

# *MEEKER MEMORIES*

WINTER 2026

MEEKER COUNTY  
MUSEUM  
QUARTERLY  
NEWSLETTER



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

*Sharing Our Stories Since 1885*

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

[www.meekercomuseum.org](http://www.meekercomuseum.org)

Tuesday-Friday 10:00-4:00  
Saturday 12:00-4:00  
*Closed major holidays*

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

308 N Marshall Ave  
Litchfield, MN 55355

### Admission

Adults - \$5

Members & Children Under 18 - FREE

*Free admission to view the G.A.R. Hall*

### Board of Directors

Jessica Bondhus  
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Warren Shepard

### Staff

Danelle Erickson - Executive Director  
director@meekercomuseum.org

Sandy Johnson - Research Librarian  
staff@meekercomuseum.org

## January

8 **Civil War Roundtable—The Art of Surviving**, presented by The American Civil War Museum. 1:30. Free for Roundtable Members; \$5/general admission

Jan Peanut Butter and Milk Festival.

31- Includes a tour of the Museum and

Feb 7 G.A.R. Hall.

## February

12 **Civil War Roundtable—Blood, Bandages, and Beds: Hospital Ships of the Civil War**, presented by Gary Blessman  
1:30. Free for Roundtable Members; \$5/general admission

## March

12 **Civil War Roundtable—The Seeds of the Civil War**, presented by Joyce Hinderks  
1:30. Free for Roundtable Members; \$5/general admission

Thank you to our local media outlets for supporting local history.

KLFD's Newsmaker—first Thursday  
*Litchfield Rail* articles—2nd and 4th issues each month

# Director's Notes

# Collection Spotlight

Danelle Erickson  
Executive Director



The last time I sat down to write this column, I shared with you the financial challenges we were facing for this new year. With the county facing their own budget struggles, their annual contribution to the Museum has been significantly cut.

As we shared this with you, our supporters and community, your response was incredible! Not only is the deficit we were facing no longer a problem, but your gifts balanced out our 2025 budget and give us an amazing start to 2026. THANK YOU for seeing the value and importance to our local stories and the future of history!



2026 marks the 250th anniversary of the United States! It is our hope to use the semiquincentennial to put a spotlight on history through upcoming events and activities. Stay tuned!



## Civil War Roundtable

2nd Thursday at 1:30pm

**Meeker County Museum**  
at the G.A.R. Hall  
Sharing Our Stories Since 1885

Museum/G.A.R. Hall  
308 N Marshall Ave, Litchfield  
\$3/Adults; Free/Members

Among the collection at the Meeker County Museum is this beautiful wedding dress worn by Martha Louise Fullerton when she married Tipton Fetzter McClure.

The wedding was on the evening of Thursday, February 12, 1914, and was described as a "pretty home wedding" with "quiet simplicity." To the modern reader, this might conjure up images of a simple dress, a handful of flowers, and pre-recorded music, but this was certainly not the case for the Fullerton-McClure wedding.

First of all, the wedding was at the home of Martha's aunt and uncle, Otho and Isora Campbell. This is the grand brick home located directly southeast of the museum. Martha spent part of her childhood with the Campbells, her mother having died when she was young.

The wedding ceremony was held in the home's parlor. Martha walked down the stairs on her uncle's arm. The traditional wedding march was played on the piano, and her groom waited for her under a canopy of greenery.

Martha's dress was white charmeuse satin and duchess lace with a detailed belt design. She wore a veil and carried a bouquet of roses and lilies of the valley. Martha's bouquet wasn't the only flowers. The February wedding saw a host of spring flowers including Easter lilies, white tulips, daffodils, and pink carnations. There were also ferns and a profusion of southern smilax, a green, leafy vine. Some of the smilax was used to create a screen to hide the small orchestra.

The next day, the couple embarked on a honeymoon that included Chicago, St. Louis, New Orleans, Galveston, and California. They returned to Litchfield a month and a half later.







## New\* and Returning Members October–December 2025

Ryan and Amy Anderson  
Shelia and Robert Bohrer  
Patrick M Campbell  
Paul and Lori Johnson\*  
Sandra Johnson  
David J Kelly  
Gregory Swenson  
Tami and Dale Tagtow  
Anita Tews  
Don Walser\*

