

Final Report - March 2022

Sod House Theater Company: Split Rock Lighthouse Historical Research Project

Grant Year: April 2021 to May 2022

Completed Goal: Sod House Theater researched the history of Split Rock Lighthouse for each decade of its existence to become source material for an original theater production.

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Grant Administrator: Carolyn Van Nelson

Introduction:

The Split Rock Lighthouse Project used primary and secondary sources, to focus on one historical event/person/story connected to the Split Rock Lighthouse for each decade (1910 to 2020) of the lighthouse's history. The scope of the research efforts unearthed historical events, influential figures, and stories of the lighthouse, Northshore, and Lake Superior communities. A selection of the decades are broken down into the following categories.

- **Researcher Narrative**
- **Evocative Story**
- **Engaging or Influential Person**
- **Clear Conflict**
- **Sources (may include style, mood, music, play genres, imagery, for each decade)**

While another selection of the decades focus more succinctly on one person, event, or conflict. In all cases the historical research is aimed toward development of a play or performance experience to be created by Sod House Theater. This original play will be produced in the greater Minnesota area, in this case the North Shore, Split Rock Lighthouse, Two Harbors, and environs. To keep our focus on performance potential we focused on the following prompts.

- Find the conflict in each story
- Find the people
- Find the performance potential in each story

During our focused research, there were times we simply had to acknowledge the incredible PLACE we were researching. The Lighthouse with its inherent symbolism of

guidance, light, listening, sounding the alarm gave abundant performance possibilities. Lake Superior with its grand industrial history, recreational offerings, and startling weather patterns was enthralling.

Sod House Theater is inspired to create an original, immersive, site-specific theater production about the history of Minnesota's Split Rock Lighthouse, Lake Superior, and the North Shore communities. We look forward to using this research to create a transformational, enduring theater production for Minnesota audiences.

Decades Breakdown Begins

1910 Decade- THEME – EVERYDAY LIFE OF THE LIGHTHOUSE KEEPER



Actor 1/Narrator: This decade begins imagining this rock is your world; Split Rock – The Superior Light on Stoney Point 2 ½ miles NE of the Split Rock River, 48 miles North and East of Duluth, MN. The stately octagonal yellow bricked lighthouse is your workplace perched high on a 130-foot cliff. One of three square shaped sturdily built buildings is your home. Those along with various outbuildings; the fog signal building, oil house, storage sheds and garages all perched on the edge of a stony cliff. An isolated hove of business sending its beacon from the craggy jut of rock bed out over a beautiful and powerful body of water. You are the keeper of this light, this place, this haven for the maritime travelers seeking help in a storm. You are the lighthouse keeper.

6 actors on stage – Actor 1/Narrator is center with the others spread out on various levels around the space.

Actor 1: *(Writing in log)* Daily log: July 31, 1910 “Put light into commission at 6:30 p.m.” This my friends is a main duty, keeping the daily log of our activities at the lighthouse. Today we’ll...

Actor mimes’ duty as they say it – continue silently as each actor adds in their duty. Voices can overlap, meld, as if they are all one image/duty.

Actor 2: Replenish fuel for the fog signal

Actor 3: Check the engines, maintain the engines, fix the engines

Actor 4: Haul loads of dirt for the landscaping, make a road

Actor 5: Fill brass can with kerosene, carry it up the spiral staircase to lamp

Actor 6: Lens cleaning the bivalve Fresnel lens

Actor 1: Add in the almost daily household chores...

Actor 2: Gardening, picking berries, trimming bushes, clearing paths

Actor 3: Cooking breakfast, dinner, and supper, cleaning up after

Actor 4: Laundry, painting, repairing, washing windows; soot everywhere

Actor 5: Be ready for the inspector wearing full dress uniform – dark uniform jacket and trousers, black tie, starched white shirt, collar and cuffs and shined shoes

Actor 6: Checking the pantry, storage sheds, inventorying supplies

Actor 1: And every two hours...*(All actors synchronize movements)* Climb the spiral staircase, 32 steps, turn the crank, watch the light revolve. *(All actors enact turning lighthouse movement)* The signal, the guidance system, the ships beacons powered by a mechanical “clockwork” system of weights and pulleys, the lens rotated once each 20 seconds, emitting a white flash of light every 10 seconds. We watch the light. Then, climb back down the spiral stairs.

Actor 1: Vigilance, discipline, watching, listening, sensing the weath—

All Freeze

[Documentary - Split Rock, The Superior Light - Bing video](#)

[The Family Lives of Split Rock's Keepers - Lake Superior Magazine](#)

Radzak, Lee with Curt Stone, The View From Split Rock: A Lighthouse Keeper's Life, 2021 Minnesota Historical Society Press, St. Paul, MN

Visit to Split Rock Lighthouse - Two Harbors, MN June 2021



1920: Tourism Comes to the North Shore

Researcher NARRATIVE

The 1924 construction of Lake Superior Highway (Highway 61 or North Shore Scenic Highway) gave access to not only the lighthouse keepers and their families but also a new segment of the population – the road trip tourist. From first person accounts early versions of Highway 61 are described as a dirt road, filled with bumps and ruts, enough to make the car shake and rattle. However, the long, dusty trek across Minnesota was rewarded by rocky shores, cool lake breezes, vibrantly colored sunsets, fragrant pines, and the chance to spot a “wild animal.” The lure of the lake was strong and as time went by these road trip tourists looking for “something to do,” discovered Split Rock Lighthouse.

Question: How did the advent of the road trip/day trip tourist change daily life at the lighthouse?

STORY: The construction of Highway 61 coincided with American automobile manufacturers' creation of a closed body that protected the driver and passengers from the weather and flying debris. Given this added sense of privacy people's urge to hit the road skyrocketed. When heaters were added Minnesota and Wisconsin day trippers packed a picnic lunch, grabbed a blanket, and gave into the lure of the lake. Newspaper car advertisements of the 1920s urge car owners to explore, get out, see the sights, discovering new horizons in grand style.

CONFLICT: I'm most interested in the clash between the tourist, the comer and goer versus the people/person who lives in a mostly isolated and spectacularly beautiful natural place. The outsider sees these places as stops along the highway while the people who dwell there see these far-flung places as home.

In a fictionalized version of this conflict: A car salesman and lady friend set out on the newly constructed Highway 61 in their stylish vehicle a 1924 Model B-70 Chrysler. Dressed in their Sunday finery they arrive at Split Rock Lighthouse to explore. Peeking in windows of the Keeper's house they watch the children eat lunch, trample across the first assistant's wife's newly planted tulips, stare at the Keeper's wife hanging clothes on the line, and the keeper carrying out his daily chores. They spread out their picnic lunch on the far side of a boundary sign saying, “Please respect the Privacy of the Keepers at this Station,” exclaiming as they settle in, “Oh they don't mean us, we're tourists.” They ask the children and the keepers intrusive questions about life at the lighthouse. Having no concept, they are at a functioning lighthouse, they urge the keeper to blow the foghorn even though it is a clear, cloudless day. The tourist couple discuss the perils of living in such an isolated area. The keeper's children, hearing their fears, play a series of tricks on the tourists, perhaps pretending to see a bear, pretend to fall off the cliff's edge, eat poisoned berries etc.

