



HERITAGE GROUP NORTH

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ABOUT HGN

HGN is an all-volunteer non-profit organization dedicated to preserving community history and identity through various projects, programs, and displays. Among HGN's most visible works are the restored railroad depot, the caboose, the historic fire-engine display, and HGN's walking tours. If you enjoy history and are supportive of community development, please consider making a donation or joining HGN. The modest dues are \$10 a year for general membership. HGN also seeks volunteers.

CURRENT EVENTS

DEPOT OPEN:

Member, Kasey Helms will be at the Depot giving historical presentations on the following Saturdays: July 22, July 29, August 5, August 19, 2017, 9 a.m.-3 p.m. Be sure to stop in!

STATUS OF CABOOSE:

Many thanks to board members, Steve Cox, Jerry Peterson, Margo Semler and those who assisted in giving the caboose a much needed paint job this spring. That will give us some time to make some hard decisions, since the caboose is at the point that may require a huge amount of costly restoration to survive. Several options are being looked into; funding, finding someone to do the work or as a last resort, donating the caboose to a museum that has the resources to accomplish restoration.

UPCOMING EVENTS

“Tea At The Station” is a high tea event at which many come dressed in historic clothing and sporting fashionable hats of the early days in Pine River. Tea and light delights are served.

Date: September 7, 2017

Time: 2:00 pm - 4:00 pm

Cost: \$25.00

Join the historic Heritage Group North organization in helping kick off Pine River Heritage Days which are scheduled for September 8 & 9.

Watch for details on Facebook, PineRivermn.com or heritagegroupnorth.org

Douglas Birk: Pine River historian, archaeologist remembered



By [Travis Grimler](#) on Mar 16, 2017. Pine and Lakes Echo Journal

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NEWSLETTER

Annette Houg

Kasey Helms
CoEditors & Publishers

Douglas Birk came to Pine River with his parents in 1950 and immediately gained recognition for a passion that eventually became a career. The area historian died Wednesday, March 8, at age 73.

His parents sold antiques and ran the Camp-Show-Me resort on Norway Lake, where Birk immediately began unearthing Pine River's past. Many fellow Heritage Group North members remember Birk's finds.

"My earliest memory as a small child was remembering he and his brother, even then outside digging up things," said Alison Amy Stephens. "One of my first memories of him was wanting to show us some artifacts or something he had dug up. We were little kids and we would be out there when our parents were visiting. I remember he and Reggie Silbaugh would swim in Norway Lake looking for shells and things. He always had that spirit of adventure, which later became his career."

"He did have artifacts on display," said Alan Johnson, of Pine River. "That was the start of his archaeology career."

"I think that really was a stepping stone or impetus to move into archaeology," said Reggie Silbaugh, Birk's next door neighbor and best friend.

Birk found an early interest in the local history. As a young man he did interviews with some of the city's early residents and documented the stories of people who helped to build the Pine River community.

It was with Silbaugh, friends and family that Birk researched Zebulon Pike at the Itasca headwaters, retraced the routes of the local railroad spurs in the Foothills State Forest near Backus and visited the locations of logging dams that were once used to control waterways for logging transport.

"We talked to some of the old-timers that were still alive and realized some of the logging roads had been rail lines," Silbaugh said. "We realized there had actually been railroad engines going up and down the line and picking up logs at landings. We started looking as we walked them."

Later, Birk mapped and documented those same spurs and documented other spurs throughout the lakes area, though this accounted for only a fraction of the work he did to document the local history.

Birk wrote large sections of "Log Sleds to Snowmobiles," the Pine River centennial book, and was an integral part to having the Pine River railroad depot restored and preserved.

"I didn't really know too much of him or see too much of him until he called me about 12 years ago," Johnson said. "He said, 'Alan, I hear you and your wife are interested in saving the depot. We have to save it. Would you be interested in helping me?' Of course, we were flattered. Pat and I both knew of Doug and his reputation. He was a renowned historian."

"That all started at the table in our house, meeting at the table," Stephens said. "I wouldn't have necessarily imagined that later in life we would be working together on a project like that. He was so instrumental because he was the research arm, the historical arm and the one who knew the history. He was the perfectionist on that and he wanted it done well and done right. It's just a huge loss for the area. It's a huge loss of intellectual property for our area."

"He did all the research on the depot to document its history and historical value," Johnson said. "There were about six of us that helped, but it could have been done without any of us but it could not have been done without Doug due to the research he did and the knowledge and everything."

Birk's list of archaeological merits is long. As a Minnesota state archaeologist he visited or consulted on most of the state's documented historical sites. Grand Portage displays Birk's scuba gear in honor of his work to uncover underwater artifacts as part of the first underwater use of the grid system for archaeological discovery.

He was a co-founder and co-president of the Minnesota Institute of Archaeology and he helped establish the Little Elk Heritage Preserve in Little Falls. He was also the 1986 Minnesota Independent Scholar of the Year.

"(He was) my first and best friend," Silbaugh said. "Later in life he was somewhat of an institution in the state to other professionals, but to me he was my best friend and the one that having a common childhood and growing up in the same circumstances made for a special bond. We knew each other extremely well. It was probably 10 years of our lives that we lived next door to one another and he became like a brother."

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Contact Us

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Along with the ongoing maintenance and refurbishing of the depot, fire engine and cabooses, we want to continue to move forward with the historical preservation of the area. This will always be a huge undertaking and if you have expertise in any specific area we would welcome your help!

VISIONS OF THE FUTURE

Historic Photo Display project
School Bell Display PR-B School
Catalog Collections and develop collection policies
Long term planning for land acquisition
Membership growth

Heritage Group North Operates on a Totally Volunteer Basis

We want to inform all members that HGN is an all volunteer, non-profit organization and has been from inception. Our vice president, Alan Johnson, recently did extensive research on the State and Federal laws governing nonprofit and 501 (c)(3) organizations. HGN has earned the designation of a 501(c)(3) corporation.

The Internal Revenue Code for 501(c)(3) organizations states "The organization must not be organized or operated for the benefit of private interests, and no part of a section 501(c)(3) organization's net earnings may inure to the benefit of any private shareholder or individual. If the organization engages in an excess benefit transaction with a person having substantial influence over the organization, an excise tax may be imposed on the person and any organization managers agreeing to the transaction."

Minnesota Statute 317A.255 addresses Director Conflict of Interest by stating that any contract or transaction to a director's interest are fully disclosed or known to the members and the contract or transaction is approved in good faith by two-thirds of the members entitled to vote, not count vote that the interested director might otherwise have, or the unanimous affirmative vote of all members.

Our Board of Directors recently discussed these issues and

voted unanimously that compensation for services will not be allowed to be paid to board of directors or to members of their family as defined in Subd. 4 of Minnesota Statute 317A.255. Compensation is defined in statute 317A as anything of value received for service rendered except reimbursement for actual approved project expenses such as supplies, mileage, etc. The Board has also agreed to review our by-laws to make sure they comply with all State and Federal laws and regulations and clearly define the policies and mission we adopted when the organization was originally formed in 2001.

The Internal Revenue Code for 501 (c)(3) organizations and Minnesota Statutes in section 317A contain extensive regulations for non-profit organizations and should be reviewed by anyone who participates in a non-profit.