



# BYWAY BUZZ

LAKE COUNTRY SCENIC BYWAY NEWSLETTER

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## Along Our Byway - 1st Annual Meeting and Dinner at Itasca State Park



A Byway Romance culminates with the celebration with newlywed's Helen & Archie Henderson

**Lake Country Scenic Byway's 1st Annual Meeting and Dinner** Guests explored the Road to Itasca as the event was hosted by Itasca State Park's own Historic Douglas Lodge on June 1, 2004.

Joe Czapiewski spoke and

showed the Lake Country Scenic Byway Video following a delicious Historical Douglas Lodge dining experience.

The meal featured their infamous wild rice casserole which could be accompanied by wines of local Minnesota wineries

and buttery special recipe shortbread cookies for dessert. Of course a cake was served as well in honor of the Byway newly-weds.

It was nice to get better acquainted with the byway ambassadors, board and interested guests.

## The Walkers-Harriet and Thomas

By: Frank J. Mitchell-Lake Country Scenic Byway Ambassador

Thomas Barlow Walker married Harriet Hulet on November 10, 1863. Harriet was born in Brunswick, Medina County, Ohio, September 10, 1841. Harriet and Thomas had been friends since school days. The Walkers had 8 children, 6 sons and 2 daughters. They lost one son in 1887 and a daughter in 1904.

Mr. Walker had various types of employment that gave him excellent experiences for the operation of the mammoth sawmill and timber business which he would be involved in through out his life.

Mrs. Walker acquired a liberal education having attended Borea University in Borea, Ohio. She was also proficient in the knowledge of the classic languages and of German. Mrs. Walker was very active in the Methodist Episcopal Church. She was a member of the Women's Christian Association of Minneapolis. Mrs. Walker directed the labors that resulted in the enlargement of the Northwestern Hospital of Minneapolis. She also gave much of her time and means to the Women's Christian Temperance Union, Newsboys Home, the Kindergarten Association and the

Children's Home.

When the village of Akeley was platted out at Mrs. Walker's persuasion a liquor clause was inserted in every deed that there was to be no liquor sold in Akeley. Even though it was thriving sawmill town with over 800 men employed, no saloons were ever built in Akeley.

Mrs. Walker aided in every state of national emergency calling for relief. When Sauk Rapids was hit by a tornado as soon as she received the message she headed up a group of women and left for the scene 5 hours later. They stayed there for 2 weeks. Her charities reached such proportions that she had to hire a stenographer to help with details.

She also had pronounced literary tastes and did a lot of writing. Many poems were circulated among friends and at church organizations. Several were published in the Minnesota Journal and copied by the press. During her 54 years in Minnesota Mrs. Walker had a large influence in promoting the growth of many institutions and struggling country churches. The Walkers celebrated their golden wedding anniversary in 1913 in the home they had lived in for 40 years.

Mr. Walker was involved in the sawmill business all his life. He owned and operated a sawmill at Crookston, MN called the Red River Lumber Company. After selling this mill in the early 1890's he came back to Walker, a town that was named for him. The business men of Walker wanted him to start a sawmill there, but Mr. Walker refused. He said there were already 12 saloons in town and he was a teetotaler. So he went to the south shore of 11th Crow Wing Lake and set up his sawmill there. After getting his business started, he had the town site platted and called it Akeley in honor of his partner, Mr. H.C. Akeley.

At this time the railroad only came as far Park Rapids where the engine was turned around on a turntable. In 1897 the Great Northern extended the railroad as far as Akeley. At this time the men saw the opportunity to expand their business so they installed the large sawmill that would saw millions of feet of lumber in the years to come.

