

THE COUNTY CHRONICLER

Polk County Historical Society

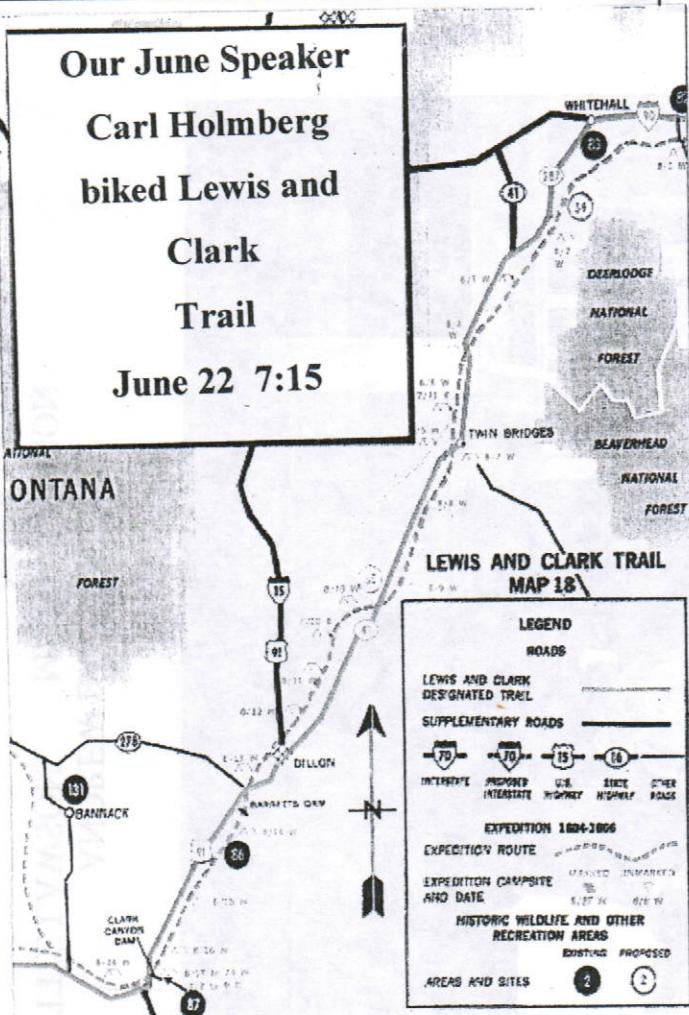
June

2004

JLW

Our June Speaker

**Carl Holmberg
biked Lewis and
Clark
Trail
June 22 7:15**



Speaker, Carl Holmgren, biked 4,578 miles following the Lewis & Clark Expedition and will be giving a power point program at our June 22 meeting.

TIME CHANGE

5:45 Board Meeting

7:15 Regular Meeting

PLACE

**Community Room at the
NEW JUSTICE CENTER**



**NELSON LAWSON
SEE PAGE 2**

“MUSIC & REFRESHMENTS ON THE MUSEUM LAWN”

Bring a friend or family to enjoy the relaxed atmosphere on the lawn of the museum.

12:00 PM TO 4:00

JUNE 19TH features:

Ardis & Friends

Fiddler: Wayne Thompson



THE NELSON LAWSON FAMILY



JIM LAWSON ANDREW LAWSON NORA LAWSON
 NETTIE LAWSON MINNIE LAWSON
 EVAN LAWSON

HISTORY OF NELSON LAWSON

Alan and Eileen Tomlinson
Great-Great Grandson of Nelson Lawson

This home was built by Nelson Lawson who was my Great-Great Grandfather on my fathers side. The home was started in 1895 and completed by 1897. Nelson Lawson was born in the village of Fodby near Nestved Sjælland, Denmark, October 19, 1853.

