

# IRON RANGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY



*WHERE HISTORY COMES ALIVE*

June 2023

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Vol. 48, No. 2



*Members of the newly formed East Range Historical Society. Seated (l-r) Elaine Melby, secretary and Al Stimac, president. Standing (l-r) Lois Espey, Jean Stimac, Clyde Helmer, Al Harris, Edna Rebrovich, Eileen Harris, Andrew Espey, Louise Nisen, Bob Kivela (behind Nisen). Aurora Journal-Facts, 6/28/1973.*

**East Range Historical Group Organization Is Promoted.** Recent meetings have been held by a number of interested persons of the East Mesabi Range area and have formed an organization tentatively known as the East Range Historical Group. The two meetings were held in the Aurora-Hoyt Lakes Library at Aurora on December 1 and on January 28. Purpose at present of this organization, is explained by Albert Stimac, acting chairman, and is as follows: Because of the rapid progress and technological change experienced in this area in the last 75 years, the history and visual connections with the past have been almost completely obliterated. The objective of the group would be to salvage and reconstruct as much of the original buildings and equipment that are still in good or fair condition if it is feasible to do so; if not, to make or construct replicas of the same. For one community to attempt to accomplish this is very impractical from a financial standpoint. The involvement of a number of communities to work as a unit would be beneficial to all and in this way, the group would represent approximately ten to twelve thousand persons on the East Mesabi Range. The organization would tie in and work closely with communi-link guide-lines. This is an organization which covers 14 midwest states to further and promote the development of the smaller communities to identify their problems, discover their past and present resources and to mobilize resources to meet their needs. The main offices of communi-link are located at Fort Collins, Colo. The main objective is to link the citizens of the smaller communities in an area in a common effort – the first of which is to re-discover the natural heritage of their particular areas. Pat Baudhuin, Hoyt Lakes, is closely associated with the communi-link center. Mr. Arnold Heikkala is county-coordinator for the local group. In brief, some of the tentative goals of the organization are as follows: To salvage some of the old buildings in the area and to acquire sites in which to be located. Each community to have a distinct characteristic of its own such as Aurora with pre-1920 mining and test drilling; Biwabik with fur trapping, a log cabin and Indian related lore and a monument to be erected telling of the discovery of iron ore on the Mesabi Range in 1892; the Palo-Markham area with a Finnish sauna, log house and hay barn; Gilbert with its store fronts and wooden sidewalks; Hoyt Lakes with logging prior to the mining era and with special emphasis on the old Mesabi Location east of that city. To date only three communities in the area have formed the nucleus of the membership; Aurora, Biwabik, and Hoyt Lakes; it is planned to include the areas of Gilbert, Palo-Markham, and Embarrass. At the most recent meeting the following were in attendance: Arnold Heikkala, county coordinator, Duluth; Pat Baudhuin, communi-link representative; Albert Stimac, acting chairman; George LaCount, Al Harris, Jean Stimac, Rudy Chernick, all of Hoyt Lakes; Clyde Helmer, Frank Licari, Jack Bergan, Biwabik and Dave Sweeney. Letters are being sent to many other persons who have shown an interest in the perpetuation and heritage of the area including mining officials, city and other governmental officials, representatives of Iron Range Trail Development and others. In brief, all people especially "doers" are invited to join and be present at the next meeting to be held at 7:30 p.m. on March 1 at the Aurora-Hoyt Lakes School in Aurora. It is expected that many interesting speakers will be in attendance and a representative of the Iron Range Trail, with offices in Duluth. *Biwabik Times*, 2/22/1973.

**East Range Historical Society Holds First Meeting.** A meeting of the newly formed East Range Historical Society was held on Thursday, March 1, at the Aurora-Hoyt Lakes School in Aurora. Arnold Heikkala, Communi-link Coordinator from Duluth, explained to the group the guidelines and history of the communi-link program and its relation to the communities involved when they work together as a unit on a specific program. Albert Stimac, acting chairman of the meeting, reported on a personal survey he has conducted that would bind the East Range communities together by restoring and publicizing something of historic interest from each

