

EXPLANATION

Section Line
 Farm or Lot Line
 Water Road
 Railroad
 Creeks & Springs
 House
 Church
 School House
 Adjacent lands owned by same party connected by a line, thus
 Post Office
 Coal, Lead or Zinc Mine
 County Bridge

OUTLINE MAP
 OF
LE SUEUR CO.
 MINNESOTA
 • 1898 •

Les Nouvelles Historiques de Le Sueur

Interest in LCHS remains strong at annual meeting

New faces and old issues took center stage at Le Sueur County Historical Society's annual meeting on April 16. The event was held in the 4-H building at the Le Sueur County fairgrounds in Le Center, Minn.

Four seats on the Society's Board of Directors were filled during the early portion of the meeting. Returning for another two-year term on the board were Bryce Stenzel and Mike Fredricks. Board

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Stenzel selected as LCHS president

Le Sueur County Historical Society's 2024 board of directors are: (left to right) Bill Stangler, Bryce Stenzel, Ron Greenwald, Nick Pollack, Mike Fredricks, Dean Pettis, Bonnie Reak, Dr. Ruth Collins and Colleen Traxler Carlson.

Traxler Carlson and Pollack are new to the board. Officers for the coming year are Stenzel, president; Pollack, vice president; and Traxler Carlson treasurer.



SUMMER, 2024

The President's Corner...

"State of the Society Address"

"I stand on the shoulders of giants," is a phrase usually credited to Sir Isaac Newton, who used it in a letter he wrote to his rival, Robert Hooke in 1676. It certainly applies to my current situation, almost 350 years later. At its May 14, 2024 monthly meeting, the outgoing Le Sueur County Historical Society Board elected me to succeed Bill Stangler, as President of the organization. I am both honored and humbled by the Board's decision. I want to especially thank Mr. Stangler for his long-term, dedicated service to the Society. Bill guided the ship of state through some very troubled waters, during the tumultuous reorganization of the Society, leaving the organization much better than it was when he took the helm. I am pleased to report that the Le Sueur County Historical Society is now on a firm financial foundation, with a strong, growing membership base to help sustain itself. Restoration work on the bell tower of the Ottawa Church, and an even larger restoration of the Elysian School Building is currently underway. Bill's shoes will certainly be hard ones to fill, but I will do my best to continue the great work that commenced, under his leadership.

I believe Bill would agree with me that, "no man is an island." I want to gratefully acknowledge and thank the Board members who have stepped down, after the expiration of their terms, according to the Society's bylaws, for their outstanding contributions to the Society. Without the amazing grant writing skills of retiring Secretary, Dr. Ruth Collins and the fantastic financial skills of retiring Treasurer, Bonnie Reak, the Society would have become just a forgotten footnote in history — the very subject it seeks to preserve. Retiring Board members, Rich Bennett and Paul Malchow also need to be recognized, and thanked for their dedicated service to the Board. Rich was part of the herculean effort to reorganize the Society, and their firm and steady leadership has done much to restore members' trust in the institution. Paul has worked tirelessly to put together and distribute the very newsletter that contains the words I am now writing, and you [the membership] are reading.

I want to welcome new Board members: Nick Pollack (Vice President), Colleen Carlson (Treasurer) and returning members, Mike Frederick and Ron Greenwald to the Board. Together, we will continue to build on the legacy of those who have gone before us. I ask you, the membership of the Le Sueur County Historical Society, to keep the new Board in your thoughts and prayers, as we navigate through the many, daunting challenges that await us in the coming year, to make the decisions necessary to carry the Society forward. I ask for your trust and continued goodwill. In exchange, we, the Board pledge to give you the best of ourselves—our individual talents, expertise, life experiences, personal integrity and sense of purpose. We have been entrusted with the care of the Le Sueur County Historical Society's collection of priceless artifacts and historic structures that together; tell the story of Le Sueur County to the world. What an awesome responsibility that is!

