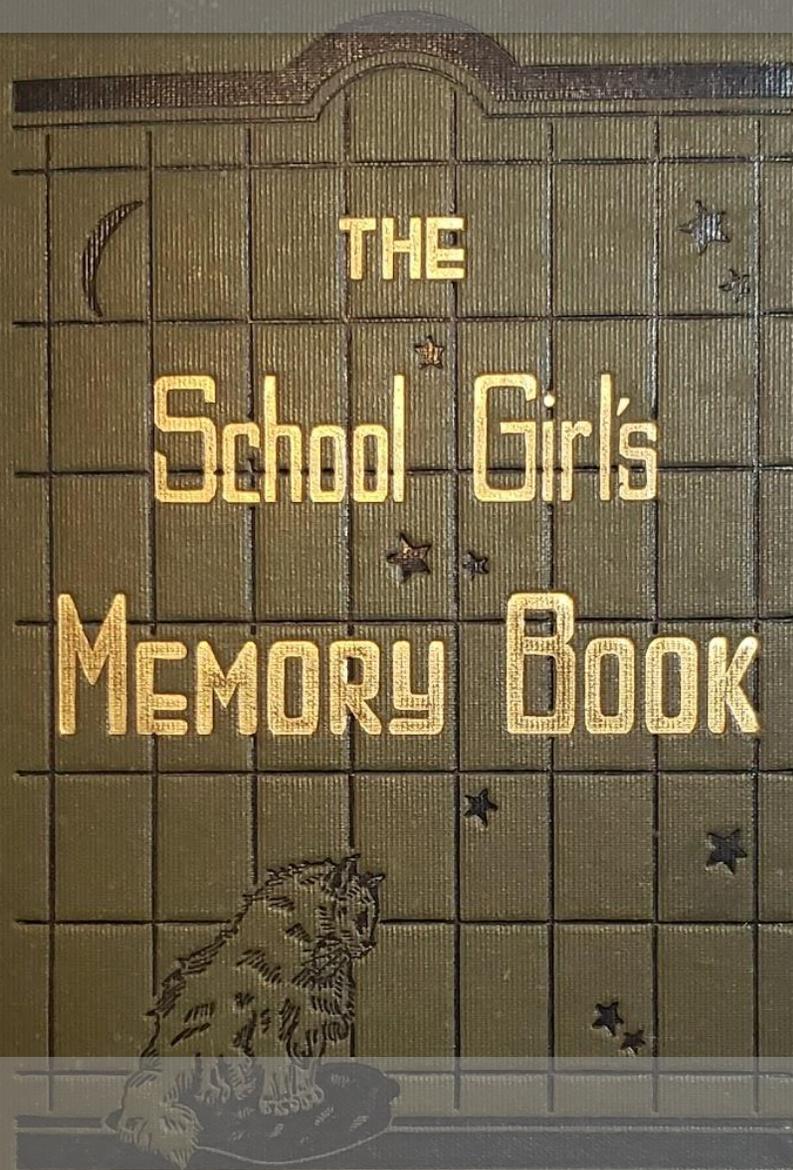


# Meeker County Museum at the G.A.R Hall



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Artifact Spotlight: Margaret Avelton's High School Memory Book

## **Mission Statement**

To enhance, archive and preserve the Meeker County Museum, Civil War Building Complex, and it's 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

## **Board of Directors**

Bob Bohrer - Sid Wilson - Bruce Nelson - Ken Zachman - Jeff Niedenthal  
Jessica Bondhus - Auggie Anderson - Barb Penk  
Sam Feistner - Theresa Nelson

## **Executive Director**

Bayley Schluter

## **Staff and Volunteers**

Sandy Johnson - Connie Lies  
Auggie Anderson

## **Museum Information**

Meeker County Museum at the G.A.R Hall  
308 N Marshall Ave, Litchfield, MN 55355  
320-693-8911  
[www.meekercomuseum.org](http://www.meekercomuseum.org)

## **Temporary Hours and Admission**

Monday: CLOSED      Tuesday: CLOSED  
Wednesday: CLOSED      Thursday: CLOSED  
Friday: CLOSED      Saturday: CLOSED  
Sunday: CLOSED

## **Admission & Research Library**

### Exhibit Admission

Adults \$3 - Children Under Age 12 Free - Members Free

### Research Library

Free access to materials  
\$0.25 per B&W copy made  
\$1.00 per Color copy made  
\$2.00 per Copy on large paper