The differences in their perspectives; tourists versus occupants of the land mount when as a whisper of change, the sun begins to set. As colors of salmon, pink, lavender, yellow, blue, and purple paint the sky both groups pause to watch. The sounds of the lake and lake shore breezes soothe the group, a far-off bird cry startles and delights. The tenor of the tourist questions changes to curiosity and suddenly they find connections; maybe simple things like a recipe exchange, a “how do you get coffee stains out of your whites,” advice session. It is a real exchange in that the car salesman may give advice to the keeper on what kind of car he might purchase, and the tourist lady shares her expertise in some way as do the women who live at the lighthouse. The lake, the lighthouse, the beautiful setting become the centerpiece rather than something to be endured or enjoyed from a distance.

PEOPLE – The Lighthouse Keeper was Orren “Pete” Young until 1928 when he retired, and first assistant Frank Covell took over. He was married to Edith Covell.

SOURCES – For perspective on the women who lived at the lighthouse. *The View from Split Rock: A Lighthouse Keeper’s Life* – page 86 and 87 interview with Edith Covell in a newspaper article by Stella M. Champney of the Detroit News. A series of articles called “Romance of the Lighthouse Service.”

STYLE, GENRE, MOOD:

Contrasts – Rural versus Urban, Bustling City life versus Isolated life, Fast Pace versus Slow Pace, Manipulation of Automobile industry to get people driving, exploring, seeking out new sights, new territory.

Art Deco: Architecture incorporated: Vertical lines, Flat, polished surfaces, Blocky, towering silhouettes, Parapets and turrets, Sharp corners, large windows and glass blocks, Exotic themes blending Classical elements- Think Chrysler Building, NYC, NY

MUSIC/IMAGES/SOUNDS: Fast Facts of the 1920s - [37 Thrilling Facts about the 1920s - Fact City](#)

Photos of Highway/Cabins built for Tourists in the newly developing North Shore area:

1917 Along International Highway between Beaver Bay & Two Harbors. (Supplied Title)

<https://media.mnhs.org/things/cms/10333/167/10333167.640x640.jpg>

1919- 1922 - Highway No. 1, North Shore, Lake Superior, near Two Harbors (Formal Title)

<https://media.mnhs.org/things/cms/10337/953/10337953.640x640.jpg>

<https://media.mnhs.org/things/cms/10337/954/10337954.640x640.jpg>

Tourist cabin from Star Harbor, the first cabin resort on the North Shore.

<https://media.mnhs.org/things/cms/10300/688/10300688.640x640.jpg>

An original tourist cabin (#3) from Star Harbor Resort of Two Harbors, MN, the first cabin resort on the North Shore. Built by Norwegian immigrant Emil Edison between 1910 and the early 1920s.

<https://media.mnhs.org/things/cms/10072/319/pf062818.640x640.jpg?irn=10072319>

Articles and Ads concerning the advent of the day trip/road trip tourist

Ad for Oil – <https://www.mnhs.org/newspapers/lccn/sn89064489/1927-05-05/ed-1/seq-2>

Article about rental car outfit - 1924

<https://www.mnhs.org/newspapers/lccn/sn89064695/1924-01-24/ed-1/seq-4>

Ad for a car – 1916

<https://www.mnhs.org/newspapers/lccn/sn83016458/1916-03-11/ed-1/seq-14>

INTRIGUING THREAD: While researching the burgeoning tourist industry in Minnesota I found an article on postcard representation of the Ojibway people. The article below is a fascinating analysis of how the Ojibway People were portrayed in postcards and “produced images” were created in the 1920s to lure tourists to the wilds of the north where they could see “real American Indians.”

Questions – is there a photographer at the Lighthouse staging photos of his subjects? Do we see how a photographer manipulates the images of what is seen and known about the Ojibway People?

[Images and reality: post cards of Minnesota's Ojibway people, 1900-80 / Patricia C. Albers and William R. James. \(mnhs.org\)](#)



1930: Vaudeville

Researcher Narrative: Vaudeville performers such as Geraldine Valliere (1896-1986) toured the North Shore area. Ms. Valliere, a lively pianist performing in Duluth, MN was featured in an act with four baby grand pianos. The crisis for her and many vaudeville performers reached its peak in 1936 to 1938 at the death of vaudeville. As to what caused its demise...theories range from 1-The public's tastes changed and vaudeville failed to keep up with the times, 2-Silent pictures blasted on to the scene taking away some of the magic of live performance and the mystique of the performer 3-Veteran vaudeville producers sensing the impending demise of their art form built extravagant

sets, costumes, stages to lure new audiences thereby blowing their budgets 4-
Producers and performers went from 2 show a day schedule to 5 show a day schedules
to maximize profits but succeeding only in exhausting the performers.

CONFLICT: As an artist, writer, actor who just lived through a pandemic that almost completely wiped out the theater industry for 18 months I am drawn to the question: What does an artist do when their livelihood is stripped away by outside circumstances?

Actress and vaudeville veteran June Havoc puts my feelings into words from *Early Havoc* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1959), p. 2. "Show business as I knew it had simply dwindled and vanished before my eyes. The happy island of vaudeville which had been my kindergarten, elementary and junior high school had sunk into the sea and left me treading water. I was an animation of the ancient quote: 'You can take the girl out of vaudeville but can't take the vaudeville out of the girl.' I was a displaced person. I didn't understand it. I only felt it."

STORY: A story of Homecoming - Coming home to the North Shore- Duluth, MN where Geraldine got her first job as a PE teacher and began playing with various dance bands. It is where she returned to when her career as a Vaudeville performer ended. Jerry and the Baby Grands traveled far and wide. When her career was essentially wiped out by circumstances out of her control, she pivoted, found new ways to celebrate her career and her life and found comfort and retreat in the North Shore area.

Making connections and collaboration between Sod House Theater and local Duluth theater Renegade Theater, and Mary Fox, Artistic Director—a theater and actors who make their home in the north shore area.

PERSON: Geraldine Valliere (1896-1986) premiered her act Gerry and the Piano Girls at the Lyric Theater in Duluth, MN in 1919. The act comprised four young ladies playing both popular and semi-classical music on four baby grand pianos. The night was such a success the theater manager, Harold Kennedy, quit his day job to manage the act, dressing the pianists in white gloves, white satin gowns, white wigs, seating them at four white baby grands. Winning a booking at the Chicago Theater the act played as 12 dancers from the Merriel Abbot dancing group danced atop and around the pianos. (In one ad the dancers were described as "Eight Little Parisian Pals") The audition was a resounding success, winning them engagements on the road in the USA and Canada. Eventually the act was renamed Jerry and her Baby Grands. For the next 15 years they continued to tour, even landing a recurring gig at The Palace in New York City. In 1929 they embarked on a world tour including England, Scotland, Paris, Berlin, South Africa, and Australia. Sometimes they dressed in 18th century costumes consisting of white wigs, tights, white heels, and ornately designed men's coats. From 1936 to 1938 as

Vaudeville work became nonexistent Valliere became the pianist for Major Bowe's famous Amateur Hour on the radio. At the end of 1938 she returned to Duluth to perform in various dance bands and start her second career as a piano teacher.

STYLE, GENRE, MOOD: As with many Vaudeville acts of the late 20s and 30s, Jerry and the Baby Grands appropriated themes, styles, and show biz extravagances to make their act stand out. To remain; “The only attraction of its kind in the world!”

