



Kandi Express

*Newsletter of the Kandiyohi County Historical Society
-Keeping Your Heritage Alive-*

Volume 57, Issue 3

September 2020

SERVING THE COMMUNITIES

OF

Atwater
Blomkest
Hawick
Kandiyohi
Lake Lillian
New London
Pennock
Prinsburg
Raymond
Regal
Roseland
Spicer
Sunburg
Svea
Willmar

124TH ANNUAL MEETING & PROGRAM WILL BE HELD VIRTUALLY ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 15TH 5:30PM ON ZOOM

With the current situation in our world, the Kandiyohi County Historical Society will be holding their annual meeting virtually. The Board of Directors decided that a virtual meeting would be the safest way to hold the meeting.

The meeting will be held on Thursday, October 15 at 5:30pm. Please email director@kandiyohicountyhistory.com if you would like an invite to the meeting. A link for the meeting will be sent to you along with the agenda.

The Sperry House Supper is postponed this year. We will bring it back next year in 2021. Due to the restrictions we have due to COVID-19, the Kandiyohi County Historical Society Board of Directors decided to postpone it until 2021. The Sperry House has not be open this summer due to COVID-19.

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*We will miss seeing all of you in person this
year and look forward to next year!*

Kandiyohi County Historical Society Receives Grant for Sperry House

The Kandiyohi County Historical Society received a Minnesota Historical and Cultural Grant from the Minnesota Historical Society in September 2020. The grant project is to hire a consultant to complete a conditions assessment for the Albert H. Sperry and Jennie Sperry House.

This is the next step in the process for the Sperry House. It has been over 20 years since a report on the condition of the home has been completed. This assessment will help to guide us in prioritizing what needs to be done to the home to help preserve it.

Minnesota Historical and Cultural Heritage Grants are made possible by the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment through the vote of Minnesotans on Nov. 4, 2008. The Legacy Amendment supports efforts to preserve Minnesota land, water and legacy, including Minnesota history and cultural heritage.



Kandiyohi County Historical Society

610 NE Hwy 71

Willmar, MN 56201

Telephone: 320/235-1881

E-Mail: kandhist@msn.com

Website:

www.kandiyohicountyhistory.com

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2019-2020

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Kandi Express

A Quarterly Newsletter of the Kandiyohi County Historical Society. September 2020 Vol. 57, Issue 3. Non-profit postage paid at Willmar, MN. Reprints with permission, please. Membership in the Kandiyohi County Historical Society carries with it a subscription to the *Kandi Express*. Stories about local history can be submitted to :

Newsletter Editor: Jill Wohnoutka, KCHS.

Newsletter Layout: Mike Norberg

***Discovering, Preserving,
and Sharing the Story of
Kandiyohi County and Its People.***

KCHS Wish List

Office Supplies

- 8” x 11” 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

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

Community Room

- 8 foot white plastic table: \$110.00
- Plastic tablecloths

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

Volunteers

Archives/Office:

Julie Neubauer, Bonnie Hoogeveen, Donna McLouth, Jan Helin, Mike Norberg, Sheila Bosch, Nancy Gustafson, Rose Nett, Tyler Nett, Randy Haats, Cal Miner, Larry Lohn

Building/Painting/Thursday Crew:

Dale Johnson, Loren Luschen, Rollie Boll, Gayle Larson, Harley Aalfs, Larry Scholla, John Davis, Allan Simon, Ron Bay, Mark Peterson and Loretta Fenske.

Coffee Pot: Cal and Diane Miner, Chappell Central, City of Willmar Public Works

Landscaping:

Linda and Gayle Larson, Allan and Elaine Simon, Joel and Bev Bruse

In-Kind Donations

Kandiyohi Co. Community Service Grounds Work/Snow Removal

Barb Youngberg —Digital Transfer Service



Thank you ~ *Your gifts help with preservation, exhibits, programs and many projects!*

**New and Renewal
Basic Membership**

July 1, 2020-August 31, 2020

Individual

Connie Schnobrich
Linda Dilley
Melodee Dorn
Carolyn Sowinski
Todd Erickson
Jakob Etrheim
Allard & Peggy Christenson
Russyl Emberland
Janice Mittendorf Smith
Gary Johnson
Krisi Tornquist
Odell Jacobson
Howard McAdams
Violet Ceske
Shirley Wood Ruehle
Judy Foley
Pat Plooster
Donn Winckler
William Keefe
Donna Kulenkamp
David Cairns
Dale Hedlund

Special Donations:

July 1, 2020-August 31, 2020

Building Fund

Mary Schnell

Coffee Pot

Francis Kalvoda

Engine 2523

Howard McAdams
Pat Shelman Plooster
Allan & Elaine Simon

General Donation

Robert & Pauline Halvorson
Steph Sjoberg

Memorial

In Memory of Phyllis Erickson
Doug Erickson
In Memory of Kenneth Norbie
Larry Johnson

Sperry House

In Memory of Karen Dresser
Linda Mickelson

June Thompson
Household
Hans & Jan Dahl
Kathy Vruwink
Jim & Shirley Portinga
Patricia & Gordon Hauge
Roger & Faye Gilland
Monroe & Irene Wallin
Peter & Emilie Poss
Marlin & Corrine Hemjum
William Dowdell
Dr. & Mrs. John K. Meinert
Mary Sawatzky
Alan & Mary Quale
John & Bonnie Boe
Mary & Tim Pieh
Evertt Wallin
Jon Olson
Allan & Elaine Simon
Scott Kaercher
Larry & Judy Lindor
Neil Graves

Business Memberships

*Thank you for providing support for
preservation of our heritage!*

Advocate -\$250

Harvest Bank
Lakeside Press
Johnson, Moody, Schmidt & Kleinhuizen
Home State Bank

Partner -\$500

Kensington Bank

Supporting Memberships

*Thank you for providing support for
preservation of our heritage!*

Silver-\$1000

Eleanor Sperry

Bronze-\$500

David Schneider & Trish Perry
Ardell & Marilyn Johnson
Scott Nelson

Patron-\$100

Corneil-Elkjer Agency North Risk Part-
ners
Lyle Stai
Dr. Roger & Kay Strand
Rand & Donna Middleton

Todd Erickson
Rolf & Joyce Standfuss
Peterson Brothers Funeral Home
Dick & Delores Olson
Don & Janet Dokken
Doris Hennen
Jon & Sophie Pederson
Sonya Peterson
Stan & Sallie Green
Diane & Larry Macht
Andrew Pakalns
Loren & Smitty Luschen
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Rambow, Inc.
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West Central Area 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 2021 class. The West Central Baseball Hall of Fame covers a 45-mile radius of Willmar which includes communities such as Glenwood, Montevideo, Redwood Falls and Dassel-Cokato. 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

Player or manager who resided in West Central Minnesota and went on to success in high levels of professional baseball as a player, coach, or manager.

Amateur

An amateur player, coach, or manager who was successful as a player in youth, high school, and/or adult amateur baseball.

Community Involvement

A longtime resident of West Central Minnesota who has achieved great success as a supporter of baseball and has made significant contributions to baseball.

The Historical Society will begin accepting nominations immediately to be reviewed by the selection committee. If you wish to submit a nomination, a form has been created to submit potential candidates to the Historical Society. The form and 45 mile radius map can be obtained at www.kandiyohicountyhistory.com or by contacting Jill Wohnoutka at the Historical Society at 320-235-1881 or director@kandiyohicountyhistory.com. The 2021 inductions to the West Central Baseball Hall of Fame will be held in the early part of 2021.

