

# OVERLOOK

Cook County Historical Society

WINTER 2011

## PROHIBITION PART 3: BOOTLEGGING



*Still: on display at the museum*

For the maker of homebrew, the enemy was the “revenue agents.” One person recalled, “My mother had a whole new batch of beer in the cellar underneath the house. She got a telephone call from Grand Marais that told her of a rumor—she was going to be raided by revenue agents. We got busy and hauled all those quarts of beer down to the beach and buried them in the sand. We just got back to the house and got another telephone call... he was just kidding!”

Several areas were known for production of booze, and Good Harbor Hill was one. Grand Marais had an influx of young CCC men during the latter part of prohibition, so when a particular Grand Marais girl received a telephone call from her girlfriend asking if she wanted to go on a blind date, it probably wasn't much of a surprise.

*( Continued on page 5 as PROHIBITION )*

## MINERAL CENTER RESEARCH

Nelda Bockvich Westerlind has been making good use of the research materials at the museum, while contributing her own information to the historic record. A few months ago, Nelda called the office and said that she was preparing to give a presentation about Mineral Center at the Linnell family reunion next summer. She wondered what resources we had to offer.

By far one of the most organized researchers to come into the museum, Nelda had a list of all of the topics she was seeking. Since she was born and raised, until age six, in Mineral Center, she already understood its history. She



*Birchwood School in Mineral Center  
M.J. Humphrey, 1937*

*FRONT ROW: Bob Smith, Lonnie Smith, Donna Bramer, Jean Linnell, Nelda Bockovich, Dallas Smith, Oliver Peterson, Warren Woodward.*

*BACK ROW: Ted Smith, Barbara Bramer, Norman Wall, Violet Wall, Gertrude Peterson (teacher), Nona Bockovich, Doris Smith, Gilbert Bockovich*

*( Continued on page 5 as MINERAL CENTER )*

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Page 2	SOCIETY NEWS
Page 3	AT THE JHP
Page 4	RUNAWAY RALPH
Page 5	PROHIBITION / MINERAL CENTER CONTINUED
Page 6	TOM LAKE TO MAPLE HILL

## COOK COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

**Gene Erickson** President  
**Dean Einwalter** Vice President  
**Eric Humphrey** Secretary  
**Eleanor Waha** Treasurer

**Carrie McHugh** Museum Director  
**Don Davison** JHP Director

### Historical Society Board Members:

**Duane Ege, Doug Anderson, Wayne Anderson, David Peterson, Leonard Sobanja, Hal Greenwood, Bob Swanson, Alta McQuatters, Mildred Thoreson, Irene Malner, Bob Pratt, and John Jacobsen**

### Honorary members:

**Howard Sivertson and Herb Hedstrom, Jim Johnson, County Representative**

All rights are reserved in this 2011 issue of the Overlook

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

To the members and friends of the Cook County Historical Society:

A letter went out to members and area residents requesting funds to help reach an important financial goal for the museum's endowment fund. Thanks to all of you who have responded with generous donations!

This fund raising effort will be going on throughout 2012. Please, help the Society with your tax deductible donation of any amount. You will truly be supporting an important cause.

Thanks to all the volunteers who helped with the fishcake dinner and to those of you who attended our annual dinner this fall. It's great to see such a good turn out at these events.

- Gene Erickson, President

## ONLINE CATALOG DEBUT

The museum's Collections Catalog, found at [www.cookcountyhistory.org](http://www.cookcountyhistory.org), is now available online by clicking on the website's tab "Online Catalog." Minnesota Legacy and Blandin Foundation funding helped initiate this project. Our goal is to make valuable research resources about Cook County history accessible. It will be a work in progress for some time.

Currently, the catalog contains information on a small, yet popular, number of collections: files, obituaries, oral histories, and articles. It works like a library catalog: search the site for specific names or topics and then contact the museum for further topic information or access. Feel free to call or email us anytime for assistance or to request research materials. Any site feedback is greatly appreciated.

A select number of photographs, as well as audio and video clips, were chosen to initiate this online resource. Enjoy Lloyd K. Johnson talking about his mother's art and Vi Rindhal's lefse demonstration. We will have much more available in the future, but this time-consuming, detail-oriented work can't be rushed. The Society gives a hearty "thanks" to volunteer Dori Betts for her continuing work on the project!



