

# Paddlewheel Press

Grand Forks County Historical Society Spring 2024

## City Band

The City Band will perform four concerts this summer in the Myra Pavilion:

June 13 and 27

July 11 and 25

Programs start at 7 p.m.

## In Memory

Suellen Bateman,  
President of the Grand Forks County Historical Society during and after the difficult days following the Flood of 1997

and

Vicki Ripplinger  
Dedicated Volunteer.

Please remember, you



can help the Society by shopping with AmazonSmile.com. A portion of each purchase is donated to our organization. Just select Grand Forks County Historical Society as your beneficiary. Thanks!

## Post Office Restoration and Inclusion in Flooding Study

In 2022 a major project to repair the Post Office was begun. The project involved repairing or replacing the rotting wall logs. This \$50,000 project was very specialized work, which required the services of a contractor from southern Minnesota.



GFCHS volunteers replaced the wood on the gable ends of the Post Office, completing the exterior work. Although the project was successful, the building is very old and requires continuous preservation efforts.

In 2023 our log cabin Post Office marked its 155-year anniversary of construction. It was built by Nicholas Hoffman and August Loon in 1868 as a stopping place along the mail route between Ft. Abercrombie and Ft. Pembina.

Matt Schlauderaff, a forestry student from NDSU, came to study the rings of the oak logs of the cabin. The project received grant funding to study burr oak trees and historic burr oak logs to understand the history of Red River flooding over time. Schlauderaff's work included samples from Abercrombie to the Canadian border.

Burr oak trees' rings are

more narrow in years with floods. During a flood the part of a tree that is under water will have shrunken or extended earlywood vessels. Unfortunately, the Hoffman cabin did not have flood rings. Either the logs came from further up the tree away from floodwater, or the trees were dormant during spring flooding.

We also learned that not all of the logs on the Hoffman cabin are from oak trees, many are from elm trees. Schlauderaff focused on the ends of the burr oak logs, sanded them smooth and marked them with chalk and dye to expose the rings. He then photographed them with a high-resolution lens. One log dates back to 1732.





## The All American Turkey Show

### When Grand Forks, ND Was the Turkey Capital of the World

#### Board of Directors

##### **President**

Richard Ray

##### **Vice President**

Rodney Klug

##### **Treasurer**

Pam Coster

##### **Secretary**

James Watt

Jacob Bourboun

John Breker

Matt Dunlevy

Rick Hagan

Marilyn Hagerty

Gordon Iseminger

David Kuznicki

James Mochoruk

Douglas Munski

Wes Rogers

Nelson Rosit

Eric Tweton



##### **Staff**

Director

Leah Byzewski

Admin. Assistant

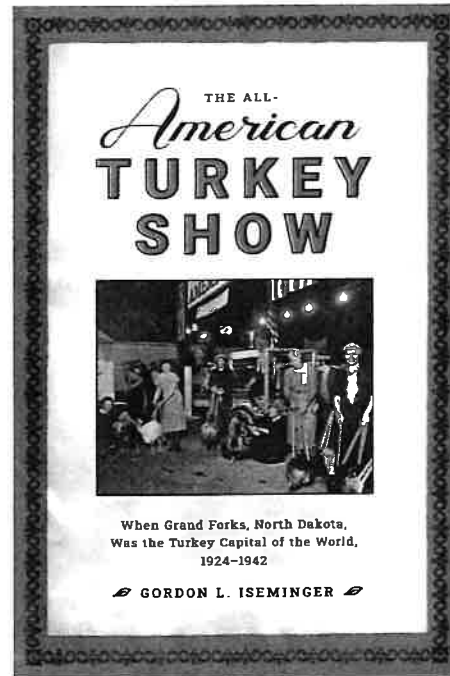
Ricardo Gomez-Nieto

The North Dakota State University Press recently published *The All-American Turkey Show: When Grand Forks, North Dakota, Was the Turkey Capital of the World, 1924-1942*. The All-American Turkey Show was the first and always the largest poultry show in the nation devoted exclusively to turkeys.

Breeders from as many as eighteen turkey-producing states and five Canadian provinces brought up to eight hundred turkeys to the shows to be judged by the country's premier judges and to compete for more prizes than were offered at any other livestock show in the United States.

The purposes of the shows included: bringing the six varieties of Standard turkeys as close to perfection as was humanly possible; encouraging consumers to eat more turkey and to eat it throughout the year, not just during the holiday season; and encouraging farmers to diversify production and increase their incomes by raising turkeys.

The All-American Turkey Show was done in by its success. By the eve of World War II, its purposes had been fulfilled and the shows were being held for little reason other than that there seemed to be no



graceful way to discontinue them.

