

MEEKER MEMORIES

SPRING 2022

MEEKER COUNTY
MUSEUM
QUARTERLY
NEWSLETTER



The mission of the Meeker County Historical Society is to enhance and preserve the Meeker County Museum, Civil War Building Complex, and its growing collection of artifacts of local historical and genealogical significance. We also serve to provide educational programming and other means for dissemination of local historical and genealogical information for present and future generations.



**Meeker County Museum
at the G.A.R. Hall**

Sharing Our Stories Since 1885

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WOMEN"**



Meeker County Museum at the G.A.R Hall

308 N Marshall Ave
Litchfield, MN 55355
320-693-8911

www.meekercomuseum.org

Admission

Adults - \$3

Members & Children Under 12 - FREE

Board of Directors

Sid Willson (President)
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Dave Pease
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Staff

Danelle Erickson - Executive Director
director@meekercomuseum.org

Sandy Johnson - Research Librarian
staff@meekercomuseum.org

April

1-30 **Spring Tulip Scavenger Hunt**
Explore the Museum while
keeping an eye out for 12 tulips

No Civil War Roundtable in April



May

- 12 **Civil War Roundtable: Sherman and the March to the Sea** with Joyce and Jim Hinderks. 1:30. Free for Roundtable Members; \$3/general admission
- 30 **Annual Memorial Day Picnic.** Litchfield Opera House. Watch our website, or follow us on Facebook for more details



June

- 9 **Civil War Roundtable: The Hardest Lot of the Men: The Third Minnesota Infantry in the Civil War** with Joseph Fitzharris. 1:30. Free for Roundtable Members; \$3/general admission

Director's Notes

Danelle Erickson Executive Director

Greetings! I am excited to be the new director of the Meeker County Museum. Having being here since January, I've been settling in and learning all I can about the museum and the local history. I grew up in Dassel and was previously the Operations Manager at the Blue Earth County Historical Society. It's good to be back in Meeker County!

As a self-proclaimed "history geek" I'm enjoying exploring the exhibits and becoming familiar with our many resources. I especially love old photos, which might explain how the story of photographer Clark Angell and his family caught my attention. (See page 5 for more.)

Thank you to our readers and supporters who have stopped in to introduce yourselves. I look forward to meeting more of you.

Speaking of meetings—there's a great chance to meet many more of you coming up on Monday, May 30 at the Annual Memorial Day Picnic. We look forward to seeing you at the Litchfield Opera House. Watch for more details on our website or follow us on Facebook.

This is also an exciting time for the G.A.R. Hall. The Hall has been on the National Register of Historic Places since 1975, but now we wait for word on an even more prestigious honor—National Historic Landmark status. *For some context, there are over 1,700 Historic Places in Minnesota, but only 25 with Landmark status.*

It will be a while until any final word comes through on the application. We will be sure to keep you updated!



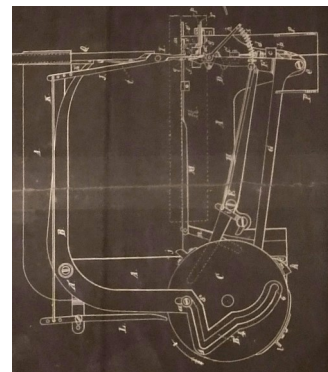
Collection Spotlight

Sandy Johnson Research Librarian

One of the things I've been working on is an inventory of the items in our collection. I locate the artifact, take a photo, and add the information to our collection database. This means I get to take a detailed look at the many items in the museum.

One object I find interesting is the twine knotter invented by John Peter Johnson (Moen) of Acton Township. It was donated by his grandchildren and first displayed in 1964.

