

MEEKER MEMORIES

SPRING 2024

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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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

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Dave Pease

Barb Penk

Jessica VanLanduyt

Staff

Danelle Erickson - Executive Director
director@meekercomuseum.org

Sandy Johnson - Research Librarian
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April

- 9 **Minnesota Live, KSTP**, 9:00am; "Must See Museums" segment will feature the Museum and G.A.R. Hall!
- 27 **Civil War Symposium**, 9:00am-3:30pm, Litchfield Opera House. \$20/adult; \$35/adult and lunch. Lunch tickets must be purchased by April 14.

Admission at the door is available but will not include lunch.

May

- 9 **Civil War Roundtable: General Meade – The Most Controversial, Overlooked, "Fighting" Union General and Hero, or an Incompetent, Abusive General?** with Gary Carlberg. 1:30. Free for Roundtable Members; \$3/general admission
- 27 **Annual Memorial Day Picnic**, Lunch served from 11:00-1:30 at the Litchfield Opera House. \$10/adults; \$5/kids. Museum open 11:00-2:00

June

- 13 **Civil War Roundtable: Military and Civilian Forts of the US-Dakota War of 1862** with Robert Mann. 1:30. Free for Roundtable Members; \$3/general admission (rescheduled from March)

Follow us on Facebook or see page 7 on how you can sign up for our monthly emails "Meeker Memos"

Director's Notes

Collection Spotlight

Danelle Erickson
Executive Director



We are incredibly excited that Litchfield is the host city for this year's Civil War Symposium! See below for details or visit our website. Please note the original registration date (to include lunch) has been extended until April 14. Admission at the door is available, but lunch won't be included.

We are very grateful to our local media for helping to spread the word about the museum and local history. Tune to KLFD Radio on the first Thursday of each month to hear us on the Newsmaker program. As for print media, starting in April we will have a regular column in the *Litchfield Independent Review*.

We are looking forward to another Memorial Day Picnic, Monday, May 27 at the Litchfield Opera House with lunch served 11:00-1:30. This is an annual tradition that helps support the museum as well as honor our service men and women.

If you, your family, or your business are interested in sponsoring the Memorial Day Picnic, please get in touch!

Stored in the archives at the Museum are three photo albums full of photos. While many of the photos have names and dates, the name of the original owner had been lost. By looking at the photos, we were pretty sure the owner was a young woman who worked in the Litchfield schools. We decided she probably wasn't a teacher, because the students photographed were from all ages.

The mystery was finally solved when we came across a scrapbook that belonged to Edith Lake. Miss Lake was the school nurse for Litchfield in the mid-1930s until 1940. Her scrapbook is full of newspaper clippings, school programs, and much more. By taking what we knew about the photo albums and comparing the handwriting in the albums and scrapbook, we can now confidently say the albums belong to Nurse Lake!

The albums include over 200 photos spanning from 1937 to 1940. There's the diphtheria immunization clinic in 1937, the community fair in 1939, and supper at the 1940 prom. What a unique view into life over 80 years ago!



CIVIL WAR SYMPOSIUM
 Saturday, April 27, 2024, 9:00 a.m.
 Litchfield, MN

**"Perspectives on
 What This Cruel War Was Over"**

Litchfield Opera House
 136 N Marshall Ave, Litchfield, MN

Admission: \$20
 w/ lunch: \$35

Lunch tickets must be purchased by **April 14**.
 General admission available at the door.

Visit website for details
 and to register.



tccwrt.com/meetings/symposium/



Members

New* and Returning Members January-March 2024

Joseph Asher*	Bruce and Anita Nelson
Fred Aten*	Dave and Jan Pease
Richard and Elizabeth Carlson	Robert Rogers
Patrick Casey	Dennis & Nina Rutledge
Lynne Gelston	Lois Sosenheimer
Margaret Johnson	Jessica VanLanduyt*
Doug Meeker	Hugh and Carol Wagner
	Ken and Mary Zachman