Bryce O. Stenzel

Le Sueur County Historical Society President

Society website

lesueurcountyhistory.org/

It is the goal of the Society's board to use the website to keep members better informed of the many projects facing the Society today. Let us know what you'd like to see on YOUR new website!

Newsletters, board meeting minutes and LCHS updates will begin appearing soon. Keep checking in!

LCHS Genealogy Center

The Society's Research Center at 301 NE 2nd St. in Elysian is open Fridays and Saturdays from 1-5 p.m. through Sept. 17. The phone number is (507) 267-4091.

Ottawa Stone Church

The Ottawa Stone Church is open to the public on Saturdays and Sundays from 1-4 p.m. The church is also available to rent for small private gatherings. More information can be found on the LCHS website: <http://lesueurcountyhistory.org/>

Find us on Facebook under LCHSHISTORY

The mission of the Le Sueur County Historical Society is to collect and preserve the story of Le Sueur County — telling its history through historic sites, a research center, collections, exhibits and educational programming.

Come see what's new at the Genealogy Center July 4th

Searching history just became more modern at the Le Sueur County Historical Society's Genealogy Center in Elysian, Minn. The Society invites the public to see what's new at the Center at a special event on the 4th of July. The Center, located at 301 NE 2nd St. will be open that day from 11 a.m. – 2 p.m.

To better serve Center users, the Society has improved scanning and printing capabilities and recently updated its internet connection.

If you haven't had a chance to visit the genealogy center before, or you are a regular user, the July 4th event is an excellent opportunity to tour the facility and see all of the fascinating history packed into a small package.

The Society plans to display a number of items in its collection on July 4 and Bryce Stenzel will be at the Center with his portrayal of Abraham Lincoln.

The Genealogy Center has proven to be a valuable resource in researching family histories. The list of historic resources at the Center includes church histories, cemetery records and maps, birth records, marriage certificates and indexed obituary clippings from newspapers. At the Center you can find old plat books, maps, and town history books and files. Some family histories which have already been compiled can be found at the

Center as well.

A user fee of \$10 is charged, but the fee is waived for LCHS members. If you wish to have Center staff assist with research, there is a fee of \$10 per hour. Document scans and copies are 25 cents each. The Center is equipped with a Microfilm scanpro printer/reader/scanner. Patrons can view archived newspapers from throughout the county and print selected items.

While most Center patrons are walk-ins, appointments can be made via email at info@lesueurcountyhistory.org or by calling (507) 267-4091.

History enthusiasts are encouraged to volunteer at the Center. Many current volunteers enjoy re-

searching Le Sueur County history for others and learning a few new things themselves. Along with doing research, volunteers are needed to file obituaries, organizing files, scan photographs and make copies.

Two volunteers are needed for each day the center is open. If interested in being involved, contact LCHS via email at info@lesueurcountyhistory.org or call (507) 267-4091.

The first phase of the Elysian School Museum building restoration is very near complete. The LCHS board reminds visitors the school is a construction zone and safety is a must – keep a safe distance!

Join us on the



**Le Sueur County Historical Society's
Genealogy Center**

301 NE 2nd St. - Elysian, Minn.

OPEN 11 am – 2 pm

COME SEE WHAT'S NEW (AND OLD)

Tour the Genealogy Center
View Society artifacts
Rub elbows with Abe Lincoln
AND IT'S FREE!

We'll be at the County Fair!

Le Sueur County Fair – Aug. 15-18 – Le Center, Minn.

The Le Sueur County Historical Society will once again be at the Le Sueur County Fair. Want to help? We're looking for members to spend an hour or two at the log cabin and Dist. 57 School House to greet the public and spread the word about the work of the Society.

Drop us an email at info@lesueurcountyhistory.org. We need your help!

Pettis was once a bustling railroad town

There is no postal code for Pettis, Minn. As a matter of fact, there is no longer a Pettis, Minn. But for nearly half a century, Pettis was a fledgling business community in the heart of Le Sueur County farmland.