## Business and Nonprofit Members



American Legion Post 104



Conway, Deuth &  
Schiesing, PLLP

Litchfield  
Downtown  
Council



Litchfield Opera House



Litchfield Rotary



VFW Post 2818



## Financial Donations October–December 2025

American Legion Post 104	Larry and Ann Jensen
Auggie Anderson	Dr. Daniel and Brenda Johnson
Barry Anderson	Paul and Lori Johnson
Kate and Jen Andrews van Horne	Margaret A Johnson
Tim and Deb Bergstrom	David J. Kelly
Gary Blessman	Bruce and Joyce Kiehn
Carol Blunt	Stan and Sylvia Kittelson
Joyce Burgstaler	Litchfield Kiwanis Club
Patrick M. Campbell	Ladies of the G.A.R., Daggett Circle
John and Jo Carlson	Al Larson
Gregory J. Casey	Don and Connie Lies
Terry and Patrice Davis	Litchfield Lions Club
Ron & MaryAnn Dingmann	Litchfield Area Writers
Ray Doering	Litchfield Eagles
John Dollerschell	Litchfield Rotary Club
Natalie Dorr	Tony Lorber
First District Association	Adam Malamen
First Presbyterian Women	Marland R Meyer
Southwest Initiative Fdn.	Michael and Jody Miller
Dennis and Kathy Garoutte	Marveen Minish
Jim and Mona Haag	Paul and Rose Minton
Christopher Hansen Trust	Scott Mitchell
John and Jean Hartwell	MN Depart L.G.A.R.
Jim Haugo	
Joyce and Jim Hinderks	

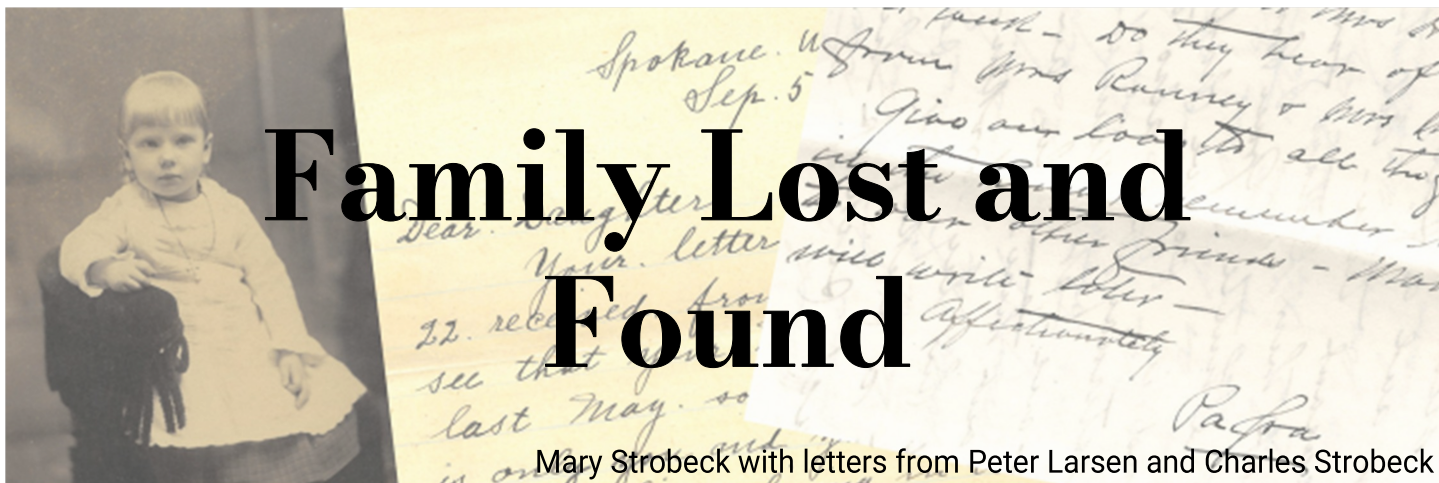
*Continued on page 7*

## Artifact Donations October–December 2025

Arlene Groskreutz	Minnesota Military and Veterans Museum
Clyde Lewandowski	Robyn Richardson
Delores Johnson and Toni Hirsch	Judy Walstad
Meeker County Sheriff Department	

If you are considering donating items to the Museum, please contact us beforehand.





Mary Strobeck with letters from Peter Larsen and Charles Strobeck

As we continue to look through the various letters in the Museum's archives, this article starts with an abandoned little girl.

Dagmar Clara Marie Larsen was born in Copenhagen, Denmark to Peter Julius Larsen and Christine Christiansen in 1886. Peter immigrated to the United States first, and Dagmar and Christine followed. The family ended up in St. Paul, where Christine died in 1889. Left alone in a new country with a small daughter, Peter was facing an agonizing decision. On April 2, 1889, Peter brought his little girl to the Protestant Orphan Asylum of Saint Paul, leaving her there.

A few months later, Dr. Woolway and his wife took young Dagmar to their home for a "trial for adoption." According to the records of the orphanage, just over a month later, the couple returned Dagmar to the children's home. No explanation was included in the record book, and this was the last entry for Dagmar, but we know things quickly turned around for the young girl.

Sometime in the following months, Charles and Carrie Strobeck of Litchfield took Dagmar into their home. Charles was the probate judge and would later serve as County Attorney and Mayor. The couple had two children, Henry and Alice.

In November 1889, Charles received a letter from the orphanage's secretary. She wrote that they had had a visit from Dagmar's father. He was hoping for some news on his daughter and perhaps a photograph. The father assured

everyone that he had no intention of interfering, and he would just like reassurance that she was doing well.