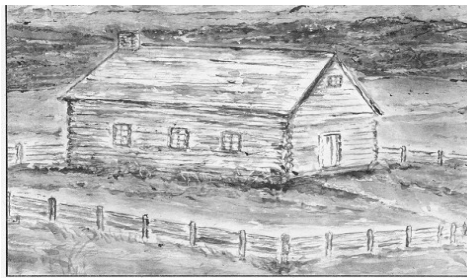
Nominations must be submitted to the Historical Society by Friday, October 30, 2020 in order to be considered for the 2021 class. All nominations must include a nomination form.

In Sympathy

- **Yvonne “Bonnie” Fischer Anderson**, 95, KCHS lifetime member since 1982, passed away on February 25, 2020. She is survived by six children, 16 grandchildren, 26 great-grandchildren and one great-great grandchild.
- **Beverly D. Heath Wolfe**, 92, KCHS member since 1983, passed away on March 23, 2020. She is survived by four children, 14 grandchildren, 35 great-grandchildren and one great-great-grandchild.
- **Gary C. Larson**, 86, KCHS lifetime member since 1982, passed away on April 11, 2020. He is survived by his wife, Marilyn, three children, seven grandchildren, and one great-grandson.
- **Curtis W. Norskog**, 93, KCHS lifetime member since 1976, passed away on April 21, 2020. He is survived by three children and four grandchildren.
- **William “Bill” H. Magnuson**, 90, KCHS member since 2004, passed away on June 1, 2020. He is survived by two children and five grandchildren.
- **Marlene Nelson Anderson**, 86, passed away on June 1, 2020 and **Harlow L. Anderson**, 92, passed away on June 5, 2020. They were KCHS members since 1997. They are survived by two daughters, six grandchildren, and one great-grandchild.
- **Ione Glenn Dowdell Polley**, 88, KCHS lifetime member since 1992, passed away on June 6, 2020. She is survived by four children, nine grandchildren, and eight great-grandchildren.
- **Jean Birkland Holmgren**, 89, KCHS member since 1998, passed away on June 9, 2020. She is survived by two sons, five grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren.
- **Loretta Gadney Brandt**, 91, KCHS lifetime member since 1981, passed away on July 13, 2020. She is survived by three children, three grandchildren, and six great-grandchildren.
- **Vernon “Lefty” Norling**, 84, KCHS lifetime member since 1984, passed away on August 8, 2020. He is survived by his wife, Ruth Ann, three daughters, six grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.
- **Kay Lundsten Strand**, 84, KCHS lifetime member since 1987, passed away on August 8, 2020. She is survived by her husband, Roger, four children and three grandchildren.
- **Marlene J. Lundquist Gilhoi Brown**, 88, KCHS lifetime member since 1984, passed away on September 10, 2020. She is survived by one daughter, four grandchildren, and four great-grandchildren.

**Norway Lake Lutheran
Historical Association**

6338 County Road 40 NW
New London, MN 56273



Norway Lake Log Church - 1868

www.nllha.org

www.facebook.com/nllha.org

News from the Norway Lake Lutheran Historical Association

September 2020

THE PANDEMIC OF 2020

No doubt, the year 2020 will go down as one of the most difficult many of us have experienced. It's been a tough year for our organization as well. As you are aware we've cancelled all activities since May due to Covid-19. We are hoping to be able to hold our Advent Service in December and run a full schedule next year. Stay tuned to our website (www.nllha.org) and our Facebook page for more information! There's an old adage "Those who do not remember the past are condemned to repeat it" which brings to mind the 1918 Influenza Epidemic and similarities to our battle in 2020 with Covid-19. We are grateful to Jill and the KCHS for reprinting a section from Carolyn Mankell Sowinski's recent book entitled *Four Farms: Life in Lake Andrew Township, 1864-1964*. Carolyn is a member of NLLHA, a native of Lake Andrew Township in Kandiyohi County and has written extensively on local history. Her most recent effort is *Lake Florida Mission Covenant Cemetery*. *Four Farms*, published by Lakeside Press, Willmar, is available for purchase at KCHS and from the publisher. Thanks to Carolyn and KCHS for allowing us to share this section entitled "Influenza Pandemic."

THE INFLUENZA PANDEMIC OF 1918-1920¹

Concurrent to and following the Great War was the influenza pandemic of 1918-1920. A world destroyed by a war was also ravaged by the flu. Two-thirds of all deaths occurred within a few weeks in the fall of 1918. Estimates for deaths across the globe are between 50 and 100 million, with 675,000 in the United States. These numbers are far higher than the 117,000 American service members who died in the war.

Epidemiologists have identified Kansas as the location of the first influenza infections—first in Haskell County and then in Fort Riley. From the Midwest the disease and deaths then spread to other military camps and across the Atlantic Ocean with the military to Europe. The first outbreak in Europe occurred in April 1918, in Brest, France, after American troops disembarked at the harbor. Another wave, a more deadly strain, of the epidemic returned to the United States with the soldiers coming home from the war. The disease knew no political boundaries. People fighting and enduring the war's destruction on both sides of the conflict suffered from influenza. It spread within the United States—to military camps, cities, and rural areas. War was the primary reason for the pandemic's rapid geographic progression. Fighting and winning the war were of more urgency than fighting a growing flu pandemic. The U.S. military needed soldiers so men were transported between military camps and across the ocean—even if they were sick—which led to more military illnesses and thousands of American deaths. Military camps were overcrowded due to the need for soldiers. The medical field was aware of how the disease spread and the need to quarantine. However, military quarantines occurred too late to quell the epidemic at the camps. Several soldiers and sailors from Kandiyohi County died when training at military camps across the United States.

¹While called Spanish Influenza, the disease was initially identified in the United States, China, and France, not Spain. Due to press censorship in the American and European press during World War I, the Spanish press was the first to write about the illness in the spring of 1918 after the country's King Alfonso XIII became ill. Spain was neutral in the war and thus had no press restrictions. The 1918 U. S. Sedition Act stated that it was a crime to publish negative articles which would affect the growing U.S. war effort. Reporting about the flu was considered negative publicity because soldiers were getting ill and military leaders failed to take proper precautions to stop the spread of the disease

Newly enlisted soldiers from Kandiyohi County primarily received military training at Camp Grant in Rock Island, Illinois. Autumn 1918 deaths from influenza at Camp Grant, include these men from the county who had just arrived at the camp about a month earlier:

John Peter Soderlund of Lake Andrew Township, died October 6
Harry Paulson of St. John's Township, died October 5
Herman Skutle of Dovre Township, died October 4
Andrew Lundgren of Colfax Township, died October 6 immediately after his transfer from Camp Grant
Iver Cornell Dunham of Norway Lake Township, died October 4
Christian Evenson of Norway Lake Township, died October 6
Willard Doss of Raymond, died September 30
Floyd Wessels of Raymond, died October 5

On October 8, the military leader of the Camp Grant, Colonel Charles Hagadorn, received a report which stated that more than 500 of his men died from the flu including young men from Kandiyohi County. Hagadorn recognized his part in ordering the overcrowding of Camp Grant and initially ignoring quarantine advice from the medical personnel until it was too late. Minutes after receiving the report Hagadorn killed himself with his gun.

This strain of influenza, spread in the air and by touch, primarily killed young and strong adults, ages 20-35; 40% of the death were in this age group. Previous flu epidemics took the very old or very young. The average age at time of death in the 1918 epidemic was 34 years. The victims were called "doubly dead"—the death of the person and the death of the person's future. The immune system in these previously healthy adults mounted a rapid response to target the virus which had invaded the lungs. Literature states that it was the body's immune system which killed the young adults—not the influenza infection by itself.

