

Meeker County Museum at the G.A.R Hall

Summer 2020

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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 Willson - Bruce Nelson - Sam Feistner - Jeff Niedenthal
Chuck Pease - Auggie Anderson - Barb Penk - Ken Zachman - Theresa Nelson

Executive Director

Bayley Schluter

Staff and Volunteers

Sandy Johnson - Mark Cashman - Connie Lies
Auggie Anderson - Ian Maner - Darlene Kotelnicki - Jessica Bondhus

Museum Information

Meeker County Museum at the G.A.R Hall
308 N Marshall Ave, Litchfield, MN 55355
320-693-8911
www.meekercomuseum.org

Hours and Admission

Monday: CLOSED	Tuesday: 10am-4pm
Wednesday: 10am-4pm	Thursday: 10am-4pm
Friday: 10am-4pm	Saturday: 12pm-4pm
Sunday: CLOSED	

Admission & Research Library

Exhibit Admission

Adults \$3 - Children Under 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

Guest Feature

“Memorial Day in a Pandemic” by Jeanne Shoultz Doran

In the midst of a pandemic of unknown dimension and consequences, the citizens of Litchfield, MN observed Memorial Day, May 25 2020 in a most unique manner. The two previous Memorial days were unusual in their own ways. May 30, 2018, the usual activities; parade, cemetery program, picnic lunch, were carried out in the most hot and humid conditions ever recorded: 100 degrees. The 2019 activities were revised, due to a severe thunderstorm; parade cancelled; program was held at the First Lutheran church.

Then, along came Memorial Day, May 25, 2020. Finding ourselves in a pandemic situation that required public gatherings to be cancelled, our Veterans in charge of this years observance developed a plan that would include most of the aspects that had made our earlier celebrations so meaningful and community inclusive. Tom Westrum, Commander of the American Legion Post #104, and Gary Smith with the American Legion and Litchfield Military Honor Guard put together a radio program that would be broadcast on Memorial Day at 10:00 a.m. on Litchfield's local radio station KLFD. Each person on the program recorded their “bit part” at the station while Steve Gretch, owner of KLFD, edited and put together a program that would be broadcast on Monday, May 25th at 10am. The program was as followed:

Memorial Day Program, May 25, 2020 10:00 KLFD Radio
Battle Hymn of the Republic-(marching song of the Union Army, Civil War)
Welcome; Tom Westrum- American Legion Post 104 Commander
Prayer, Pledge of Allegiance
Invocation: Bruce Nelson, American Legion Chaplain
Words if thought and inspiration:
Keith Johnson, Litchfield Mayor
Gary Smith, Litchfield Military Honor Guard Member and Officer of the Day
Daniel Lease, Veterans of Foreign Wars Commander
Keynote Speaker: Jeanie Shoultz Doran Ladies of the Grand Army of the Republic
Gettysburg Address: Bruce Nelson
Vocal Solo: “Proud to be an American” by Molly Anderson, granddaughter of Tom and Cindy Westrum
Benediction: Bruce Nelson
“God Bless America” recorded solo by Celine Dion
Closing words by Tom Westrum

Other activities of the day included: 9:30 The Ladies of the G.A. R. held a private wreath laying ceremony at the Civil War Soldiers Monument at Ripley Cemetery. 11:00 Wreath laying was held in front of the GAR hall by Vet's Groups. A special lunch was provided to Veterans at the Opera House and meals were delivered to other veterans who could not attend.

This day will long be remembered as the Most Memorable Memorial day in Litchfield, Mn, May 25, 2020

July 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	

July 4th: Independence Day - The Museum will be Closed

August 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					

August 13 at 1:30pm - Litchfield Civil War Roundtable - *Heading Farther South: Confederate Mercenaries & Emigrants After the Civil War* by David Page - Free for CWRT Members and \$3/guests - Drinks and Appetizers Served

September 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			

September 7: Labor Day

September 10 at 1:30pm: Litchfield G.A.R Civil War Roundtable - *The Bullocks & the Roosevelts: A Study of Two Civil War Families* by Raymond Marshall - Free for CWRT Members and \$3/guests - Drinks and Appetizers Served

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

Meeker County Memories

The Life of Dr. James W. Robertson

James Wright Robertson was born in Perrysville, Ohio on July 26, 1852, growing up to eventually graduate from Perrysville High School. He continued his studies at the University of Michigan for two years before moving on to the Detroit College of Medicine, graduating in 1877. He continued his studies in several European cities for the next two years, learning the new methods of family medicine before returning to the United States in 1879 to establish his own medical practice. Robertson became a professor at the Detroit School of Medicine, and remained on staff for ten years. He also staffed as a doctor for several hospitals in the area while co-running his own Nose & Throat clinic out of St. Mary's Hospital (the largest in Detroit).