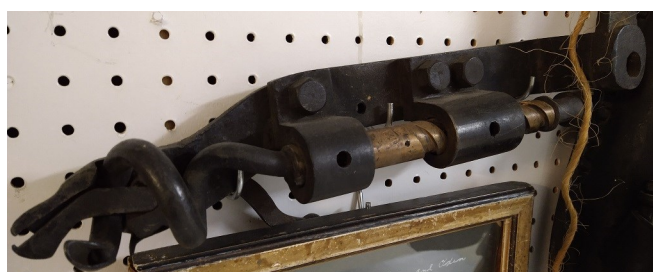
Johnson was from Norway and settled in Meeker County in 1858. He served in the Civil War and later became a member of the Litchfield G.A.R. Post. He was also one of the organizers of Ness Church.



Knotter patent papers

Johnson was a farmer, but he also had a mind that was mechanically inclined. In 1874, Johnson started working on a twine knotter for a grain binder. His invention was a big timesaver as it tied newly cut grain bundles. Before this, the tying was done by hand.

Part of the knotter and several pages of the patent are displayed in the Museum.





New and Returning Members January-March 2022

Auggie Anderson	Charles Lavallee
Patricia Arnold	Michael Miller
Kelli & Ryan Beckler	Theresa & Brad Nelson
Mindy Desens	Jamie Phelps
Gerald & Audrey Euerle	Robyn Richardson
Sarah Fjellanger	Lois Sosenheimer
Lynne Gelston	Gregory Swenson
Margaret Johnson	Wanda Urdahl
David J Kelly	Hugh & Carol Wagner

Business and Nonprofit Members



American Legion
Post 104



American Legion
Post 381



Conway, Deuth &
Schiesing, PLLP



Greater Litchfield Opera
House Association



VFW Post 2818



Financial Donations January-March 2022

Patricia Arnold
Sarah Fjellanger
Margaret Johnson
Ladies of the G.A.R. Frank Daggett Circle #105
Meeker County Board of Commissioners
Gregory Swenson
VFW Post 2818

Thank you to those who donated in memory of John E Miller. A list of these donors will be included in the Summer Issue of *Meeker Memories*.

Artifact Donations

William Holmquist
Rueben Hoyer Estate
Minnesota Genealogy Center
Dale Smolnisky

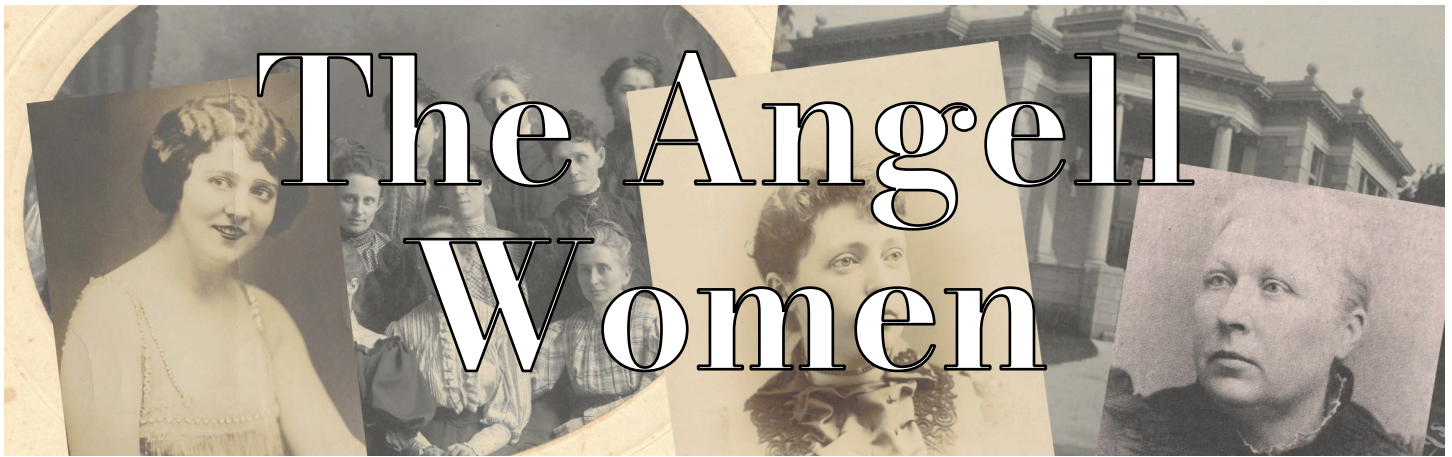
Meeker Memories by email

In the past, some of our readers have opted to receive issues of *Meeker Memories* by email. However, we realized email addresses sometimes change and spam filters sometimes filter too much. So we have decided to send all our members a paper copy of this issue. **If you will to receive future issues by email, please let us know at Director@meekercomuseum.org**



Even if you have signed up to receive issues by email in the past, please let us know again.