The majority of influenza victims recovered. The majority of pneumonia victims recovered. Some had a mild infection; some more severe. They were sick for about ten days and experienced bad headaches, body aches, sore throats, fever, exhaustion, and coughs. But for some—millions across the world—their infection did not follow normal patterns.

Those who had the most virulent strain faced death. Some were dead only a few hours after experiencing their first symptoms. For others death was within 24-48 hours. Here are the severe to lethal symptoms which victims faced as they fought the disease:

- Blood loss from nosebleeds
- Blood loss from the ears
- Coughed up blood
- Coughed so hard that abdominal muscles and cartilage tore
- Painful headaches
- Intense body aches
- Vomiting
- Fingertips and lips tinged with blue
- Cyanosis: Skin turned unusual colors, including shades of blue to almost black due to lack of oxygen in the blood.
- Hemorrhagic lungs: Within 24-48 hours the lungs filled with blood and the victim could not breathe.

Many of those who had severe infections also suffered from lingering brain and nervous system complications

²Western leaders who met in Europe to finalize the peace treaty suffered from influenza, including President Woodrow Wilson and his staff. There is a strong argument that because of his decreased mental abilities due to his severe flu infection, his missed meetings, and his sudden reversal in negotiations, Wilson conceded to European leaders in their need to punish Germany with severe reparations. This rapid reversal in negotiations laid the groundwork for a nationalistic Germany to arise in the 1920s and 1930s. A severely weakened and diminished man, Wilson soon suffered a stroke—or it was additional complications from his severe influenza from which he never fully recovered.

muscle twitching, depression, delirium, hallucinations, confusion, forgetfulness, psychosis, schizophrenia, and even suicide,².

The flu arrived in Kandiyohi County in the fall of 1918 and stayed for about two years, occurring in waves. Records show no deaths occurred at the four farms due to influenza. However two women and one man died from the flu who were connected to the families: a sister of a renter, a woman who was a neighbor and a former classmate—the brother to a farm wife.

Nellie Hatlestad, 1901-1918

Nellie Luella Amalia Hatlestad died on December 4, 1918, at the age of 17. She was the youngest daughter of Severin and Pernille Hatlestad and a sister to Lars Hatlestad, renter of the Norman farm. Nellie died

from a two days' illness of the influenza... At the time of Nellies' death the mother was at the New London Hospital too weak to be told. She has since, however, improved and has been informed of her bereavement.

One month prior to Nellie's death, the family had buried another woman, Caroline (Tollefson) Hatlestad, wife of Lars, and the mother of seven children. She had given birth to her youngest son just three days prior to her death. Caroline's obituary stated the cause of death was from pneumonia, which was often a complication of influenza. Born in 1882, she died in 1918 at the age of 36 and is buried at First Lutheran Church of Norway Lake cemetery. Her funeral services were conducted outside of the home and then outside of the church building due to the flu epidemic. When gathered together, people were concerned about enclosed spaces where they believed people could fall ill.



Nellie Hatlestad, 1901-1918
(Image courtesy of Marlin Henjum)

Agness (Larson) Knutson 1888-1919

Agnes (Larson) Knutson died the following spring. She was the daughter of Lars H. and Helene Larson, and born on July 6, 1888. She grew up on the farm in Section 20 (SE ¼) and worshiped at Lake Florida Mission Church where she attended Sunday School and was confirmed. She attended District 25 School located across the road from her parents' farm. Her former classmates from the four farms families included Harvin and Clara Christenson; Herman, Edna, and Alice Mankell; Edith, Lillie, Oscar, and Victor Larson; and Stella Berry. Expecting their first child, Agnes married Elmer Knutson on April 14, 1919 and she fell ill days later, after their arrival at their new home in Granite Falls in western Minnesota. Her death came one week later, on April 23.

While on their wedding trip she was taken ill. Mr. and Mrs. Knutson had reached Granite Falls when she fell victim to influenza pneumonia which resulted in death. Her mother was the only one who had time to reach her bedside before she passed away.

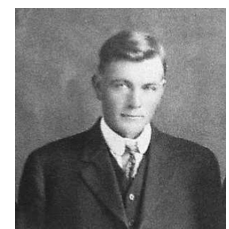
Pallbearers at her funeral included former classmates from the four farms: Herman Mankell, Harvin Christenson, and Oscar Larson. Wearing her wedding dress, she and her unborn child are buried at Lake Florida Mission Church Cemetery.



Agnes (Larson) Knutson on her wedding day in 1919
(Image courtesy of Loretta Brandt)

Casper Engen 1882-1920

One year after the death and burial of Agnes Knutson, another death affected the four farms community, specifically the Christenson family. Casper Engen, the brother of Mina Christenson (Mrs. J. S. Christenson), died on May 15, 1920, at the age of 35. The son of Martin and Helen Engen, Casper was born on May 7, 1882. *"He fell victim to the dreaded plague influenza, and having a weak heart that disease affected this important organ and caused his death."* He is buried at East Norway Lake Lutheran Church cemetery.



Casper Engen 1882-1920
(Image courtesy of Marlin Henjum)

³While not connected to the four farms in this book, Hilda is included in this chapter because of her daughter's memoir—a first-hand account of a woman's death from the flu and how it affected the family.

In Kandiyohi County and Lake Andrew Township, the residents responded to calls for aid and restrictions on activities. Beginning in the fall of 1918, the county Health Officer, Dr. J. M. Rains, placed bans on public gatherings such as movie theaters and churches. These bans lasted about five weeks. He also closed Willmar public schools. Those who had recovered from influenza were asked to wear masks. School District 25 was closed for about a week in October 1918.

During 1918, the Health Officer for the county reported 38 deaths from influenza and various complications, including pneumonia. One of those deaths in the county was a Hilda (Haramoen) Espelien. Her parents were Norwegian immigrants who settled in Section 35 of Norway Lake Township. Her husband Adolph Espelien was from a farm about a mile away, in Section 25. They married in 1906, lived in Norway Lake Township early in their marriage, and were members of First Lutheran Church of Norway Lake. By 1910, the growing family lived in New London and later returned to the Espelien farm in Norway Lake Township. Hilda was 33 years old, a mother of six children (ages 2-12) and pregnant with her seventh, when she died from pneumonia, a complication from her flu infection. According to her obituary, her illness was brief as were many deaths from the lethal form of influenza. She was buried at Oak Hill Cemetery in New London. Hilda's oldest child, Viola Myrtle (Espelien) Skare, was 12 years old when her mother died. Several years later she reflected back on her mom, life in the household, fears about the flu, and that difficult time for her, her siblings, and her father.

My mother was a sweet, lovely person. She was tall and slim and had lots of long, auburn hair and she wore it in a pug on the top of her head. She was a milliner and seamstress so she made beautiful hats, wedding gowns, and confirmation dresses, etc. She worked for Mary Peterson in New London, a milliner and seamstress who taught sewing. She [Hilda] taught me to sew when I was about five and I wasn't too enthused about it then. She made me sew my doll dresses by hand, and if she thought I could do it better, she made me take it all up again and again until it got nice. I might as well have done my best the first time. The same thing with reading. We had to learn our ABC's long before we started school and our Katikismus [catechism]. We used to have a whole month of Norwegian school every year and had to memorize most of the Bible history...and even Norwegian hymns.

My mother died on Christmas Eve, December 24, 1918, at 12 o'clock. She died with an unborn baby from the flu which had turned to pneumonia. Everybody was so scared of the flu that year that nobody but our dad, aunt, and my sister and I went to the funeral. There were a few who met us at the grave. She was buried in New London. Our home was broken-up and we all went to live with neighbors and relatives.