Pettis was a railroad station of the Chicago, Milwaukee and St Paul Railroad in Section 35 of Kasota Township in Le Sueur County, Minnesota. The station was located between Cleveland and Kasota, Minn.

The Pettis lineage came to Minnesota from Illinois in 1855 in the form of Solomon Harlow Pettis. Sol and his wife, Sarah Ann Davis, married in Traverse des Sioux in 1856 and raised five children: Alva, Alan, Alma, Adna and Amy.

This comes from an account from Connie Voight Giles and Lorene Voight:

“In 1902, the Farmington Division of the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad came through the area east of Kasota enroute from Wells to Farmington and then on to St. Paul. The Brogan brothers from St. Peter were the general contractors of this part of the railroad. Farmers living nearby were paid to help dig the cut for the railroad tracks to go through. The farmers in the area donated their land to the railroad with the exception of Frank Carr who sold two acres for railroad right-of-way.”

Building a railroad with miles of tracks and trains cost money and investors were needed to start the project. Surveyors had to negotiate

dense forests which were part of “The Big Woods,” as well as find a way to cross turbulent rivers such as the Le Sueur River.

After a route was chosen, work crews leveled the land and laid ties. Heavy iron rails were lifted into place and fastened with long metal spikes driven into the ties with sledgehammers.

During the winter, snow would bury the tracks and supplies. Workers would often have to dig out the supply train.

To navigate steep hills along the route, workers built the track in S-shaped curves which took extra time and effort. Numerous bridges and trestles were required and provided another challenge for the construction. Once the track and depot were ready for freight, passengers and baggage, station agents had to keep operations running smoothly. Voight and Voight Giles write: “In addition to managing the general store, Carl Pettis was paid five dollars per month to watch the railroad depot. The train didn’t stop at the Pettis Station unless Carl hung out a flag or lantern at night. The train would then stop and pick up the few passengers that waited in the depot. The depot was a 12-foot by 12-foot building with a potbellied stove and benches in it. People would call on the telephone and tell Carl Pettis that they were taking the train He would go down and start up the stove so they would be warm while they waited for the train was never on time. There was a passenger and a freight train going each way every day. Passengers could ride from Pettis to Mankato for a quarter.”

According to the Le Sueur County plat books from that period, Alvis Pettis lived in Section 35, Route #4 near Lake Emily.

The railroad came through his property located along Le Sueur County Road 18.

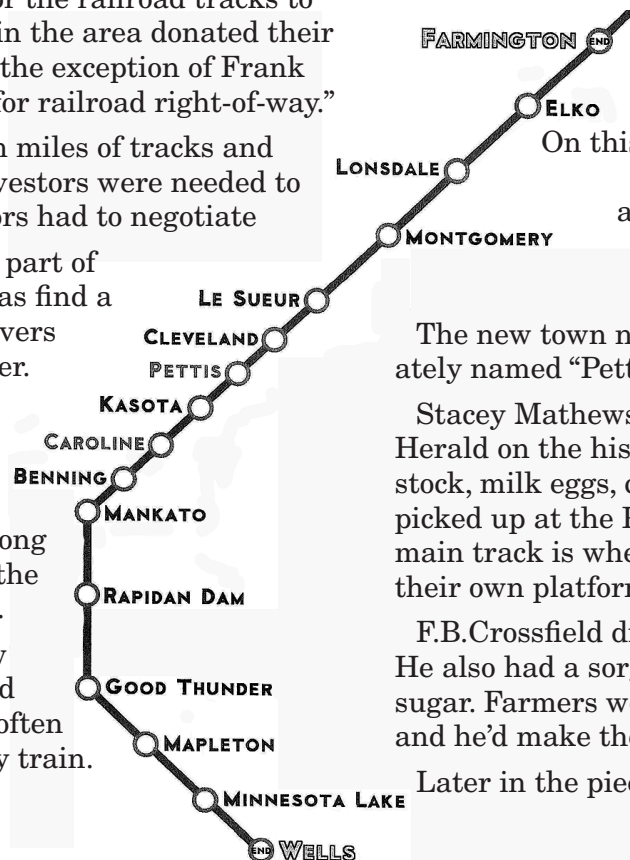
On this property he built a general store, blacksmith shop, a grain elevator and a stockyard. A storage building and loading platform were also constructed.