area. Arnold Heikkila suggested that the Voyageur's National Park and the Iron Range Trail are activities outside the East Range Historical Society's probable programs but that the activities of the organizations could be correlated with these. Frank Young Director of the St. Louis County Historical Society, Duluth, gave the group a report on the methods needed to formulate an active and successful historical society. Donald Shank, a member of the Board of Governors of the St. Louis County Historical Society, and a native of Biwabik, discussed some innovative ways to create popular local interest in area history. Marvin Lamppa, Instructor of History at the Aurora-Hoyt Lakes High School, informed the group of many old buildings and historic sites that are still visible in the area but may soon be lost to posterity unless public action is taken. An open discussion followed with various points of view expressed by those in attendance. Herb K. Anderson, St. Louis County Regional Grants Coordinator, Virginia, explained the guidelines set up by Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) "Open-Space" program. (He specified that in order to get a federal grant, an organization must have a governmental (state, county, township, etc.) backing a project and matching funds.) He also explained the procedures required to register historical buildings and sites with the Minnesota Historical Society and the federal office. The communities of Aurora, Hoyt Lakes, Palo, Biwabik and Brimson were represented at the meeting. Names of those attending the meeting include: Arnold Heikkila, county coordinator; Herb K. Anderson, regional coordinator, Frank Young, director of the county historical society; Donald Shank, representative of the county historical society; Albert Stimac, acting chairman; Elaine Melby, acting secretary; Clyde Helmer, public relations; Al Harris, Vincent Lacer, Jr., Frank Licari, Arlen G. Swanson, Fred Thompson, Pamela Thompson, Jerry Baland, Robert Farrell, Frances J. Stepetz, R. Chernick, Marvin Lamppa, Harry E. Lamppa. The next meeting will be held on Thursday, March 29, at 7:30 p. m. at the Aurora-Hoyt Lakes School in Aurora. The next meeting is to be an organizational one including the election of officers and selection of committees. *Biwabik Times*, 3/8/1973.

**Historical Society to Meet Tonight.** An important meeting of the East Range Historical Society will be held tonight, May 24, at 7:30 p.m. The meeting will be held in Biwabik in the old post office building, which has been donated for use by the society by Mrs. Louise Nisen of the Biwabik State Bank. At a special meeting on May 10, revised by-laws and incorporation papers were voted on and accepted by those in attendance. Committees, dues and plans for the future will be discussed at this important meeting. It is planned that David Nystuen, Field Supervisor for the Minnesota Historical Society, will be a guest speaker and assist the Society in future endeavors. Coffee an' will be served. *Aurora Journal-Facts*, 5/24/1973.

**Historical Society Grows: Incorporates.** The East Range Historical Society has filed for its non-profit incorporation certification by the State of Minnesota. A major effort on the part of the interested persons involved helped make this idea a reality and the Society is now making plans to obtain financial assistance from private industry and established organizations. Future plans call for a membership drive of the citizens of the area who are interested in the promotion of such an organization. The Historical Society feels that although many people, will not take an active part in the society as such, they would like to join. By doing so they will give moral support to the Historical Society as well as helping it financially. To date, all expenses have been absorbed by the organizers of the society. The elected officers hold non-paying positions and all monies received by the Society will be used to purchase office supplies and equipment which are badly needed. Permanent housing for the Historical Society is now being sought. This is necessary because of the donations of manuscripts and artifacts that have been acquired and are now stored in private homes and property. Albert Stimac, president of the

Historical Society is most pleased with the people involved in forming the East Range Historical Society by their continued perseverance and enthusiasm. The biggest accomplishment and pride so far is that individuals from various communities and rural areas are, working as one unit to achieve the society's goals. *Aurora Journal-Facts*, 6/28/1973.

**ER Historical Society Conducts Membership Drive.** During the past seventy-five years we have progressed so rapidly in this area that we have almost eliminated the physical and cultural heritage of the early settlers. Now the East Range Historical Society has been organized by interested citizens from Gilbert, Hoyt Lakes, Biwabik, Aurora, Palo-Markham, Brimson and Embarrass. Primary consideration will be given to salvage buildings, collect artifacts and manuscripts as well as to establish marked trails, paths, and portages. To accomplish this task, dedicated individuals are required; individuals who will put an immense amount of time and effort into the projects that are selected. It will take the awareness of private industry as well as individual citizens to make this task possible. The society is presently conducting a membership drive and has appealed to private concerns in the area for support also. President Albert Stimac feels that although many individuals would like to support such an organization, they cannot join as active members because of other commitments or circumstances. For this reason the society has made available to them the ability to join as inactive members. In this manner they will give moral and financial support to the society's efforts. The cost per year for membership is \$3.00 for active and inactive memberships. Interested persons should make application to" Lois May Espey, Treasurer, East Range Historical Society, Route 1, Box 32, Embarrass. *Biwabik Times*, 7/26/1973.

