

# *MEEKER MEMORIES*

FALL 2022

MEEKER COUNTY  
MUSEUM  
QUARTERLY  
NEWSLETTER



The mission of the Meeker County Historical Society is to enhance and preserve the Meeker County Museum, Civil War Building Complex, and its 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.



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

*Sharing Our Stories Since 1885*

WITHIN THESE  
PAGES

- 02* **UPCOMING  
EVENTS**
- 03* **DIRECTOR'S  
NOTES**
- 03* **COLLECTION  
SPOTLIGHT**
- 04* **MEMBERS &  
DONORS**
- 05* **"TOWNSHIP  
TALES"**



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

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

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

### Admission

Adults - \$3  
Members & Children Under 12 - FREE

### Board of Directors

Sid Willson (President)  
Ken Zachman (Treasurer)  
Theresa Nelson (Secretary)  
Jessica Bondhus  
Mark Cashman  
Pam Dille  
Sam Feistner  
David Holle  
Jeff Niedenthal  
Dave Pease  
Barb Penk  
Tom Westrum

### Staff

Danelle Erickson - Executive Director  
[director@meekercomuseum.org](mailto:director@meekercomuseum.org)

Sandy Johnson - Research Librarian  
[staff@meekercomuseum.org](mailto:staff@meekercomuseum.org)

## October

**Civil War Spy Mystery.** An Interactive History Mystery for all ages. All month during regular hours. Free.

- 13 **Civil War Roundtable: Meeker County "Boys of '61"** with Brian Pease. 1:30. Free for Roundtable Members; \$3/general admission



## November

- 10 **Civil War Roundtable: General George Thomas and the Minnesotans** with Tom Romaine. 1:30. Free for Roundtable Members; \$3/general admission

- 11 **Veterans Day Lunch** Civil War-Inspired lunch. 11-2 (lunch served until 1:30)

## December

- 6-17 *Your Holiday Traditions* exhibit, see page 4

No Civil War Roundtable in December

Stay tuned for information on the upcoming Annual Meeting and Holiday Hours. Follow us on Facebook or see page 7 on how you can sign up for our monthly emails "Meeker Memos"

# Director's Notes

# Collection Spotlight

**Danelle Erickson**  
**Executive Director**



In my opinion, fall is the perfect time for museum visits. The summer rush is over and the snow hasn't started to fall (yet!). Stop on in!

This October we invite you to our first ever Civil War Spy Mystery! It's an interactive history mystery. In the G.A.R. Hall, visitors will find a series of puzzles, encoded messages, and word games. Will you solve the mystery?

The Spy Mystery is free and available during our regular hours, Tuesday-Friday 10-4; Saturday 12-4. Come on your own schedule. It is sure to be fun for all ages.

We are also going to host a lunch on Veterans Day, Friday, November 11. Step back in time at the G.A.R. Hall and enjoy a Civil War-inspired lunch. Free (donations welcome). We will also have on display some of the U.S. Flags from our collection.

As we head into November, thoughts often turn thankful. I know I personally have a lot to be thankful for this year—top among them has been my first year at the Museum. Thank you to all who have made me feel so welcome.

A special "thank you!" to all of our wonderful members and donors. It's because of you, the Museum and G.A.R. Hall continue to share and preserve local history!

In the past few months, we've added a couple of items to the Samstad Cabin in the Museum.

First is a **spinning wheel** that once belonged to Sigrí (Olsdotter Slinden) Overvig. Sigrí was born in Norway and was the sister of Mari Samstad. This makes Sigrí the great-aunt of Irene, Sabin, and Mailer Samstad who donated the cabin to the Museum.



On the side of the spinning wheel is painted "Siri Ols Dattor Slindon Aar [year] 1843" Sigrí came to America in 1868 after the death of her husband and lived with her brother Harbo Slinden's family on their farm in Acton and Gennessee (Kandiyohi) Townships.

Another new item, also from the Samstad family is this **candle safe**.



The beveled wooden front slides up and down and candles would be stored inside. Many of the candles used by pioneers were made out of tallow, or animal fat. To keep pests such as mice from eating the candles, people would use a safe.