The new town now had formed and was appropriately named “Pettis.”

Stacey Mathews wrote a story for the St. Peter Herald on the history of Pettis. In it she says, “Livestock, milk eggs, cream, grain and sugar beets were picked up at the Pettis Station. A switch off the main track is where the sugr beets were loaded on their own platform.

F.B.Crossfield dried sweet corn for the farmers. He also had a sorghum press that he used to make sugar. Farmers would bring him their sugar cane and he’d make the sugar.”

Later in the piece, Mathews wrote, “When W.O.



Farmington-Mankato-Wells

Table 73

READ DOWN		Ml.		Table 73		41		551	
Ex. Sun.	592 Frt. Mon. Wed. Fri.			Ex. Sun.	AM	PM	Ex. Sun.	Frt. Tues. Thur. Sat.	
1.35	8.30	0	10.6	AM	11.40	12.50			
1.57	9.15		13.6	PM	11.21	12.15			
2.08	10.35		19.0		11.13	11.55			
2.15	10.01		27.7		11.01	11.35			
2.23	10.43		36.1		10.43	11.02			
2.33	11.30		42.8		10.25	9.35			
2.51	12.01	562	47.6		10.09	9.00	561	43	
3.07	12.25	Frt.	50.7		9.57	8.30	Frt.	Ex. Sun.	
3.19	12.44	Ex.	56.1		9.50	8.15	Sun.	Ex. Sun.	
3.29	1.16	AM	59.8						
3.49	6.35	AM	59.8		6.20	7.30	PM	PM	
3.58	6.15	PM	66.2		9.25	AM	6.45	7.25	
4.07	6.32		73.1		9.04		4.07	7.20	
4.19	6.44		80.2		8.52		3.35	6.55	
4.29	7.00		89.4		8.35		3.45	6.48	
4.39	7.16		89.4		8.22		3.50	6.25	
4.51	7.35		89.4		8.05		4.00	6.25	
5.16									

from its original foundation, which could still be found in 1972. The depot was on the Frank Kessler farm in 1972. The foundation of the general store was able to be found in 1972, but has since been destroyed during road construction.

No sign of the depot could be found in 2002.

LCHS Board Member Dean Pettis shared his insights:

“Pettis Station as I always knew it as a youngster was a place that had seen its better days. Not much was left,

but I had seen the site of the Pettis Store before the county road had been widened and improved. (The then-gravel road took a sharp turn to go under the large wooden beams before straightening out again to follow along the tracks into Cleveland.)

During the road improvement, the train trestle which carried the tracks above the road was removed. The trestle was located a quarter of a mile east from Pettis.

A small remnant of the path of the former track is evident a mile east of Pettis station on the north side of the road and a small segment remains between Cleveland and Le Center on the east side of Highway 99. Trees have become overgrown along these former track lines but are evident in the landscape by the raised soil buildup that was necessary to level the path of the trains.

I remember when the rails and wooden ties were removed in the late 1970's. Much of the land under the track line has been reclaimed by the farmers — so much so that one cannot distinguish where the track line actually had originally been built.

My father, Avery Pettis, had rented a pasture across the road from the active part of what was once Pettis Station. The unusual thing about the pasture was the fact it contained a horse racing track. Back in the Pettis Station's heyday, races were held to see who had the fastest horse.

The little settlement also had a baseball team. Some of the local young men enjoyed getting together for a Sunday afternoon game. This pasture was no doubt a good place for a gathering of ball-players to practice.