In April, 1855, Nelsons' brother, Hanee Lawson, immigrated to the U.S. After his brother had left for America, Nelson Lawson set his mind on coming here too, and his parents not objecting it was arranged for him to leave in the spring of 1867, not being fully fourteen years of age. He left Denmark by steamer by the way of Gottenberg, Hull, Liverpool, Queenstown to New York, arriving here May 17, 1867, and meeting his brother there. He has resided in Wisconsin ever since. He immediately went to work in the American hotel, working for his board and went to school to perfect himself in English, a course in which he had taken with the private teacher the last winter he was home. In the fall of 1867 his brother moved to Kentucky and left him there alone to manage for himself. In the winter he took a place in the country to do chores for his board and go to school and attended a very competent school where they taught everything from ABC's to Higher Algebra, Physiology and Physical Geography. In the summer of 1868 he worked on a large farm where he learned to drive oxen and general farm work as done by the early settlers which came in good service later. In the winter of 1867-68 he again worked in the same hotel and went to a city school at Neenah until about March, when his brother meanwhile had gone to Chicago. He went there and engaged in painting chairs in a chair factory until he unexpectedly received a letter from his parents. They had sold out in Denmark and arrived at Neenah. He immediately went to meet them there and they, not finding any satisfactory place for a home, came to Polk County and bought a place half a mile from the present village of Luck, arriving here about June 15, 1869. This country was then a perfect wilderness of Forest without roads except trails cut through the woods and Indian trails. The only way to get here from Neenah was by rail to LaCrosse, by steamboat across the Prescott and by smaller steamboat from Prescott to St. Croix Falls and then afoot to the Butternut Lakes. Luck not then having been heard of. They worked steadily clearing up a farm together until the spring of 1872 when he took a notion to try his luck helping build the Northern Pacific railroad. With a satchel on his back walked to the railroad camps on the Northern Pacific railroad far as Detroit, Minnesota where owing to the financial troubles of Jay Cook who was backing the building of the railway, work was very uncertain. After four months experience of work and unemployment he returned home afoot carrying his satchel with \$3.50 out of the thirty he had when he started. After doing the haying at home, he, as was the custom of all the men in the settlement, went down to St. Croix county to earn a stake, harvesting. He worked at this near Star Prairie and in the fall concluded to go to school again. He attended the Wisconsin Academy at Madison, until June when his funds were exhausted and he had to walk and work his way home. In the fall he worked in the harvest field near Burkhart and thereafter attended the teachers institute of four weeks at Osceola Mills. He passed a good examination and taught school for five months at Little Butternut Lake, which school district then comprised

what is now all of the town and village of Luck. He then went to Madison again and attended Worthington and Werners Business College, from which he graduated in June, 1874, stopping on his way in the harvest fields at Hudson.

In the fall of 1874 James Thompson, then doing the largest Mercantile business in St. Croix Falls, employed him as clerk. He stayed with him until April, 1875, when he returned to Luck. In the spring of 1875 he was elected town clerk of the town of Luck, which office he held for 10 years. Wm. H. Foster, having started a store at Big Butternut Lake, (my parents house at 815 Butternut Ave.) in connection with his station or hotel, employed him that year with the exception of the harvest season when he went to Hudson Prairie to make his usual summer stake. In the fall of 1875 he was again engaged to teach the school at Little Butternut Lake and taught it that year. In the spring of 1875 he went into partnership with Wm. H. Foster and continued until the spring of 1877 when he took over the home farm and was married to Carrie Tretsvén. In 1881 they organized a Grange here but owing to prejudice against secret societies it did not grow and materialized as was expected and finally died about 1885. He was the master while it existed. Out of this organization however grew the starting of the Luck Creamery company which is conceded to be the first co-operative creamery company in Wisconsin. There is a historical marker located out on the highway by Waynes IGA.

Nelson Lawson was its first secretary and several times served as its president or secretary. In 1885 he was elected chairman of the town board of the town of Luck and held the same for four years. During that time he was elected chairman of the board of supervisors of Polk County and held the same until he resigned to take over the office of County Clerk of Polk County to which he had been elected to take charge from January 1, 1889. He held the office of County Clerk for four years, retiring January 1, 1893. During the time he was County Clerk he was also the County Purchasing Agent and Deputy Clerk of Circuit Court. During 1893 and 1895 he worked part of the time for the Bank of St. Croix Falls getting out a set of abstract books for their use. In March 1895 the Soo Line sent for him to act as Immigration Agent for their company which he accepted. His job was locating several thousands of settlers on the free homestead lands in North Dakota and also helping some settle on cheap lands in Wisconsin. After the homestead lands in Wisconsin were exhausted and the real estate agents started profiteering off of the buyers, he refused to have anything more to do with immigration work and was used for exploring lands along new prospective lines of road right away and mainly as tax agent for the company in the State of North Dakota.

