



Newsletter

A Historical Resource for the whole Community

Britt Community Historical Society

Fall 2008
Volume Number: 01
Issue Number: 02

Britt Musicians - Past and Present

*A memoir of Goodie (Westby) Backlund
An excerpt from an essay written by Janet Marie (Backlund) Heglund*

I'd like to tell you about a very talented musician, one whom I admired and respected very much. This person was my mom - Gudrun (Goody) Petra Backlund. Mom was born on May 18, 1915 in the hospital in Virginia, MN. She was the daughter of John and Marie Westby and the fourth child of nine. Their home was located in Brittmount and she lived there until she graduated from Virginia High School. Mom was the only one of the children who played an instrument. Then to top it all off, she played by ear. (I understand many musicians during this time also learned to play that way.)

Mom lived in a home where she was exposed to music at an early age. My grandma had an organ which she used to sit and play on. I was told the type of music that she played was mostly religious. Then too, my grandma and grandpa used to love to dance, so you see, mom was exposed to different types of music early on. Dancing was a big part of peoples' entertainment during this time. What was a Saturday night if you couldn't go out dancing? Mom told me the story of how and when she started her musical career.

One day my grandma was singing or humming (I don't remember which) a tune and my mom went over to the organ and before long was playing the notes to accompany grandma. Can't you just imagine the shock it was to grandma because you see at the time, my mom was only around four years old! That day was the beginning for mom and she played right up until a month before she passed away. Mom started playing on an organ and then eventually went to an accordion. She did have a few lessons but she didn't have a real interest in playing that way. It was just easier for her to play by ear. She could still read notes though

if she had to. I have a picture of mom when she was just 17 and already playing the accordion at the area dances. Music just seemed to run through her veins. From other pictures that I have, it looks like mom had had four accordions. The one with her name on she bought out in Comstock, MN where she worked cooking at her grandparent's farm.

Area nursing homes, senior centers and various other activities were also places she enjoyed entertaining at. Shortly before my mom died, a gal who attended the Laurentian Senior Citizen's Club came to the house and told mom how much they had missed her being at the meeting and playing for them. Young and old always enjoyed mom's music. Today there is no more - only what memories we have of her. Mom died in 2000 and so now her accordion (the one with her name on) sits in one of my closets - silent - because no one in my family ever learned to play an accordion. The days of mom's playing are over but her music will live on forever with those who heard and enjoyed her style of playing.

Mom turned to me and said, "It is your turn now Babe." What an honor this was for me to hear her say this.



Goodie (Westby) Backlund
1932 - 17 years old

We have launched a search for names of any and all Britt residents who were musicians, past and present. Britt is and was, in the past, a very musically talented area. We are interested in musician names, what instrument or instruments they played, what kind of music they played and when or where they performed. Please send the information to:

Britt Community Historical Society
P. O. Box 477
Britt, MN 55792

or Call 749-6143
or E-mail: BCHSMail@gmail.com

Thanks for any and all information you can help us with!

Up Coming Events

* Next Board Mtg. is on Thursday, December 4, 2008 at 6:00 p.m. at the USFS Sand Lake Guard Station.

Greetings from the President

Welcome to our new members:

Craig & Melissa Augustin
Mrs. Laila Carlson
James & Carolyn Curley
David & Mary Jean Eilertson
Patrick Emery
Thomas Falkowski
Vicky Goebel
Dale Heglund
Darrell & Judy Heglund
Jamie Heglund
William Jusela
Otto & Melva Kangas
Doug & Sue Kolstad
Eric Luoma
Ginger Luoma Anderson
Thomas D. Maki, Sr.
Virginia McBride
Bill & Kathy Oliver
Tammy Renzaglia
Roy F. & Judith Schuman
Robert & Iris Teasck
Voyageur Sand Lake Resort

Seeking new Board Member:

The Britt Community Historical Society is actively seeking a new board member.

Please contact a current board member or officer if you are interested.

Our first active summer season was filled with many exciting research events. As a young organization, the Officers and Board members have invested much time and effort in the development and promotion of the BCHS.

Our initial newsletter premiered in June and was not only mailed to all members, but was sent to all Britt area residents in an effort to create an awareness and interest in our organization. Through this, we gained many new members and received several positive comments.

We are happy to include in our current membership, past residents who now reside across the nation spanning from Afghanistan to Hawaii. Please let us know if you would like us to mail a newsletter and membership form to any past residents, or interested individuals. We would be happy to include them in our next mailing.

In addition to BCHS business meetings, the Officers and Board members have investigated a few options for future public events or tours for the general membership.

On September 7, 2008 Mr. Mickey Bukovac generously invited the Officers & Board members for an informal meeting at his home to review potential future research projects and artifacts of historical importance to the Britt community. We are grateful to Mickey for his efforts and willingness to share his insight with our organization.

Following this meeting, our group embarked on a rugged tour to the original Shake Mill of

Recent events of the BCHS

the Rankila family located west of the Sand Lake area. This tour was inspired by photos donated by the Bob & Iris Teasak family. We thank them for their donation of history.