## Give to the Max Day

**November 17, 2022 is Give to the Max Day!** Join with thousands of other donors across Minnesota in this state-wide day of giving.

Visit [GiveMN.org](https://www.givemn.org) and make your donation(s) to your favorite organizations and charities, including the "Meeker County Historical Society" *Donations don't have to be made on November 17 but can be made at any time.*







# Members

## New\* and Returning Members July-September 2022

Allen Co. Public Library	Jerome Johnson
Burton Bard Jr.	Marveen Minish
Shelia and Robert Bohrer	Chuck & Merna Pease
Mike and Louise Brooks	Dave and Jan Pease
Pamela Dille	*Stacy & Derek Penk
Jim and Mona Haag	Carol Rowell
Merle Hanson	Mark Schwinden
Joyce and Jim Hinderks	Tom & Candy Westrum
David Johnson & Bev Meyer	*Heather Piepkorn Woodlee

## Business and Nonprofit Members



American Legion Post 104  
American Legion Post 381



Conway, Deuth &  
Schiesing, PLLP




Greater Litchfield Opera  
House Association




**INSURANCE**  
*Solutions*  
of Litchfield  
Ron Dingmann



FWV Post 2818



# Donors

## Financial Donations July-September 2022

Mark Cashman	Olson Trust
Bob Feidler	Bernard Schulte
David Johnson & Bev Meyer	Mark Schwinden
Jerome Johnson	Swede Grove Twp.
Meeker County	

## Memorial Donations in Honor of John E. Miller *Continued from the previous issue*

Shelley Legus

## Artifact Donations

Tim Bergstrom  
F. John and Iris (McGraw) Campbell Family  
Barbara Hynes-Tomczyk and family  
Randall Nelson  
Stephen E Osman  
Dean Urdahl w/ Darryl Sannes

## Your Holiday Traditions A Community Exhibit

### December 6-17, 2022

Help create a new exhibit featuring your holiday traditions. Lend us a favorite Christmas ornament, holiday recipe, family photo, etc. and be included in this exhibit.

Items must be brought to the Museum Nov. 29 – Dec. 2.

# Township Tales

## Acton & Danielson

Come along as we continue our “Township Tales” series. Each issue of *Meeker Memories* features a story from one or two of Meeker County’s townships. Topics will vary – from people and places to businesses and events.

### Acton

One of the most memorable, and certainly the largest, items in the museum’s collection is the Samstad Cabin. Originally built in Section 18 of Acton Township, it was the Samstad family who last lived in the cabin and later donated it to the Museum. But what about people who lived in the cabin before the Samstads.

The cabin was built by John Blomberg in 1868. He was born in 1835 in Sweden and came to America in 1857. Prior to the Civil War, Blomberg worked as a farmer and lumberman in various places in eastern Minnesota. He enlisted in the Company D, Third Minnesota Infantry in 1864, serving for 11 months. During the winter of 1864-65, his regiment was stationed at DeValls Bluff, Arkansas, an important Union outpost for both river and rail transportation. After the end of the war, Company D remained at Batesville, Arkansas for a few months.

A couple of years after the war, John made his way to Meeker County. In 1868 he built



John Blomberg, 1888

what we think of today as the Samstad Cabin. Blomberg came to own over 200 acres, 110 of

which he actively farmed.

Blomberg, like most farmers in the area, was hit by the grasshopper plague in the 1870s, losing most of his wheat. He was able to save some of his oats, but admitted “there was more grasshopper legs than grain.”

Blomberg married Lena Maria Peterson in 1869. The couple would have nine children. He was also a member of the G.A.R. Post in Litchfield for a few years.

In November 1889, Blomberg and his family moved to Salt Lake City. The Meeker County land was put up for sale and around 1891, it was purchased by Albert N. Brown.

Brown lived and farmed the Acton land until about 1901 when he sold his livestock, farm equipment, and household items at auction. He and his family, which included wife Elise and three children, moved to Nebraska where he started a hardware business. They later moved to South Dakota.

In the meantime, the land and cabin remained in Brown’s name. At least one other family lived on the property before the Samstads. In 1902, Ole Fuglem and his new bride, Mollie (Qvello), started their life together



Samstad Cabin



here, presumably renting the farmland and cabin from Brown.