The trees of this boundary line were removed in 2022 and the entire area was tilled for drainage to facilitate better crops. Not much is left that could identify the small railroad stop Pettis once was.”

Schwey became owner of the general store, he removed the lean-to. The store was a two-story building with old-style windows and a porch. In 1918, Schwey sold the store to Max Haack who ran it for several years before moving the business to his house. He then sold the store to Tony Bravo who made it into a tavern or night club.”

About 1937 the building burned down under disputed circumstances.

“In the early 1940s, a pea vinery was then set up in Pettis. Farmers cut their peas and took them to the vinery where the peas and vines were separated from one another,” Mathews went on to write.

According to Patricia L. Simonette, the train — called the “Doodlebug,” ran a route from Farmington, Minn. to Elko, Webster, Lonsdale, Montgomery Le Center, Cleveland, Pettis, Kasota, Caroline station, Benning, Mankato, Rapidan, Good Thunder, Mapleton, Minnesota Lake and ending in Wells. A return route took passengers back to Farmington.

The last passenger trains running through Pettis, “Doodlebug #40 and #41,” stopped running in 1950. The Milwaukee Road went bankrupt in the 1970s.

The town of Pettis no longer exists. Connie and Lorene wrote about the final stages of Pettis, Minn.: No exact date is available as to when Pettis no longer existed, but it dwindled out soon after the vinery was built. Automobiles came into use and the town of Kasota took over. It seemed to put an end to the town. The stockyard fences fell down from lack of repair. The blacksmith shop and the lumberyard were tore down by Frank Kessler, Jr. In 1972 there were still two buildings standing. One was the depot, which Frank Kessler bought for \$10, and the other was the storage building. The storage building was on the Gerald Dobie place not too far

Annual meeting continued

members Paul Malchow and Rich Bennett chose not to run for another term. New members of the board are Colleen Traxler Carlson and Nick Pollack.

Traxler Carlson grew up in rural Elysian and graduated from Waterville/Elysian High School. She has a degree in Ag Education from the University of Minnesota. She is currently a U of M Extension educator for Scott and Carver Counties.

Colleen is married to Brad and has three adult sons: Donald, Ted and Sam. They live on a small farm, raising beef, chickens and pigs and have a collection of antique machinery and ephemera. Colleen collects antique quilts, cooking, and poultry items.

A life-long resident of Le Sueur County, Pollack started collecting antique machinery when he was 14 years old. He has also accumulated a small assortment of windmills which he is restoring to functional use.

Nick has valuable experience with other not-for-profit organizations, serving on various boards.

He and his wife Becky have two young adult children.

Board member Stenzel read the Society's annual report and synopsis of 2023. The report can be found on the LCHS website: <http://lesueurcounty-history.org/>.

Questions from the audience followed. Much of the discussion centered around the restoration of the Elysian Museum, the status of the project and what steps the board plans to take in the future to keep the project moving. There were also questions concerning the Society's collection of artifacts and how soon those artifacts will return to display.

Annual meeting guest speaker Al Batt was well received. Batt, a renown naturalist and bird watcher, writes humor and nature columns for many newspapers and does regular radio shows about nature. He is the author of the book, "A Life Gone to the Birds," and is a columnist for "Bird Watcher's Digest" and "Watching Backyard Birds."

The LCHS Board thanks all of the members who attended and participated in the annual meeting, which takes place in April of each year.

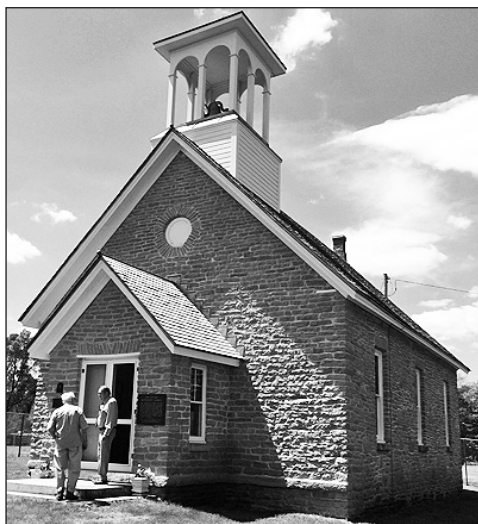
Ottawa Church is open on Sundays; available for event rentals

Now that the Ottawa Stone Church in Ottawa Minn. has returned to its historic glory, the landmark is being made available for social gatherings such as weddings, reunions or similar events.