*Passenger and mail sleigh stopping at Lutsen Resort Post Office by Maude Small Toftey. Her wonderful glass negative collection is included in the online catalog.*

# JOHNSON HERITAGE POST SCHEDULE

15 WISCONSIN ST. (218-387-2314)

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

Opening	Last Day	Exhibit
October 21	December 4	Northern Photography, 100+ photographs by 21 photographers
March 2	April 20	PALS, Plein Air Lake Superior: Lisa Stauffer, Michelle Wegler, and Cheryl LeClair Sommer
May 4	May 27	Marie Westerman, Fiber Artist and Weaver

*Exhibit Openings & Receptions are on Fridays. Last days are on Sundays.  
The Gallery is closed on Mondays and between Exhibits.*

## HAPPENINGS AT THE JOHNSON HERITAGE POST GALLERY

It is a quiet time of year at the Johnson Heritage Post. Remodeling is nearly complete and there will be an open house January or February—watch for your invitation!

Next summer the JHP is hoping to add another day to the schedule. We are looking for volunteers to staff the front desk. If you have a few extra hours available contact the JHP. It would be great to have your help.

With new storage space at the JHP, the art formerly housed at the Cook County Historical Society Museum is being cared for at the Johnson Heritage Post, an appropriate location for these works.

## ARCHIVAL STORAGE WORK CONTINUES

James Krache has joined the volunteer ranks at CCHS (he is a regular volunteer at the Science Museum of Minnesota). He has been coming to Cook County doing loon surveys for years. Lucky for us, he has decided to spend time helping at the Museum. In this photo, he is constructing boxes to hold newspaper issues, dating as far back as 1891, of the *Grand Marais Pioneer*, *Cook County Herald*, *The Grand Marais News*, *Cook County News Herald* and *Cook County Star*. Jim also helped organize all of Holly Nelson's PAC-13 VHS cassettes.



## PATRICIA ZANKMAN NOMINATED FOR AWARD

The professional organization American Association of State and Local History promotes and preserves history. Pat Zankman is being nominated for their "Leadership in History" award for her 15 years directing many important projects at the CCHS Museum. Projects under her direction included: building a replica fish house, returning and restoring the Neegee to the Grand Marais Harbor, acquiring St. Francis Xavier Church, adding essential archival storage and exhibit space to the historic Lighthouse Keeper's Residence, developing a Passport Program for elementary students, creating a CCC exhibit, initiating important procedures, and bringing the museum into the digital age with the use of computers to catalog and share Cook County history. A wonderful legacy has been enhanced and benefitted greatly from the guidance and leadership of Pat Zankman. The Society would appreciate letters supporting this nomination.

## FULL HOUSE FOR CHIPPEWA CITY TALK

Staci Drouillard's "Small Talk" on Chippewa City was an in-depth history of the people and places that once filled this community east of Grand Marais. Her years of research with her sense of connection to Chippewa City bring the past to life in her telling of the stories. Her latest project mapping with Tom McCann is an attempt to recreate the well-trodden path between the village and Grand Marais.



## RUNAWAY RALPH

In a 2009 oral history interview, Gary Nelson retold a story his father, Ralph Nelson, was fond of sharing. It explains the beginnings of Ralph's work life at the age of thirteen at a Cascade logging camp.

Young Ralph Nelson "got in a little wrangle with his dad. He had tipped his younger brother over while he was reading the paper, and made him cry. So, my grandfather [John Nelson] was quite a disciplinarian, pretty tough fellow, and he was going to take him out in the shed and give him a whipping with a strap, which they did back then. My dad reached into the wood box, the story goes; he took a piece of kindling and then hit my grandfather on his fingers so he wouldn't take the strap to him. And with that, my grandfather took his packsack and his rifle. And my dad always thought through the years that his dad was going to shoot him for doing this."

