

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

Summer 2019

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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**

Chuck Pease - Charles Holmquist  
Bruce Nelson - Sam Feistner  
Jeff Niedenthal - Bob Bohrer - Sid Wilson  
Auggie Anderson - Barb Penk  
Ken Zachman

## **Executive Director**

Bayley Schluter

## **Staff and Volunteers**

Sandy Johnson - Mark Cashman  
Connie Lies - Sophie Ross - Laura Beach  
Lillie Ortloff - Auggie Anderson

## **Museum Information**

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

## **Hours and Admission (June - Sept)**

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

## **Admission & Prices**

### *Exhibit Admission*

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

### *Research Library*

Free access to materials  
\$0.25 per B&W copy made



An April Blizzard at the Museum



Bob Hermann speaking at the Annual Meeting



The 2019 Memorial Day Picnic



A 3rd Grade student getting a closer look at one of our displays

# Letter from the Director

## Bayley Schluter

It's been a busy few months at the Meeker County Museum, I've met a lot of people who are excited about the new ideas being presented and the thoughts for the future.

We were most active during the month of May: The 2019 Annual Meeting, the Memorial Day Picnic and 13 school tours (off-da!). The assistance of many volunteers and contributors made these events go off without a hitch (despite the rain, but we'll get to that later). With so many visitors, researchers, and event attendees; we have exceeded our overall Visitor Count from where we were at this time last year!

We added something new to the Annual Meeting & Potluck that brought more people this event than in recent years: a Featured Speaker. Following a delicious potluck dinner provided by our attendees and business meeting regarding the Museum; Bob Hermann, President of the Forest City Stockade, gave a presentation about this unique example of Minnesota's pioneer history. Our guests had many kind things to say about Hermann's presentation and we want to thank him for volunteering his time.

In April and throughout May, we had a great time leading field trips of over 350 students from Lake Ripley Elementary School, St. Philips Catholic School, and Dassel-Cokato Elementary. We added a scavenger hunt to the tours that incorporated elements of what the students had been learning in their history and geography classes. The positive response inspired us to create the "Find the Sun" Scavenger Hunt that was available throughout the month of June. 10 Suns were hidden in plain sight throughout the Museum for children to find while enjoying the exhibits. This simple activity brought new families to the Museum and inspired the staff to brainstorm more ways to make our building more kid friendly.

Last, but certainly not least, the Annual Memorial Day Picnic. Remember when I mentioned rain earlier? A dreary forecast of rain and wind seemed to doom our picnic this year, especially after the parade in Litchfield was cancelled. But we should never doubt the empty bellies of our loyal citizens. Even with a smaller crowd than previous years, the Picnic was a success thanks in large part to the sponsorships, pre-event donations, numerous volunteers, and every person who came to the Litchfield Opera House and showed their support of the Meeker County Museum.

A lot of time passes in between these newsletters, if you'd like to stay more up-to-date on Museum news and events, visit the Membership page on our Website or check the Box labeled "Add me to the Email list" on the membership form. You'll receive information about upcoming events and promotions at the Museum. This is a great tool for those of you who have an email address, but aren't comfortable with social media.