**Historical Society Receives Donation From Eveleth Man.** The regular monthly meeting of the E.R.H.S. (East Range Historical Society) was held on October 25 in Biwabik in the old post office building. One of the highlights of the meeting was the presentation of a beautiful 16" x 32" plaque carved out of a tree trunk by Joe Bogdanich of Eveleth, a well-known historian and collector of antique and historical items dating back more than a hundred years. The plaque depicts the Minnesota State Flower, the Lady Slipper. Bogdanich has a collection of historical artifacts in his museum located on Eveleth's main street. Accompanying the plaque was a letter from Bogdanich commending the newly formed historical organization for perpetuating and preserving the history and lore of this section of Minnesota. At present, the E.R.H.S. is engaged in many ventures of many and varied projects. Just recently a group of some 30 members made a more than two-mile hike from Merritt lake, just east of Biwabik, northward over the old Vermilion Trail which was used by the Indians years ago. Pictures of this tour were taken by Michael Bergan and Fred Thompson and slides were shown to the group by Thompson. Also a treasure of old time photos were displayed by Marvin Lamppa of old-time diamond drilling in 1892 and scenes of the old settlement of Merritt which was located just east of Biwabik and which later was moved and is now the City of Biwabik. Although the society has many projects contemplated for the future, three are now being considered as the most important and are being contemplated at the present time. They are: The old Portage Trail between Biwabik and Aurora and vicinity – to develop this by restoration of old homesteads etc. Documentary slides, both written and taped by old time residents of the area who remember the early days of this part of the country and played a part in the development of the northeastern section of Minnesota. The development and possible erection of an historical marker to mark the scene, which has been definitely located near Hoyt Lakes, of the first diamond drill hole drilled by E. J. Longyear Company in the year 1892. There are many other projects contemplated and visualized for the future months and years ahead. One is to secure



a suitable building to house the artifacts of days gone by and to safeguard and preserve these historical items which have been promised the organization by many well-wishers of E.R.H.S. It was announced by President Al Stimac that J. C. "Buzz" Ryan, retired State Forestry Ranger will present a talk on the old lumbering days in the area. Ryan, for many years, was located at the State Forestry establishment on Highway No. 4, in the vicinity of Shields, located about midway between Biwabik and Duluth. The program is scheduled for Thursday, Nov. 15 in the Aurora-Hoyt Lakes High School cafeteria. Interested persons of the general public are invited to attend. *Biwabik Times*, 11/1/1973.



ERHS members l-r: Jack Bergan, Biwabik; Ernest Karpinen, Aurora; Dan DeVaney, Hoyt Lakes; Albert Stimac, Hoyt Lakes; Marvin Lamppa, Aurora, 1973