Bibliography:

- Barry, John F. *The Great Influenza: The Epic Story of the Deadliest Plague in History*. New York City, NY: Penguin Group, 2004.
- Brandt Family Collection, with thanks to Loretta Brandt.
- Henjum Family Collection, with thanks to Marlin Henjum.
- Leite Family Collection, with thanks to Dan Leite.
- *New London Times*, January 2, 1919
- *Smithsonian Magazine*, November 2017
- *Washington Post*
November 6, 2018, Section F, p. 1; November 8, 2018, Section Q, page 6
- *Willmar Tribune*
1918: October 9, October 16, October 23, October 30, November 20, November 27, December 18
1919: January 22, May 7
1920: January 7, May 26

The Sporting Scene

By Rand Middleton

Jump Ball! Women's Sports Tipped Off In '70s At College

Today Ridgewater College is a stylish campus with modern buildings set among green lawns on the hilltop overlooking Foot Lake and the city beyond. Comparatively, it had a log-cabin kind of start.

On Sept. 7, 1961, the Willmar Area Vocational-Technical School opened in abandoned military quonset huts.

The previous March, Willmar voters were 95 percent in favor of the concept of a vo-tech and transfer college, and in May put their pocketbooks behind it with 97 percent supporting a bond issue. School district superintendent Philip Helland led the effort, according to a history by Mike Cullen, who also credited *West Central Daily Tribune* publisher O.B. Augustson and U.S. Senator Hubert H. Humphrey with moving the plan forward. The key was acquiring permission to claim the deactivated U.S. Air Force Radar Station on 22 acres of land. The Willmar Army Reserve had first dibs, but the school district bought the Sperry Property and leased it to the Reserve to erect a new armory along U.S. 71 N.

Instructors with practical work experience in the trades were recruited from around the state. They taught in 60 x 20 foot "army style" quonset huts, each divided into three classrooms. A staff person's office consisted of a two-drawer filing cabinet, a small table and a chair, according to Cullen, an early ag teacher who was appointed Director of Willmar Vo-Tech in 1975.

In the fall class 15 students were enrolled full time in electronics, 14 in auto mechanics and 29 in business. Since summer, 29 women were enrolled in the practical nursing program which was at Rice Hospital. Cosmetology would start later as equipment arrived.

The junior college would open a year later, in the fall of '62. The library was in the former air force gym. The old operation building became the college theater and lecture hall. The air force mess hall became, naturally, the cafeteria. Sports activities beginning the '62-63 school year were in one of the Willmar school buildings or the City Auditorium.

Winters were hard. The northwind blasted the fully-exposed little campus. Teachers wore boots indoors on the cold floors. Fuel lines and water lines froze. So did the sewer system.

More frequent were power failures, shutting down hair dryers, business machines, welders, food service and all else. During storms, any season, trees would blow down, severing the overhead power lines reaching from the radio station to the summit enclave.

Enrollment grew quickly at both the vo-tech and the junior college. Interscholastic sports for men emerged right away with vo-tech students eligible to play. Football, basketball, baseball and wrestling each were quick to win championships. Co-eds were part of the fan base. The course catalog offered some intramurals, cheerleading and Wampums (a pom-pom dance line).

In 1970, the Campus Women's Club organized activities, including intramurals, as "An opportunity to develop social poise, etiquette and a well-rounded personality." Physical Education offered women's weightlifting which the school



Air Force barracks on the wind-swept plain above Foot Lake in 1960. Big snow piled up at the radar base and late isolating the vo-tech and college.



newspaper teasingly supported: "Women should get into weightlifting to give them curvaceous bodies to help them wear the pants in the family."

Intramurals were gaining with softball and basketball teams. Men's sports were do-or-die while females played just for fun. "A jump ball in a girl's basketball game adds excitement and humor to intramural activities" read a caption in the 1972 school annual.

But attitudes were changing. Title IX became the midwife for the berth of interscholastic sports. Girls and young women were eager to join the competitive spotlight that had shone only on males.

But it would be a man's job, at least at WCC, to get things started. According to Carrie Lorraine Ogdahl's "The History of Women's Intercollegiate Athletics at Ridgewater College" (Master's Thesis, 2005), Linton Lehrer emerges as an unsung hero.

A Wisconsin native and WWII army veteran, Lehrer earned degrees after the war from the University of Minnesota and North Dakota. He came to Willmar from Crookston High School in 1967 to teach journalism, photography, direct intramural director and advise the school paper and annual. Additionally, he was a talented vocalist and trumpet player and a key figure in organizing youth hockey programs.

Supported by Title IX, Lehrer encouraged the administration to add women's athletics. The *Hilltopper* got on board in a 1973 article making clear "A women's athletic program is needed [but] there are no female physical education instructors" dominated by men. Lehrer became the first coach of women's gymnastics, basketball, volleyball, track and field, cross-country and golf, and the first women's athletic director (part time).

"I think it is long overdue," he told the *Hilltopper* in 1974. "Women have too long been relegated to a minor role when it comes to athletics."

Arlen Sjerven was another 70s pioneer. He joined the college full-time as a counselor after teaching and coaching at Royalton for five years. He was the first softball coach and later coached golf. He stayed at the college for 28 years and longer than that as the public address announcer at volleyball, basketball and football games.

In a 2005 interview with Carrie Ogdahl, Sjervan said of Lehrer: "He was the type of individual that would take on anything to help the college. Not only did he coach all the sporting teams in their early years ,,, [he] was an all-around advocate for the community college and what it stood for." the latter abandoned after two years for A decade after men's sports hit the new campus, women's sports got off to a herky-jerky start.

What follows are several highlights as the varsity program matured, as outlined by Ogdahl.

*Volleyball, track and field, and gymnastics debuted, low participation. Softball started in spring of '75 followed by tennis in '76, when for the first time women's sports received postseason recognition.

*Men's tennis coach Cal Minke also coaches the new women's tennis program. He coached four seasons over two stints, including 10-0 in 1984.

*Pat Thompson came on board as the first woman to be appointed athletic director, albeit part-time. Thompson, a Hector native, out of Southwest State and Bemidji State, comes to Willmar after positions at Belgrade and Morgan. She will coach year-around but it still doesn't add up to a full-time spot.



*Also, in 1977 the softball Warriorettes lobbied successfully to become the Lady Warriors.

*Three years later at the urging of Sjerven [he was way out front of the recent trend], the Viking Warrior replaced the native-American logo as a matter of cultural sensitivity.

*The '82 volleyball team under Val Swanson, the school's first full-time women's athletic director, finishes 37-3 and with the school's first region team title and national appearance in women's sports. In 1988, the school was recognized for having the most athletic programs for women in the junior college division covering North Dakota, Minnesota and Wisconsin.

*The 1986-87 school year sees the Willmar campus selected the Minnesota Junior College Conference All-Sports champions. It was the first time women's programs were included.

*1988, softball team wins Region 13 tournament and national trip under Bert Phillips, who retires after six seasons with a 99-77 record

*1989, under Dick Bjur, the softball team won its first state championship. In three seasons Bjur's teams log an 80-14 record with a region title in '91.

*In '92, Judy Aagesen, among the pioneer coaches in Willmar High School sports, retired as women's tennis coach after 12 seasons.

*In 1996-97 DIII nationals, the volleyball team placed third, softball fifth and tennis first with Ogdahl selected Coach of the Year.

*1998, volleyball team finishes NJCAA runner-up. Jill Braaten, Sunburg; Jackie Robinson, Redwood Falls; and Rachel Penny, Delano; are each All-America.