Apparently Ralph's father was also concerned. Gary continued, "My grandfather left home...just before Christmas. It was the winter. My dad thought I better not be home when Pa comes back. He didn't know how long he'd be gone. So, he packed his packsack and walked from Maple Hill across Devil's Track Lake, which was frozen, to...Captain Cedarstrom, who lived on the north side of Devil's Track. He spent the night, and then the next morning he left there and went up to Cascade Lake where the logging camp was. It took him all day - it was dark when he got up there.

"They told him where the bunk house was and said go down and pick out a bunk. [The mattresses] were straw...what they called muzzle loader bunk." Sleeping conditions were cramped. "[The bunks] weren't full length on the wall... set in to get all the guys they could in this bunkhouse. They slept two men to a bunk, and he remembers all the men to be old. He thought, 'Boy, this going to be tough.' And with that, the door came open and boss cook from the cook shack came and said, 'Ralph, you come with me. You're coming to the cook shack to spend the night, and you will have to put up water in the morning for the cook and help me split wood and firewood.' And that's what he did."

That March, Ralph began his return home. "He met his dad [who also stayed away most of the winter]...on the same road walking home. And my grandfather said, 'How did you do this winter Ralph?' And he said, 'I did good, Pa. I brought money home.' He recalls this very clearly. And he handed his father the money, which you did. When he got home, his mother made him take all his clothes off. She had a big kettle of hot water, she wouldn't let him in the house because he was lousy and there was bed bugs in the camp. And my grandmother was a very meticulous person. He had to take a bath, clean up, and get his clothes washed before he could come in the house.

"He worked forever after that - he only went to 8<sup>th</sup> grade in school. Mildred Hedstrom, later Mrs. Charlie Anderson, had been his school teacher [as an older student, she taught younger students]. She recalled always feeling really sorry for Ralph because he had to leave home so early!"



*Twenty-fifth anniversary of  
Ralph and Ruby Helmerston Nelson in 1954*

In addition to his career in logging, Ralph also helped survey the Alger Line and the Gunflint Trail while working for the county highway department for a total of 40 years.

*( PROHIBITION, continued from page 1 )*

That evening the young men wondered if they could get some booze. “Of course,” the girls assured them! However, only at one of the usual Good Harbor Hill places, that the girls went with their dates, was there anyone home. Apparently, the two young ladies were among the few who hadn’t known revenue agents were in town! That evening, arrests were made and the girls became quite unpopular for a while!

When prohibition came, a lot of thirsty fishermen dried up. It wasn’t long before they learned how to make their own homebrew. One fisherman said, “We made it here—everyone had a recipe.” He added, “You had to have a stone crock... because those that tried to get along on the cheap, they had fish kegs... that you salt fish in. Some of them didn’t want their wives to know... so they set their brew in the dang keg and it took on the wood taste. I mean terrible, horrible. But they sat and managed to crunch that down. Well, the fisherman right next to us he made homebrew. It was a big day when he got a stone crock! That was a big one! But stone crocks were in high demand and hard to get. And did you know Sears and Roebuck sold the malt you could make homebrew out of?”

One fisherman in the Lutsen area had, with friends, hidden a still in the woods, [with] his wife apparently upset about his making bootleg. Eventually, she found the still, the heater still going as they were working the mash. She kicked the stove over, burning down the shack. Her husband, while out on the lake, saw the smoke. His young daughter told him when he came in that “Mother found a Teddy Bear’s House and it burned!” Was there one Teddy Bear House or were there more? There are several different stories.

Our thanks to the many people who shared their stories of prohibition as part of oral histories, some of which were used for this article. Visit the Museum to see a still once used in Cook County, along with the brewing instructions!

***Instructions for Setup***

*Once mash is in boiler, whatever you prefer on top, make sure it fits properly. On each corner put small clamps (4) as a washer on wood part use 4 pennies, so as not to gouge plywood top.*

*So as not to lose any of potency in tub, make a mash of cornmeal and put around boiler and top cover.*

*When finished brewing clean cornmeal from top and side of boiler thoroughly with hot water so it will be ready for next time around.*

*To make sure you have everything sealed tight, test around connections with match or candle. If leaking you will notice lube flame just seal with more corn meal.*

*If you follow the instruction this one does a good job. Of course you have to have good ingredients in your mash. A good test is put a teaspoon full and light with a match.*

*( MINERAL CENTER, continued from page 1 )*

was now searching for specific information. Wednesdays were her day to look into CCHS catalogs, digging through our files and examining photos on various topics related to Mineral Center, its people, and the surrounding area. Of her experience she said, “They made what could have been tedious and hard, fun and exciting instead. Try them, you’ll like them.”