Intriguing Idea: There is an interesting side note in one of the descriptions I found of their act explaining that as they toured around the country it was often difficult for them to attain four matching white baby grand pianos. Certainly, lends itself to conflict, drama, and comedy – the manager desperately trying to come up with these pianos – and what kind of substitutes might be proposed?

MUSIC/IMAGES/SOUNDS: Fast Facts of the 1930s - [60 Thrilling Facts about the 1930s - Fact City](#)

SOURCES: Encyclopedia entry on Vaudeville Performers-Geraldine Valliere

[Vaudeville old & new: an encyclopedia of variety performances in America - Frank Cullen, Florence Hackman, Donald McNeilly - Google Books](#)

Renegade Theater, Duluth, MN – Mary Fox, AD [Renegade Theater Company | Zeitgeist \(zeitgeistarts.com\)](#)

Video of one of the dancers who performed for with Merriel Abbot Dancers – the group who performed on top of the pianos as Jerry and her Four Baby Grands played.

<https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=Merriel+Abbot+Dancers&&view=detail&mid=1B28C3ABCBD7B0B773661B28C3ABCBD7B0B77366&&FORM=VDRVSR>

Sheet music written and composed by Jerry Valliere.

[Please say you love me \('cause I love you\): fox trot : Finding Aids : MNHS.ORG](#)

Duluth Minnesota’s Vaudeville Theater – Home of the Duluth Playhouse currently

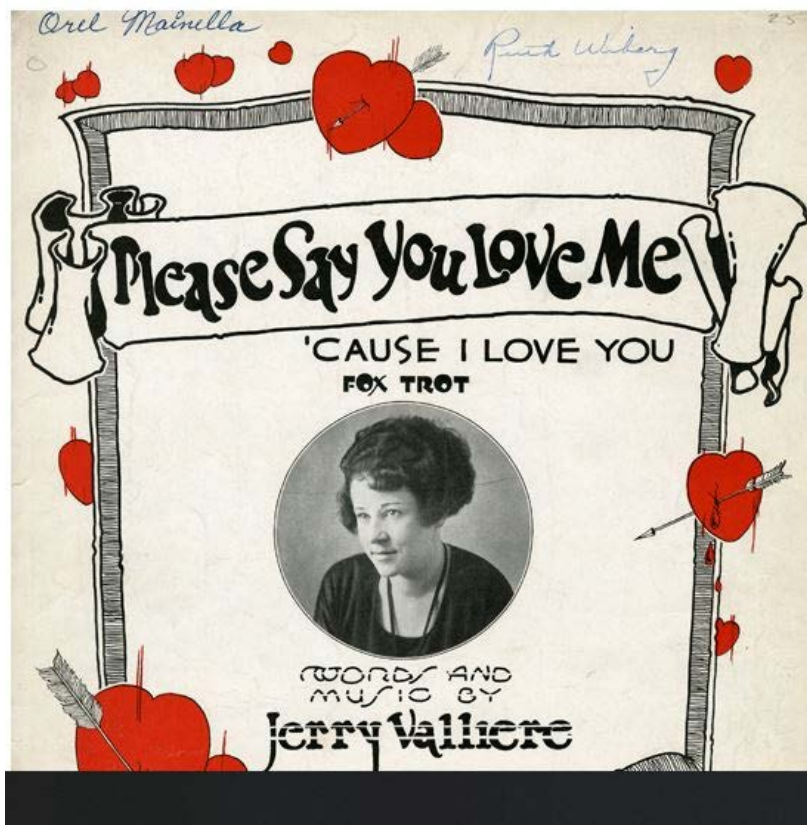
[NorShor History - The Historic NorShor Theatre of Duluth Minnesota](#)

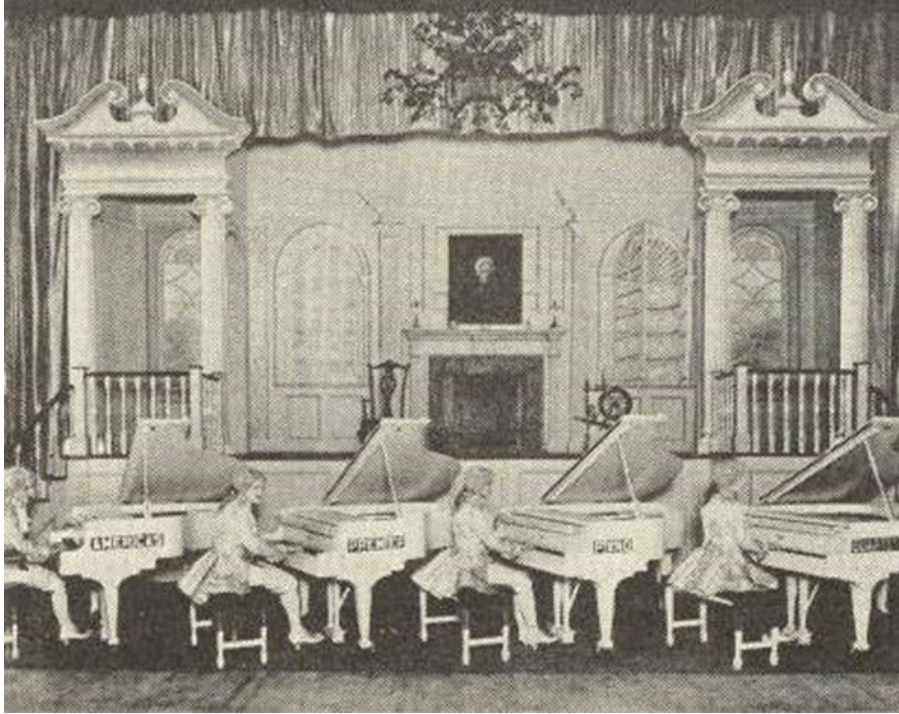
At least three recordings exist of the act including the songs: The Doll Dance, South Winds, and I’m Looking over a Four-Leaf Clover. They can be found at:

"Victor matrix BVE-38809. The doll dance / Jerry and her Baby Grands." *Discography of American Historical Recordings*. UC Santa Barbara Library, 2021. Web. 11 July 2021.

Hoosier State Chronicle – Indianapolis Times, Volume 38, No. 285 Indianapolis, March 5, 1927, Ad for Jerry and her Baby Grands

COVER PAGE





MATINEES
2.15
 EVENINGS
8.15

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1940 Decade – Grand Marais Art Colony, Grand Marais, MN

The proposal for this Decade triangulates across:

- 1) The founding of the Grand Marais Art Colony, by Birney Quick in 1947. Quick, his wife Marion and the first cohort of art students journeyed to the remote town of Grand Marais, MN (population 855), located 250 miles northeast of the Twin Cities and 40 miles south of the Canadian border to begin a summer artist's retreat. They sought a place of refuge to create art, experience immersion in the horizon line, remove themselves from day-to-day post war reality (many of them were soldiers) and absorb themselves in the awe inspiring fresh air landscapes of Lake Superior's North Shore.
- 2) The Colony continues it's work today with Lyla Brown, Executive Director and Ruth Pszwaro, Artistic Director who met with Darcey and I on June 16, 2021, for a discussion of the Colony, its founders, and goals for the future. Specific inspiration for me came from Lyla who said, "We're always looking for ways to make people less intimidated by art." Two weeks after our visit the colony hosted the Grand Marais Arts Festival continuing the tradition started by Quick and his fellow instructors to display works of art pinned to hanging clotheslines. The whimsical nature of this display, the accessibility of the art, the connection of artists to people and lovers of art (people who didn't know yet they are lovers of art) was intriguing to me in a way I knew I needed to explore.
- 3) Artist Amanda Lovelee in partnership with the Grand Marais Art colony created personalized "detour" signs to guide residents and tourists through disruptive (and dusty) construction of the main highway going through this coastal village in summer of 2021. Specific inspiration for me came from my research into Lovelee's artist installations. I had a "punch in the gut " visceral attraction to how she creates space not only for an artistic installation but demands/encourages interaction with the art. In the above example the detour signs she created were gleaned from residents' life lessons on taking a "detour." The example pictured in the article I read is next to a large orange Highway 61 detour sign any traveler is going to greet with a falling heart. Lovelee's signage reads in part, "Detours can be painful even when you choose them."