The writer wishes to express his gratitude to Carrie Ogdahl for making her master's thesis available. She is a long-time coach and physical education teacher at the college

WHEN A GIRL...SCHOOL DAYS

By Bea Ourada

My 'When a Girl' memories continue to be sparked by the on-going Covid19 Pandemic. It is affecting every area of our lives, so, how can it be otherwise. This week Gov. Walz announced his plan for the school year 2020-21. School administrators have guidelines for starting the school year during the pandemic, but still many decisions to make. This brought me to thinking about my school years.

When I was starting school, kindergarten was not a required part of education, and I think I may have been in the first kindergarten class offered in Willmar. It was not a full year but I don't know how long it actually lasted. I do know that the first morning, when my mom woke me, I could not believe it was FINALLY here, the long awaited first day of school. My mother walked me to school, carefully pointing out landmarks, so that I would remember to turn at the corner, and walk the two blocks west on Ella Avenue to Lafayette School. I had a small rag rug folded up and clutched under my arm, for nap time. Kindergarten was two sections of a half day each and I was in the morning session.

I am sure my mom must have met me at the door to go home at noon. And I know my words tumbled over each other in my excitement to tell her all the things that happened, all in that first day. The next day I was to bring a nickel, so that I could order milk for the mid morning snack—chocolate, please. Kindergarten was all structured play time,

with concentration on socialization. We had story time, we had a doll and playhouse corner, puzzles and other dexterity projects, the boys had trucks and farmyard.

Following that first day there followed 12 years of “first days”, each exciting in its own way. We had elementary schools—Lafayette, Lincoln and Garfield, a junior high and a senior high. The junior and senior high were joined on one site, the junior high in the old building and the senior high the new building—now WEAC.

Thinking of today’s situation, it is sad to think of the first day thrills that are missing for all students, but most particularly the ones who are missing their first first day. First day excitement has been totally different than when I was a girl growing up, certainly, but still the same butterflies and anticipation.

I have good memories of each school year and each first day. Sure, there were things I did not like and teachers I did not appreciate, and sure, when asked, I had to act like school was no big deal and I was not looking forward to that first day, but I was, for sure.

Our school day included a lunch break of almost an hour and those of us living near school went home for our lunch. Most others brought their lunches in a colorful lunchbox, with Superman or Mickey Mouse or a big truck pictured on it. I always thought it would be fun to carry one of those boxes, but probably a peanut butter sandwich and a carrot stick would get tiresome. I don’t know when the school hot lunch program started.



We had visiting teachers in addition to our own classroom teacher. Miss Rosentrater, physical education teacher at the high school would come once or twice a year and she would do something special with us at recess. She was one teacher that was in Willmar years before I was in school and years after. Other visiting teachers were much shorter duration, like those who taught music. I remember the music teacher visited when I was in fourth grade and taught us “Somewhere Over the Rainbow.” What fun that was to sing. We loved the change in our routine. Sometimes our classroom teacher would trade off with another teacher and we would have the other teacher teach us art and our teacher would go to her classroom and teach penmanship or arithmetic. I don’t know if this was to take advantage of the strengths of the teacher or give us a change in routine, but I think for the strength of the teacher.

When we went to junior high, each class was taught by a different teacher and we moved from class to class. AND some of the teachers were men. That was not so in elementary school, both because teaching was considered a woman’s career and because it was wartime and men were serving in the military. Following the war, they had to get their college education and then we started seeing men in elementary school too. The women were single, or rarely, a widow. Once married, a woman could not teach in the Willmar school district but were permitted in some other county schools.

When we started junior high we found a whole lot of new people because the three grade schools all came together. Then, in ninth grade we had another influx of new students. The country schools and smaller town schools and the parochial only went through eighth grade, so all those students joined us. People always told us to enjoy these school years, they were the best years of our lives. Well, they were certainly good years.



ABC'S OF KANDIYOHI COUNTY

This spring the Kandiyohi County put together an ABCs of the history of Kandiyohi County for a social media campaign. Many other historical societies in the state participated! It was a fun to do and we have

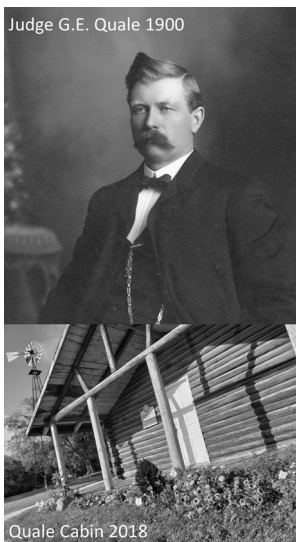
O is for Opera House.

The first opera house was located in the Central Hotel. In 1891 the Central Hotel was erected by William Gilger across from the Great Northern Railroad Depot on 4th and Pacific Ave in the City of Willmar, Minnesota. The opera house was named after William's daughter, Stella. William Gilger had the first brewery in Kandiyohi County located at the current Fairgrounds. He owned the brewery from 1879-1898. The Stella Opera House opening night was on December 7, 1891. It was built on the location of the Windsor Hotel that had burnt down previously. The building was renamed the Lincoln Hotel and operated by the Ostersaas family.



P is for Pennock.

The railroad station of Pennock was originally called St. Johns, but was changed to Pennock in the fall of 1891. It is named after George Pennock who was the superintendent of the Great Northern Railway in Willmar at that time. The village was incorporated in 1903. In 1891, E.G. Berglund became the postmaster of Pennock. He also opened a hardware store with his brother C.J. Berglund. He was postmaster until his death in 1935. His daughter Emma followed him and became postmaster in 1936 and served as postmasters until 1972. This family served as postmasters in Pennock for 81 years! One of the first murders in the County involved the first saloon keeper of Pennock, Louis Wilson. In late July 1874, Louis Wilson disappeared. The night prior to his disappearance Wilson and a man named Andrew Roos slept in the section house together. The following day Roos came back without Wilson and people began to question where Wilson was and Roos said that he had left for California. Roos then took possession of Wilson's property. On August 13, 1874 August Hans Paulson and friend were hunting at a slough south of Pennock and came upon a human body. The coroner identified the person as Louis Wilson. It was determined he had been murdered and Andrew Roos was arrested. Roos was found guilty and sentenced to prison for life doing hard labor. He was pardoned after 13 years.



Q is for Quale

Judge G. E. Quale's Cabin that is located on the Historical Society's grounds. This building served as a guest cottage and playhouse for children at Judge Quale's lake home on Eagle Lake. The cabin was moved to the Kandiyohi County Historical Society in 1971. This year we will be updating the exhibit inside to tell the story of resorts in Kandiyohi County. Judge Quale bears the most famous name in the judicial circles of the county. For 50 years he was judge of the District Court and he was noted as the senior judge of Minnesota-no other judge has had such a long record. Also he had the record of least reversals of his decisions by the Supreme Court of the state. Quale was born in Norway in 1860 and came to Willmar in 1880. He was largely a self-educated man and a great student in a variety of fields. He was admitted to the bar in 1882 and was associated with Atty. Ludwig Arctander after whom Arctander Township is named. In 1883 Quale became Judge of Probate and in 1890 held the position of County Attorney. He became District Judge in 1897 and served until his retirement in 1946. Judge Quale passed in 1951.

R is for Raymond.