It was the war, with its shortages of labor, rubber, and gasoline that brought the All-American Turkey Shows to a merciful end. Shows were suspended for the duration of the war, on the assumption they would begin again at the war's end. They did not, and the All-American Turkey Shows passed into history.

The book is available from the NDSU Press, the Myra Museum, local bookstores, and on Amazon.

The book's author is Dr. Gordon L. Iseminger, recently re-

*(Continued on page 5)*





## Giving Hearts Day

On February 8, 2024, the Grand Forks County Historical Society participated in Giving Hearts Day for the first time! Giving Hearts is 24-hour event for local non-profits. Each year Giving Hearts Day (GHD) provides a platform for charities to fund their missions through a community of donors. This unique fundraising concept around Valentines Day each year asks people to show affection to not only people they love but to charities, too.

The first step in the process of GHD, and the one that seemed to challenge us the most, was the match funds requirement. In order for non-profits to accept donations on GHD, they first need to raise "match funds". The Historical Society held a variety of events and had some individual donors come forward to supply the match funds. In the future we hope this process will go a little smoother and we will find a benefactor to provide the necessary match.

The Historical Society set a goal to raise \$3,000.00 for its first GHD. At the end of the day, our total raised was \$2905.00. A fairly successful day for our first attempt! We appreciate all those who kept us in their hearts that day!

## Special Thanks

The **Myra Foundation** has supported the Grand Forks County Historical Society from the beginning. They have proven to be a generous and consistent benefactor supporting our many projects. **Thank You Myra Foundation.**

**The Craft Guild** for its donation to replace the heating and air conditioning system.

**John Nash** and the **Nash Foundation** for its annual support.

**Thank you Lawn King** for making our grounds look fabulous!

## Border Monument

Visitors to the Myra Museum might note a quartzite pillar standing in a flower bed in the southwest corner of the parking lot. It is one of the 720 such monuments, one set every one-half mile, to mark the boundary between the states of North Dakota and South Dakota, twin states that entered the Union in the same moment on November 2, 1889. Each monument is ten inches square and seven feet long and each weighs eight hundred pounds.



The monuments were quarried in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, and transported to the boundary by railroad and steam boat. The number and letter on the east face of the monument indicate

*(Continued on page 5)*

## History Rocks

Our History Rocks car show will be held on Sunday, August 25<sup>th</sup>. Vehicle registration starts at 10:00 A.M. and the entrance opens at 11:00. Kenny and the Classics perform at 1:00

History Rocks is the Society's most popular event. We anticipate nearly 100 cars to register and be eligible for judging and door prizes. Hot dogs, chips, pop, root beer floats and ice cream will be sold. Our buildings will be open. Mark the date on your calendar so you don't miss this memorable event.



## James F. T. O'Connor

As a fourth-generation member of my family living in Grand Forks, one of the yearly duties that my father bestowed upon me was joining him and my grandmother at the Memorial Park Cemetery to plant flowers and clean the tombstones of the family plots. This duty also included making watering trips throughout the spring and early summer to ensure the petunias, pansies and marigolds survived.

This gave me ample time to explore Memorial Park and the neighboring Calvary Cemetery with an occasional trip over to Montefiore. If I were walking around with my father, he would point out various headstones such as Gotzian, Griffith, Reeves, Walsh, and other Grand Forks pioneers and give me a brief history lesson about them.

One of the more memorable monuments that my father pointed out is that of James Francis Thaddeus (JFT) O'Connor. It has the following inscription "Comptroller of the Currency of the United States 1933-1938" "He kept the banks sound and your money safe" *President Franklin D. Roosevelt Grand Forks, North Dakota October 4, 1937.* Interesting to have a quote from a President on your memorial.

Here is the brief history lesson on J.F.T. O'Connor.

Following the advice of fellow Ontario families like the Ryans and Campbells about the opportunities awaiting in Grand Forks, JFT's father Edward O'Connor immigrated from Canada in 1881 to open a saloon. Edward's wife Honora "Nora" and the rest of the family joined him in December 1883 when the saloon was established when JFT was just one month old. The Saloon was located at the corner of Demers and Third street which turned out to be a prime location.

Due to Dakota Territory becoming dry in 1888 the O'Connor's purchased five quarters of land near Thompson ND and began farming. JFT, the youngest of eight children, would attend Americus Township school with his siblings during the farming season and would move to Grand Forks to attend school in the winter.

JFT earned a bachelor's degree from the University of North Dakota in 1907 and a law degree one year later. He received a second law degree in 1909 and a master's degree a year later both from Yale University and then taught at Yale for four years.