# Some Things Never Change:

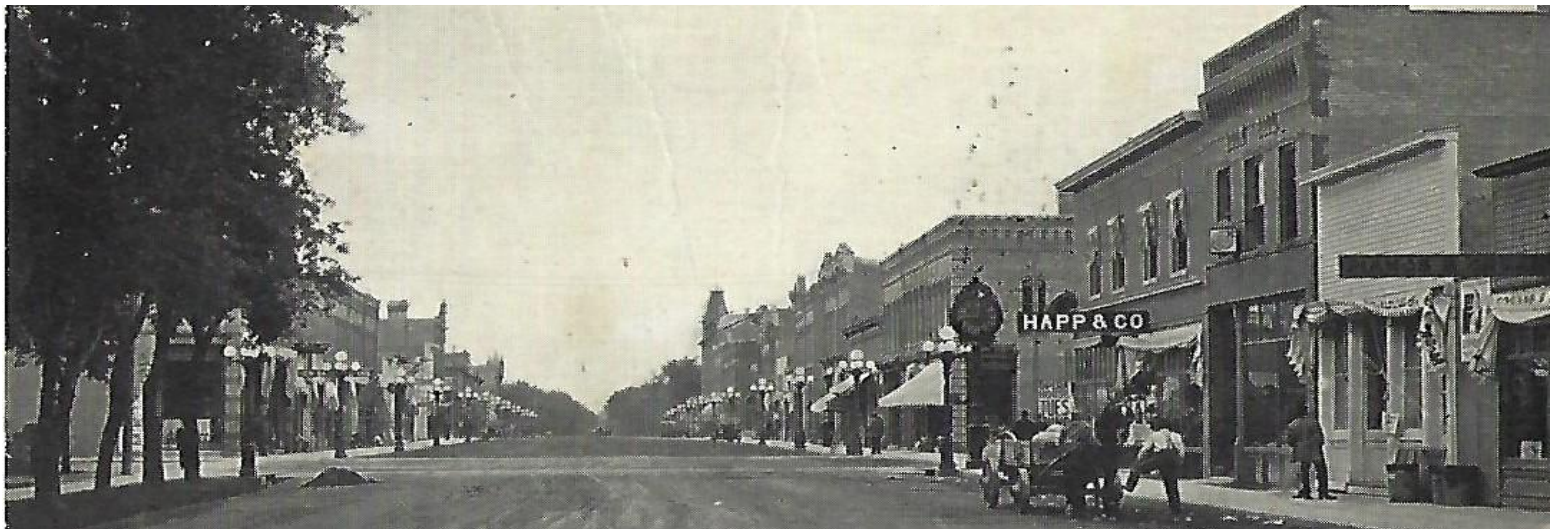
## Litchfield Turns 150

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*"...Litchfield is built on its people. It seems that the people who live here now have much in common with those whom they have replaced. Way back when they were mostly of foreign origin, they developed a mutual respect toward each other and the customs and religions of their neighbors. Two generations later...that same spirit of respect and tolerance continues."* - Patrick Casey (1969)

Litchfield, Minnesota has experienced many changes over the years, every 50 years since the town's founding in 1869 has seen dramatic changes that the previous generation couldn't have predicted. The first 50 included the massive expansion of people due to the railroad, the invention of the telephone, the "War to the End all Wars," and the beginnings of the Women's Suffrage Movement. By 1919, a population that began with 373 grew to more than 2,700. The main export of the area changed from wheat to oats/barley, and then again to soybeans and sunflowers, and once more to dairy products. Brightwood Beach on the south side of Lake Ripley was the popular summer destination; a resort that boasted a dance pavilion, decorated steamboat, tennis tournaments, ball games, and much more. At this time, horses pulling wagons on dirt roads were still a common sight. The native languages of the town's founders were beginning to fade away from school and church, but never from the family dinner table.

Fast forward another 50 years to those that witnessed the moon landing from the comfort of their own living room; to a generation that fought through the Great War and lived to experience it a second time. By 1969, Litchfield's population grew to approximately 5,200; including enough children to justify the construction of separate buildings for an elementary school, middle school and high school. The town was bustling with new technology. Gone were the days of hitching posts and kerosene lamps; "Litchfielders" were now enjoying electric refrigerators and airplane travel for overseas vacations. By this time, the Meeker County Hospital completed a new wing with plans for future expansion already in the works. But some things never change; families were still spending their summer days outside, but could now choose between six public parks or the nine-hole Golf Course. The retired citizens each had a favorite spot for their morning coffee; the first cup at their own kitchen table and the second at a local spot such as The Travelers Inn or Kate's Food Box on Sibley Avenue. The 1960s came to an end when hope and optimism were difficult to find; there seemed to be no end in sight for the War in Vietnam and too many American leaders were cut down in their prime.