Thanks!



If you've visited the G.A.R. Hall there's a good chance you are familiar with Clark L Angell. Even if the name doesn't ring a bell, you probably have seen his photography work – including the 99 photos of Civil War veterans and G.A.R. members.



Clark L Angell

While Clark has an interesting life story, it is one we've told before (see Spring 2017 Newsletter). Instead, let's take a look at the Angell women—Meeker County family line that consisted of only three women across three generations.

Nancy Ball Angell

Nancy Ball was born in Canada in 1847 and came to Minnesota at a young age. She married Clark Angell on July 3, 1864. In 1869,



Nancy Ball Angell

the couple and their young family settled in Litchfield, Minnesota, a place they would call home for the rest of their lives.

While Clark was actively involved with the G.A.R. and his photography business, Nancy was

raising their family. The 1880 US Federal Census shows Nancy with their five children at home without Clark listed. Perhaps he was on one of his trips to photograph the west.

Nancy was also involved in the goings-on in

town and knew much of the town's history, having witnessed much of it herself. She also kept up on state and national news, an activity not always viewed as the most "lady-like." Nancy was an important member of the Litchfield Women's Relief Corp over the decades. She was also selected as a Minnesota aide to the Corp's national convention in 1893, one of about two dozen women from across the state.

Nancy's obituary called her a "woman of great fortitude, courage and undaunted spirit," characteristics she needed several times in her life, especially when faced with the tragic deaths of three of her children. In 1892, 14-year-old Louis was injured in a hunting accident. At first, he was expected to recover, but blood poisoning set in and he died three weeks later.

Then in 1902, sons Hiram and Otto, in a horrible coincidence, both died on July 16. Hiram, the district court clerk, died from "meningitis with other complications." His young brother Otto was the deputy clerk. His health had been failing for several years and he died of "consumption" (known today as tuberculosis).

A few years later, in 1905, Nancy's daughter-in-law, the wife of son Clark L Angell Jr, died in South Dakota, leaving two small children, Lewis William and Mary Janet (more on her later). Another loss came two years later when Nancy's husband, Clark Sr., died. They had been married for 43 years.

Nancy herself met a tragic end. On February 1, 1929, she and a friend were leaving the G.A.R. Hall following a meeting of the Women's Relief Corp. As they walked, Nancy

mistakenly thought she could beat an oncoming train and was struck and killed instantly.

Alice Angell Lamb

Alice was the daughter of Clark and Nancy Angell. She was born in 1865 in Rockford, Minnesota, a few years before the family settled permanently in Litchfield. She did well in school, graduating as valedictorian from Litchfield High School in 1882.



Alice Lamb, photo taken in her father's photo studio.

She went on to be a teacher, teaching first in Meeker County rural schools and a couple terms at Atwater. The Atwater paper noted in 1885 that her school term was the first time both of the Atwater teaching positions were held by women. From 1885-86, Alice continued her own education as she attended St. Cloud Normal School where she graduated from the advanced course. She then taught briefly in Sauk Centre and St. Cloud.

On Thursday, September 12, 1889, Alice married Charles F Lamb, a promising lawyer from St. Cloud. (The *Litchfield Saturday Review* included an elaborate write-up about the wedding, including an extensive list of the many gifts the couple received. Stop by the Museum to give it a read.) The couple lived for a short while in St. Cloud before moving to Duluth. It was here their son, Newel, was born.