Proposed Interactive Art Installation:

Part One: CREATION

1. Near the performance space a creation station is built. The table, counter, chair, drafting area is stocked with cardstock in several color, paper, material, markers, crayons, colored pencils, glue, sparkles, googly eyes, cut out foam shaped stickers, scissors, sharpie markers, a stack of magazines for collage making, staplers etc.

2. A Clothesline adorned with clothespins is built to hang artistic creations.
3. A roaming artist/teacher/friend/cheerleader staffs the area helping people to create; a drawing of what inspires them about the North Shore, Lake Superior, Split Rock Lighthouse. Can be drawing, collage, painting, a painted object, carving, cloth.

Part Two: INTERACTION

1. Each audience member is given one of the created items and sent on a journey to find the artist. They can shout out for them like a barker, ask around quietly, roam in a meandering pattern with the art held aloft, whatever suits their style of questing.
2. When the audience member finds the artist, they ask a question about their art.
3. A time limit is set. Could be done with music, if music slows getting close to time's up and when it stops just grab whoever you're closest to and make art.
4. At this point there could be, and hopefully will be, overlapping artists/audience members so the whole space becomes populated by artist/artwork/audience.
5. Once the art, audience member, and artist reunite, the twosome takes the artwork back to the clothesline where it's displayed on the clothesline.
6. All paintings, creations are hung on the clothesline. Displayed during the performance and beyond depending on whether it is an indoor or outdoor space.

Photos below from the Grand Marais Arts Festival Facebook page:





The

Sources:

[Grand Marais Arts Festival \(grandmaraisartcolony.org\)](http://grandmaraisartcolony.org)

[How Artists Help Build Equitable, Empathetic Infrastructure \(nextcity.org\)](http://nextcity.org)

[Amanda Lovelee](#)

[CAIR LAB](#)

[Grand Marais Art Colony | MNopedia](#)

[Making a place for art : 50 years at the Grand Marais Art Colony / Colleen J. Sheehy. \(mnhs.org\)](#)

[Minnesota Artists Oral History Project: Interview with Byron Bradley : Collections Online : mnhs.org](#)

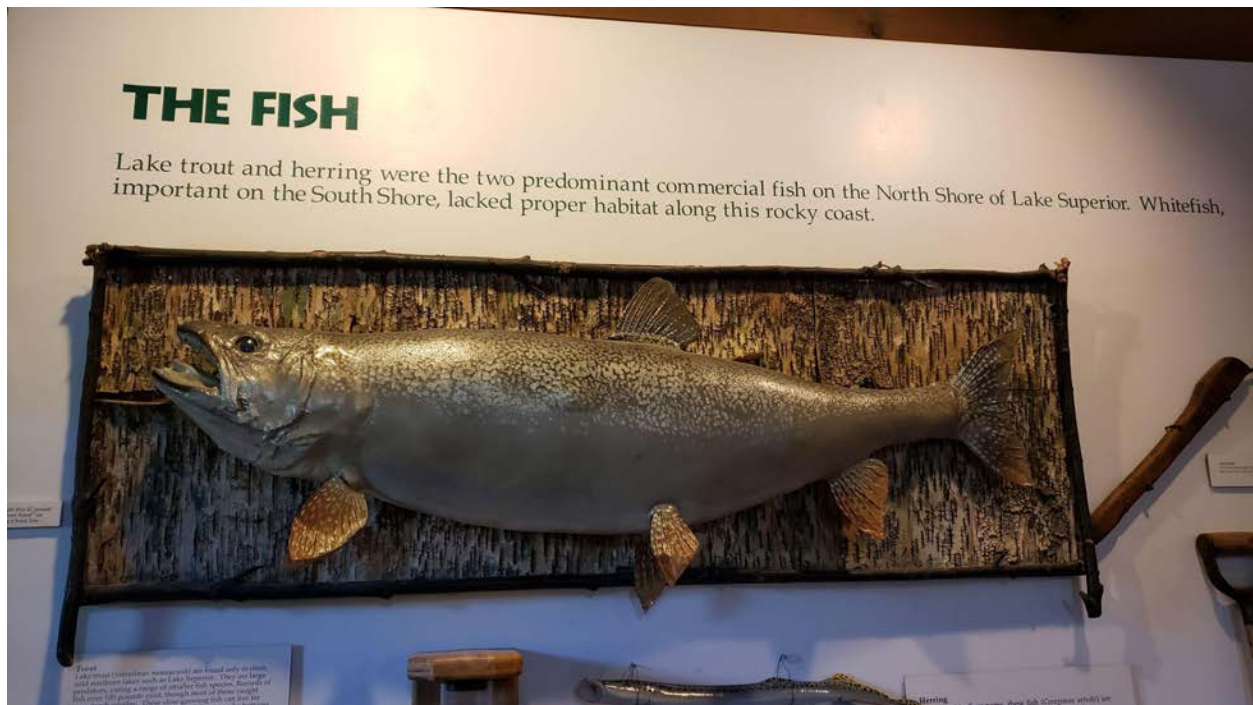
Quick, Birney, *Adrift in Aesthetic Latitudes for Those at Sea About Art*, 1980 Voyager Press, MN

Dora/Darcey Visit to Grand Marais, MN - Wednesday, June 16· 2021– Interview; Ruth Pszwaro, Artistic Director, Lyla Brown, Executive Director, Grand Marais Art Colony

1950- LIFE ON THE LAKE/FROM THE LAKE – Fishing Industry

Engaging PERSON: While visiting with Virginia Storlie, President of the Tofte Historical Society and our tour guide for the North Shore Commercial Fishing Museum, Tofte, MN, we asked about interesting personalities from the 1950's. We knew we wanted to focus on a fisherman working the lake during its commercial fishing heyday. With a grin, she first demurred explaining, "These are fishermen and their families, they all have interesting personalities." Finally, she offered the name Helmar Aakvik and a museum newsletter of his attempt to rescue a young fisherman on November 28, 1958. The monologue written below is "from" his words with exact quotes from the newsletter oral history account, and transitions created by me to give insight into the commercial fishing industry of the 1950's.