The town of Raymond was established in 1887 when the Willmar & Sioux Falls Railway laid tracks to the southwest out of Willmar. The name Raymond is in honor of Raymond Spicer, son of John M. Spicer who was the president of the company that built the line. Did you know a person who was born in Raymond invented Cool Whip, Tang and Pop Rocks? William A. Mitchell was born in Raymond October 21, 1911 to William and Florence Mitchell. By 1920, his family had moved to Colorado. William Mitchell worked as a chemist for General Foods Corp. in White Plains, N.Y., for 35 years until his retirement in 1976. He held more than 70 patents, including inventions related to Cool Whip, quick-set Jell-O gelatin and the drink mix Tang. William Mitchell's most famous invention was Pop Rocks, the exploding candy that became a cultural phenomenon after 1975 when it hit the market. He made the discovery accidentally while trying to design an instant soft drink. He put sugar flavoring mixed with carbon dioxide in his mouth. He passed away on July 26, 2004 in California. He married to Ruth Cobbrey and they had seven children



Sunburg 1940s

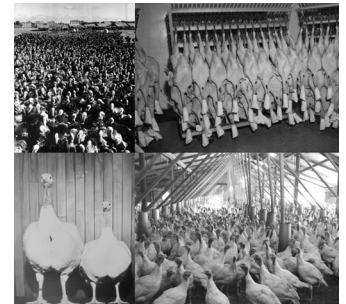
S is for Sunburg.

Sunburg started as a post office in 1872 at the home of Ole Eliason. The name of the village was given by Jon Sandvigen, a rural mail carrier. Sund means straits in Norwegian. The post office recommended it to be Sunburg. Sunburg had the pleasure of hosting the kickoff for the 1918 Republican campaign. All the candidates for state office for the Republican party were there. State Senator P.A. Gandrud convinced the party that his hometown of Sunburg was the perfect place to start the 1918 campaign. U.S. Senator Knute Nelson was the keynote speaker for the day inside of a huge tent. It is reported that hundreds of people came to Sunburg that day to enjoy the campaign kick-off.

T is for Turkey!

Kandiyohi County has a rich history with the turkey. Here are some fun facts provided by Minnesota Turkey Growers Association. If you want to learn more about the turkey business, check out their website at www.minnesotaturkey.com.

- Kandiyohi County is the number 1 turkey producing county in the state of Minnesota.
- Kandiyohi County ranks number 5 in top ten turkey producing counties in the United States.
- Willmar is the home of Farmers Produce Company which is now Jennie-O Foods.
- Willmar is the home of Willmar Poultry and Egg Company which is now Life Science Innovations.
- Life Science Innovations consists of seven affiliated companies that work with all aspects of turkey production.
- Jennie-O is the 2nd largest turkey processing company in the United States.
- Select Genetics, an affiliate of Life Science Innovations, is the world's largest turkey hatchery company.
- Minnesota is ranked number 1 for turkey production.



U is for Unusual Item

Does anyone else have an 8-foot coffee pot? Well the Kandiyohi County Historical Society does! The coffee pot first appeared during Willmar's town celebration Kaffe Fest parade. For over 40 years, Willmar would celebrate "Kaffe Fest" every summer. During a survey by the Willmar Tribune in the 1940s, it was found that coffee consumption in Willmar was in the "astronomical" figures. This, and an organization called the Willmar Saucer Drinking Society started the first Kaffe Fest in 1946. It was reported that 15,000 to 20,000 cups of coffee were served during the three-day event in 1946. The word "Kaffe" is not a typo, rather is the Swedish spelling for coffee. Kaffe Fest changed to Willmar Fests in

the 1980s. This pot had been missing in action until 2018 when it was found via a Facebook post! The owner donated it to the Kandiyohi County Historical Society and we are working on restoring it for all to enjoy! We would like to thank Chappell Central, Inc. for their generous donation of time and materials to get the coffee pot back in good shape. Currently, Hanson Silo Company is in the process of powder coating it white! It is getting closer to coming to the Historical Society for its final stop. This year is the 75th anniversary of the first Kaffe Fest and it is fitting that the coffee pot has found its way back to Willmar!



Veterans Conservation Camp -Sibley State Park

V is for Veteran’s Conservation Corps

In 1935 the National Park Service assigned a Veteran’s Conservation Camp No. 1785 to develop Sibley State Park. Sibley State Park was established in 1919 in northern Kandiyohi County. In 2019 Sibley State Park had a 100th year anniversary celebration to honor the opening of the park. The Veteran’s Conservation Corps was a part of the Civil Conservation Corps. The Civil Conservation Corps was voluntary public work relief program that ran from 1933-1942 for unemployed and unmarried men. The Veteran’s Conservation Corps was established in May 1933 for 25,000 World War I veterans to join with no age or marriage restrictions. They were sent to special

camp. One of those camps was at Sibley State Park. Up to 200 men worked in the park developing picnic grounds, foot trails, campgrounds, beach house and wells for drinking water. The VCC project at the park ended in 1938.

W is for Willmar

The railroad came through Willmar in 1869 and the railroad platted out the town of Willmar in 1870. The town is named after Leon Willmar, a businessman from Belgium who worked for the railroad at this time. It became the county seat of Kandiyohi County in 1871 after a contentious battle with Kandiyohi Station. It has been a long time railroad hub since the beginning. The town was incorporated in 1874. One of the more well-known happenings in Willmar is the Bank Robbery that happened on July 15, 1930. Five armed gunmen robbed the Bank of Willmar, located at the intersection of 5th St. and Litchfield Ave, and go away with \$70,000 bonds, cash and gold. The five gunman were Harvey Bailey, Tommy Holden, Robert Steinhardt “Frisco Dutch”, Joseph Cretzer “Dutch Joe”, Sammie Silverman “Jew Sammie” and George “Machine Gun” Kelly. After the alarm rang out, gun fire ensued. Two robbers and three bystanders were shot that day, Robert Steinhardt died from his wound. These men were never caught and never tried for the bank robbery. At the time of the robbery, George Kelly did not have his nickname of “Machine Gun” yet, it came two years after the Willmar robbery when his wife gave him a tommy gun as a gift.



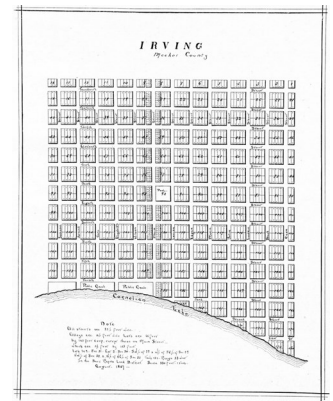
X is for X marks the spot.

We are going to change it up a little bit today and do a description of this and see if you can figure it out. Good Luck!

This began in 1888. It later moved to the known location in 1892 near railroad tracks. The product made here was shipped all over west central Minnesota, South Dakota and North Dakota. Numbers in the production are 600,000; 60,000; and 15,000 per year. There was more than one item made here. Ownership has changed hands many times. This landmark is the only thing remaining of this location.

Y is for why.

Why was the northern half of the county called Monongalia County? The name was brought here by some of the first settlers of the county. This group of settlers came from Virginia in 1857 and established the town site of Irving on the north-eastern shore of Green Lake. This group had a different name for Green Lake, they called it Carnelian for the red-dish pebbles of silica found on the shores of the lake. This group of settlers were successful in getting the state legislature of 1858 to designate the county as Monongalia and Irving town as the county seat. In 1861, the county seat was moved to Columbia and then in 1866 it was moved again to New London. The group of settlers who came from Virginia were from Monongalia County, West Virginia. The name Monongalia is a Unami word Monongahela which means "falling banks". The Unami is the Algonquian language spoken by the Lenape people from the late 17th century and early 18th century. The Lenape or Delaware Nation are people indigenous to the North Eastern Woodlands of New Jersey, Pennsylvania, New York and Canada

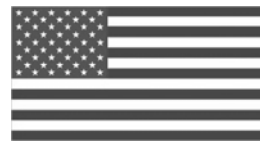


Z is for Zimmerman Cabins.