A rental application must be made to the Le Sueur County Historical Society for review. To receive an application contact the Society via email at info@lesueurcountyhistory.org or call (507) 267-4091.

Rental of the church and grounds for an entire day (8 a.m. - 10:30 p.m.) is \$150. A damage, cleaning and key deposit of \$250 is required for all rentals. Late cancellation fees may apply.

The renter is responsible for any and all damage to the facility occurring during the term of the



rental by the renter or by guests. The renter is responsible for cleaning the facility and grounds after the event. Smoking is prohibited in all Le Sueur County Historical Society facilities. No open fires, including candles, are allowed in the Ottawa Church or on the property.

Other rules and guidelines for renting the church are included on the application.

The church is open Sunday afternoons throughout the summer. It is one of seven native limestone buildings left in the village and is listed with all seven others on the National Registry of Historic Places and are also on the list of Minnesota's Ten Most Endangered Properties.

STORAGE NEEDED

The Le Sueur County Historical Society needs dry, secure storage for artifacts while the Elysian museum is being repaired. If you know of any potential sites, please contact us at info@lesueurcountyhistory.org as soon as possible.

Pass it on ...

Do you have a friend who is interested in history? Do you know a student who is curious about life in Le Sueur County “way back when?” Sign them up for membership!

Let's keep moving forward — Join the Le Sueur County Historical Society for 2024.

LCHS Membership Application

Member Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ E-Mail: _____

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP OPTIONS

- Individual — \$30
- Family — \$40
- Supporting — \$100
- Business — \$250
- Contributor — \$500
- Benefactor — \$1,000

BENEFITS OF MEMBERSHIP:

- Research at the Genealogy Center without charge
- Receive Society newsletters, updates and invitations
- Cast a vote at meetings of membership
- Dues and donations are tax deductible
- Le Sueur County Historical Society is a 501C3 Minnesota nonprofit organization with historic sites in Cleveland, Elysian, Le Center, Le Sueur and Ottawa

I can help with

- Building and grounds maintenance
- Recording inventory and artifacts
- Educational programming
- Genealogy Center assistance
- Communications

My signature on this application confirms my commitment to supporting the mission of the Le Sueur County Historical Society.

Signature

Date

Mail application with check payable to: Le Sueur County Historical Society
ATTN: Membership
P.O. Box 123
Le Center, MN 56057

For Society Records: Received _____ Reviewed _____ Approved _____



Le Sueur County
**HISTORICAL
SOCIETY**

**PRESORT
STANDARD
Permit #55
New Prague, MN
56071**

**P.O. Box 123
Le Center, MN 56057**

Society will be at the Le Sueur County Fair Aug. 15-18

The Le Sueur County Historical Society's Heritage Center on the Le Sueur County fairgrounds has been a popular stop for hundreds of fairgoers over the years. As we look forward to the 2024 Le Sueur County Fair (Aug. 15-18), the "Log Cabin" will need some tidying up to meet the public.

There are jobs of all sizes and abilities which need to be done: Packing artifacts from last year's display, bringing new artifacts in, some lifting and carrying, and general cleaning.

Buckets, rags, brooms, step stools, step ladders and two-wheel carts would come in handy if you can bring them, but most of all we need helpful hands.

This is an opportunity to meet fellow Society members and create a good impression of the Society's work to the general public. Please consider lending us a hand.

The cleaning day will be announced on the Society's website and Facebook page. If you know you want to help, email info@lesueurcountyhistory.org Thank you!