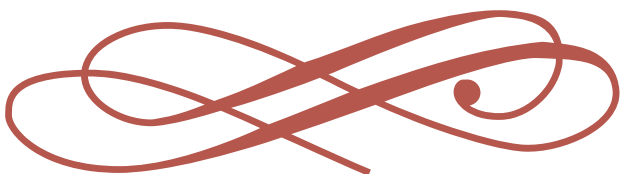


Here are a few of the reported suspicious stories. Annie Mary's spirit continues to haunt the spot there she was buried. Some have seen her body wondering around the burial site within the stonewalls that were built by her father. Many reported upon driving by the burial site seeing a little girl dressed in white swinging from the big tree close to her grave. As soon as the little girl is approached, she disappears. Now even though the tree is not longer there, her body removed, the wall taken down, the stories continue. Horses do not like going near the burial site and the gravestone has been reported as cold to the touch. I will have to personally check that last statement myself.

In a 2018 blog, a former student reported " ... The gravesite is no longer there, however. There is nothing that remains but the hill on the highest part of the farm – right next to the gravel road where she was once buried and the stone fence once stood"

*..." Some friends and I visited the gravesite in 1996. ...When we left, about 50 yards from the site the lights and radio in the car shut off. Then soon after the car died."* A former student also reported.

*... " But when I was younger (1970's) myself and some friends would go out there and clean it up( from parties that would go on there) at one point we got there and the stone was off its base (tried to move it but it was to heavy) my brothers have stories also about their experiences there too."* A parent of a former student remembered.



In 2019 a former student commented that, *"I went there with friends around 1984. ... When discussing whether or not the stories were true our lights on my car started turning off and on as we were driving away from the site. I remember it like it happened yesterday."*

Teens trashed the site with beer parties and visits to the grave. Karen S. noted on Feb.17, 2021 that her family lived just a mile from Iberia, in Stark Township. Her 4-H club cleaned up the Annie Mary Twente gravesite on the Fisher farm back in the 1990's before the family removed her coffin from the private stoned fence gravesite. There used to be flowers that were planted around the perimeter but the 4-H club found just broken glass from teenage parties and hauled it away. Even her headstone was moved and lost several times. Because of this continued attention to Annie Mary's grave either the county, state or family decided to move her grave out of Brown County mainly because of the continued desecration done to the site. Although she died in 1886 her story still is told all of the time. Do the hauntings and strange things still occur in her new resting place? Don't know.

If you think that Annie Mary's story is totally unique, you would be wrong! Google buried alive and you will see that it is not. In fact because of those occurrences, coffins were rigged with bells to alert cemetery workers that the person they had just put in the ground was still alive. Case in point, a few years after the death of Annie Mary, Essie Dunbar, a 30-year-old woman from South Carolina suffered an epilepsy attack, everyone thinking at the time that it was deadly.



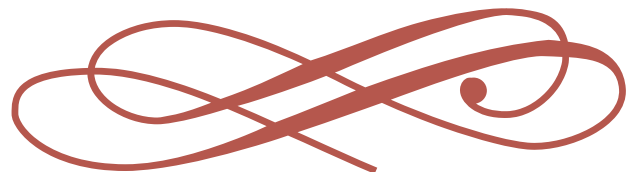
They were dead wrong. Her sister who lived far away was not able to get to the memorial service on time and just arrived as the final dirt was being placed on her coffin. Essie's sister would have none of that and demanded that they allow her to see her sister one last time. And weren't they all surprised when they opened the lid of the coffin and Essie sat up and smiled. She went on to live for another 47 years.

Around 1867 it was thought that if you put a lit candle under one's nose and the flame remains stable, the person was dead. Well, in the case of 24-year-old Philomele Jonetre, who had contracted cholera, the lit candle signaled her death, but she was not dead. Embalming was a thing of the future so bodies were put in the ground relatively quickly and in her case it was 16 hours after her death. To the surprise of the gravedigger, who heard a thumping against the casket and dug the poor girl up. They heard distinct sounds of a heartbeat, muscle contraction and eyelid fluttering. However, the sounds and movements didn't last long and she was buried again. Probably traumatized by waking up in a coffin buried under six feet of dirt.

