

Hill Farm News

Publication of the Hill Farm Historical Society May 2024

NORTH OAKS NEWS
4779 Bloom Avenue
White Bear Lake, MN 55110

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

PRESORTED
STANDARD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT NO. 9
CIRCLE PINES, MN

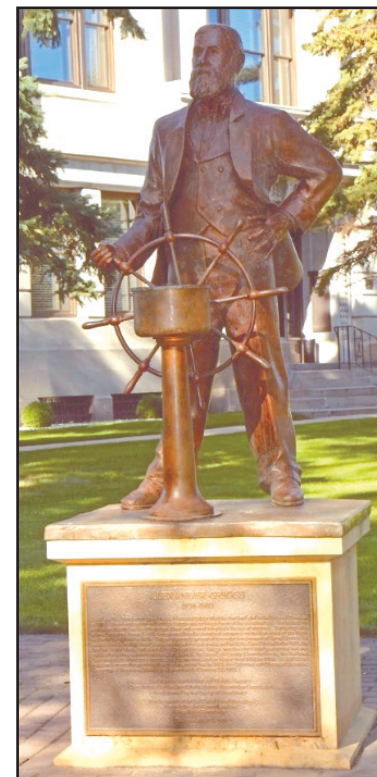
Your Membership Matters

Preserving a legacy that has affected all North Oaks residents. See upcoming Hill Farm preservation work on page 4



The Griggs Mansion, 476 Summit Ave. St Paul, Minnesota.

Courtesy Minnesota Historical Society



Courtesy Great Falls Preservation Society

Statue of Alexander Griggs on the Courthouse Grounds. Dedicated May 23, 2001

Paul Dickson's Griggs - Hill Connections

Paul Dickson

Hill Farm Historical Society

Benjamin Griggs (1777-1857) brought his family west.

Trying to make the connection

The three Griggs men mentioned in the Albro Martin book were Colonel Chauncy Griggs, Captain Alexander Griggs, and John William Griggs.

Colonel Chauncy Griggs (1832-1910) was a merchant in St Paul who joined Jim Hill in the "energy business" selling firewood and coal and later with the Red River shipping business.

Captain Alexander Griggs (1838-1903) was a veteran steamboat captain who joined the Hill-Griggs partnership.

John William Griggs (1849-1927) was an attorney who Jim Hill hired to defend his Northern Securities Company from the anti-trust suit brought by the Federal Government in 1903.

Starting the search

Since John William Griggs was from New Jersey, he was the first one I tried to connect to my great-great-grandfather Griggs. That one was not very difficult; I came across a book John William Griggs co-authored about the founding families of New Jersey.

The four pages of this book on Griggs family history contains a wealth of information about the Griggs families in New Jersey and Long Island, New York back to when my seventh great-grandfather came to Gravesend, Kings County, New York from Boston, in about 1672.

John George Griggs had been born in England in 1634, and arrived in Roxbury Massachusetts in 1635 with his father George, mother Alice, and his 5 siblings, having lost his 11-year-old sister Elizabeth on the trip across the Atlantic.

So that makes John William Griggs my second cousin three times removed.

On with the journey. The next one I pursued was Alexander Griggs.



The John Benjamin Griggs home

Perry County Ohio, Courtesy Ancestry.com

Although my career was in the computer business, history has been a significant interest for most of my life. Genealogy was a close second, especially after I became the recipient of all my parents and grandparents' old family photos and papers over the past 30 years or so.

I have a pretty good knowledge of my family's history, so while reading Albro Martin's book, "James J. Hill and The Opening of the Northwest," I became very curious about three men mentioned in the book with the same last name as my great, great-grandfather, John Van Ness Griggs (1802-1858). His daughter Elizabeth (1841-1919) married my great-grandfather, David Klingler (1836-1907) and their daughter Dora (1875-1953) was my maternal grandmother.

John Benjamin Griggs (1777-1857) brought his family west to Ohio, and settled in Perry County in 1821. Eight of his nine children had been born in New Jersey, and one was to be born in Ohio in 1823. The Griggs family traces their roots to England.

This George Griggs branch of the Griggs family arrived in Roxbury Massachusetts in 1635. Some stayed in Massachusetts, and others spread out across the country. Thinking about this period in American History – colonial America, the Revolutionary War (1775-1783), the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, Lewis and Clark's Expedition and the War of 1812 (1812-1814) – they were challenging times.