In 1881 he organized the Luck Mutual Fire Insurance Company. April 16, 1877, he was united in marriage to Carrie Tretsvén and to this union ten children were born: Martin, Ella who died at 13 years of age, James, Andrew, Minnie (my Great-grandmother), Nettie, Evan, Ragna who died at the age of 2 and Nora.

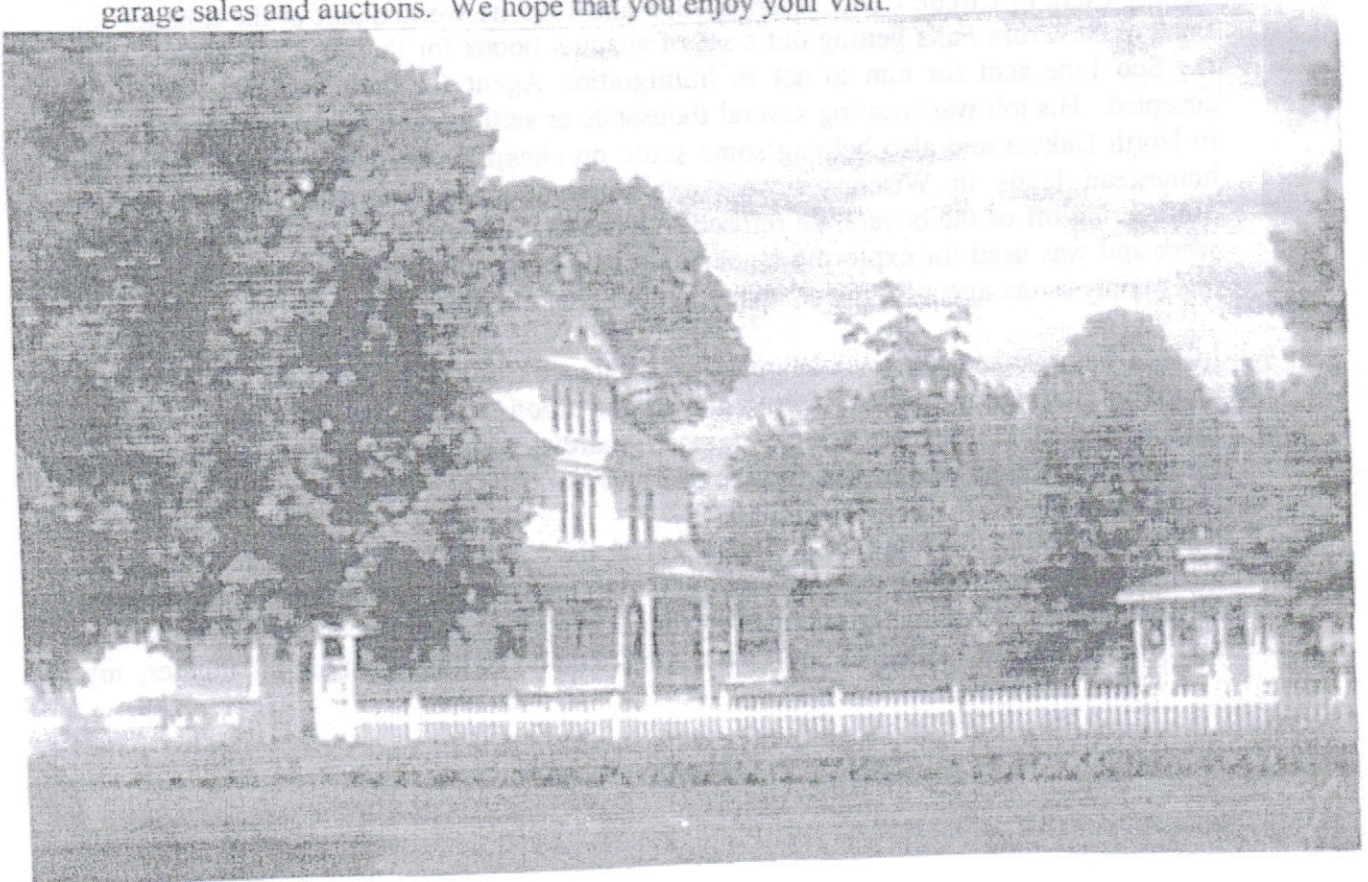
Nelson Lawson died Friday, March 13, 1931 at the age of 78. His wife Carrie Lawson died in 1940. At that time the home was willed to my Great-grandmother Minnie Wallin, (their daughter). My Great-grandmother Minnie passed away in December 1968. At that time the home was willed to my Great Aunt Rucille Salling (Minnie's daughter, my

June 04

Grandmothers' Sister.) My Great Aunt Rucille passed away in 1998. At that time the home was willed to my cousin Michael. My wife and I purchased the house from my cousin in April, 1999.