Then at the start of 1907, Albert Brown returned to Meeker County and sold the land to Olaus and Sigrid Samstad, "receiving a good



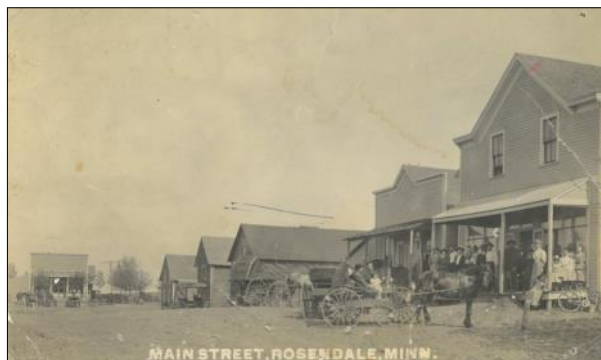
The 1868 cabin inside the Meeker County Museum.

price." The Samstad family would live in the cabin until 1923 when they built a new home. The cabin was donated to the Meeker County Historical Society by the Samstad family in 1961, and a portion of it was moved inside the museum.

## Danielson

If you were to look at a map of Danielson Township, past or present, you will find the sole community of Rosendale. Like many

similar communities, only a few buildings remain today, but it was once home to a creamery (the second built in the state), store, blacksmith shop, garage, mill, and the Danish Brotherhood Hall. About a mile and half west of Rosendale was School District #50, often called the Rosendale School.



Rosendale in Danielson Township

One of the things sometimes overlooked in local history is the vast number of schools that once dotted the countryside. In fact, over the years there were nearly one hundred rural schools in Meeker County! In the days before cars and school buses, most children walked to school. "Three miles in the snow, uphill both ways" wasn't an exaggeration for many children. To keep the distances manageable for the students, schools were added across

the countryside as the population demanded.

The Rosendale school was first organized in 1871. In 1909, it was decided a new school was needed. J.W. Dudley of Atwater was paid \$10 to move the old building so new construction could begin. The original school was purchased by the Danielson Creamery Co.



A present-day view of the original Rosendale school (with a later addition). It was later the Danielson Township Hall and is now an antique store.

for \$50 and moved into Rosendale. It would later become the Danielson Township Hall. This building still stands.

The new school cost over \$3,100 to build. A loan from recently widowed Margrethe Mortenson paid for half of the new structure. The rest of the funds came from bonds, taxes, and state aid. More than two dozen local men hauled over sixty loads of lumber, stone, and cement for the construction. The cement walls were poured and then marked to look like bricks.

The building was outfitted with new seats (ordered from Sears and Roebuck), maps, textbooks, library books, and furnace. It was considered one of the "finest and best equipped schools of any rural district."

Rural schools only offered education up through eighth grade. To honor the graduates, the rural schools would host a joint commencement. Held at the Litchfield Opera House, the ceremonies included music and a special speaker. One year, the Governor of Minnesota was even in attendance to hand out the diplomas. Most graduate classes from any given school ranged from zero to around six students each year. District 50 was no exception.

Over the years, student enrollment at the Rosendale school decreased, as did many of the rural schools, due in part to the increase in available school bus transportation. District 50

closed in 1965. The building was used as a private home for a time but burned down in 1980. The end of an era.

**Sources**

Various newspaper articles  
*Meeker County Minnesota History*  
Treasurer records, District 50



Rosendale School, District 50, c. 1930s

The next installment of "Township Tales" brings us to the southernmost townships in Meeker County—Cosmos and Cedar Mills where we will find tragedy and a horse thief. Stay tuned!

*Meeker Memos*



**NEW Monthly email**

Each month, we will send you a short and to-the-point email with the latest news and events from the Meeker County Museum at the G.A.R. Hall.

To signup, just send an email with subject "email signup" to Director@meekercomuseum.org

**Wish List**

The Museum is looking for off-site storage options. Approximately 12'x12'. The space will be used to store artifacts, so it will need to have at least moderate climate control.

**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

**Annual Litchfield Civil War Roundtable Membership**

- Single \$30
- Family \$40

I'd like to make an additional donation \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**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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