After leaving Yale, he returned to Grand Forks to practice law. He was elected to the North Dakota legislature and served from 1918 -1924. In 1925 he moved to Los Angeles to practice law. While in California he continued to be involved in politics and became friends with Franklin Roosevelt.

Due to the great depression following the stock market crash of 1929 thousands of banks across the nation failed and millions of Americans lost their life savings.

When President Franklin Roosevelt took office in March 1933 the first order of business was to address the bank crisis. Roosevelt nominated JFT O'Connor to be the Comptroller of the Currency and the Emergency Banking Act was passed by Congress.

After a month long run on American banks, President Roosevelt proclaimed a Bank Holiday that shut down the banking system for a week. While working in this role, JFT helped to organize the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) and helped establish the plans to exam all banks to ensure that only those that were sound would be licensed to be reopened. The Bank Holiday worked, when the banks' reopened people were standing in line to re-deposit their money. JFT continued to serve as Comptroller of the Currency until 1938.

In 1940, President Roosevelt appointed JFT to the bench of the US District Court for the Southern District of California and remained in this position until his death in 1949.

### Eric Tweton.

*Tweton's father, D. Jerome Tweton, served as Chair of the UND History Dept.*



O'Connor is 2nd from the right in this photo.

## Dal Segno Music Camp

The Northern Valley Youth Orchestra, under the direction of Naomi Welsh, will hold their annual Music Camp August 5-9 at the Historical Society grounds. On Friday August 9th the campers will perform a public concert from 11:30 to 12:30 in front of the Campbell House. Please plan to attend!





## Myra Museum Improvements

Several projects were completed on the Myra Museum over the past two years. The front entryway was rebuilt with deep footings. The original concrete slab had moved nearly five inches due to freezing and thawing over the years since the museum was constructed in 1977. The brick sidewalk was removed for safety reasons and replaced by a new concrete sidewalk.

Last fall the original wood siding was replaced with steel siding, eliminating the need for painting in the future. A and L Siding completed the work at a cost of \$56,788. The project was funded with Society building funds, an anonymous donation and a grant from the Myra Foundation.

Volunteers from the Board then repaired the storm windows and installed gutter guards to prevent the downspouts from clogging with debris.

Recently the roof runoff was redirected around the entryway. This should protect the new concrete from damage from excess saturation.

*(Continued from page 3)*

that it was set 89 miles west of the Initial Point.

At the Initial Point, in the center of the Bois des Sioux River, the boundaries of Minnesota, North Dakota, and South Dakota intersect. The letters ND (North face) and SD (South face) indicate the twin states and also the cardinal points of the compass.

United States surveyor Charles H. Bates and his crew placed the monuments along the boundary during the surveying seasons of 1891 and 1892.

More information on the boundary monuments is included in the book titled *The Quartzite Border: Surveying and Marking the North Dakota-South Dakota Boundary 1891-1892*. The book is available in the Myra Museum gift shop.

## The Big Event

Members of the University of North Dakota Women's Basketball team helped with spring cleanup of the flower gardens during the Big Event volunteer day on April 27th. The women and coaches completed several tasks saving our staff many hours of outdoor work. Thank you!



## Security Upgrade

You may have noticed crews trenching behind the museum buildings this spring. New sensors for our fire and security system have been installed and required new wiring between the buildings. Our newest building, the "Myra Auto Livery," needed to be connected to the system also.

*(Continued from page 2)*

tired after teaching in the University of North Dakota's history department for fifty-seven years. Dr. Iseminger serves on the Grand Forks County Historical Society's Board of Directors and on the Grand Forks Historical Preservation Commission.





Grand Forks County  
**HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

2405 Belmont Road, Grand Forks, ND 58201

Non-Profit Org.  
US Postage  
Paid  
Grand Forks, ND  
58201  
Permit no. 31



Grand Forks County  
**HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

**Not a member? Please join us!**

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_

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

**City, State, Zip** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone** \_\_\_\_\_

**Email** \_\_\_\_\_

**MEMBERSHIP LEVELS**

- \$25 Individual
- \$50 Family
- \$100 Corporate
- \_\_\_\_\_ Other

Members receive free admission, our organizational newsletter and museum shop discounts.

Please make checks payable to the Grand Forks County Historical Society. Membership is fully deductible as allowed by law.

*Membership runs for one year from receipt of dues.*

The Grand Forks County Historical Society is a registered 501 (c) (3) Organization

***The Grand Forks County Historical Society provides life-long learning, research assistance and a valuable tourism destination for our community. Please show your support by becoming a member today!***