# Letter from the Director

Bayley Schluter

Greetings from your friendly neighborhood Museum Director! For those who don't know, I spent the majority of my summer at home with my baby girl who was born in May. She is an incredible baby, and while I loved every minute at home with her, I am excited to roll up my sleeves and continue working to preserve and share the history of Meeker County. The first task upon my return from maternity leave was working to reopen the MCM so that all of you can comb through our research materials and enjoy our exhibits. The plan is still in the "review stage" and we hope to be open to the public by the end of October. Watch our website, social media pages, and the local newspapers for any reopening-related announcements.

Reserve your tickets for *With Charity for all: Abraham Lincoln and the Dakota War Trials of 1862* on November 21. Bryce Stenzel, a famed Abraham Lincoln impersonator, will be acting as our 16th President as he contemplates whether or not to execute 303 Dakota Indians found guilty for their actions during the U.S/Dakota War. Admission is \$10 for current members of the MCM and \$15 for non-members. There will be other programs similar to this throughout 2021 with special rates for our loyal members. Watch for event announcements in upcoming newsletters, and check the date printed on the mailing label of the newsletters to see when you may need to renew your annual museum membership.

I want to send a giant "thank you!" to everyone who donated to the MCM during the Bakeless Bake Sale. The pandemic forced us to cancel the annual Memorial Day Picnic and a large Gala planned for this December, but with the support of our membership, I'm certain that we'll make it through this unforgettable moment in history stronger than ever! Another great time to donate will be Give to the Max Day in November; for every donation we receive through our page on GiveMN.org, the MCM is entered into a lottery to win an additional 3- for 4-figure dollar donation! This would be a fantastic way to end the year, but we can't do it without your help!

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## Notice of Annual Meeting

Thursday, October 15th at 6:30pm

Meeker County Museum

The Board of Directors for the Meeker County Museum invites it's membership to the 2020 Annual Meeting. The event will include a catered dinner, a short business meeting to celebrate the MCM's accomplishments over the last year and outline our future goals, and a presentation by Litchfield Mayor Keith Johnson.

The Meeting is open to active members only. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the MCM will be practicing social distancing and asks that guests wear masks before and after the meal. We are also requiring guests to RSVP by October 10. Members may do so by calling or emailing the Museum

### Board Members to be Voted On

Sid Wilson (currently served as Vice President)

Ken Zachman

Theresa Nelson

Tom Westum

Jessica Bondhus

# October 2020

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

**October 8 at 1:30pm:** Litchfield GAR Civil War Roundtable - *Lincoln: Life and Legacy* by Jim and Joyce Hinderks - Free for CWRT Members and \$3/guests - Drinks and Appetizers Served

**October 15 at 6:30pm:** MCHS Annual Meeting with Featured Speaker: Mayor Keith Johnson - Catered Meal Provided - RSVP Required by October 10

**October 30:** Deadline to submit nominations for the West Central Minnesota Baseball Hall of Fame Class of 2021. Nomination forms can be found at [www.kandiyohicountyhistory.com](http://www.kandiyohicountyhistory.com)

# November 2020

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

**November 12 at 1:30pm:** Litchfield GAR Civil War Roundtable - *Bugle Songs During the Civil War* by William Crowder - Free for CWRT Members and \$3/guests - Drinks and Appetizers Served

**November 21 at 3pm:** *With Charity for all: Abraham Lincoln and the Dakota War Trials of 1862* Presented by Lincoln Impersonator Bryce Stenzel - Litchfield Opera House - Advance Ticket Purchase Required - \$15/non-members \$10/members

**November 19:** Minnesota Give to the Max Day

**November 26 & 27:** Thanksgiving Weekend - The Meeker County Museum will be Closed

# December 2020

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
		<b>1</b>	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	<b>10</b>	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>
27	28	29	30	31	1	

**December 1 at 10am:** First Day of the 3rd Annual Christmas Tree Village - Scavenger Hunt Guides Available for Children (\$1)

**December 10 at 1:30pm:** Litchfield GAR Civil War Roundtable - *The Great Locomotive Chase* by George Romano - Free for CWRT Members and \$3/guests - Drinks and Appetizers Served