On that note a case could be written for Virginia Storlie herself as an engaging person. What a delight to hear her stories of "November Gales," have her explain the importance of fishing net repair and experience her passion for maintaining and expanding the history of the commercial fishing museum on the North Shore. To visit the museum, I recommend going a day early and purchasing one of the several self-published books written by people/families working in the commercial fishing industry. This is a museum of stories, and they should not be missed. So, take your book or one of the amazing newsletters the museum and historical society publish back to your cabin, read them aloud, talk about them, share your ideas of what it would be like to make Lake Superior your place of work. Then go back to the museum, look, listen, and find those stories in the beautifully preserved and displayed exhibits. The museum is small in square footage and large in the voices of people who lived and made their home off the lake as commercial fishermen and their families.



The Fisherman

An actor sits on a wooden box or stool a large, fishing net cascading around the playing area. The well-used net is in need of repair before being deployed for the upcoming fishing season on Lake Superior April to November. Gnarled hands competently tie and repair the net during the following monologue.

It was about seven in the morning and the kid had gone out, it was cold about 6 degrees. The lake was smoking, you could tell a nor'wester gonna blow up—but the kid was just out of the Navy, didn't know no better. Well, I knew where he had set, about a mile west of here. He was fishing out of the same fish house, catching ciscoes, walleye, blue pike, and whitefish. Yah, it's a fact, I was worried, we all were. You know what they say, "Superior, she don't give up her dead." So, I got ready to go out and look for him. I put on lots of wool, pants, and shirt. I had a rubber suit over that, and wool mitts and a sheepskin helmet. I got an old fish box, a rope for a sea anchor and set out. I guess about 8 o'clock. The wind had come up and the sea had really started to run. Yah I was in my 18-foot skiff and it was getting knocked around out there by the wind, they told me later it was up ta 70 miles per hour. I couldn't see nothing, so I thought I'd start to head on back the way I thought he mighta gone. I'd been getting a lot of spray and everything off the top of them seas, all over the motor. There was no jacket on it see so it all iced up. The line froze up, so I couldn't get it going. Well, I had not tools—just an ax—so I had to bare my hands to get the gas line off. Then I stuck it in my mouth and got the ice

out you see. Well, I got the motor going, and pretty soon a big sea went right over me, and the skiff was swamped—oh, I'd guess a quarter full. I kept going, I figured a storm's got to run out of wind eventually.

But keeping into the wind I wasn't going nowhere the sea was so big, maybe twenty, twenty-five feet. The skiff was taking a terrible pounding, the planks were separating and the screws pulling right out. Well, I couldn't keep going or I'd have no skiff left so I shut off the motor and drifted – the rest of the day, all night and the next forenoon. I thought I'd kind of drift the same direction as the kid and maybe I'd still find him. Got dark then, real dark. Mighta been a moon, don't recall.

(Pause)

You can't sleep, you do, you're gone. I chopped ice all night. I started thinking that's what happened to the young fella, he didn't have no way to chop the ice building up, so the weight of it pulled him over. I hope he didn't suffer...much. Probably just went to sleep. I think I musta dreamed of herring fish cakes fried in butter, crisp on the outside, tender on the inside. Nah, if I'd fallen asleep, I wouldn't be setting here right now. I did see a Coast Guard cutter looking for us once in the night, mighta been twice, big searchlights flashing across my eyes. But the ice was too dangerous for them to get close.

Next morning the wind had calmed some so I thought it was time to think about getting back in. I couldn't see the shore, even from the top of the seas, but the sun shone up and I knew which way to go. I chopped the motor loose and got it going. It was slow going I tell ya, the skiff all bogged down with ice. My legs froze in solid so I couldn't stand even. I run like that about six hours and then the motor quit. No gas....

Well, I sat thinking – what am I going to do now? I remembered I still had my oars only by then my hands were too cold to grip them. I took my knife and heavy wool shirt and cut out some mitts from out the back, then I could row ya see?

Next thing I know I look up and there was the cutter. They run right into the side of the skiff! Said I'd been out there on the lake for 28 hours. At the dock this old helicopter wanted to take me to the hospital. As if I needed a hospital! I only froze two toes where I cut the rubber boots with the ax chopping ice and water got in. I was mighty hungry, ate an egg sandwich and drank about a pint of coffee my neighbor lady brung me. She was a fisherman's wife, knew what I'd been going through out there as much as anyone could. Never found the kid. I still feel sorry about that a course. *(Pause)* Well anyway, I couldn't do that no more, I was only sixty then.

(End of Monologue)

The SOURCES:

Virginia Storlie, President of the Tofte Historical Society at the time of our visit



Dora/Darcey Visit to Tofte, MN – June 16th, 2021--Interview Virginia Storlie, North Shore Commercial Fishing Museum, Tofte, MN

Various Newsletters given to us by Virginia Storlie, President (2021) of the Tofte Historical Society

[North Shore Commercial Fishing Museum \(commercialfishingmuseum.org\)](http://commercialfishingmuseum.org)

“Helmar Aakvik’s Daring Rescue Attempt” from the North Shore Commercial Fishing Museum Journal – Newsletter, Volume 3, Fall 1995, Issue 4

[Thanksgiving ice-storm rescue highlighted in 'Bold Sea Stories' collection \(carnegiehero.org\)](http://carnegiehero.org)

[Carnegie Medal, \\$500 awarded one year after attempted rescue \(carnegiehero.org\)](http://carnegiehero.org)

[Helmer M. Aakvik – Carnegie Hero Fund Commission](http://carnegiehero.org)

1960- THEME –POLITICAL activities and activists in the North Shore

This decade's focus on political activities and activists in the North Shore presents the perfect opportunity to bring the research to a personal level and personal stories. My inspiration for this approach comes from several areas.

1- Sod House Theater itself and the theater's approach as written on their website – 2/28/2022 "Our work engages and lifts up local actors, arts organizations, nonprofits, and businesses through a collaborative process centered on **each community's unique history and assets.**" (Emphasis mine)

2- Given the above, the focus shifts to the community, the world and how the extreme events of this decade shaped the world and more specifically North Shore communities' everyday life. For a broader view of changes I found help from Rhoda R. Gilman's book "Stand Up!:The Story of Minnesota's Protest Tradition." Especially, the following passage in the Progressive Era chapter (1950 to 1975)

"Economically these decades saw crops multiplied many-fold by mechanized equipment, chemical fertilizers, insecticides, and herbicides. They saw taconite mills built to replace the exhausted mines on the Mesabi, and they saw the St. Lawrence seaway, a century-long dream of bringing ocean shipping to Duluth realized at last. The same years also saw the melting of differences between country and city lifestyles as power lines spread to every corner of the state, freeways made travel faster and rural schools were consolidated. By the end of the 1950s nearly every household had a television set with its fantasy world of sex, celebrity, consumption and limitless expectations."

3- I believe people come to activism in a variety of ways as evidenced by U of Minnesota Mathematics professor Charlotte Striebel. (1929-2014). Striebel was notable as a strong advocate for equal rights for women and started a university group called WAMS (Women Against Male Supremacy). A woman of tremendous scholarship, leadership, and activism, one of her most far-reaching accomplishments was inspired by wanting to help her child. Her daughter Kathy was a swimmer but was refused the opportunity to swim for her school. Charlotte took the case to the Human Rights Department in St. Paul, filed a lawsuit and won the case. Further she worked with Representative Phyllis Kahn to pass a state law that required equal opportunity in athletics for girls on a state level.