Now equipped with years of education and experience, Robertson decided to strike out on his own and moved to Meeker County, Minnesota in 1891. He worked as a surgeon for several years for the Great Northern Railroad while also doing his part to help the community. Robertson worked to establish the Crow River Valley Medical Society, initially serving as Secretary, and was also secretary for the Meeker County Medical Society. Additionally, Robertson was mayor of the city of Litchfield for three terms, served on the local school board, and was a member of the Village Board of Health.

In 1906, Robertson left the GNR to establish his own private practice, the Robertson Hospital on the corner of Sibley Avenue and 3rd Street in Litchfield. He paid to have a new brick building erected in that spot, using the 2nd floor as a hospital and renting on the ground floor originally to Joe E. Happ, who ran a grocery and dry goods store.



All of this work didn't affect his personal life. On September 17, 1872, James Robertson was united in marriage to Ms. Ella Jane Phelps. They worked together to raise three sons (Archibald, William and Carl), all of whom would eventually become doctors. After completing their education, Archibald and William returned to Litchfield and practiced medicine out of their father's original office. Carl volunteered for the Navy, and would reach the rank of Commander before his death in 1948.

Doctor James Wright Robertson passed away on January 13, 1913 after complications during an operation for a ruptured appendix. His funeral was held in Presbyterian Church, a building that was too small to fit the large crowd of people who attended the service. Many businesses were closed for the day, and schools allowed students to be absent from classes in order to attend. Colleagues in the medical field from Minneapolis, Benson, Willmar and throughout Meeker County made an effort to be at the church and say goodbye to their esteemed friend.

Donations, Memorials and New Members

Financial Donations

Cedar Mills Township
Pamela Dille
Larry Sharpe
Greg Swenson
Swede Grove Township
Marveen Minish
Connie Lies
Litchfield Township
Manannah Township

Litchfield Opera House Association
Ladies of the G.A.R.
Harvey Township

In Memorial

Pamela Dille in honor of Steve Dille
John & Linda Miller in honor of Kate and Jack Wyrens

New Members of the MCM and the Civil War Roundtable

Carol Rowell

Returning Members of the MCM and the Civil War Roundtable

Sandy Johnson
Pamela Dille
Marveen Minish
William Holmquist
Daniel Hoisington
David Johnson/Bev Meyer
Sam Feistner
Jerome Johnson
Tom Westrum

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 [PayPal](#) or [GiveMN](#)
- Use [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

Cashier's Box

Country stores and homegood stores are a treasured memory for many in the rural area. A place where people gathered to not only purchase groceries and household items, but to catch up with friends and spend time with family. Maybe it was the one place where the latest fashion accessory could be found, or maybe it was where you spent your hard earned nickel on some hard candy, everyone has special memories of their favorite local store. The Greep-Trueblood Store was such a place for many people in the Litchfield area.

The building on the corner of Sibley Avenue and U.S. Highway 12/Depot Street was originally constructed in 1892. It's first inhabitant was the Wells Brothers Company, a "Big Store" that opened in 1900 that featured four departments, including a grocery section. When the store was in its prime, it was said that "in addition to the members of the firm, the services of ten clerks [were] required to attend to the wants of the many patrons of this mammoth establishment." On November 11, 1908, the interior of the building was destroyed by a fire, and wouldn't reopen until March 1909. The store recuperated it's former customers and continued to serve the community until February 1917.



The building sat empty until 1926, when Greep-Trueblood (GT) moved in. GT was an association of stores that would share business and their profits. One artifact from the Greep store that we are happy to preserve at the Meeker County Museum is the original Cashier's machine used to ensure that transactions were handled corrected. The Cashier would sit on the end of "receipt trolley," which included a cable that ran between the first and second floors. When a customer was ready to make payment, an employee would dispense the receipt and payment into a small bucket (or "holder") and send up to an accountant on the second floor. They would then use the Cashier to ensure that the correct amount of money had been taken, review the receipt and sent down any necessary change.

The Greep-Trueblood remained as such until approximately 1980, but it's legacy remains with the original building still in use in Litchfield today.

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, Deuth & Schmiesing, PLLP



Stockmen's Greenhouse and Garden Center



Nonprofit Organizational Members

Greater Litchfield Opera House Association



American Legion Post No. 381



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)

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 four months of business during what is normally the busiest time of year; meaning a loss of income from tours, research requests, programs and rentals of the Hall. 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: ☐

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308 N Marshall Ave
Litchfield, MN 55355

Return Service Requested

Non-Profit Org.

U.S. Postage

PAID

Permit No. 2

Litchfield, MN

55355