

Legends of Freeborn County

Museum's library supplies answers

by Bev Jackson

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What was the date of the Boyd and Jack's fire? (Who/what was Boyd and Jack's?)

When was the Case Corset Company in Albert Lea? (What is a corset?)

How many bowling alleys have there been in Albert Lea? (Do you remember the Town Club?)

How do you operate a ? radiant heater made by the American Gas Company? (How many did they make?)

What kind of clothes were worn by women in 1892? (Bustles, Petticoats?)

Do you have a photo of the ? house on ? Avenue? (We are thinking of buying the house and would like to know its history.)

I hope that by now you have figured out that these questions are routine for the FCHS Museum librarian.

In 1992, hiring a librarian was a major step for the historical society. Formerly, as with the rest of the facility, all of the work was done by volunteers. However, this is another area where time available and work needed never seemed to balance. So the decision was made to make the position of librarian a permanent part of the staff.

Because I rely so much on our library, I am continually amazed when people tell me they are unaware of its resources.

We have Sears and Wards catalogs dating back to 1902. They contain pictures of almost everything your home and family has ever needed and are an excellent source of information when someone finds a "what'sit" in the attic.

We have cemetery transcripts for all of Freeborn County. The Freeborn County Genealogical Society undertook this incredible project and have generously shared the information.

We have cookbooks. Early church and organization cookbooks contain some marvelous recipes and home remedies.

We have an extensive photo file of people, places, and activities.

We have a microfilm collection of the Freeborn County census records from 1857 to 1910, and the early county papers - Standard, Times, Times-Enterprise, Alden Advance, Emmons-Leader, and Glenville Progress.

We have most city directories from 199 to the present.

We have Sanborn Insurance maps for Albert Lea dating from 1884 to 1931. These are detailed drawings of every block in town with its buildings and business occupants.

We have county plat maps beginning in 1874.

We have ALHS and Lea College yearbooks. Here again the collection is incomplete, but almost every year since 1913 is included. We also have some yearbooks from Freeborn.

We have family histories and genealogies.

We have the original Hi-Lites and Shadows drawings by Irv Sorenson. They are being indexed for better subject access.

We have county history books from 1882, 1911, and 1988.

We have almost all of the Community Magazines, also being indexed according to the subject.

We have a wealth of area information that has been preserved in acid-free folders. This information is in the form of newspapers, certificates, notices, ads, booklets, catalogs, flyers, and letters.

Our materials are basically concentrated on Freeborn County Information and there are some gaps in the collections, but we will do our best to answer your questions whether the subject be great-uncle Oscar's homestead or underground gasoline tanks.

Linda, has asked me to mention that the museums collection is mainly from donations; so if we have a void in a particular subject, it isn't because it is unimportant. We simply haven't received anything.

I also wanted to say we still have volunteers who work regularly in the library. It's because of them that so much is accomplished so efficiently. (I'd better qualify that word efficient. Its awfully easy to get sidetracked when the reading material is so colorful.)

So, the next time you consider a trip to the museum, plan to stop in the library. It will be well worth the time. I promise you.