Along the way, Nelda shared her own information with the museum, providing photos and articles she had collected over the years. She also helped identify a couple of M.J. Humphrey negatives taken in the 30s at Birchwood School. This is the inquisitive little girl in the 1937 photo on the front page!

Plans have been made to video tape Nelda’s presentation. So even if you aren’t a Linnell, you will be able to see all of Nelda’s research. The reunion, which includes a dinner and a dance, is the weekend of June 23, 2012. It is organized by the nationwide Linnell Family Association who traces the roots of all known Linnells in North America to Robert Linnell, who arrived in Massachusetts in 1638.

## TOM LAKE TO MAPLE HILL—THE HARD WAY

Wayne Anderson shared his dad's 1906 story in an 2008 interview. "When my dad was I think 17, he and Osborne Ellquist, they trapped together. They had a trapping cabin at Northern Light Lake. They would walk—there was no road to Northern Light Lake. [From there] they'd go on the trap line along the way... eventually to Tom Lake.

"They left Maple Hill on to Tom Lake in early November in beautiful weather, no snow. They didn't bring snow shoes with them. One evening when they were there, his partner, Ellquist looked out the door and said, 'It snowed a foot of snow already!' It was snowing like crazy. They got up [the next] morning, and there was almost three feet of snow. I guess they tried to see if they could get back to Northern Light. [They] went just a little way and found it was so deep and so many trees had gone down that they couldn't.

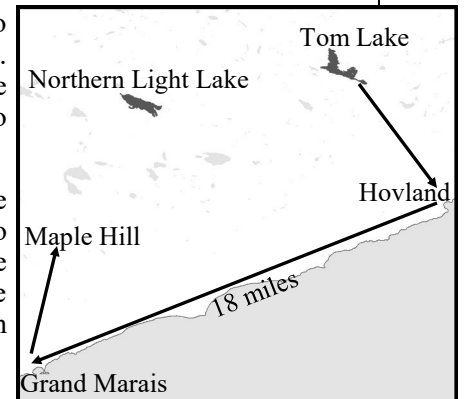


Charles J. Anderson (left) as a young man & Osborne Ellquist (right) c1903

"They thought, 'Well, we'll have to try the tote road that goes to Hovland.' So, that day they chopped out some cedar and made some skis. [They used] some boot tops to hold the skis on. The following day they got up early in the morning, they fried pancakes and ate all they could. They stuffed the rest in their pockets and headed for Hovland down this tote road. And, because of all the wind falls, it was extremely slow going. They had to go around windfalls more than they went forward on the road.

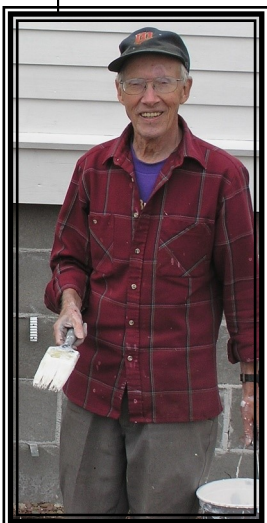
"As they got closer to Hovland, they met a crew of lumberjacks coming to open the road. So they followed their tracks and had a little bit better going. But they didn't get to Hovland until evening. When they got to the shore there hadn't been so much snow so they could walk without snowshoes or skis. So they threw their skis in the Flutereed River and they walked to Grand Marais.

"They got to Grand Marais sometime after midnight. And then, since there was no particular place to stay at Grand Marais, they walked to Maple Hill. So they walked from Tom Lake on skis to Hovland, to Grand Marais, to Maple Hill in one day. And they ate their pancakes on the way! And they got home here to Maple Hill I guess about 3 o'clock in the morning, having been walking all day. People were really tough in those days—for 17 year olds!"



## DICK GILBERTSEN WILL BE REMEMBERED

Richard Gilbertsen, life-long resident of Maple Hill and Grand Marais, passed away on November 16th. Dick will be missed by many. His hard work and dedication to service is well known in the community. The Cook County Historical Society has many reasons to honor him.