4- So, the question for me, in this decade, is how to explore the North Shore's unique communities and assets during the 1960s. How do we find those stories? They may not be stories resulting in revised legislation, but the quiet stories of activism or larger stories of agitation should be a part of our research process and development of this new theatrical work. In my opinion the 1960s decade fits the brief perfectly because...

5- I believe some actor's potentially working on the Lighthouse/North Shore/Lake Superior production piece could have memories from the 1960s. They could have parents, grandparents, family members with stories to share. Stories of their own activism, their own letters to the editor, their own stories of agitating for change. I'd like to hear those stories. I'd like to have elements of our eventual production illuminating those unique actions.

And to provide guidance for the actors in how to interview I offer two wonderful resources and a checklist of advice:

Moment Work: Tectonic Theater Project's Process of Devising Theater by Moises Kaufman and Barbara Pitts McAdams

Improvising Real Life by Jo Salas (and any other book on Playback Theater!)

Also, advice from my mother, writer Lyda Lanier, who has interviewed hundreds of people in her career as a writer. As a featured columnist she wrote "Journal Entry From Ridgeville," for over three decades. As an interviewer she is curious, and allows silences to yield new material. Also impressive to me is her ability to ask a simple question, "tell me about that," listen to the answer and ask a follow up question to help even the most taciturn Midwesterner reveal their thoughts, ideas, and plans.

1. Get the follow up information right away. E-mail, phone number, address. You will always have further questions and you need to know how to get in touch.
2. Housekeeping – Occupation? Title? How long have they held this title? What is their name? Exact spelling of their name? Age? Where are they from?
3. Say yes whenever possible. If they said, "Did you want me to tell you about the time I was on the school board and the librarian wanted to add a book to the library some parents didn't like?" Say yes – see where it goes. Don't assume you know what the person has to say, go with their flow. AND Make sure they know early on – your focus, 1960s, controversy, social issues, things changing, what got people excited? Letters to the editor? Not gossip, their feelings/ideas/actions.
4. Each person has their own vocabulary, their way of saying something. Find those unique verbalizations. Don't put it in your words, put it in their words. Phrases they use, slang they use, rhythm of their speech. Note if they are quick

talkers, breathy talkers, or have a video of the interview if they are willing and it doesn't hinder the conversation.

5. Same with behaviors – look for their physical characteristics. Describe the person, their hands, the objects they hold in their hands, do they cross their legs, sprawl on the chair? Have your own visual picture of the person.

6. Always end by saying “Anything I haven’t asked?” and/or “Anything you’d like to tell me?”

The SOURCES

Lyda Lanier, Interviewing best practices– Ridgeville, Wisconsin. June 12, 2021

Gilman, Rhoda R. Stand Up: The Story of Minnesota’s Protest Tradition. Minnesota Historical Society Press, St. Paul, MN. 2012.

Kaufman, Moises and Barbara Pitts McAdams. Moment Work: Tectonic Theater Project’s Process of Devising Theater. Penguin Random House Canada Limited. Toronto, Canada. 2018

Salas, Jo. Improvising Real Life: Personal Story in Playback Theater. Tusitala Publishing, New Paltz, NY. 2007.

[When women went public : feminist reforms in the 1970s \(mnhs.org\)](https://mnhs.org/when-women-went-public-feminist-reforms-in-the-1970s)

[Charlotte Striebel | College of Science and Engineering \(umn.edu\)](https://www.charlottestriebel.com/college-of-science-and-engineering)

[chap31.pdf \(weebly.com\)](https://www.weebly.com/chap31.pdf)

[Enemies of the people : asbestos and the Reserve Mining trial \(mnhs.org\)](https://mnhs.org/enemies-of-the-people-asbestos-and-the-reserve-mining-trial)

1970s Decade – THEME - SINKING OF THE EDMUND FITZGERALD

Researcher Narrative: I began this Decade’s research ready to dive into the facts and theories surrounding the sinking of the Edmund Fitzgerald, November 10, 1975.

Gradually this changed as I discovered a myriad of sources mostly by mariners, “boat nerds” as one of the experts called himself, and oceanographers. In other words, people who knew a lot more about this incredible (and tragic) story than I could even imagine, people who were answering questions about this event I didn’t even have the know-how to ask! At this point I transitioned to focusing on “the November Gales” the strong winds and storms which come upon Lake Superior in Late October through November. In one of the many online articles about the sinking of the Edmund Fitzgerald the storms are

described as a “wild parade of some of the most glorious meteorological nature has to offer.” Another description from Captain Dudley Paquette, shipmaster for the lake carrier Wilfred Sykes and on the waters the night of November 9/10, 1975.

“We were really out right in the middle of the lake -- just huge seas, 30-35 foot seas. I was completely awash and I was on a super ship,” I was registering 70, 75 knots steady with gusts to 100. Huge seas, I was completely awash. Water was flying over the top of my bridge.”

Evocative STORY: Another reason for my change in focus concerned Sod House theater’s brainstorming production ideas. From the very beginning of this research to the production process we’ve discussed creating the “big storm.” How could the Sod House play based on Lake Superior, the North Shore and Split Rock, create the November Gales? How could we produce and give audiences the visceral and collective experience of understanding why the Lighthouse was built so long ago? Guide them to understand the November gales were so severe the Lighthouse had to be built, it’s beacon and sound to guide ships safely through the November storms. As the Split Rock Lighthouse Home page says, “A November gale that wrecked nearly 30 ships in 1905 prompted this rugged landmark's construction.”

Author/Investigator Michael Shumacher’s comments on how the storm looked from the land in his book *The Mighty Fitz*: “While attempting to obliterate any vessel still left on the lake, the storm also worked furiously on all things anchored to land. Fierce winds snapped power lines everywhere, trees were torn from the ground by their roots...Winds swayed the Mackinac Bridge...The Soo Locks facing winds of up to 90 mph had been turned into slips of churning water, with waves surging over the lock gates...Nothing, small or large, was safe on the water.”

When I transferred my research focus to the November Gales, it gave me further insight into the loss of life, 29 men lost the night of the Fitzgerald’s sinking, their families forever changed by the November Gale. These thoughts and story lines led to reflection on the survivors. What happens to the people who came out of that very same storm and ended up home with their families, instead of at the bottom of the Lake? How do they process the tragedy and even more how do these families survive the loss of their loved ones? So, I became more interested in the human impacts of the storm which for me translates into the live audience watching a performance of a storm. I believe an audience’s awareness can be heightened if they commit to their part as a “watcher” of the storm. By committing I mean they might physically do something; make a sound, wave a scarf, create motion of a prop, or a reaction. Their belief it is “storming” illuminates the impact of the created storm.

Engaging PERSON/PEOPLE: Virginia Storlie, our contact at the Commercial Fishing Museum in Tofte, MN describes her first experience with a November Gale as being like a wall of water, wind, and sound coming at her, like it could flatten her down. She describes being buffeted, not able to walk straight, arms either pressed to her sides or flaying in the wind. She describes the sound as sometimes whistling, sometimes moaning, and sometimes filled with cracks from trees, ice, or structures. She concluded it was difficult to tell where sound came from as the sounds were echoing everywhere.

An eyewitness from a 2018 storm on Lake Superior says: "...the waves unrelentingly batter the cliffs and heavy winds disperse a dense layer of mist over the surrounding trees."