And one more story! This story happened in 1937. Now I know that embalming can be traced back to the Egyptians and that is was pretty standard practice by the Civil War, but 1937?? How could this happen? Well, it did to a 19-year-old guy by the name of Angelo Hays. He was involved in a motorcycle crash that sent him headlong helmetless into a brick wall. The crash so destroyed his face that his parents were not able to identify him, but he was buried.

He was unearthed two days later because of an examination that needed to be done by an insurance agent that was not done prior to burial. His body was warm!! Angelo had been in a complete trance like state, allowing his oxygen levels to decrease and that kept him alive. After several surgeries and therapy he recovered and instantly became famous as the guy who was buried alive. He really died in 2008. Not the end of his story though. Because of his experience he went on to invent a coffin with a security system, chemical toilet, radio transmitter, thick upholstery, food storage, and even a library.

So there you have it! Buried alive is not as uncommon as you may think. In my research I was struck by the fact that there were so many cases and then I wondered about all the incidents that went undetected or unreported. Then I was struck by the fact that if a person was embalmed how could they be buried alive. However, embalming is not a federal law. In California, embalming is required if the body is being transported by train, plane or ship. In Connecticut embalming is required if a person had a contagious disease and in Florida, 24 hours after death a body must be refrigerated or embalmed. State by state, religion-by-religion and person-by-person. Many are now electing to be cremated so unless the body is present during the service, it need not be embalmed. Too much information?





Come and join the Kandiyohi County Historical Society on a cemetery walk of Tripolis Cemetery south of Kandiyohi, MN. You will get to learn the stories of the families in Kandiyohi County. Each stop along the tour will have a guide telling the story of that family.

The Tripolis Lutheran Church is going to be open for you to explore and learn more about the building and history of the church.

There will be a tour starting every half hour. A check in station will be located between the church and cemetery. This event will require walking on uneven terrain.

This a free event! Refreshments will be served. Any questions, please let us know at 320-235-1881!

Look forward to seeing you!

### *19th Annual Fundraiser for Sperry House Preservation*

The 19th annual “Dinner at the Sperry House” fundraiser for preserving the Sperry House is underway. Four winners of the raffle will receive dinner for two in the Sperry House on October 20. The dinner includes a turn of the 20th century meal catered by McKales Catering of New London served by KCHS staff and volunteers. Raffle tickets are on sale at the Kandiyohi County Historical Society museum and from museum members.



Funds raised will supplement the repairs made to the 130 year old home. KCHS has submitted a grant to begin the first phase of preservation to the Sperry House. The funds raised will go towards that preservation. Tickets are included in your newsletter along with a donation form. Any questions, please contact us!



Kandiyohi County Historical Society  
610 Highway 71 NE  
Willmar, MN 56201

Non-Profit  
Organization  
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Permit No. 484  
Willmar, MN

## KANDIYOHI COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Phone: 320-235-1881

Email: kandhist@msn.com

## HOURS

Monday	9am - 4pm
Tuesday	9am - 4pm
Wednesday	9am - 4pm
Thursday	9am - 4pm
Friday	9am - 4pm
Saturday	Closed
Sunday	Closed

## GURI ENDRESON CABIN

Closed for the season

## SPERRY HOUSE

Open by appointment

## WEST CENTRAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME



The Kandiyohi County Historical Society partnered with the Willmar Stingers to begin a West Central Baseball Hall of Fame in 2014. We are seeking nominations for the 2024 class. In order to be considered for the West Central Baseball Hall of Fame, nominees must fall within the 45-mile radius of Willmar and be featured in one of the following categories: Professional, Amateur, or Community Involvement. The Historical Society will begin accepting nominations immediately and they are due by Friday, October 27, 2023. More information and the nomination forms can be found at [www.kandiyohicountyhistory.com](http://www.kandiyohicountyhistory.com) or by contacting Jill at the Historical Society [director@kandiyohicountyhistory.com](mailto:director@kandiyohicountyhistory.com)