From Protestant Orphan Asylum of Saint Paul 1889-1889 report, from the Strobeck file at the Museum.

Over the next several years, the birth father visited the orphanage a few different times and asked that they write to his daughter's family for a photo and news. "He is a good man and his heart is nearly broken at giving up his child. He is hungry for news of her"

the orphanage wrote in one such letter. In at least one instance, the Strobecks did send a letter and picture of the young girl they now called Mary Louise Strobeck, their adopted daughter.

Even though the adoption and name change had passed through the courts, the orphanage was very diligent about not sharing the name and location of Mary with her birth father. The orphanage didn't expect any trouble and described the father as being well dressed and gentlemanly, but they still acted with caution. They even reminded the Strobecks that if they do send photos, to make sure the name of the photography studio and city don't appear on the image.



Mary Strobeck, 3 years old. Perhaps a copy of this photo was sent to her birth father.

From about 1900 until the start of 1905, Charles Strobeck was a clerk with the House of Representatives in Washington, D.C. In May 1904, Charles and most of his family returned to Litchfield, however Mary remained in the capital city to finish out the school year. Charles' letter to Mary in June 1904 was full of what one might expect from a father to a daughter. There was news of what the family had been doing, an update on new wallpaper for the house, plans for Mary to return to Litchfield in a couple of weeks, and greetings to their friends out east.



Mary and friends in costume, 1905.  
Iva Rothlisberger, Chapin Foster, Leah Stewart,  
Arthur Weeks, Allen Wheeler, Mary Strobeck

By the writing of the next letter in our collection in 1916, there had been many changes for Mary. Both of her adopted parents had died, Charles in 1911 and Carrie earlier in 1916. Mary was engaged to Bert Grono, and they would marry the following year. In addition, sometime earlier, Mary had started communicating with her birth father, Peter, and was even thinking about visiting him at his home in Spokane, Washington.

The Museum's collection includes a handful of letters written from Peter to Mary over the next several years. Although there may have been letters from Peter that weren't saved, it doesn't appear that he was the most faithful letter writer, often starting his letters with apologies for not writing sooner and not having much to write about except the weather. Mary and Bert did make at least one trip out west to see her father.



Mary and Bert Grono,  
married Oct. 8, 1917

Then in 1935, a new correspondent entered Mary's life – her Aunt Hulda. Three years earlier, Mary's father had been in the hospital with a lengthy illness when he died by suicide. It's not clear if Mary knew about her Aunt Hulda, but from Hulda's letter, she didn't know that Mary had been in contact with Peter. It was one of several things that didn't make sense to Mary Strobeck Grono.



Hulda. She wrote, in response to a letter from Mary, "We didn't understand your Daddy either. He was so secret with everything." Many years prior, Hulda's husband had asked Peter what had happened to Mary, to which Peter responded, "Never mention her to me again." After Peter's death, Hulda was able to track down Mary. They exchanged some letters and photos and Mary was able to fill in some of the gaps in her family history and even get in touch with some of the family living in Copenhagen.

As we come to the end of the Museum's file on the Strobeck family, the last of the letters and documents are from the end of Mary's life. She died in Litchfield in 1977, with her husband, Bert, and daughter, Doris, having predeceased her. Mary's estate was overseen by her cousin and by Mary herself. She left a detailed will, leaving a significant sum to the Trinity Episcopal Church in Litchfield and smaller amounts to relatives and friends.

Going a step further, Mary had a small notebook where she wrote a detailed list of her household goods and who they should go to after her death. Family dishes and furniture were to be given to nieces and cousins. Other treasures and trinkets went to friends or neighbors who "has been so nice to take me to card club." Most of the pages in Mary's little notebook include a checkmark, which probably indicates her final wishes had been carried out.

Mary's notebook does include one request that was not carried out. She wrote that if she became

incapacitated towards the end of her life, she wanted her adoption papers destroyed. Why this wasn't done, we will never know. Perhaps Mary changed her mind or, her executor overlooked Mary's handwritten note. Whatever the reason, at the Museum we are grateful for this collection of letters and papers that gives us a look at a family lost and found and found again.

Mary with her cousins  
Bill and Archie  
Robertson.

#### Sources

- Strobeck, Grono, and Robertson family files, letters, and photographs
- Protestant Orphan Asylum of Saint Paul records, Minnesota Digital Library
- Various Litchfield newspapers

## Financial Donations ~ cont. October–December 2025

Judy Oestreich  
Dave and Jan Pease  
Jane Piepenburg  
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Tom & Candy Westrum  
Stephen Whitaker  
Sid and Deb Willson  
Wood & Rue  
Ken and Mary Zachman

**In Memory of Boyd  
Anderson**  
Sarah Anderson

**In Memory of Warren  
McQuay**  
Carol Moss

**In Honor of Thomas, Max,  
Josh, and Andy**  
Darlene Kotelnicki

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

☐ 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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