### **East Range Historical Society Members Take Nostalgic Hike.**

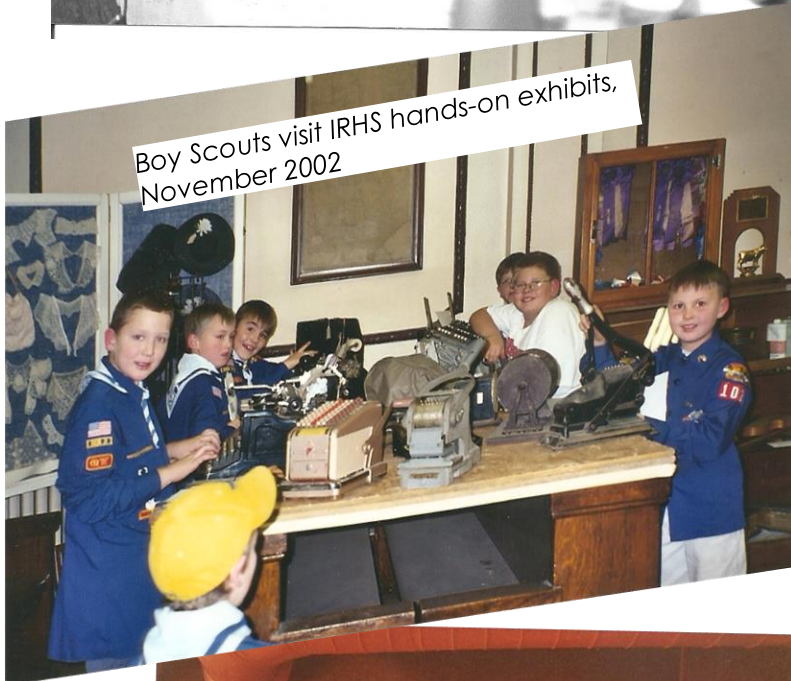
East Range Historical Society's President Albert Stimac comments on the Old Portage Route Field Trip. It was a beautiful morning in late September when members from the East Range Historical Society assembled for their first field trip. Field leader for the day was Marvin Lamppa, the society's vice-president. The purpose of the trip was to acquaint members with

one of the first and oldest portage trails in Minnesota. The preservation and restoration of this part of the Old Portage Trail has been included on the "critical" list by the ERHS as one project for which "time may be running out" unless work is done on it soon. The mood of some of the 37 members (from several East Range communities) taking part in the walk was one of mixed emotions. There was serious thought and conversation mixed with the pleasure of family participation. The walk was brisk and stops were many with Mr. Lamppa fielding questions in reference to the portage. The walk was approximately two miles distance one way and when the Embarrass River was reached, the group enjoyed light lunches carried in sacks or knapsacks. While the older members rested and visited during the "lunch break" younger adventurous members explored the surrounding area. Finds included a notch in a huge cedar tree and the remains of a log structure of approximately 8 feet by 10 feet. A small clear bottle found in the base area of the structure as identified by Andrew Espey of Embarrass as possibly being of 1900-1910 vintage. Fred Thompson of Brimson took numerous color-slide pictures of the walk and Michael Bergan of Biwabik, a youthful photography buff, snapped black and white pictures. As a member of the society this reported had these thoughts as she walked with the group that day late in September: As we hiked through this area the "Portage of the 12 Poses" on a beautiful autumn day, a sense of history filled some of us. One could visualize Indians, Voyageurs, Explorers, Surveyors, Prospectors and Settlers all as big as life-hiking along with us in spirit as we viewed the unspoiled terrain within the forest. We live in an historical area and we must salvage the past for those of the future—we must salvage it before it is lost. *East Range Journal-Facts*, 11/23/1973.





1978 L-R; Dana Miller, Pres; unknown; Barbara Lamppa, staff; Hy Berman, speaker; Geri Kangas, Treas; Jean Stimac, staff; Clem Cossalter, Eveleth Mayor



Boy Scouts visit IRHS hands-on exhibits, November 2002



Kathy Bergan, in 2015, a volunteer of over 33 years.



Italians in MN exhibit at Iron Range Interpretive Center, October 1983.



1st annual meeting 1974  
L-R: M Muehlbauer, G & E Melby, R Esala, J & A Stimac

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# Iron Range Historical Society Happenings

*To collect, preserve and share the history of Minnesota's Iron Ranges for the benefit of future generations*

**ACTIVITIES AT IRHS THIS SUMMER:** Please join the IRHS Board and volunteers this summer as we are hosting many different events for you to attend. All are free and open to the public. If you would like to volunteer your time for any of these events, please contact us by phone 218.749.3150 and leave a message or by email [ironrangehistsoc@gmail.com](mailto:ironrangehistsoc@gmail.com).

**\*\*June's Saturday at the Society** will be on the 17<sup>th</sup> from 10 to 2. The theme is **Get to Know Your Society**. Volunteers and Board members will be on hand to show attendees the IRHS collection. Do some family research, look through photos, read newspapers from the early 1900s, page through a book, or just come to visit. The coffee will be on and in true Iron Range style there will be treats.

**\*\*IRHS and the Eveleth Heritage Society** have teamed up and are presenting an historic tour of Eveleth through power point. Attendees should use the accessible door of the Eveleth Public Library to gain entrance to the building. The presentation will begin at 10 am on Saturday, July 1 and again on Monday, July 3 and be about an hour and half in length. Coffee and treats will be served.