George's Griggs's son John, my seventh great-grandfather was in Gravesend, Kings County, New York by about 1672, and John's son Benjamin had moved to what became Griggstown New Jersey in 1733. Entering the period of the Revolutionary War, things of course slowed down. For two generations the family stayed in New Jersey, but in 1821 my third great-grandfather John

Records showed he was born in Marietta, Washington County, Ohio, which happens to be where my ancestors on my father's side came from. Additionally, his father William W. Griggs had lived in Muskingum County Ohio for about 10 years before moving to Marrietta. Four of Alexander's siblings were born in Muskingum County. It is only about 30 miles from the John Van Ness Griggs farm in neighboring Perry County where I grew up.

It had to be a connection; but it was not to be. Turns out the Alexander Griggs line goes back to Ulster, Albany, and Rensselaer Counties of New York, which are all in the Albany area. Local history has them originally coming from Holland or perhaps Germany.

Alexander Griggs and I are not related that I can determine, although his wife Henrietta Strong did come from Connecticut in the area many Griggs families lived.

And finally, Chauncy Griggs was the one I least suspected of being a relative. He was born in Tolland, Connecticut in 1832. Tolland is northeast of Hartford and only 80 miles from Boston. But it turns out that many of the descendants of George Griggs (1593-1660) settled there, and in surrounding communities. George was my eighth great-grandfather, so that makes Chauncy Wright Griggs my seventh cousin, twice removed!

So, two of the three Griggs's in Jim Hills life were related to me. Reading about these men, including Jim Hill, I saw many similarities in their lives.

They were all a similar age:

- Chauncy Wright Griggs, born in Tolland County, Connecticut in 1832
- Alexander Griggs, born in Washington County Ohio, in 1838

- James Jerome Hill, born in Guelph Ontario in 1838. Note, Guelph is about 200 miles east of Detroit and 60 miles west of Toronto.

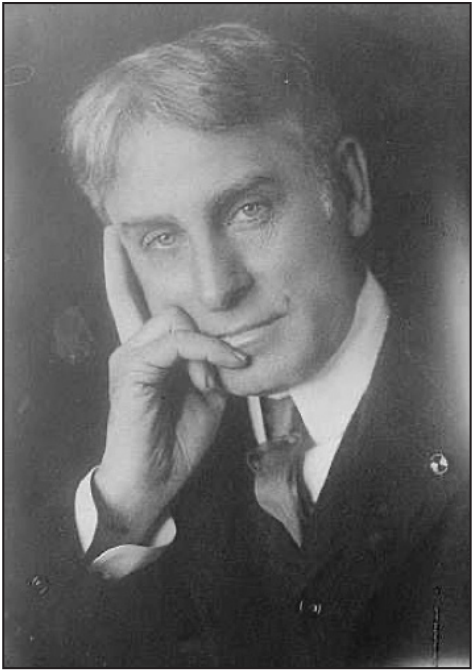


Photo Courtesy Wikipedia

John William Griggs

- John William Griggs, born in Sussex County, New Jersey in 1848
- Of those coming to Minnesota, they all arrived in the same timeframe:
 - Alexander Griggs arrived in St. Paul with his family at 10 years of age in 1849
 - Chauncy Griggs, the senior of the group, arrived in St Paul at 24 years of age in 1856
 - Jim Hill arrived in St Paul at 18 years of age in 1856
- They all started in modest occupations in Minnesota:
 - Chauncy ran a grocery store
 - Jim was a book keeper in a warehouse
 - Alexander was a "cabin boy" on a steamboat

Yet they all played significant roles in the development of the country

I will provide a bit of information about each, in the order in which they first encountered Jim Hill.

Chauncey Wright Griggs

Chauncey Wright Griggs is the fourth son of Chauncey Griggs, born in Tolland, Connecticut. Chauncey W. was born on December 31st, 1832 and his father was born on April 10th, 1795. His mother was Hearty Dimmock, daughter of Capt. Daniel Dimmock, also of Tolland County. By both lines of ancestry C. W. Griggs is connected to me through George Griggs (1593-1660), his seventh and my eighth great-grandfather, who came to Roxbury (now Boston), Massachusetts in 1635.