However, longtime resident H.E. Wilmot was still enthusiastic about the future of Generation X. In Litchfield's Centennial book, he wrote that *"Some people refer to children as little monsters...but they are our own and they are a lot smarter than we were at their age and they are developing and becoming fine citizens...They are taller and stronger and develop earlier than their ancestors...They are growing up in an age of the atomic bomb and jet air flights and trips to the moon. We are certain that they will make a better world to live in."*

Jump another 50 years to present day. It's 2019 and can be difficult to find many similarities between the childhoods of those born in the last twenty years and their parents. Fast tracked advancements in technology caused radical changes in how we communicate, listen to music, and find information. Historical artifacts in a museum could include a Walkman or the first mobile phone because these objects are just as technologically outdated as the gramophone or the hanging wall phone. Litchfield is now the home to over 6,000 people and boasts a thriving business community that includes a fair variety of small businesses that cater to the local population and larger corporations that ship around the country. Litchfield Public Schools survived the "great consolidation" of the 1990s, when several schools consolidated their districts, and the overall number in Minnesota decreased from 435 to 347.

There are many contrasts in Litchfield between 1969 and today, and especially since 1869, but I would argue that the people themselves rarely change. Residents of this community will be the first to list the differences that they don't care for, the changes over time that they wish had never happened. But they also will be the first, and often the loudest, defenders of their town. Dean Ohland, former owner of the Ben Franklin store, after listing off several local businesses that closed between 1969 and 2019, confidently stated that I (Bayley) had *"gotten to the best town in the world"* and that Litchfield had the best schools and hospital around. Litchfield has a history of continuously trying to improve and advance themselves, whether that be through education, industry or renovation. While keeping an eye on the future, the hands are working to preserve and care for what is already here. Several buildings are under the protection of its citizens, armed with the mission of standing as a lasting representation of a time gone by. Litchfield is comprised of several storytellers. Those sharing tales of when their grandparents lived in Litchfield, of volunteers working diligently to turn an ugly piece of land into a beautiful public park, or of going shopping on Main Street.

Who can say how this town will appear in the year 2069, what monumental changes will make today look like ancient history? I think that it can be safely stated that the essentials will never change. The people's love for their town, their devotion to its continued growth and success, and the commitment to keep moving forward while remembering to occasionally stop and remember where we started. Litchfield is now 150 years old, and is just getting started.





# July

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			

Check our Website or  
Social Media Pages  
for More Details  
about these Events

July 4 - Independence Day - Museum Closed

July 8 - FungusAmongstUs Players in the Hall - 7pm - Freewill Donation

July 21 - Birchbark Canoe Program - 2pm - Freewill Donation - Bring A Chair

# Aug

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 1, 2, 3, 4 - Find Us at the Meeker County Fair

August 8 - Civil War Roundtable - "A Selective Look at Lesser Known MN Officers - 1:30pm

August 22 - Uncle Milton's Inheritance: An Escape Room - 7pm - \$17/person

August 27 - Meeker Museum Book Club - 6:30pm - \$10/members & \$12/nonmembers

# Sept

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					

Sept 2 - Labor Day - Museum Open 12pm-4pm

Sept 12 - Civil War Roundtable - "Collecting the Civil War" - 1:30pm

Sept 21 - Meeker County History Crawl - 10am to 2pm

Sept 27 - Meeker Movie Club - 6:30pm - Snacks for Sale - Movie Title TBD





Boy Scout Troop #3353 volunteering at the Memorial Day Picnic



A group of 3rd Graders from Lake Ripley Elementary School

## Show your love for local history by becoming a member of the **Meeker County Museum at the G.A.R Hall**

### Membership Benefits Include

Quarterly Newsletter sent by Mail or Email - Free Admission to Annual Meeting  
Reduced Price on Museum Events - 10% Off Most Items in the Giftshop

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

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

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

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Phone Numbers: \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Add Me to the Email List

#### Annual Museum Membership Levels

___ Single	\$15
___ Family (2+)	\$25
___ Supporter	\$50
___ Sustainer	\$100 - \$249
___ Advocate	\$250 - \$499
___ Visionary	\$500+

#### Business Levels

___ Annual	\$50
___ Supporter	\$100
___ Sustainer	\$250
___ Advocate	\$500
___ Benefactor	\$750
___ Visionary	\$1000



#### I Want to Be a Member of the Litchfield Civil War Roundtable

\_\_\_ \$25.00 Single Membership

\_\_\_ \$35.00 Family (2) Membership

#### Make checks payable to:

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

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

308 N Marshall Ave  
Litchfield, MN 55355

Return Service Requested

Non-Profit Org.

U.S. Postage

PAID

Permit No. 2

Litchfield, MN

55355