**December 25 & 26:** Christmas Day - The Museum will be Closed

**January 1st:** New Years Day - The Museum will be Closed

Check our Website for any updates about upcoming events and programs  
<https://www.meekercomuseum.org/events-and-announcements>

# Meeker County Memories

## *The American Legion in Meeker County*

When our staff and volunteers are leading tours of the Grand Army of the Republic (G.A.R) Hall, the history and purpose of the organization is often compared to the veterans organizations of today; the Veterans of Foreign Wars or the American Legion, for example. All three of these groups are comprised of American citizens who served in the Armed Forces during a time of conflict, have a history of being active within their community, and grew to have some political power in state and national governments. While the G.A.R. dissolved in 1956 with the death of its final member (Albert Wilson of Duluth, Minnesota), the Legion and VFW are showing no signs of slowing down. The American Legion recently celebrated their 100th anniversary as a national organization, and has been established in Meeker County for nearly as long. Let's explore the history of the Legion (nationally and locally), the influence that the G.A.R had on its origins, and what the Legion is up to today.



**A G.A.R. grave marker, still placed near the graves of Civil War veterans on Memorial Day still today**

The G.A.R. was founded on April 6, 1866 on the principles of “Fraternity, Charity and Loyalty.” Any veteran who served in the Union Army, Navy, Marines or the U.S. Reserve Cutter Service were eligible to join. The G.A.R. advocated for the voting rights of negro veterans, federal pensions for white and negro veterans, and can be credited with the establishment of Memorial Day. Lobbying efforts by the G.A.R. were made easier by their influence over national elections. By the late 19th-century, the chance of a member of the Republican party receiving a presidential or congressional nomination without the endorsement of the G.A.R. was rather slim. Presidents Ulysses Grant, Rutherford B. Hayes, James Garfield, Benjamin Harrison, and William McKinley were all members of G.A.R. posts in their home states; several members of Congress were also card-carrying members.

The practice of labeling local chapters as “posts” and giving them a number originated with the G.A.R. and was later copied by the American Legion after its establishment in 1919. The first and only time that the Legion amended their Constitution was in 1942 when “War” was changed to “Wars.” This was because membership was originally restricted to those who were in Active Duty between April 6, 1917 and November 11, 1918. Soon after the start of America's participation in the Second World War, eligibility was expanded to those who have served in Active Duty since December 7, 1941 and have been honorably discharged or are still serving. Leaders within the Legion were instrumental in the creation of the American Veteran's Bureau and eventual elevation to Cabinet-level status as the Department of Veteran Affairs. As well as the drafting and successful passage of the original G.I. Bill in 1944. One major difference between the Legion and G.A.R. is that the Legion's Constitution strictly forbids them from endorsing a specific political candidate, remaining absolutely nonpolitical. Taking things one step further, members are not allowed to wear any clothing with the Legion logo at a political event. If a candidate requests the use of a post for a campaign event, the establishment must remove its emblem and flags “to avoid the impression of an endorsement.”

Today, there are 549 American Legion posts in Minnesota, 6 of which lie in Meeker County. The number assigned to an American Legion post correlates to the order in which they are established within its state. The posts in Meeker County, from oldest to latest are: **The Nelsan-Horton Post 104 in Litchfield, Beack-Thompson Post 126 in**

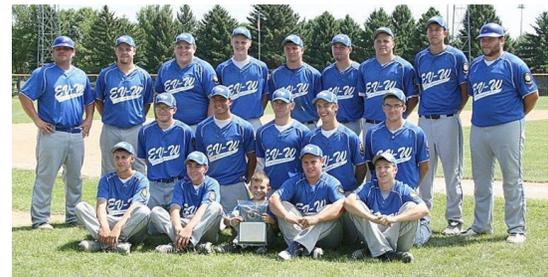
**Cosmos, Paul F. Dille Post 364 in Dassel, Eden Valley Post 381 in Eden Valley, Watkins Post 453 in Watkins, and the Johnson-Kelly Post 483 in Dassel.**



**A screenshot of the livestream from the Paul F. Dille Post 364 Memorial Day Service. The program was closed to the public and livestreamed on Facebook.**

Each club has spent their entire existence working to honor the actions of fallen and discharged veterans, as well as to remain involved in the community. The Beack-Thompson Post, for example, offers an annual scholarship to high school seniors who have been active in their school as well as their hometown. During the recent state-wide shutdown, each post each found a unique way to still memorialize deceased veterans on Memorial Day 2020. Eden Valley Post 381 released a video online of its members performing a roll call of deceased veterans. The Nelsan-Horton Post 104 hosted an entire program over the radio that was individually pre-recorded. The program included a fife and bugle opening, various speakers, a reading of the Gettysburg Address, a 21-gun salute, Taps, and the singing of “God Bless America.”