It was in Tolland County that C. W. Griggs passed the earliest years of his life, where he received a rudimentary education in the public school and at the age of 14 became a clerk in an office in Ohio. He later furthered his education and became a teacher



Photo Courtesy US Find a Grave Index

Colonel Chauncey Griggs



Jim Hill's warehouse on the St. Paul levee circa 1866

in Palmer, Massachusetts. He soon decided in favor of a business career and moved to Detroit Michigan where he graduated in the business college of that city.

When leaving college, he foresaw that his best business chance would be found not in New England, but in the new country to the west. He then got a job as a clerk in a banking house in Detroit. He later pursued "mercantile pursuits" in Ohio and Iowa and was well regarded as a business man. From Iowa he returned to Detroit to a partnership with his brother in the furnishing business, and remained there till 1856, when he decided to go still further west, to the outskirts of civilization in St Paul, Minnesota Territory.

When he was but 24 he located at St. Paul, Minnesota, and opened a general store. St. Paul was seeing rapid growth at that time; expanding from less than 400 people in 1848, to over 2500 in 1852, and over 10,000 in 1860. Railroads were pushing west and Chauncy saw an opportunity, and so in addition to his general merchandise business, he became a railroad contractor, and a coal and lumber merchant, through his partnership with Jim Hill.

Having settled in St. Paul he married a lady from his old home in Connecticut, Miss Martha A. Gallup, daughter of the Rev. Timothy Gallup, pastor of the Congregational Church of Ledyard, Connecticut. She was a member of the family of Milton Gallup, of revolutionary fame, and she inherited the strength of character and worth of her Puritan ancestry. She was also connected with the heroic revolutionary family of Stanton. They were married in April 1859, and their marriage was followed by more than a year of true and quiet happiness.

At the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861, Chauncy enlisted as a private in the Third Minnesota Infantry, but was immediately promoted to the rank of captain. The first engagements were near Nashville. During the operations of General Grant before Vicksburg, his regiment was constantly engaged. Capt. Griggs had just been promoted to lieutenant-colonel when his commander brought disaster on the regiment.

During some maneuvers at Murfreesboro, Tennessee, Lester's command became isolated, and was attacked by General Jackson. The attack was gallantly repulsed, and the regiment would have been able to

hold out until reinforced, but Lester disgracefully surrendered. He was a prisoner in Georgia for four months, when he was exchanged. Lester was at once court-martialed, and expelled from the army, and Griggs was immediately appointed colonel.

He handled his regiment with extraordinary bravery and skill, and became the idol not only of his own troops, but of that portion of the army. At one time he was in charge of four regiments—but, robust as he was, his health gave way, and in July 1863, he was compelled by sickness to resign and quit the army.

Returning to St. Paul he was the moving spirit of the house of Hill, Griggs & Co., which subsequently became the firm of Griggs & Johnson, and finally of Griggs and Foster. All this time St. Paul was growing with amazing rapidity. During this period Chauncy was director of the First and Second National Banks, and vice-president of the St. Paul National Bank. He was also president of the Lehigh Coal and Iron Company, and of the Beaver Dam Lumber Company.

He was a member of the State Legislature for two years, and of the Senate for seven years. It was then that his attention was directed to the new territory opened by the Northern Pacific Railroad in the far northwest.

He was 55 now, but he was inspired to visit the Washington Territory and the region of Puget Sound. To the astonishment of everyone, he now resolved to leave St. Paul and move to Tacoma, Washington, which they did in 1889. He packed up and left his nearly new home at 432 Summit Avenue in St Paul; Griggs was 56 years of age.

In Tacoma, in conjunction with Henry Hewitt of Chicago, and George Browne of New York, he formed a corporation known as the St. Paul & Tacoma Lumber Company. They established mills and offices at Tacoma, and purchased 80,000 acres of timber land from the Northern Pacific Railroad. They subsequently purchased a coal mine for \$80,000, and the company became the principal stockholders in a large smelter built at Tacoma. Railroad contracts, vast real estate deals, and enterprises of every kind were engaged in by this corporation, and were extending each day their sphere of operations. Chauncey Wright Griggs died in Tacoma at 77 years of age on Oct. 10, 1910.