Business and Nonprofit Members



American Legion Post 104



Conway, Deuth & Schiesing, PLLP



Litchfield Opera House



Litchfield Rotary



VFW Post 2818



Donors

Financial Donations January-March 2024

Burton Bard Jr.	Don and Connie Lies
Cedar Mills Township	Litchfield Lions Club
Danielson Township	Litchfield Women's Club
Terry and Patrice Davis	Einar Lundin
Donald and Maureen Olson Charitable Trust	Doug Meeker
Forest City Township	Mark and Diane Nicholson
Greenleaf Township	Meeker County
Margaret Johnson	Sherrie Risch
Deb Kramasz	Dennis & Nina Rutledge
Ladies of the G.A.R.	Bernard Schulte

Artifact Donations January-March 2024

Clifford Johnson
Litchfield Study Club
Tracey McCoy
Rod Ness

If you are considering donating an artifact to the Meeker County Museum, please contact us first. As exhibit space and storage is limited, all items must be from Meeker County and will be evaluated based on condition, history, and uniqueness to the current collection. Thanks!

Help share local history!

In the coming year, will be working to spread the word about the Meeker County Museum at the G.A.R. Hall. Here are some ways **you** can help:

- Bring someone to the museum
- Forward our monthly email or share your newsletter with someone
- Organize a group tour or talk to us about group presentations
- Comment on and share our Facebook posts

Township Tales

Darwin & Ellsworth

STREET VIEW DARWIN MINN. 10.

Darwin, Minnesota c 1917

Come along as we continue our Township Tales series, featuring stories from Meeker County townships. This issue includes Darwin and Ellsworth Townships.

Darwin Township

For many people, when they hear “Darwin” thoughts turn to the Twine Ball, but there is another “ball” that has a place in Darwin’s history—baseball.

One of Darwin’s baseball highlights comes from September 1921 when the Miller brothers from Darwin faced off against the Litchfield team. At the close of Litchfield’s regular season, the Miller brothers decided to challenge the team to a special game.

John and Catherine Miller had thirteen children—ten boys and three girls. The patriarch John was a great ballplayer himself. John once struck out 24 batters in a single game and is said to have thrown a ball from Litchfield’s Sibley Avenue, across Central Park, and into the front door of the G.A.R. Hall. It’s no wonder the Miller boys grew up with the game. Sadly, John died two years before the celebrated Miller brothers vs. Litchfield game.

The game began at 2:00 on Sunday, September 18, 1921. About 750 people attended, a great crowd despite some concern over the weather.

The Millers’ lineup included eight of the brothers, plus one Mr.

Alexander who was brought in to play the catcher position. Howard Miller, the youngest brother, didn’t play and brother Raymond was in uniform but didn’t appear in the game’s box score.



Earl, Tim, Billy, Vic, Roy, Henry, Fred, Joe, & Raymond Miller

As for the Litchfield team, their season hadn’t gone as well as they had hoped, so they brought in outside players from Hutchinson and Dassel to bolster their lineup.

The game was a close one. Some of the Miller brothers were a bit out of practice and had some fielding errors, but brother Joe pitched well, striking out 17 batters. Litchfield threatened to score in the bottom of the ninth, but the Miller brothers hung on for a 4 to 3 victory.

Another highlight in Darwin’s baseball history was the 1936 Darwin team. The team was part of the Wright County League. They had been part of the Meeker County League in previous years, but the league had added a rule that the whole team had to be local, which wasn’t the case for all of Darwin’s players. One of the Darwin boys was Earl Miller of the Miller brothers team.

Despite winning only half of their regular season games, the 1936 Darwin team would go on to win the Wright County League championship, earning them a spot in the State Amateur Baseball Championship at Lexington Park in St. Paul.

FEATURE BALL GAME
Litchfield Ball Park, Litchfield
Miller Bros. vs. Litchfield
Sunday, September 18

Joe	→	Fred
Roy	→	Victor
William	→	Raymond
Henry	→	Howard
Tim	→	Earle

MILLER



Back: Reno Lindell, Eldon Palm, George Christenson, Carl Martens, Doug Miller, Herb Johnson, Earl Miller
 Front: Wes Asplin, Johnny Palmquist, Phil Gallivan, Bennie Leppa, Fred Colberg, Mose Martens; Bat boy: Eddie Palm

The Darwin team represented one of the smallest towns to have ever reached the state tournament, but one wouldn't have known it by the number of fans at the games. The *Meeker County News* reported that the fans outnumbered the population of Darwin. A caravan of forty or more cars left from Darwin, with a bus and more cars joining in Dassel and eastward.