As travel by automobile increased, overnight accommodations were needed for families and business men. In 1932 Mr. Henry Zimmerman built eight separate cabins at the intersection of Willmar Avenue and 1st Street. Along with the cabins a full service Phillips Gas Station was located on the site. The distinctive white clapboard and red trim cabins were furnished with beds, a basic kitchen and outdoor bathroom facilities. These cabins were located where right across from Walt's and Walgreens on First Street in Willmar.

Remembering Theodore Curtis - Willmar's Greek Confectioner

By Jim Froemming
August 21, 2020



I am deeply appreciative of the guidance of Stephanie Ann Curtis, the granddaughter of Theodore and Mary Curtis and the daughter of Nickolas and Arlene Curtis, which allowed me to be as accurate as possible in my research.-Jim Froemming

My grandfather, Thomas Kokovikas, an immigrant from Greece, operated the Morris Candy Kitchen, a confectionery in Morris, for over 40 years, retiring in 1962. In 2018, I wrote an article for the Stevens County Historical Society about my grandfather and his candy kitchen. While doing research on his store I also learned much about the man who changed my grandfather's life, and the lives of his children and grandchildren, and the phenomenon of Greek owned confectioneries. A fellow Greek, Theodore Curtis, the owner of the Boston Candy Kitchen in Willmar, befriended my grandfather in 1916 and taught him the skills of making candy on the weekends during the time my grandfather worked at the railroad yards in Willmar. Many

of the Greek owners of confectioneries across America called their stores "candy kitchens" since they made their homemade candies on location in copper kettles.

*"However, it was spelled, Kandy (or Candy) Kitchen was by far the most popular name for a Greek confectionery, ..."*¹

Confectioneries were sweet shops, that sold candy, soda, and ice cream. Many of the Greek confectioneries also sold cigars and newspapers, a couple of favorite pastimes of Greek men. Later they also started lunch counters to stay competitive with the five & ten-cent stores and the drugstore chains. *"Perhaps the major concern of the con-*

¹Ann Flesor-Beck, *Greek Immigration to, and Settlement in, Central Illinois 1880-1920* (PhD diss., University of Illinois Urbana/Champaign, 2014), 270.

*fectioners was the ten-cent store and the drugstore chain. These were powerful competitors who entered the candy and ice cream business successfully and aggressively. ... Statistics on the failures of the small confectioners are unavailable; but it is reasonable to assume that, with the onset of the depression in the late 1920s and early 1930s, most of the marginal confectioners were driven to the wall.”*² By the 1950’s one would rarely see the “confectioneries” heading in city directories, due to the decline in the number of them. Only a handful survive in Minnesota to this day.

City business directories in the early 1900’s had a separate heading for confectioneries due to their popularity and number. Greeks owned a disproportionate share of these establishments based on their share of the population in the community. The number of foreign-born residents of Minnesota from Greece never exceeded 0.1% of the population³, yet there were at least 80 cities in Minnesota in the early 1900’s that had at least one Greek owned confectionery.

According to US Census data, there were no foreign-born Greeks living in Minnesota until the 1890 Census, when there were 14 recorded, and the 1900 Census when there were 75. The number of foreign-born Greeks in Minnesota for the following Census years: 1910: 1,660; 1920: 2,391; 1930: 1,765 and 1940: 1,761.⁴

Theodorus Demetrios Kourtis (Theodore James Curtis) was born July 4, 1879 in the rural village of Levetsova, in the regional unit of Laconia, in the southeastern part of the Peloponnese, about 19 miles southeast of the city of Sparta and situated between the mountains of Taygetos and Parnon. His parents were Demetrios and Kalliope Kourtis. At age 18, he came alone to America, arriving at Ellis Island in 1897 where they “Americanized” his name. He stayed in New York City for two years with koumbaros (Greek term for “friends like family”, such as a godparent) and then, after earning and saving enough, came to Minneapolis to join friends there. Therefore, Theodore Curtis was one of the earliest Greeks to reside in Minnesota.

My grandfather, Thomas (Athanasios) Kokovikas, was born April 23, 1891 in Sella Greece, a rural village on the northern foothills of the Panachaiko mountains in the regional unit of Achaia, in the northwestern part of the Peloponnese peninsula. As a nineteen-year old, my grandfather, a shepherd by living, arrived in America thirteen years after Theodore Curtis arrived. He arrived at Ellis Island in 1910, after a 19-day ocean journey, from the Port of Patras,

Greece.

The Peloponnese constitutes the southernmost part of mainland Greece and is roughly the size of the state of New Jersey and a tenth of the size of Minnesota. The Greek regional units of Laconia and Achaia are about 63% and 47%, respectively, larger than Kandiyohi County. *“After 1890 Greeks began arriving from all parts of Greece, but those from the Peloponnese kept coming in the greatest numbers. The primary reason for their departure was the drop in the price of currants, the main money crop, which brought hard times for growers. In general, poor soil conditions, repeated crop failures, difficulties in making a living, floods, earthquakes, oppressive taxation, and frequent changes in the government forced many to look to the United States as the land of opportunity. They came predominantly from the rural areas. Most immigrants were young males without families, including many teenagers who arrived without parents. In Greece, as in other poverty-stricken countries, the young were taught the need of earning a living and accepting the responsibilities of an adult at an early age.”*⁵

The Greeks from the Sparta area were some of the first to be confectionery owners in America. This was not a trade they learned or brought from Greece, it was a niche that they created after starting off as street peddlers and learning of America’s sweet tooth. They first set up confectioneries in the larger cities, New York, Boston, Chicago, and St. Louis. *“The pioneer confectioners were Eleutherios Pelalas of Sparta and Panagiotis Hatzideris of Smyrna, who established a lukum (sweet) shop shortly after their arrival in 1869. Hatzideris eventually returned to Smyrna, but his partner continued the business under the name of Haggis Greek-American Confectionery Company, with plants in New York, Memphis, and Pittsburgh. The establishments of Pelalas and Hatzideris furnished employment for many of the first immigrants from Sparta, providing an opportunity to learn skills of the trade. ... Chicago became the Acropolis of the Greek-American candy business. At one time it was said that 70 percent of the Greek candy merchants in the United States were or had been residents of Chicago. With Chicago money and Chicago training, they set out in search of cities which suited them and opened up-to-date candy stores.”*⁶

When Theodore came to Minneapolis from New York City, in approximately 1899, he worked for the Great Northern Railroad. He probably cultivated his trade of candy making at the same time, presumably from fellow

²Theodore Saloutos, *The Greeks in the United States* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1964), 264.

³United States Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census (1940) “Population (1900-1940), Volume I, Number of Inhabitants, Table 3 & Volume II, Characteristics of the Population, Part 4, Minnesota, Table 15.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Theodore Saloutos, *The Greeks in America – A Students’ Guide to Localized History* (Columbia University, New York: Teachers College Press, Teachers College, 1967), 2.

⁶Saloutos, *The Greeks in the United States*, 262.

Spartans like the Boosalis family, from Niata, 25 miles east of Levetsova, or the Geanakoplos brothers from Sparta, who operated several confectioneries in the city.⁷

After proving himself solvent, Theodore returned to Greece in 1906 to marry Mary Barris (Marigoula or Marrigo Bariaktari), who was from his home village of Levetsova. Her “Americanized” name of Barris was formed by taking the beginning and ending of her father’s Greek surname Bariaktaris. She was born in Levetsova on January 1, 1889. Many Greeks anglicized their names after coming to America, perhaps because misspellings and mispronunciations were common by immigration and census workers or perhaps simply to be more accepted in their new country. Theodore and Mary became parents on July 12, 1908, when their daughter Bessie was born in Levetsova.⁸ Her Greek name was Vassiliki.