Courtesy Minnesota Historical Society

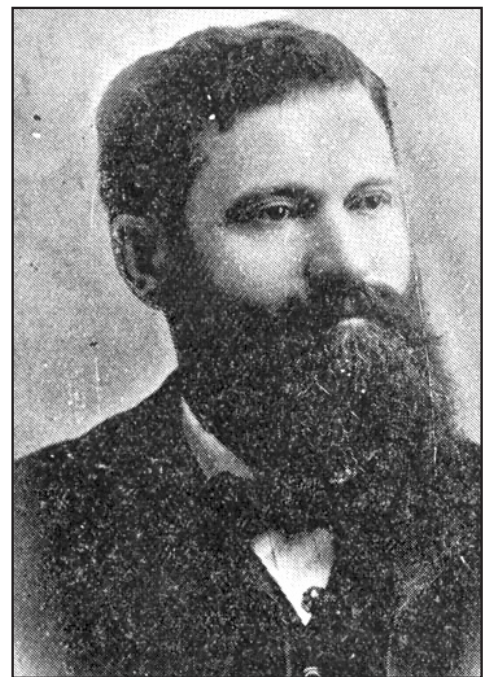


Photo Courtesy University of North Dakota Collection

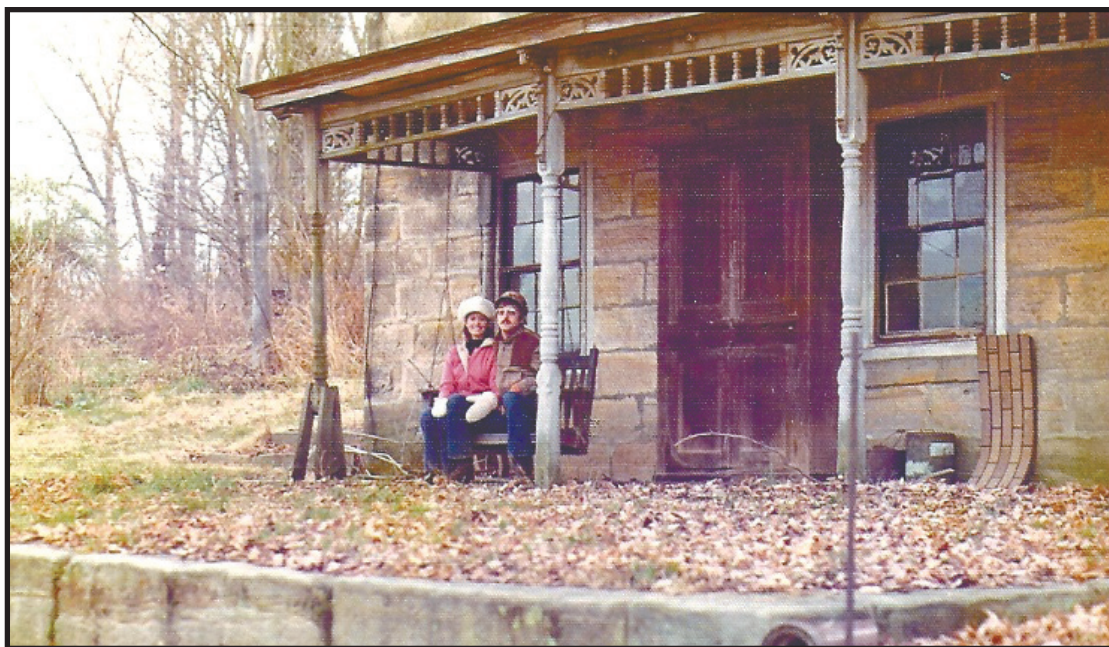
Captain Alexander Griggs

Alexander Griggs

Alexander Griggs was born in Marietta, Ohio on Oct. 27, 1838, the son of William and Esther (McGibbon) Griggs. William was born in Rensselaer County New York in 1808. His father Alexander Griggs Sr. was born in Albany County New York in 1778. The family traces their lineage back to Germany or Holland with the first Alexander having arrived in America in 1712.

Alexander Sr. moved his family to Muskingum County Ohio about 1814, and remained there until the early 1820s when they moved to Marietta. Marietta is on the Ohio River in south east Ohio, and was one of the earliest settlements in Ohio. Alexanders oldest son, William Wallace Griggs met his future wife, Esther McGibbon there, and they were married on March 11, 1834. The family remained in Marietta until about 1840 when they moved to Beetown, Grant County, Wisconsin. Alexander Griggs Sr. died in Grant County in 1844, and the William and his family moved to St. Paul, Minnesota sometime in 1849.