When they aren’t performing their official duties during military holidays or as the Honor Guard for veteran’s funerals, members of the American Legion are working to be positive members of their towns. You can always expect to see the Dassel Legions in the Red Rooster Days Parade, either as part of the Color Guard or riding their motorcycles with the American Legion Patriot Riders. The Watkins Post 483 and Nelsan-Horton Post 104 each own buildings that double as restaurants and public meeting spaces, providing more opportunity for others to learn about the traditions of the American Legion. There’s also, of course, the American Legion Baseball league. Comprised of 13- to 19-year-old amateur players, a local Post sponsors and coaches a team through a series of games against other teams within its state district. Meeker County is a part of District 7, and is represented by 6 local schools. Following a spring and summer full of local tournaments, the winning team moves onto state and regional tournaments, with the ultimate goal of making it to the American Legion Baseball World Series in Shelby, North Carolina. In 2011, the team from Eden Valley-Watkins (sponsored by Posts 381 and 453) won the Division II State Champion and were the Great Plains Regional Champions after shutting out the team from Pahrump, Nevada with a 5-0 final score. Unfortunately, it’s the teams from Division I that go onto the World Series, so winning the Regional Championship is how the 2011 season ended for Eden Valley-Watkins.



**The Champion Eden Valley-Watkins team, coached by Heath Kramer**

The origins and traditions of the G.A.R posts of old are very similar to the American Legion posts of today. Both began as fraternal clubs for veterans, both advocated for veterans rights within the state and federal government, and both have a legacy of active involvement within their community. However, the Legion is not allowed to get involved with political campaigns and has made revisions so that their membership would never die out. The American Legion has been an integral part of Meeker County for the last one hundred years, constantly growing and expanding, but never parting with their traditions and values. When you consider their involvement with local Scout troops, baseball clubs, annual city- and county-wide events, and other community-based charitable organizations; it becomes obvious that all 6 Posts have striven to as positive a member of their town as possible. It’s difficult to imagine our city’s without the sight of a Legion member marching the Colors down a parade route, or without the chance to win Bingo at the local Post on Friday night. The history of each Meeker County club is too full to fit within these two pages, but we are proud to continue working with and preserving the history of this unique organization.

# Donations, Memorials and New Members

## Donations

Anderson Chemical Company (Hand Sanitizer)	Dennis Rutledge	Phyllis Prochaska
Litchfield Chamber of Commerce (Masks)	Sally Anderson	Patricia Bajada
Custom Products (Printer Paper)	Renny Malinski	Conway, Deuth and Schmiesing, PLLP
Garden Nook Tea and Gifts (Prize for Fundraiser)	Joyce Burgstahler	
Citeral Skalbeck	Chuck Lavallee	
SL Willson	John Dollerschell	
American Legion Post #104	Tim Bergstrom	
Suzie Dalquist	Greg Swenson	
Mark Cashman	Tom and Candy Westrum	
Dean Urdahl	Jerry McRaith	
Diane McCandles	Margaret Johnson	
	Richard Carlson	
	Judy Oestreich	

## New Members of the MCM and the Civil War Roundtable

Mark Swinden

## Returning Members of the MCM and the Civil War Roundtable

Allen County Library	James & Roberta Swenson	Bradley Havemeier
Auggie Anderson	Linda Atkinson	David Pease
Carol Blunt	Tony Lorber	Les Heitke
Gerald & Audrey Euerle	Sam Feistner	Jeff Niedenthal
Chuck Pease	Ken Zachman	Miranda Gohn
Kelli Beckler	Greg Swenson	Lynn Gelston
Dennis Rutledge	Patrick Casey	Connie Lies
Jim & Mona Haag	Chuck Lavallee	

## There is More than One Way to Support the Meeker County Museum

- Mail a Check or Cash Payment to the Museum
- Make an Online Donation through [GiveMN.org](http://GiveMN.org)
- Use [smile.amazon.com](http://smile.amazon.com) the next time you shop online and donate to the “Meeker County Historical Society”
- Look up our [Amazon Wishlist](#) and donate Office or Archival Supplies
- Designate the Meeker County Historical Society under the [Thrivent Choice Program](#)