Through my research and items I have found in the home at one time Nelson Lawson wanted Luck to become Lawson City. When Nelson was the Purchasing Agent he knew that the railroad was coming through where the current Gandy Dancer Trail is. He knew that when the railroad came through that the Village of Luck that was located at the end of Park Ave., and by Big Butternut Lake was going to move closer to the railroad tracks. He purchased all of the land that Luck currently stands on so he could sell it when the town moved. I have the original plat maps of Lawson City, that never came to be. The story goes that back in those days when the settlers traveled from St. Croix Falls to Clam Falls via the Clam Falls Trail and reached the Wm. Foster residence (my parents home) on the west shore of Big Butternut Lake in one day they considered that Lucky. Thence the name Luck. When the town was moved down Park Ave., over logs and put in its current location that named remained. Many of the buildings you currently see on the Main Street of Luck used to be down by the lake.

Since our purchase in 1999 we have extensively renovated the home that you are now visiting. We have added a 4 car garage and put in a new driveway. We've put on a new roof, new decking and refinished all of the floors in the home. Every room has been replastered and painted. We have tried to bring back the home to what it was in its time albeit modern conveniences. We just completed our porch last November. Eileen (my wife) has worked extensively on all of the flowers that you see about our property. I have laid all of the paving blocks, over 7000. We are happy that you can enjoy the restoration of such a historical property in our town. Many of the antiques that you see in our home are original to the house, and the others are from our countless hours of searching at garage sales and auctions. We hope that you enjoy your visit.



THE COUNTY CHRONICLER

Polk County Historical Society

June

2004

REPORTS

Air Exchange

The air exchange committee has met several times and laid out a series of projects to help improve our air quality.

A professional crew will be cleaning and disinfecting the attic. Darrell Kittleson has donated his time and experience and will be installing two fans on the main floor ceiling. He will also install a large air conditioner in the basement. This will draw fresh air in and cool it. **Bending Branches Company**, Osceola, have donated a large fan for the attic. This attic fan will be the main air exchange and connected to the existing air ducts. Darrell will also be doing this work.

Tours

School tours were very successful with about 375 students passing through the museum and Lanesdale School. They all received beautiful picture buttons of the museum building and a one-year membership card and a free pass for one adult to see the museum. A group of ladies organized as the "Red Hats" received a tour with guest speaker, Dan Mosay.

Library Displays

The display cabinets built by Myron Daellenbach are in our local libraries: Dresser, St. Croix Falls, Centuria, Milltown, Clayton, Clear Lake, Amery and Balsam Lake. The displays are taken care of by: Ted Zinn, Jim Gisch, Marge Hallquist, Dave Knutson and Marge Hallquist and Judy Wester.

Elevator Project

We have started an elevator fund at the S & C Bank in Balsam Lake.

New Displays at Museum Basement level

Irville Wike donated a coal stove from the Amery jail. It looks good in our jail. Railroad display was cleaned and changed.

Main floor

Iraq Display was put in our Military Room and the Civil War display was cleaned. Vintage hats and hatboxes are now on display in the Fine Arts Room.

Second Floor

The town of Amery display has been moved and expanded. Please check out the Amery fire hose nozzle.

Main Floor Storage Room

Jim Gisch and Darrell Kittleson have been cleaning the storage room, east of the office. At the present time this room is accessed through the Country Store. It has been suggested that we could have a door between our office and this room to enlarge the office space and have a section for genealogy research. While working on this Darrell found a large bag containing two hats that had Nelson Lawson's name sewing in, plus some other belongings of the Lawson family. It was exciting finding this two days before the Bus Tour, which included the Lawson Mansion. Nelson's great-great-grandson, Alan was speechless with gratitude when Rosalie gave these items to him.

