PROSPECT HOUSE & Civil War Museum
Celebrating a great year!

As we enter this season of festive gatherings, giving and good tidings, we are pleased to bring you news from your community historical and cultural resource.

The Prospect House, a Georgian-style "mansion," was the first house, and later the first resort, built in 1882 in Battle Lake, Minnesota by Cap Colehour, a veteran of the Civil War. This unique “house museum” not only contains one of the largest collections of Civil War artifacts in the state, it also tells a story about the history of the region.

Prospect House has perpetually remained in the Colehour family. In December of 2015, Cap’s great grandson, Jay Johnson, donated the home to the 501c3 nonprofit that has been managing it. Why? To create a living legacy so that this community asset is here for generations to come.

Prospect House contributes greatly to personal, economic and community development. People choose to live, work, and visit communities because of the presence of unique and attractive cultural aspects. Museums reflect life and connect us with the past through creating, viewing and responding to activities that provide both private and shared experiences.

In 2016, the organization’s board of directors took on a planning process to ensure operational and financial stability for the organization. By development of exhibits, events, education and advocacy, the museum is poised to take a tremendous step forward. Financial solvency, governance and a plan for continued operations for future generations, are just as critical.

CORNERSTONES

Historic Preservation. Funding from the City of Battle Lake, Battle Lake Lions, individuals and other community groups allowed the museum to address planning for historic preservation. This included creating an archiving system to begin cataloging the thousands of artifacts, documents and photos contained in the museum, and open the door for other artifacts of the region. The organization also studied and identified preservation needs to protect artifacts from elements (humidity, UV light, dust), and provide increased security.

A lead donation was secured from Veden Trust for exhibit cases, lighting, storage and other preservation furnishings in the Civil War room. Not only are the most valuable and delicate artifacts housed there, preservation issues must be addressed before the launch of the planned museum education program for public safety and protection of museum resources. The winter of 2016-17 will be dedicated to implementing much of this project, with the Civil War room being closed to the public in order to complete the work.
A Busy and Productive Year

Education: Research and curriculum development has begun on an education program related to Minnesota’s role in the Civil War and Resettlement after the war. Prospect House Museum hired Julie Fietek through a competitive bid process to lead development of the curriculum.

Julie has a Master’s degree in elementary education, plus a degree in e-commerce and web development. She comes to the museum with over 11 years’ experience teaching at the elementary level, and over a decade of experience developing training programs and curriculum for Fergus Falls Public Schools, Pioneer Care and others.

Darla Ellingson, a part-time employee of the museum, is the Education Project Director, and is also helping out with organizational development. Darla has a long history of helping businesses thrive and grow, both in Minnesota and Hawaii. She has owned a media and marketing company for over 20 years, and worked in communications capacities ranging from engineering, producing and directing to executive management.

Jay Johnson serves a key role in exhibit development, with administrative support provided by Melody Nelson, and overall operational management by Abby Bizzett-Johnson.

The museum education program is scheduled for a soft launch in May, with the full program starting in fall of 2017, with three on-site learning stations at the museum. The program development is supported by the MN Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund through the Minnesota Historical Society.

Events: Several engaging cultural events were produced by Prospect House Museum this year, including these notable highlights:

- Popular bluegrass band Monroe Crossing (*pictured right*) performed a sold out benefit concert for the museum in July.

- Museum grounds were filled in August with a Civil War encampment! Wearing historically accurate uniforms and equipment, members of the 2nd Minnesota Battery Light Artillery feasted on hardtack and salt pork, cooked over an open fire, slept on the hard ground in all kinds of weather, responded to the call of the bugle and breathed the black powder smoke of battle. The highlight of the event is always the firing of two canons. All tours during this event sold out!

- A very lively Fall Luncheon was held in October in the cozy surroundings of the museum living and dining rooms. With background music provided by Terry Christopherson, guests were treated to a delicious meal prepared and served by a dynamic crew of volunteers. Three performers from Battle Lake school, accompanied by the drama teacher Cindy Peterson on piano, sang songs from their production of Li’l Abner. The luncheon was sold out, and we want to thank all those that attended for their support, with special thanks to Thrivent and a host of private supporters that underwrote event expenses.
The Opportunity

History helps us learn from the past, gives us a sense of place, and reveals the interconnectedness of the pioneers of the region. The best way to have a say in the future is to create it. During a year of change, assessment and community connection, Prospect House has been inspired by new approaches to the business of running a nonprofit.