It is said that Mr. Walker had assembled one of the most efficient crews ever gotten together. The men were treated

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### Lake Country Scenic Byway Ambassadors

- Joyce & Erland Alto
- Rose Anderson
- Jim Canada
- Carolyn Engebretson
- Allen & Sharon Friedman
- Archie & Helen Henderson
- James Keller
- Mary Luetgers
- Katie Magozzi
- Frank Mitchell
- David Ring
- Sally J. Shearer
- Madalyn Sukke
- Jackie Wizner
- Hazel Yliniemi
- Lezli Zimmerman

### Board Members

- Kelly Blackledge
- Jerry Emery
- Allen & Sharon Friedman
- Nancy Hanson
- Tim Holskamm
- James Keller
- Katherine Magozzi
- Jack Murray
- Sharon Rezac-Andersen
- Lisa Rhorer
- Cleone Stewart
- Donald Tschudi

### Ex-Officio Members

- Joe Czapiewski, HRDC
- David Bergman, MN Office of Tourism
- Carol Altepeter, MN Office of Tourism

## The Walkers-Harriet and Thomas - (continued from page 1)

well in every respect and received a decent salary. Sawmill workers received 17 1/2 cents an hour, whereas railroad workers only got 11 cents an hour. There was never any labor trouble of any kind. The Walker family was greatly respected in all their dealings. In the 15 plus years that the big sawmill was in operation at Akeley the Red River Lumber Company built roads and railroads into all the area north and west of Akeley. Many miles of track was built into the various logging camps as far as Itasca Park and Lake George. Steam engines were used to pull these carloads of logs to the mill. It is reported that the huge stands of Norway and white pine in this area kept the big mill running day and night for 15 years. Many loads of logs were dumped on the ice of 11th Crow Wing Lake in the winter. Many of the logs sunk to the bottom of the lake and some were never recovered.

The camps that were situated throughout the

large stands of timber were a busy place all winter. They consisted of a large mess hall with kitchen, bunk houses, a clerks shack and store, horse barns and toilets. The lumberjacks were a hardy breed of men. With no thermometers in camp they never missed a day of work because of the cold. Each man had a specific job and were named according to the work they did. They were careful workers so injuries were seldom problem. The food was as good as could be had in an restaurant uptown.

One of the most remarkable things that Mr. Walker did for the people of Akeley and vicinity was taking a train load of people from Akeley to Itasca State Park in August 1914 using the railroad spurs that had been built through the country. He advertised that he would give a free ride to Itasca Park. Over 250 people signed up and went on the trip. The train left Akeley at 6:00 a.m. on Sunday morning for 30 mile trip.

They had to walk the last 2 miles and were met by W. T. Cox, state forester and custodian McMahon. They went by launch and barge to the Mississippi headwaters and back. The train consisted of 4 flat bed cars equipped with railing and seats, a logging engine and caboose.

The big mill at Akeley ceased operation soon after this. During this time the town of Akeley was a fast growing boom town. In 1909 it is said there was 17 hotels, 3 theaters, 5 Churches, 5 doctors, 1 hospital, 5 grocery stores, 2 meat markets, 2 clothing stores, 2 jewelry stores, 1 bank, 2 blacksmith shops, 2 livery stables and no saloons.

After this mill closed Mr. Walker and his family and some of his crew went to California and constructed a large sawmill at Westwood this was a large mill with 4 band saws putting out over 650,000 foot of lumber a day.

## Streets of Gold

### By: Frank Mitchell, Historian

The front-page headlines in the Park Rapids Enterprise of July 24, 1930, were: "Park Rapids to celebrate Pavement opening Friday." The official opening of the newly paved Main Street took place on Friday evening, July 31, 1930.

The director of the Community Club had been busy arranging a program for the important celebration. Mayor H. E. Delaney made the dedication address. He then introduced the Honorable Floyd B. Olson, Hennepin County attorney, who was a candidate for Governor of Minnesota.

The program opened with a concert by the Park

Rapids municipal band, which also played at intervals during the evening. Meire Grove Concertina Orchestra furnished other music throughout the night. The American Legion drums and bugle corp. also paraded as part of the festivities for the evening. The celebration continued with a free dance on the new pavement.

The street was also decorated with lights purchased by the American Legion for the previous Christmas, with other lights and many decorations in the store windows along Main Street.

The article didn't tell how many blocks of Main

Street were paved but it is believed that it would have been three blocks, where the major businesses were located.



## Become a Member of the Lake Country Scenic Byway

Become a Member of the Byway Today.

Benefits include:

- Stakeholder in sustainability of the Lake Country Scenic Byway
- Newsletter Subscription
- Email announcements
- Opportunity to attend Association Meetings if desired
- Input in Key Byway and Highway issues.

### Byway Membership Levels

88 Mile Benefactor.....\$88

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Ambassador.....\$5

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