**\*\*The City of McKinley** will be hosting festivities on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July on Grand Avenue in McKinley and IRHS offices will be open from 10 to 2 celebrating with the City the 247<sup>th</sup> birthday of America. There will be treats and a coloring contest for the kids. Come one, come all!

**\*\*McKinley** will be having an all-city rummage sale on July 7, 8, and 9 and IRHS will have items in the sale. All items have been deaccessioned as per IRHS policy. The items will be offered by donation only. We will be open from 9 to 2 on Friday the 7<sup>th</sup> and Saturday the 8<sup>th</sup>.

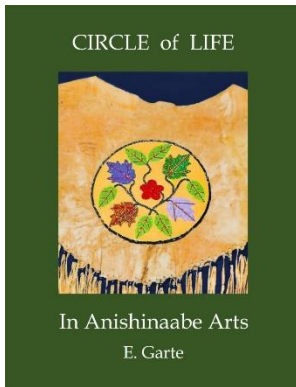
**\*\*July's Saturday at the Society** will be on the 15<sup>st</sup> and August's Saturday at the Society will be on the 19<sup>th</sup>. Both days the Society will be open from 10 to 2. The Board is still planning these events so watch Facebook and our website for the theme for each Saturday.

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The Board of Directors finalized the 2023-2025 strategic plan and it has been posted on Facebook. It is also available for download on our website. Click on the Board of Directors tab and scroll to the bottom of the page.

**THANK YOU!** To the Aurora American Legion Post 241 for the very generous donation of \$2,400. On behalf of the Board I wrote to the Legion requesting funds explaining that, "the IRHS has over 25,000 hard copy historical photos of the Iron Ranges of Minnesota. People, cities, ways of life, mining, logging, events and activities, and much more is documented in our photographs. Anyone in search of old pictures is welcome at

the Society to comb through what we own. The photos are probably our most sought-after items. Volunteers over the years have filled over 90 3-ring vinyl binders with these photographs. Very regularly, and more often than we would like, we must replace the binders because they just do not hold up to regular use. We believe we have found a solution in a leather-bound D-ring binder that is much sturdier and better made than the binders we are currently using. The leather binders are costly, at \$25 each.” The Board that governs the Legion sent a check for \$2400 which will completely cover the cost of the binder replacement project. IRHS Directors are in the process of deciding which one of two companies to use for the binder purchase, weighing binder costs and shipping and handling fees. Thank you again, Aurora American Legion.



Author Edna Garte has updated her e-Book for 2023 and IRHS is honored to continue hosting it on the IRHS website. Ms. Garte has added more text and more photographs of artwork. The e-Book is available for free. Click on the publications tab, then books, and then the button to download.

Edna Garte’s graduate degrees in art and teaching are from Yale and City University of New York. Of Ashkenazi Jewish heritage, she is retired from teaching cross-cultural introductions to the arts at Oakland Community College in Auburn Hills, MI. In the 1970s and ‘80s, she taught art history at Central Michigan University and University of Minnesota, Duluth. While there, she researched and curated exhibitions on Anishinaabe arts. At that time, she met several of the artists who inspired this book.

Included here is work by Robert DesJarlait, Dewey Goodwin, Margaret Hill, Bob Larsen, Melvin Losh, Erik Michael Mitchell, Steve Premo, Karen Savage-Blue, Wendy Savage, Lena Strong and Gerald White. Their art in diverse media is shown in relation to Native poetry, stories, and histories.

Created mostly by senior artists in Minnesota, these are only a few examples of the wealth of Anishinaabe expressions in the Great Lakes area and elsewhere. Those expressions include creative work by numerous artists of all generations who combine individuality with community consciousness.

*ERHS 1st Annual Meeting.  
L-R: Eveleth Mayor  
Joseph Begich; Biwabik  
Mayor Bob Woods; ERHS  
President Albert Stimac;  
Lt. Gov. Rudy Perpich;  
Clyde "Happy" Helmer,  
Biwabik; Gilbert Mayor  
Ben Verbick; IRRRC  
Director Bob Scuffy; St.  
Louis County Comm. Ed  
Hoff; ARDC Director Rudy  
Esala, 1974*

