

Morrison County Historical Society
2020 Highlights - Annual Meeting Report, September 29, 2020

Pandemic: After starting out with a couple of strong events in 2020, including the Candlelight Hike that brought 763 people through the museum and the February event series with The Museum of Russian Art, the COVID-19 pandemic closed the Weyerhaeuser Museum in mid-March, with museum staff working primarily from home for a couple of months. The museum reopened by appointment only on June 30, 2020, and the building has been operating at reduced capacity since, with staff dividing their time between home and the museum. Volunteers also went home, with a couple of them returning when we reopened by appointment.

We have had to become accustomed to holding online meetings for board members and staff, as well as hosting online events. We held a couple of the Ojibwe Culture Series events we had scheduled online but had to cancel a couple. We separated our annual meeting program from the meeting itself. This year's program was led by State Historic Preservation Office archaeologist David Mather and was on The Archaeology of Bear Ceremonialism.

Museum staff has increased our frequency of posting to our website, including adapting the BEAD Exhibit we constructed at the beginning of the year to an online exhibit. Staff and board members have also taken part in the many online museum- and preservation-related webinars and conferences that are being offered by cultural organizations, with a benefit being that we can participate without added travel costs.

Several funding opportunities were offered due to the pandemic, including the Paycheck Protection Program loan/grant, which we applied for and received (\$23,600). The National Endowment for Humanities and Institute for Museum & Library Services both offered CARES grants, which we applied for and did not receive. Federal grants are incredibly competitive, with many more requests than funds granted. We also applied for a Musser Fund general operating grant but did not receive it. All of these funding opportunities and the required grant writing took place between March and July 2020. A recent CARES grant opportunity that we are awaiting word on is through Morrison County.

Expect the pandemic to affect museum operations and events for some time to come. We are working with Lindbergh State Park and the Lindbergh House & Museum on offering an alternate hiking event in place of the Candlelight Hike. As we adapt to new ways of working, we are finding new ways to reach people, some of which will continue after the pandemic.

Capital Campaign & Capital Projects: Started in 2019 with a goal of raising \$2 million for various capital improvements, we have raised \$110,651 to date. We were seeking bonding dollars from the Minnesota Legislature, but the pandemic ended the legislative bonding session the day we were due to testify.

In 2020, we finished our project to install mobile shelving in the Archives and have a contract archivist sort and organize several large collections.

Currently, Kampmann Sash & Door in Brainerd is manufacturing two new exterior doors to replace the ones leading into the museum's courtyard.

A crew from Northern Bedrock Historic Preservation Corps spend two days painting front sections of the museum. They discovered carpenter ants around one window and we are in the process of finding a pest control company to manage that situation.

Washout & Berm: On June 29th, during a storm that dumped up to 8 inches of rain in Little Falls in 6 hours, a huge section of the museum's shoreline washed into the river. The Lindbergh site experienced a washout behind the house and Lindbergh State Park also had several areas of shoreline wash out. We took photos of the damage from the river thanks to board member Pat Quinn arranging for a pontoon ride from her son-in-law. Numerous experts provided feedback on the washout. All agreed it was a major job to undertake and will cost between \$200,000-\$300,000 to mitigate. An engineer from Anderson Engineering, who examined the damage at the Lindbergh site, assured us that the building is not in danger of sliding into the river any time soon. Board president Camille Warzecha contacted Morrison County and the Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD). SWCD provided expertise and funding to construct a low berm at the top of the shore along the fenceline in order to divert rainwater away from going over the top of the bank where the washout occurred. The berm was completed at the end of September by contractor Kevin Sobiech.

Rethos Contract: In July 2019, MCHS became the Central Minnesota Education Coordinator for Rethos: Place Reimagined (formerly Preservation Alliance of Minnesota). As part of the year-long contract, we were to arrange a set number of preservation-related training classes in Central Minnesota. These were set and the pandemic led to them being postponed and rescheduled with masks and physical distancing guidelines in place or as online events. One of these classes, Egress Education, was held outside at the Weyerhaeuser Museum in August. MCHS is currently considering renewing the contract for another year.

Smuda Property: Alvina and Alice Smuda have sold their property to Lindbergh State Park and are in the process of moving. The Smuda family sold the Weyerhaeuser Museum property to MCHS and has long served as supportive and watchful neighbors, with many Smuda family members doing work for the museum over the years. We will be sad that they are no longer neighbors and miss their presence.

MPCA: Museum staff have been serving on the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency's Small Building Group over the past year. The purpose of the group was to find ways to reduce construction and demolition debris going into landfills. MCHS staff were part of the group to encourage keeping buildings in use and properly maintained so that they don't end up in landfills from disuse.

Writing Intern: This fall Ray Mulvey from the College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University joined MCHS as a writing intern. While we have had many museum interns over the years, we have never had one who is concentrating on writing. Ray's work will be appearing on our website and in the newsletter.

Archaeology Assistance for SCSU: Rob Mann, Associate Professor of Anthropology at St. Cloud State University, contacted MCHS for assistance on getting in touch with property owners in Morrison County in order to conduct archaeology field schools with his students. We suggested several potential sites and put him in touch with former board member Duane Welle, who helped with contacting property owners. Through this work, Rob and his students were able to investigate 3 sites, including finding a previously unrecorded 19th-century site near Belle Prairie.

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2020 Web Stats: January 1 – September 27, 2020

Unique visitors to website: 55,745

Pages viewed: 1,536,751

Top 3 downloaded PDFs:

1. Zombie Attack Cards
2. Morrison County Murders Index
3. Legend of Hole in the Day booklet

Top 10 web pages viewed:

1. Home page
2. Capture the History of COVID-19 by Keeping a Journal
3. How to Build a Museum Exhibit in an Hour
4. Unsolved: The Disappearance of Harold Tidd
5. 1972 Flood Exhibit
6. Hole in the Day's Bluff
7. Morrison County Influentials
8. Hennepin Paper Company – Construction Paper
9. C-19 Symbols
10. Paul Larson's Boats

Twitter followers: 836

Joined Twitter in March 2009 – 11.1 k tweets since then

Facebook followers: 970

Facebook likes: 891