During this tour, we uncovered several stone wall foundations, concrete floor slabs including



Shake Mill Tour
09-07-2008

elaborate drainage systems, a very sturdy root cellar, remains of earlier log structures and evidence of our human past including ceramic and tin dishware, decorative stamped tin, automobile license plates.... and yes, finally we located

the original location of the shake mill.

We hope to further our research over the winter and organize an educational public tour for next summer. We would appreciate any information or insight from our membership to help in this endeavor.

Lastly, I must applaud our current Officers, Board members and active members who have enthusiastically supported our growth. With this effort, we have successfully established our business as a historical society, and in the process, we have discovered the excitement and enjoyment of our mission.

Our archives of historical information are constantly growing, and our acknowledgment of the many, many areas of historical importance and research are growing at an even faster pace! Therefore, I urge all members to become active and enjoy the merits of our organization by attending meetings, donating information or becoming active with one of our committees.

Please mark your calendars for our monthly board meetings. I look forward to getting to know you, and our community history, better!

Jody Phennig, President



Mary Kesanen and Janet Heglund
Admiring Mickey's artifacts
09-07-2008

History 'Lost and Found'

The Britt Community Historical Society is seeking your help in locating the following lost historical information:

* Box of historical documents from the original Britt Community Club

* Photo album of Irma and Bill Mattson and the Oasis Tavern, which they operated on the old Highway 53 roadway.

These items were borrowed in the past within the community and their location is currently unknown. If you have them or know who does, we'd appreciate your help in retrieving these items as they have much historical information regarding the Britt community.

Please call 749-6143 or e-mail: BCHSmail@gmail.com with any information.

BCHS Annual Meeting

Written by Janet M. Heglund

On Sunday, July 13 2008, the Britt Community Historical Society and the Laurentian Environmental Center, which is located on Arrowhead Lake in Britt, met and celebrated BCHS's second annual membership along with the LEC's 30th anniversary. Jim DeVries, acting director of the LEC, was a very gracious host.

At 4:00 p.m., the BCHS held a brief business meeting. Each board member and officer was introduced to the members who were in attendance. All committee leaders told of their mission statements and a little of what their group is working on. Interesting! Our treasurer, Ross Phенning, gave his report on our finances. After, our president, Jody Phенning finished up with the business at hand, and after we voted on two new board members, we all sat around and enjoyed a wonderful meal prepared by none other than Mark Stefanich, the head cook at LEC. The meal was a time for all of us to sit and reminisce about old times and to look at all the displays that were made up of days gone by.

Steve Johnson presented a slide presentation about LEC with Jim DeVries adding many interesting comments. Our guest speaker for the evening was Harry Lampka. He was there representing the

Virginia Historical Society. He did a wonderful job talking about the CC camps in our area. I think we all left with a feeling of more respect for those who served in the CC's.

After a time of asking him questions, we got down to some very serious business - our drawings. Just kidding!



Annual Meeting
07-13-2008

Three prizes were given out by the BCHS and two from the LEC. Dale Heglund and Mary and Byron Kesanen were each the winners of a dinner gift certificate from the Elroy Supper Club. Tammy Renzaglia won the framed replica of CCC Camp 715, Feb. 12, 1934 donated by Lauren Nelson. Thanks to both the Elroy and Lauren! The two prizes given by the LEC were won by Butch Panula and Ted Luoma. Thanks LEC and congratulations to each of you winners. That concluded our evening. Again we were truly grateful for all who attended and for the hospitality of the LEC. Hopefully at our next annual meeting we will see an even larger increase in our membership. I know I can speak for everyone when I say "a good time was had by all."

Officers:

President:

Jody Phенning

Vice President:

Lauren Nelson

Secretary:

Jessica Panula

Treasurer:

Ross Phенning

Board of Directors:

Howard Emery

Janet Heglund

Steve Johnson

Mary Kesanen

Charlene Luoma

Harlan Pernu, Sr.

Committees:

Historical Research

Membership

Events

Newsletter

Promotional

Website

Share your Story

Do you have a bit of local news or history to share with the membership?

Send your text or photos by postal mail to:

P. O. Box 477
Britt, MN 55710

or email:
BCHSmail@gmail.com

Did you know... (or do you remember?)

* The original Britt Community Club received a Certificate of Achievement for the best Roadside Picnic Area in 1964?

* There were two CC camps in the Mesabi District of the Superior National Forest?

Look for more information on these topics in upcoming newsletter articles!

Application for Membership to the Britt Community Historical Society:

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Mobile: _____

E-mail: _____

Please choose an annual membership level: (BCHS Year is from July 1 to June 30) Renewal New Member

\$15 Individual

\$100 Lifetime Individual

\$25 Family

\$175 Lifetime Family

Mail Application to: BCHS, P. O. Box 477, Britt, MN 55710. Please make checks payable to the Britt Community Historical Society.



Mystery Photo

Where in the Britt community is this lake located
- and -
what is the current (and more familiar) name of this lake?

Do you have additional information or knowledge about this photo?

We encourage your stories and memories of the past to add to our growing archives!

Previous Newsletter Mystery Photo Answer:

Now known as Wagon Wheel Lake,
formerly known as Big Wheel Lake
located in Section 26, south of Jammer Lake.

Britt Community Historical Society
P. O. Box 477
Britt, MN 55710