In early 1894, Charles moved to Phoenix, Arizona, hoping the change in climate would help his "pulmonary troubles." Once he recovered his health and established his business, Alice and Newel planned to join him. Sadly, that never happened. Charles' health continued to plague him and he returned to Minnesota, passing away in November 1894.

Following his death, Alice returned to



Litchfield Library

Litchfield and to teaching. It's unclear if it was by choice or necessity that led Alice back to the school room. However, the 1900 census shows Alice owns her own home, free of mortgage and has a live-in servant, which may suggest she chose to teach.

By 1905, Alice's life had seen two significant changes. In May 1904, she became the Litchfield public library's first librarian, a position she held for the next 33 years. During her tenure, she saw the library collection grow from 900 books to over 10,000. When her sister-in-law died in 1905, Alice's niece and nephew came to live with her.

Like her mother, Alice was also active in the community. Before and after her time at library, she served on the Library Board and was elected a trustee on the Minnesota Library Association. She was a member of the Women's Club (first known as the Women's Literary Club) and was one of the first to join the League of Women Voters.

She was included among "prominent educators" who the Minnesota League of Women Voters enlisted to promote their education campaign in 1922 with the goal of 100% literacy across the state.



Women's Literary Club, c. 1907.

Mary Janet Angell Lamb Tacot

Mary was born "Mary Janet Angell" in 1902 in North Dakota to Kate (Austin) and Clark L Angell Jr. When Kate died in 1905, Clark would have found it hard to care for his two children and continue his work as a railroad conductor. So, the children came to live in Litchfield and were raised by Aunt Alice (with assistance from Grandma Nancy Angell).

Mary was especially close to Alice and even used the last name of Lamb at times. Unlike her grandma and aunt, Mary's life took her far from home as she took to the stage. By the time she was 20, she was touring extensively. This included time in New York where she was

casted as the “second lady” in the play *Rain* in 1924, as recounted by the Litchfield *Independent Review*.

In 1926, Mary married Gustav A Tacot, a former French soldier. The couple made an impression when they visited Litchfield as they walked arm in arm, he in his military uniform and she in her jewels, black dress, hat, and high heels.

The couple had a son, Charles, born in 1929. Like her aunt and grandmother, Mary found herself on her own when the couple divorced sometime before 1931. The 1940 US Census shows Mary and her son living in New York, She was now working as a clerk. We can only guess what was going through Mary’s mind when she reported in the census that she was “Mary Angell” a widow, although records show Gustav was very much alive and living in Florida.

Back in Litchfield, Aunt Alice found herself



On stage, she went by “Mary Angell”

the last remaining Angell in town. As her health began to fail, Mary returned to care for her. Alice died in 1956 at the age of 90. She was “well-known and highly respected throughout her long life in this community.”

Mary remained in Litchfield, suffering a stroke later in life. She moved to a nursing home and according to a former nurse, Mary insisted on wearing makeup every day. Sadly, when she passed away in 1990, the

local paper made no mention of her death. In addition, the year of her death was never added to her marker in Litchfield’s Ripley Cemetery where the three Angell women, from three generations now rest.

In a time when much was ran by men, these three women often had to rely on themselves and each other to make their own way in the world.



Mary’s traveling trunk at the Meeker County Museum.

Meeker County Museum at the G.A.R. Hall Membership

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Annual Museum Membership

- ☐ Single \$25
- ☐ Family \$40
- ☐ Senior Single \$20
- ☐ Senior Family \$35

☐ I’d like to make an additional donation \$ _____

Annual Litchfield Civil War Roundtable Membership

- ☐ Single \$30
- ☐ Family \$40

Membership Matters!

Your membership to the Meeker County Museum not only gives you some great benefits, including free/ reduced admission and a subscription to *Meeker Memories*, but you are also supporting the ongoing work at the Museum. **Thank you!**

Members can find your renewal date on your mailing label.

Meeker County Historical Society, 308 N Marshall Avenue, Litchfield, MN 55355

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Litchfield, MN 55355

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