Michael DeWitt, In Lake Superior Magazine, September 2017 writes.

"Then sometime just after dark, a sudden gust of wind blew through our camp. It quickly turned into a howling eastern gale. What we couldn't know was that a thunderstorm packing 70+ mph winds had just blown off Minnesota's North Shore and scored a direct hit on Outer Island.

As the squall came up, our anchors failed to hold in the face of 6- to 8-foot seas. This, despite the fact we'd both set two bow lines. We struggled in vain to get our boats off the beach; only my boat made it. I tried to get my friend to toss a line so I could pull his boat out, but the roar of the wind and sea was deafening. I didn't realize his boat was already sinking. He had no intention of boarding a sinking vessel.

Over the booming seas, I heard him scream for me to get out and find shelter.

As I pulled away, I looked back just as a flash of lightening illuminated the shoreline. It is a sight that will be seared into my memory forever: My friend, not able to hold his boat any longer, let go. It went sideways into the rocks and exploded into pieces."

CONFLICT: November Gales- The Through line- warning systems – portends - Signs of a storm coming-Foghorn – lighthouse beam.

Weather proverbs/Combined with how nature warns of a big storm coming – some of these culled from “Storm’s Coming” by Margi Preus a lovely book based on a little girl reading signs of a coming storm from her home at Split Rock Lighthouse and “Red Sky at Night” a children’s picture book by Elly MacKay:

- Dandelion blossoms close before a storm
- A bee is never caught in a shower
- Red at night, sailor’s delight; Red in the morning, Sailor’s warning
- When ladybug’s swarm, expect a day that’s warm
- When the dew is on the grass, no rain will come to pass
Spiders spin their web short and stout to make strong for high winds and rain.
- Air feels heavy or suddenly light – due to change in barometric pressure
No weather be ill if the wind be still
Frogs will call before the rain, but in the sun are quiet again.
Ring around the moon, Rain will come soon.
Cats leap and chase their tails to warn of thunderstorms and gales.
- Knees creak, catches doors stick, closet door pulls hard/sticks, drawers stick – all signs a coming rain will pour and pour
- Leaves twisting, fluttering, laying unnaturally still, then cascading into the air.
- Black swirling clouds, whirls of breeze, lake water shifts in patterns between sun, cloud cover, green, blue, black, purple, sunny yellow patterns
- Gulls swooping near the water – If birds fly low, then rain ye shall know.”

Possible STYLE, GENRE, MOOD: In looking for inspiration to theatrically create the November Gales I found several dance pieces with the *Wizard of Oz* storm and the opening tempest from Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*. The most applicable examples were outdoor theaters and the companies that chose to focus less on lighting, scenic elements, and video special f/x. In these pieces storm making scarves both string scarves and long material scarves were often used. Additionally, live music, percussive instruments, sound f/x both audio or human voice or musical instruments, actor’s

movement/dance, props movement and the actor's or dancers' reactions/responses to the howling wind and lashing rain.

My experience with live interactive events motivates me to query how the audience participates in the "storm making" process. Endowing the audience as "Gale makers" they could perform a large group version of the actor's game/warm-up sound scape; where actors are given a specific place and must produce the sounds of the place with their voices, bodies, simple percussive instruments etc. Our November Gale could be performed in four parts:

1-The lead up to the November Gales (with portends of the storm coming)

Human signs, Natural signs

2.-Warning of The November Gales

Readying the light house, foghorn, beacon

3-The Storm

4-The Aftermath

Video of Isadora Duncan – as a source of inspiration in the storm making process:

[isadora duncan dance video - Bing video](#)

[Storm - Contemporary dance choreography - YouTube](#)

MUSIC/IMAGES/SOUNDS: [44 Throwback Facts About The 1970s \(factinate.com\)](#)

The SOURCES

Descriptions of the November Gales:

<https://youtu.be/9vST6hVRj2A> - Recording of Gordon Lightfoot's "The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald"

"With the gales of November remembered."

[The Gales of November - YouTube](#) Royal Oak Public Library

[Nine Major Lake Superior Storms - Lake Superior Magazine](#)

[The Gales Of November Witness The Wrath Of Lake Superior – OhTheme](#)

[Newsflare - Incredible footage shows monster waves in Lake Superior lashing coast during storm](#)

[Riding an Angry Lake - Lake Superior Magazine](#)

Children's book Resources for Weather Portends/Proverbs: "Storms Coming" by Margi Preus (St. Paul, MN author) and "Red Sky at Night" by Elly Mackay.

Intriguing questions: When one is warned – how does knowing tragedy approaches change actions? See below with emphasis mine.

From radio show [Listen to radio transmission on the night of the Edmund Fitzgerald's sinking | Michigan Radio](#)

After suffering this damage, Captain McSorley contacted Cooper and asked him to shadow him down the lake. It was really several hours later that what could be the last transmission from the *Fitzgerald* was received. Essentially Captain Cooper or the mate asked McSorley how he was doing, how the vessel was riding. He said, "We're holding our own, going along like an old shoe." In an interview from his retirement home in Florida, Arthur Anderson Captain Jesse Cooper said the memory of that night still haunts him. He says Captain McSorley didn't let on that his ship and crew were in danger. "I think he knew he was in trouble, but he couldn't spread the word because it would panic the crew," said Cooper. When asked how McSorley knew he was in trouble, Cooper replied: "What the hell would you think if you had a hole in your bottom and were taking in more water than you could pump out?"

[Listen: We Are Holding Our Own | Wisconsin Public Radio \(wpr.org\)](#)

Final Thoughts: A foghorn, a beacon, nature, our bodies/instincts give warning – who is listening? Looking? Are we warned if we don't see or hear the warning? How about if our leaders choose to hide the warning or the knowing from us for our own good?

1980: Beacon Lighting Ceremony

Researcher Narrative: Lee Radzak begins his book "The View from Split Rock: A Lighthouse Keeper's Life" with the account of how he began the annual beacon lighting ceremony to commemorate the lives lost during the sinking of the Edmund Fitzgerald. He describes driving home in the late afternoon and hearing the Gordon Lightfoot song, playing on his car radio to remember the 10th anniversary of the tragedy. Seized with the desire to do something special to commemorate this important anniversary, he lit the lighthouse beacon that night. This began a new tradition which has created its own set of sojourners to the lighthouse. Also, it continues to provide meaning and comfort (I

hope) to the families of the men who lost their lives on that evening in November 1975. And also I would imagine to other loved ones left behind when sailors, swimmers, or fishermen face the challenge of the lake and lose. Regarding the ceremony, an overview from a Duluth newspaper below:

Annual Lighting of the Beacon ceremony began on November 10th, 1985 on the 10 year anniversary of the Edmund Fitzgerald sinking. The freighter left Superior on Nov. 9, 1975, with a load of taconite, bound for Detroit. It got caught in a massive storm on Lake Superior. Its last radio contact was with the freighter Arthur M. Anderson on the evening of Nov. 10. The Fitzgerald then disappeared from radar near the entrance to Whitefish Bay at the eastern end of the lake. The Fitzgerald's 29 crew members were lost in the wreck. The tragedy was memorialized in Canadian musician Gordon Lightfoot's well-known song. Lee Radzak, lighthouse keeper, began the tradition on the 10th anniversary of the wreck in 1985. That was the first time he lit the beacon in tribute. By the 1990s, Radzak began putting together an official program with the ship's bell and beacon lighting. At 4:30 p.m., the lighthouse will close temporarily while the names of the Fitzgerald crew members will be read to the tolling of a ship's bell. Lighthouse staff will toll a bell 29 times in honor of each man who lost his life on the Fitzgerald, and then toll the bell a 30th time for all lost mariners.