# Spotlight on the Collection

## *Margaret Aveldson's Memory Book*



**A page from the Memory Book, photos of LHS students**

Many people have positive memories of their years in high school, with some storing yearbooks or graduation caps in their attics for decades. Margaret Aveldson took the preservation of treasured memories one step further with her “School Girl’s Memory Book,” a scrapbook filled with photographs and remnants from her time at Litchfield High School (LHS). The book includes autographs from her classmates, photos of students and teachers, and even her dance card from the Junior Prom. This scrapbook, recently donated to us by her granddaughter, is a fantastic time capsule from a bygone era of public learning.

In 1924, LHS had 15 teachers to educate 239 students. Of the many clubs one could join, one was called the “Girls Club,” whose purpose was to “promote friendliness among the high school girls... [and] to give each girl a chance to develop her talent as she possess it.” There was also the Litchfield High News, the school newspaper; and the “L Club,” an organization of students and alumni who earned more than one letter in athletics during their time at LHS, amongst others.

Young Margaret “Migge” Aveldson was Vice President of her class, literacy editor for the Reflector - the annual yearbook, and was voted “Keenest Student - Girl” by her classmates. The beginning of her Memory Book is filled with photographs of herself and her friends, and of loving notes from her classmates; including this helpful piece of advice from Fern “Davie” Davidson: “*When you are married and your hubby gets cross, Fick up the broom and say, ‘See Here, Old Man - I’m Boss.’*” Later sections of the book include several programs for plays and musicals, newspaper clippings, and invitations to other classmates graduation parties. There are also non-LHS related items such as Christmas cards, birthday notes and photos from family vacations.



**Margaret during her senior year**

On May 28, 1924, Margaret graduated from Litchfield High School and spoke to her class during the ceremony as it’s Valedictorian. The event was held at the Litchfield Opera House and celebrated the largest class to graduate from LHS to date with 53 students. Margaret’s speech is one of the items preserved in her memory book, the ending of which is a fitting representative of the artifact as a whole. “*For such opportunities we have enjoyed we are grateful first to our parents who have made it possible for us to complete our high school course, and to our teachers who have always patiently helped us during the trials and difficulties of our four High School years...To all of you we extend our class farewell with the hope that your memory of us may be as pleasant as ours shall always be of you. MRA.*”

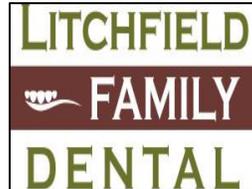
# Support our Business and Nonprofit Organizational Members!

## Business Members

### Mueller Law Firm, PA



### Litchfield Family Dental



### Insurance Solutions of Litchfield



### Nelsan Horton American Legion Post 104



### Admiral Benson Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 2818



### Spirit of Ripley RV Campground



### Conway, Death & Schmiesing, PLLP



### Stockmen's Greenhouse and Garden Center



Your  
Business  
Here!

## Nonprofit Organizational Members

### Greater Litchfield Opera House Association



### American Legion Post No. 381



Your  
Nonprofit  
Here!

Visit <https://www.meeckercomuseum.org/business-membership> to learn about our Business and Nonprofit Membership!

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

## Regular Membership

This is a  Renewal  New Membership

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

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Add Me to the Email List:

**Note:** Annual memberships expire the same month as the original enrollment. See the mailing label on each Newsletter to check your renewal date

I'd Like to Make a Tax-Deductible Donation: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

### Meeker County Museum Membership Levels

Single (\$25)  Family (\$40)

Senior Single Annual (\$20)  Senior Single One-Time (\$500)

Senior Family Annual (\$35)  Senior Family One-Time (\$500)

### Litchfield Civil War Roundtable Annual Membership

Single (\$30)  Family (\$40)

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# Donation Form

During this unprecedented time, it's important to remember the local organizations and businesses that make your community unique. The Meeker County Museum has lost months of business and been forced to cancel all major fundraisers planned for 2020. If you're able, please consider making a donation to this organization and support our efforts to preserve the unique stories of Meeker County

Donation Amount: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Send Me a Receipt for My Tax-Deductible Donation:

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

308 N Marshall Ave  
Litchfield, MN 55355

**Return Service Requested**

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