The team played well, winning their first three games and advancing to the championship game against Windom. Unfortunately for the team, their semi-final game had originally been scheduled for Saturday, but rain forced the team to play the game Sunday morning before the championship game that evening. The Windom team proved too tough for the tired Darwin team and they lost 1 to 3.

Ellsworth Township

For many of the farmers in Meeker County's first couple of decades, their focus was on their crops, mostly corn, wheat, and other grains. When it came to livestock, the 1870s agricultural schedule shows the average farm had one to two dozen animals —perhaps a couple of horses, some milk cows, a team of oxen, and maybe a few sheep or pigs. But the livestock owned by Ellsworth Township's John Duckering is another story.

For those whose ancestors were farmers in the 1870s, the agricultural schedule is a great source of information. It gives land amounts, livestock, and crops raised along with values. The total value of Duckering's farm was \$4,000.

Only one other farm in the township was valued higher. The Duckering farm had three milk cows, two oxen, four pigs, seventeen horses, and 215 sheep. In comparing his horses and sheep, there wasn't a farm in the entire county that had a higher number. Duckering had three times as many sheep as found in all of Ellsworth Township combined.

Not only did Duckering have a large number of animals, but the animals themselves were often large and made prize-winning appearances at the local fairs. In 1871, he presented a 1,000-pound pig and a 1,450-pound stallion in 1873.

Some of the breeds Duckering raised included White Chester pigs; Merino and Cotswold sheep; and Durham and Shorthorn cattle. His horses included Norman and English Shire.

Shire horses were large, working horses. According to an 1888 Meeker County history, Duckering owned one of only two Shire horses in the whole county, and it was said to be one of the finest in all of Minnesota.



Shire Horse, Wikicommons

The Duckerings' farm was kept busy with more than just livestock. The 1870 schedule shows the farm produced wheat, Indian corn, barley, oats, potatoes, and hay. There was also 300 pounds of butter, 260 gallons of molasses, and, not surprisingly, 700 pounds of wool.

But Duckering didn't stop there. In 1872, he planted eighty apple trees and was harvesting 100 bushels within three years. He also raised turkeys and won prizes for his pumpkins, squash, honey, popcorn, and apples.

Royal George!
 This Superb Stallion will hereafter be in Litchfield, at the Lake Ripley House stable on Tuesdays of each week. He is one of the finest horses in Minnesota. For terms &c., enquire of
JOHN DUCKERING, Proprietor.

1874 ad from the *Litchfield Ledger*

John Duckering was born in England in 1819, came to the United States in 1842, and settled in Ellsworth Township in 1865. John and his wife Marie (Bean) had twelve children, and it is safe to

assume the whole family shared in the success of the family farm.

In 1886, Duckering sold much of his livestock, valued around \$1,500. Within a few years, he and his wife had sold their Ellsworth farm and divided their time between Kimball and Hutchinson. In 1906, the couple followed some of their children west, residing in Washington. John died in 1909 at the age of 89. His wife, Maria, died the following year. Despite not having lived in the area for several years, a lengthy obituary for John appeared in Litchfield's *Independent Review* where he was remembered as being a "lover of good horses and fine stock" and for his "bluff, outspoken and honest personality."

Sources:
Various Meeker County Newspapers
"Darwin Baseball—The 1936 Season" with photograph, compiled by David Kelly
"Baseball, A Family Affair" with photograph by David Kelly
Meeker County Memories, 1986
Album of History and Biography, Meeker County, 1888
1870 Agricultural Schedule

Meeker Memos

Monthly email



Each month, we will send you a short and to-the-point email with the latest news and events from the Meeker County Museum at the G.A.R. Hall.

To signup, just send an email with subject "email signup" to Director@meekercomuseum.org

Wish List

4 to 6 metal bookends



THANK YOU to the Greater Litchfield Opera House Association and their in-kind donation of printing this publication.

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

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone Number: _____

Email _____

Annual Museum Membership

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

Annual Litchfield Civil War Roundtable Membership

- Single \$30
- Family \$40

I'd like to make an additional donation \$ _____

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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