Notes from the President;

The June meeting was a wonderful program of the Lewis/Clark Expedition Trail. The beautiful historical rivers, valleys, mountains and trail sites were illustrated by Carl Holmgren. His 4,178 miles bike trail was breathtaking as well as historically educational. The evening was topped off with make your own sundae or in my situation sundaes served by Clara Garish, Judy and Dale Wester.

We are planning our Vintage Hat Style Show, we have the menu, program the date and place which have not been confirmed at this time. This will be the initial fundraiser for the Elevator/Addition Project. We have applied for a matching grant from Wal Mart and Deaver Foundation.

Darrell, Rosalie and Joyle Anderson met with Walter Brager from the Deaver Foundation July 13, 2004, Walter Brager will be sending a grant application for the elevator/addition project.

We are pleased with our numbers for our first month totally 220 visitors and 452 students touring our museum and Rural School.

I again appreciate all the volunteer workers and encourage them to keep up the good work. They have worked their way through a hurricane of boxes, shelves of hats, clothing and many articles and a mountain of early attic dust. Our greeters have been busy sorting and preserving priceless photo's and other artifacts. Jim Gisch is busy making the Lanesdale School look new again, he has power washed, sraped and primed. If we have a volunteer painter out there with some time available please give Jim a call at 485 9269.

Hope to see you everyone at our July Picnic at the Pine Park, the program speaker will be Dan Mosay, his topic will be "Native American"

President

Rosalie

Acquisitions

Rick & Suzanne Perlich, Shoreview Minnesota, have donated a 1949 4-H Calendar advertising the Frederic Auto Company. They have discontinued an antique shop that has been in Frederic. The Balsam Lake Woman's Club dispersed after 65 years of meetings. They donated their scrapbooks and a monetary gift. We thank these people for thinking of our museum.

July '04

AUTHORS WEEK

The Polk County Historical Society will host the following authors at the museum each day during the week July 19-23.

Monday

Elizabeth Esther, Amery, WI, *A Murder in the Pines*

Juanita Marotta, Taylors Falls, MN, *Wildflowers of the Saint Croix Valley*

Tuesday

Leroy Schwan, New Richmond, *Poems of Life*

Bernice Abrahamson, Frederic, *Behind the Signpost*

Wednesday

Linda Anderson, Amery, *Forget Me Nots are Forever*

Vernon Holmes, Spooner, *America's Backyard*

Thursday

Larry Lee Phillipson, Amery, *From Rocks to Rockabilly*

Gloria Larsen, Centuria, *I Heard the School Bells Ringing*

Friday

David Cysewski, Amery, *Silent Conversations*

Muriel Pfeifer, Amery, *A Whisper in the Wind*

LOCAL AUTHOR PUBLISHES EARLY TOWN HISTORY BOOK

A Whisper in the Wind was written in response to questions asked at the Polk County Information Center. Questions such as: Where was Jensen? Have you heard about Pineville? Why aren't Joel and Patterson on the maps anymore? These questions aroused Muriel Pfeifer's curiosity and she began to research for the answers. The more she researched, the more interesting the topic became. Over the years there were about 36 villages, "burgs" that were once thriving communities. Today they have faded away, or have been reduced in size so that the post offices have been removed and many people have moved away. At least one was only a town on paper.

The people of Polk County were very generous with their time and memories and willingly shared both with Muriel. "I hope everyone will enjoy the stories gleaned from our neighbors," Muriel said.

There has been a lot of research and time spent in finding out about these towns. Much information had already been published, in booklets, newspapers and books. Muriel tried to make a comprehensive collection of many of the old villages giving credit to those who have written about these villages.

Muriel is a retired teacher, living in Amery. She taught the last twenty years at Mahtomedi Middle School where she worked with the learning disabled. Her roots are not from this county, but she tries to enjoy to the fullest the history of the area wherever she has lived. She is also active in the Polk County Genealogy Group and the Polk County Historical Society, where she is a life member. Muriel is also a member of the Amery Historical Society, St. Croix Falls Historical Society and Delaware County, Ohio Historical Society as a life member.

The book *A Whisper in the Wind* will be available at the Polk County Museum, after her book signing. She will be donating a dozen copies to the museum for retail sales and also one to each library in the county. The retail cost will be \$12.50 (tax included).

Muriel will hold a book signing at the Polk County Museum in Balsam Lake on Friday, June 18, from noon to 4 p.m.