The 1857 Census shows William as a merchant, and no occupation listed for Alexander. The 1860 Census shows William Griggs working as a day laborer, and Alex, at 21, working as a



This is a photo of my wife Connie and me sitting on the front porch swing on Thanksgiving weekend, November 1975, just a month before we were married.

river pilot. William's "Personal Estate" value was listed as \$50 and Alex as \$100. Alex married Miss Henrietta Ione Strong, of Le Sueur, Minnesota on Dec. 27, 1865. Etta, as she was known, had been born in near New Haven, Connecticut in 1848. She was the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Lucius Strong, a pioneer Connecticut family. Mr. Strong was a scout in the Indian War, and the earlier ancestors of the family were among the little band of settlers who arrived at Plymouth Rock in 1620. When Mrs. Griggs was but seven, the family moved to Henderson, Minnesota where they were living when she met and married Captain Griggs.

By the Census of 1870, father William was working as a "plasterer," an interesting mix of occupations over just 13 years. And the 1870 census shows Alexander, wife Etta, and children Louie and Ansel were living in Henderson, where he worked as a steamboat captain on the Minnesota River. Alex continued in this line of work as a ship's captain for the rest of his life; initially on the Mississippi and Minnesota, and then the Red River, and ultimately the Columbia.

He was the pioneer steamboat captain on the Red River, and devoted a great portion of his time and attention to the river traffic for many years. He first came to Grand Forks in the fall of 1870, and the year following moved his family there as well; he was considered one of the pioneers of Grand Forks and Griggs County was named after him. On that initial trip, he settled on the land which comprised a great portion of the city of Grand Forks in the late 1800s. His cabin was 12x12 feet and five logs high, and that was his home for some time.

On the trip to St. Paul to bring his family to Grand Forks, Alex succeeded in interesting James J. Hill in the construction of a saw mill in Grand Forks, the establishment of a store, and the building of a steamboat. The firm name was Hill, Griggs & Co.

During his residence in Grand Forks, he was quite prominent in politics, and was a member of the state's constitutional convention. He was also elected mayor of Grand Forks for two terms in 1888 and 1889. He was associated in a business way with Wm. Budge and Jacob Eshelman under the firm name of Budge, Griggs & Co., which built the Syndicate block and was largely interested in city property and other real estate.

With Mr. Budge, Capt. Griggs also built the gas plant later owned by the Grand Forks Gas and Electric Co. He erected the Griggs house on North Third Street and several of the smaller buildings of the city. Capt. Griggs was also in the livery business for several years.

By 1891, Alex's health had greatly deteriorated and he left for the west. After traveling about for some time, he finally settled at Wenatchee, Washington, where his family followed him later. Wenatchee is in west central Washington on the Columbia River. Alex soon became interested in traffic on the Columbia River, and built a boat. From that time forward his interests in that line increased rapidly, until at the time of his death on Jan. 23, 1903, he had five boats plying the Columbia River, and was building the sixth at the time of his death on Jan. 23, 1903 in Wenatchee, Washington. He did carry some of Jim Hill's Great Northern Railway freight too!

Alex soon became interested in traffic on the Columbia River, and built a boat. From that time forward his interests in that line increased rapidly, until at the time of his death on Jan. 23, 1903, he had five boats plying the Columbia River, and was building the sixth at the time of his death on Jan. 23, 1903 in Wenatchee, Washington. He did carry some of Jim Hill's Great Northern Railway freight too!

John William

John William Griggs was born on his father's farm in Newton, Sussex County New Jersey on July 10th 1849. His father was Daniel Griggs (1798-1868). John descended from John George Griggs (1634-1702) who was his 3rd and my seventh great-grandfather. The 1850 Census shows Daniel living in Newton Twp., Sussex County, New Jersey, which is in the northwestern part of the state. That same census shows John William as 10 months of age.

John grew up on the farm, and according to his obituary "he acquired as a boy, the fondness for fishing and hunting, and uncommon skill at them, which remained with him all of his life." By the time he was 19 years old in 1868, he had graduated from Lafayette College. He did not like asking for paternal help to pay for his college, so he worked as a railroad ticket agent in Phillipsburg, New Jersey while attending school and studied law at night.