However, the funding landscape for humanities in Minnesota is tough. There is no operational support for museums through state or Legacy funds, unless you are a state-run entity or designated County historical society. While we’ve done great raising support for programs, operational support to sustain those programs remains a challenge. Our 2017 budget is $63,550, of which we hope to see financial support of $8,350 from individuals and business.

WE NEED YOUR HELP TO GET THIS DONE!

We anticipate visitation to grow by 40% over the next four years through new programs, engagement in revitalized exhibits, and expanded marketing exposure. This will improve lives of attendees by connecting with regional Minnesota history and the Civil War, in the words and images provided by those among the first settlers to the region and the Colehour family.

Within this time period, it is envisioned that the Prospect House and Civil War Museum will have a permanent staffing plan in place that will sustain stable operations. This would involve a half-time operations manager/curator employee, supported by a robust crew of volunteers. This transition is already taking place, shifting from an all-volunteer run organization.

To see a successful implementation and an ongoing accredited education program, expanded tours, collection and care of regional historical artifacts, and quality cultural events, we are asking individuals and businesses in the area for annual support. Levels of support are suggested, but any contribution is appreciated!

Please include Prospect House Museum in your annual giving plans!

We ask you to consider a commitment of $50 for individuals ($25 for seniors), $100 for small businesses and $250 for our corporate supporters, or what you are able to give, to help us reach our goal, and suggest fulfilling your gift in any of the following ways:

$________ My gift is dated by December 31, 2016 to take advantage of a charitable giving tax credit this year

$________ My gift is dated by January 31, 2017 to help ensure museum is able to sustain educational and cultural programs, and receive tax credit in 2017

I pledge $________ and will remit a monthly gift by electronic bank transfer in 12 installments and receive tax credit in 2017.

Please include the following so we can thank you:

Name ____________________________________________________________

Address __________________________________________________________

City, State, Zip _____________________________________________________

Email _____________________________________________________________ Phone _______________________

Remit using the enclosed envelop to Prospect House Museum, 403 Lake Ave. N, Battle Lake, MN 56515. We are honored by your support and look forward to your continued involvement. For more information, please contact Abby Johnson at (218) 864-4008 or email Prospecthouse2@arvig.net.
A PERSONAL NOTE FROM ABBY AND JAY JOHNSON

It has been an exciting and challenging year for us personally.

Several years ago we began transitioning Prospect House and Civil War Museum from a privately owned home to a museum, which led to its being included on the State and National Register of Historic Places. Quite an accomplishment! We are thankful to each one of you that has provided financial and emotional support, including many of our family members, to make this dream a reality.

After touring well over 10,000 patrons, we are poised to participate in the next chapter of the Prospect House story, under ownership by the 501c3 nonprofit. Focusing on core values that center around historic preservation and education, the museum will address practical goals in collections, program management and governance. New and expanded sources of income have been identified to meet growing operational needs and drive us toward sustainability. The museum will constantly review and evaluate its performance, with a critical benchmark being at the four year point. This could not be accomplished without the support of community, foundation, and public supporters that believe preserving and sharing history is key to understanding change and how society came to be.

We urge you to join us (or continue to be involved) because history matters!

Wishing you a warm and wonderful holiday season,

Abby and Jay Johnson

We’re on the Web!
www.prospecthousemuseum.com
www.facebook.com/ProspectHouseandCivilWarMuseum

Volunteers are sought to help catalog artifacts, learn how to help with tours and more!

It’s a fun opportunity that is also important for the museum. Currently, teams work in pairs to identify and log items before they are temporarily moved so the room can be upgraded with new lighting, cabinets and exhibit walls.

Special thanks to new volunteers Hannah, Jan, Julie and Kathy who started working on this project in October! We are looking for at least 4 more teams.

Museum experience is not required to volunteer, but basic computer skills are helpful. Volunteers who sign up to work on the curatorial project now may also assist in curating new exhibits, and have the first opportunity to sign up to help with the school program this spring.

Volunteers are scheduled in 2 hour blocks. Those interested in applying are asked to send an email request for a volunteer application to phmuseumprograms@gmail.com. Applications are also available at the museum.

Make a NO COST DONATION to the museum through AMAZON SMILE!

When shopping on Amazon, log into https://smile.amazon.com/ first, and enter Prospect House Museum as your charity of choice! .5% of your eligible purchases will be donated to the museum at no cost to you!