Dick served on the Society's Board for many years. At the museum, he volunteered his time frequently and without hesitation. He would lend his hand to any project and happily greet people at the front desk. This very publication benefitted from his careful attention and long-time experience working for the *Cook County News-Herald*. Dick took his time proofreading every issue of the *Overlook*.

Recently, a question surfaced about an old place on Greenwood Lake, dubbed the "Chalmar Chalet." Dick immediately knew of the place, and in fact, brought in photos he had of that lodge and the owners with their hired help. His uncles had built the lodge around the same time as they had built their own Greenwood Lodge.

It is certainly a loss when someone with that much accumulated experience and knowledge passes on. Most of all, we will miss Dick's friendly smile and his peaceful presence.



*Lee Radzak, Historic Site  
Manager, Split Rock Lighthouse*

## FISHCAKE AND ANNUAL DINNERS

Another successful fishcake dinner was held in September. Next year's dinner is scheduled in June, as before, and we will be looking for volunteers to help. If anyone is interested in learning the secrets of the fishcake, let us know!

The CCHS's 87th Annual Dinner was a wonderful evening at the Harbor Light Supper Club. Once business matters were attended to, the crowd was treated with a talk given by the long-time site manager of Split Rock Lighthouse, Lee Radzak.

Lee talked about the site's origins in 1910 and the continued preservation of the buildings and lighthouse. He also shared stories of raising his family at the site. The Fresnel lens a top the tower was also a topic covered. Thanks to all who helped organize and participate in these events.

### Become a member of the Cook County Historical Society Museum and/or the Johnson Heritage Post Today

#### COOK COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

We invite you to join our society, supporting its museum and our ongoing projects. If you are interested in supporting our work, please select a category below:

- \_\_\_\_\_ \$10.00 Single Annual Membership
- \_\_\_\_\_ \$15.00 Dual Annual Membership
- \_\_\_\_\_ \$25.00 Supporting Membership
- \_\_\_\_\_ \$50.00 Commercial Membership
- \_\_\_\_\_ \$100.00 Patron
- \_\_\_\_\_ \$500.00 Life Membership
- \_\_\_\_\_ Other Donation Amount: \_\_\_\_\_

Please clip and return this form along with your check to:  
Cook County Historical Society, P.O. Box 1293  
Grand Marais, Minnesota 55604

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

#### JOHNSON HERITAGE POST ART GALLERY

Your memberships are very important to JHP. Membership privileges include free admissions, invitations to openings, newsletter mailings, and discounts on book sales. Join today!

- \_\_\_\_\_ \$20.00 Annual Membership (Single)
- \_\_\_\_\_ \$30.00 Annual Membership (Family)
- \_\_\_\_\_ \$50.00 Sustaining Membership
- \_\_\_\_\_ \$100.00 Sponsoring Membership
- \_\_\_\_\_ \$250.00 Patron Membership
- \_\_\_\_\_ \$1000.00 Lifetime Membership

Please send your membership check to:  
Johnson Heritage Post, P.O. Box 35  
Grand Marais, Minnesota 55604-0035

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Preserving Cook County's History for Future Generations.

**OUR MISSION:** The purpose of the Society shall be the collection, preservation, and dissemination of knowledge about the history of Cook County and to relate it to the history of the State of Minnesota.

# HISTORICAL SOCIETY EVENTS

Everyone is invited to come share good stories and good food.

◆ **Saturday, January 21 at 4:00 p.m. at the Museum**

Tim Cochrane presents a "Small Talk" about the making of the Grand Portage National Monument's film *Rendezvous with History: A Grand Portage Story* and a showing of the film (limited seating, please call ahead)

For more information call the museum

(218) 387-2883

For updates visit [www.cookcountyhistory.org](http://www.cookcountyhistory.org)



Non Profit  
Bulk Rate  
US Postage  
PAID  
Grand Marais, MN  
55604  
Permit # 19

COOK COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
P.O. Box 1293  
Grand Marais, MN 55604  
218-387-2883  
history@boreal.org  
www.cookcountyhistory.org  
Address Service Requested