After leaving college he became a student in the law office of Robert Hamilton, in Newton, New Jersey. In

1871, he removed to Paterson, where he resumed the study of law in the office of Socrates Tuttle. He was admitted to the bar in 1871. In 1875 he was elected to the New Jersey house of assembly serving two terms beginning in 1876. For several years he devoted himself to building up his private practice. In 1882 he was elected state senator, being reelected in 1884, and again two years later. He served as President of the New Jersey Senate of 1886.

In 1895 Mr. Griggs was elected governor over Alexander T. McGill, by a plurality of over 26,900 votes, being

the first republican governor elected in New Jersey in 25 years. He served from Jan. 21, 1896 to Jan. 31, 1898, when he resigned to accept the position of US Attorney General. He served as William McKinley's Attorney General until April 1, 1901, when he resigned and returned to his law practice in Paterson New Jersey.

As you may know, President McKinley was assassinated on September 6, 1901, and his new Vice President Theodore Roosevelt, who had joined McKinley on the Republican ticket in 1900, became the new President. In the summer of 1901, President Harrison gave serious consideration to Mr. Griggs' name in connection with a vacancy on the United States supreme bench, caused by the death of Justice Joseph P. Bradley, but the appointment went to another.

Given his position, knowledge, and connections it is easy to see why James J. Hill engaged Griggs to handle the defense in the US Government's anti-trust case against Hill's Northern Securities Trust. Jim Hill was all for making a more efficient railway system in the United States, and you could not do it without consolidating some of the many railroads operating at that time. The Northern Securities Company was established by J. P. Morgan and Jim Hill as a way of possibly staying under the radar of the federal regulators.

President Roosevelt ordered the Department of Justice to take the Northern Securities Company to court for violating the Sherman Antitrust Act, in his "trust-busting" efforts to

break up big business monopolies. The Northern Securities case was a great victory for President Roosevelt when the Supreme Court ordered the Northern Securities Company to be dissolved.

John William Griggs died in Paterson, New Jersey on Nov. 28, 1927. During his lifetime Gov. Griggs was also identified with several business institutions of Paterson, New Jersey. He was president of the Paterson National Bank and the Paterson Safe Deposit Company.

At the time of his death, he was general counsel and a director of the RCA Corporation, a director of the American Locomotive Company and Bethlehem Steel, and Chairman of the Board of Paterson National Bank.

This has been an interesting and rewarding trip through history, and I know lots more about my Griggs ancestors than I did a few months ago! If you know anyone named Griggs who would like to learn more about their family history, have them get in touch.

I visited the Griggs Farm in Perry County Ohio many times as a kid and young adult. When I was young, a woman who was John Van Ness Griggs' granddaughter and her husband Herb Pearson lived there. When they passed on, the farm passed to their heirs but the stone house on the property fell into disrepair. It was disassembled and the stone sold by the new Amish purchaser.

It was sad to see that historic structure virtually rot away, when it had served as a stately home for generations. It makes me proud of what the North Oaks Company and Hill Farm Historical Society have done to preserve our historic site. I joined the HFHS Board of Directors in 2011, and have grown to really appreciate what the "Founding Members" and early HFHS Board members and community volunteers have accomplished.

References - The Magazine of Western History, Three Men of Tacoma, Chauncy Wright Griggs, Volume VIII, Pages 20-24, November 1890; Ancestry.com, and the St Paul Daily Globe via Chronicling America.

The Griggs County ND Historical Society, The Grand Forks Historical Preservation Commission, Ancestry.com, St Paul Globe vis Chronicling America.com

"Jim Hill was all for making a more efficient railway system in the United States"

Paul Dickson

Hill Farm Historical Society President



Our Precious Farm



Blacksmith-Machine Shop before restoration

It is easy to take something for granted if you do not look back and see what has been done to preserve our precious community landmark, the Hill Farm. It all started in 1989 with the formation of the Hill Farm Historical Society and a flurry of fundraising necessary to save what remained of the farm site—and it was not pretty, as can be seen in these pictures. But the community pulled together, and raised the funds necessary to start the multiyear project.

The total cost of restoring the Dairy was \$106,000. With exception of a new roof, renovations included preparing and painting the grimy interior walls and repairing the marble floor and cupolas. Resident volunteers repaired windows, replaced the porch and cupolas, and painted the exterior.

Restoration of the Blacksmith - Machine Shop building cost \$83,000. A contractor repaired the brick walls, replaced an interior brick partition and exterior north wall and installed a new roof. Volunteers restored the old equipment and added additional equipment to enable a blacksmith to use the shop.