Around the time of the birth of his daughter, Theodore, now 28 years old, returned to America, bringing with him his younger brothers, Nick, age 21 and Peter, age 15. Theodore’s wife and newborn remained in Levetsova, staying with Theodore’s father, Demitrios Kourtis. In 1908 Theodore and his brothers started a confectionery in Lake City, Minnesota, 70 miles SE of Minneapolis, at 106 E Lyon Ave, called the Lake City Candy Company.⁹ At some point after the Lake City store was established, Theodore and Peter moved to Minneapolis and lived at 609 3rd St S, according to the 1910 US Census, and worked as fruit peddlers. It is assumed that Theodore was trying to help Peter establish a business in Minneapolis, or perhaps to get some candy making training by some of the older “Spartan” confectioners in Minneapolis, while Nick was left to run the Lake City confectionery.

Mary Curtis (Mariggo Kourti), age 25, with her daughter Bessie (Vassilki Kourti), age 3, after staying with her father-in-law Demitrios Kourtis in Levetsova, left the Port of Grythion, Greece on September 3, 1911, arriving 20 days later at the Port of New York, with their final destination shown as 106 E. Lyon Ave, Lake City, Minnesota, to be with her husband Theodore Kourtis, according to ship manifest records.¹⁰ This was her first time in America. Theodore and Peter accompanied them to their new home in America.

Note: Some interesting conventions in Greek names.¹¹

The “s” at the end of the man’s surname is dropped for his wife and daughters’ last name. Kourtis becomes Kourti for the females in the family.

Greeks do not have middle names. What appears to be a middle name is usually the name of the person’s father. Theodore’s father’s name was Demetrios, so Theodore’s “middle” name became Demetrios (or James, the English version of the name).

The birth of Theodore and Mary’s second child, Peter Tyke Curtis (Panayiotis Kourtis), occurred on October 15, 1912 at a hospital in Red Wing, about 17 miles NW of Lake City.¹² Peter Tyke was named, as many are, Paniyotyke. The picture to the right was donated by the Curtis family and is on file at the Kandiyohi County Historical Society. It is estimated the picture was taken circa 1913, perhaps near Christmas of that year. Approximate ages would be Theodore, 34, Mary, 24, Bessie, 5 and Peter, 1.



Theodore and Mary’s third child, Mabel C Curtis (Kalliopi Kourti) was born in Lake City on March 4, 1914.¹³

Mary, with her three children, went to Greece around April or May of 1914 to visit her mother, Georgia Bariaktari, in her home village of Levetsova. Unfortunately, a World War broke out not long after her arrival delaying her return to America for several years to be reunited with her husband in Willmar.

Theodore’s brother, Peter, after being in Minneapolis for a period of time, lived and worked in Regina, Saskatchewan as a soda fountain worker. At age 22 he returned to the US from Canada with his final destination as Lake City, Minnesota on December 5, 1914 to rejoin his brothers at their confectionery.¹⁴ Around this same time, Theodore decided to move to Willmar, most likely after hearing about the Boston Candy Kitchen being for sale. After Theodore left, Nick and Peter took over management of the store in

⁷D.O. Adallis, Editor and Publisher, Greek American Merchant, The Greeks of America (May 1915).

⁸Funeral Notice, West Central Daily Tribune, March 29, 1974.

⁹Sharon M. Nelson, researcher and Don Schwartz, editor, Downtown Lake City Business History, Vol. 2 (The Lake City Historical Society, 2016).

¹⁰S.S. Athinai, List or Manifest of Alien Passengers for the United States Immigration Office at Port of Arrival, New York City on September 23, 1911.

¹¹https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/img_auth.php/d/df/Lica_Catsakis_9_Learn_About_Names.pdf.

¹²Funeral Notice “Peter Curtis,” West Central Daily Tribune, June 9, 1997.

¹³Funeral Notice “Mabel C Myers,” West Central Daily Tribune, June 15, 2006.

¹⁴U.S. Department of Labor, Immigration Services Form 3 – Canada, List or Manifest of Alien Passengers Applying for Admission to the United States from Foreign Contiguous Territory, Port of International Falls on Nov 6, 1914, and Port of Winnipeg on Nov 24, 1914.

Lake City and changed the name to the Lake City Candy Kitchen.¹⁵ Perhaps to have it sound similar to their older brother's new store, the Boston Candy Kitchen.

The Boston Candy Kitchen was started in the fall of 1909 by Peter Chakeris and was located at 210 Fifth St S in Willmar. *"Willmar is soon to have a candy store and factory. The new enterprise will be launched in about two weeks by Peter Chakires [sic], a Greek, who for a number of years has been in the candy-making business in this country. He will be assisted by two nephews, Ernest and Enjlos Berbes. The location will be the building formerly occupied by the Telstad grocery store on Fifth street."*¹⁶ After owning the store for 4 years, he sold the store to his nephew, Ernest on January 24, 1914¹⁷ and went to work for the Imperial Candy Store at 501 Hennepin Ave in Minneapolis, owned by the Geanakoplos Bros.

Only 1-1/2 years later Ernest Berbes decided to also move to Minneapolis and sold the store on July 3, 1915. *"Ernest Berbes has sold his Boston Candy Kitchen to Bissenas Brothers and Mike Borden, who have taken possession of the same."*

The new ownership was temporary since Theodore Curtis purchased the store prior to the Christmas 1915 season. *"The Boston Candy Kitchen is closed to the public this week. It will reopen on Saturday, December 4th, under a new management, and the place will scarcely be recognized by the public. The present owner, Theodore Curtis, is a man experienced in his work and he is putting in an entire new outfit. The walls are being redecorated and repapered; new show cases and wall cases are being put in, new light fixtures, new marble top tables, and everything will be up-to-date. The owner plans on putting in a big door in the rear wall, so the public may walk in and see how the candy is made, if they desire. In the spring Mr. Curtis will dispose of the present soda fountain and install a more modern one."*

Source: *The Willmar Journal*, December 11, 1915

The 210 Fifth Street S location of the Boston Candy Kitchen was in The International Order of Odd Fellows (I.O.O.F.) building, constructed in 1891. Today, the address would be 210 Fifth Street SW. To the right is a picture I took on December 2, 2017 of the I.O.O.F. building. The 210 address is the one on the left side of the shoe store, in the picture.

The current businesses shown in the picture along this street, from left to right, are:

212 Fifth St SW: Bihi's Shop of African Food (opened in 2003)

210 Fifth St SW: Bihi's Restaurant (opened in 2007)

208 Fifth St SW: Petersons Shoes (opened in 1946)



Before 1916 the street addresses of these three locations used to be 220, 216, and 212 Fifth St S. The Sanborn fire insurance map of May 1925 still had the old addresses despite the change occurring years earlier. From the May 1925 Sanborn map below, these businesses are located on the east side of Block 31 in Section 2.²¹



(Continued in December 2020 Newsletter)

¹⁵Nelson, Downtown Lake City Business History, Vol. 2.

¹⁶"New Candy Factory," Willmar Tribune, October 20, 1909, 1 <https://newspapers.mnhs.org/jsp/browse.jsp>.

¹⁷"Notice of Change of Ownership, Willmar Tribune, January 31, 1914, 4.

¹⁸Davison's Minneapolis City Directory, Vol. XLIII, 1915.

¹⁹The Willmar Journal, July 3, 1915, 4.

²⁰"Candy Kitchen Renovated," Willmar Tribune, December 1, 1915, 3.

²¹Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from Willmar, Kandiyohi County, Minnesota. Sanborn Map Company, May 1925. Map. https://www.loc.gov/items/sanborn04414_005/.

Kandiyohi County Historical Society
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Willmar, MN 56201

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