More money was needed before



Dairy before restoration

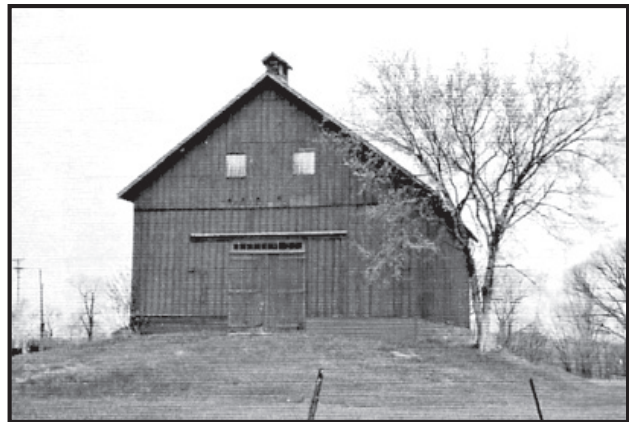
the Granary restoration could get underway. North Oaks residents answered an appeal for additional funds. Reboarding the Granary proceeded. Cost was \$157,556. North Oaks residents contributed additional funds to update the farm's electrical system and install lightning rods on the Granary.

Hill Farm Historical Society is now 35 years of age and so are the roofs on all three of the farm buildings. Our normal membership and contribution income will not come close to covering the nearly \$300,000 cost of the project. We have money in the bank, but not enough to cover all three buildings.

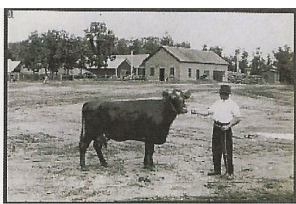
Extraordinary income needed

The next few years will not be business as usual at the farm. The

*Paul Dickson,
Hill Farm Historical Society*



Granary before restoration



Support the Hill Farm!

Preserve the Legacy that has made a huge impact on all of our lives!

The Hill Farm Historical Society (HFHS) is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization whose mission is to share the important legacy of James J Hill through continued education and preservation of the nationally registered historic Hill Farm in North Oaks. While the legacy starts in the heart of North Oaks, it expands throughout the Midwest and beyond. Funding for our mission comes primarily from memberships, events held throughout the year and donations from corporations and people like you! This year is especially important because the primary buildings on the Hill Farm property need to be restored to keep them structurally sound. HFHS needs your help with this endeavor. Our goal is to raise \$250,000 for our Restoration Project which would replace the roofs, rebuild dormers and preserve the structural integrity of the Hill

Farm for generations to come. With your HFHS membership, you'll receive a discount on tickets to our Spring Dinner, coupons for the June Ice Cream Social, free tickets to use at our September Farm Fest and a free guided tour of the Hill Farm. If you aren't already a member of HFHS, become a member now. If you've been a member, renew your membership. Either way, please also consider a larger donation if able, to preserve this North Oaks Legacy. Membership and Donor Levels can be found below and on our website at <https://www.hillfarmhistoricalsociety.com/membershipanddonate>. Use the QR code below to join/donate from your mobile, or tear off the bottom of this page and return it to HFHS with your check (payable to HFHS) or to become a member.

Become a member, renew your membership or consider a larger

DONATION NOW!

Hill Farm Historical Society thanks you for your support!

Use the QR Code or Tear off this form and mail it to HFHS, 35 Hill Farm Circle, North Oaks, MN 55127

MEMBERSHIP OPTIONS: \$40 (annual) \$1,000 (lifetime)

DONOR LEVEL OPTIONS:

White Oaks Circle \$250 - \$499

Anvil & Forge Circle \$500 - \$999

Creamery Circle \$1,000 - \$2,499

Carriage Circle \$2,500 - \$4,999

Red Barn Circle \$5,000 - \$9,999

Heritage Circle \$10,000 - \$24,999

Founders Circle \$25,000 - \$49,999



In-kind donations, Employer Matches and Legacy Gifts are also accepted

Make this gift anonymous

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY/STATE/ZIP: _____

PHONE: _____

EMAIL: _____

NAME ON CREDIT CARD: _____

CARD # : _____

EXPIRES: _____ **CVC # :** _____

AMOUNT ENCLOSED OR TO CHARGE YOUR CARD: _____