Evocative STORY For me, this decade's research became about near and far. What action by one person can have a lasting impact on a large group of people? What are the ripple effects of one person's action? I'm sure this research interest is in part driven by the pandemic we are still fighting as I write this in August of 2021. At first, I resisted going with the impulse to use the fight against COVID-19 as a counterpoint to anything. However, I quickly discovered several important things which swayed me to continue on this path, see where it led, and how it might be used in a future production:

- 1- On November 10, 2020 the beacon ceremony was virtual only as many of the jobs, schools, events, and rituals had to do during surges of Covid-19 infections
- 2- On April 10, 2020 the Split Rock lighthouse beacon was lit as a show of unity with the front line workers, health care workers, essential workers who were continuing to work, and in some cases putting their own lives and families at risk.

“Split Rock Lighthouse shines bright on April 10th, 2020 in solidarity with the fight against COVID-19” by Story North Productions: [Split Rock Lighthouse Beacon Lighting - YouTube](#)

3- Sod House Theater, as most theaters, canceled their entire 2020 season and had no way of knowing when, if, and how they would ever return to performing in communities throughout Minnesota.

4- A Beacon of light is often a symbol of light in the darkness, hope, following the light, and in fact the beacon was built to guide ships into safe waters, or away from the cliff infested shoreline. Given this, what did the lighting of the beacon come to mean for the people of Minnesota who saw it, to me who watched the footage above and was moved beyond words, and to the lighthouse keeper, or site manager who actually turned the crank of the beacon to begin its movement and light?

Engaging PERSON and Clear CONFLICT

Near – a family who lives and works at the lighthouse – Far – the people who see the beacon from far away

Near versus Far (NOTE: Some of this is inferred (by me) therefore Fiction based on Fact):

Near – Lee Radzak turns on the radio of his car late afternoon on November 10 1985, hears a song written by...

Far – Gordon Lightfoot, plinking on his guitar to write a new song, reads an article in Newsweek about the sinking of the Edmund Fitzgerald. He's inspired to write a song based on the tragic events coupled with his own experiences of the unpredictable weather and storms around the Great Lakes. He records the song in a downtown Toronto studio in December 1975 then releases it on his 1976 album called, "Summertime Dream."

Near – Lee Radzak goes into his home next to the lighthouse tells his wife he's going to light the beacon. He climbs the stairs, puts the mechanisms in place needed to light the beacon and Split Rock Light house beacon beams out into the night.

Far – A man, a woman, wonders why the lighthouse is on, OR a man, a woman sees the beacon and realized it's significance immediately.

Near – Lighthouse Keeper Lee Radzak decides to light the beacon again in 1986, over the year he's received feedback as to how meaningful the beacon lighting was to various people. He decides to continue this reach out and commemoration.

Far – A resident of nearby Two Harbors calls Lee and asks if he's lighting the beacon this year, Lee responds Yes.

Near – The family arrives, bundled up to stand at the base of the lighthouse and watch the beacon being lit. They crane their necks back to observe the light emanate from the tower and sweep out over Lake Superior and the entire North Shore communities.

Far – Word of mouth spreads and the event becomes a ceremony where names are read, music is played, bells are tolled, and the beacon is lit. All attended by hundreds of people willing to brave the probably fog, cold weather, and wind of the North Shore in early November.

Possible STYLE, GENRE, MOOD: For me this decade has a very people centered focus as it became about the impacts of actions. How one person's action can change the trajectory of a situation, a response, a journey. The ripple can launch something improbable. The article referenced below was particularly interesting as it focuses in on the wives of the keepers. How they lived very different lives from fellow wives/mothers of their time. How their children's lives were so different from the other children they were accompanying to school.

[I Hate Lighthouses! - Apostle Islands National Lakeshore \(U.S. National Park Service\) \(nps.gov\)](https://www.nps.gov/ahis/learn/history-culture/visiting-the-islands.htm)

MUSIC/IMAGES/SOUNDS:

Events: [What Happened in 1980 - Significant Events, Prices, 1980 Top Movies, TV and Music \(thepeoplehistory.com\)](https://www.thepeoplehistory.com/1980/)

Design Influences: <https://www.architecturaldigest.com/story/children-of-the-80s-will-remember-these-home-trends>

Songs: - [Top 100 Songs of the 80s \(listchallenges.com\)](https://www.listchallenges.com/top-100-songs-of-the-80s/)

The SOURCES

[The Story Behind Gordon Lightfoot's Famous Edmund Fitzgerald Song \(awesomemitten.com\)](https://www.awesomemitten.com/story/behind-gordon-lightfoot-s-famous-edmund-fitzgerald-song/)

[Split Rock's Modern-Day Light Keeper: Meet Lee Radzak and Family - Lake Superior Magazine](https://www.lakesuperior.com/split-rock-modern-day-light-keeper-meet-lee-radzak-and-family/)

[Land of 10,000 Stories: Longest-serving keeper of Split Rock Lighthouse ships out - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)

[Fitzgerald shipwreck ceremony continues after founder's retirement from Split Rock Lighthouse | Duluth News Tribune](https://www.duluthtribune.com/news/fitzgerald-shipwreck-ceremony-continues-after-founder-s-retirement-from-split-rock-lighthouse/) November 7, 2019

[Hundreds gather at Split Rock in memory of Edmund Fitzgerald's demise | Duluth News Tribune](#), November 10, 2019

[Spilt Rock Lighthouse Edmund Fitzgerald Memorial Beacon Lighting Minnesota State Park - YouTube](#) November 12, 2016

1990- THEME – GHOST STORIES OF LAKE SUPERIOR

“A Favor for a Neighbor”: Told by Helen Cline born in Austin, MN and lived with her husband Calvin and 3 boys (now grown and gone), about two miles down the road from Split Rock Lighthouse, Two Harbors, MN.

The Neighbor:

The thing is, I'm not sure I wanta tell you this story, don't want you to think I'm a nutcase... besides there's plenty of eerie happenings on Lake Superior and the Lighthouse, for that matter, do we really need something else to scare the pants off us next time a fog rolls in?

All right...all right, well...now this was back in the early nineties you understand? No for goodness sakes I wasn't born in the 1890's... oh....you.... Well yes it was a long time ago now probably doesn't even matter.... All right then, if you insist. But don't say I didn't warn you.

Lee Radzak, he was the lighthouse keeper then, he had to go down to St. Paul and work some kinks out between the DNR and the Minnesota Historical Society. Jane, his wife, wanted to go along to see some of her folks, a course and take the kids. So anyways, they asked me and my husband Cal to be the keepers of the lighthouse for a few days. It'd been a cold winter and spring was coming but not fast enough to suit any of us. They didn't want to leave the place be, a course we said, yes, they were good neighbors to us. Jane brung me a wild rice salad when my dad passed. They showed us the ins and outs, watch this sidewalk it ices over, the toilet lever sticks sometimes, the catch on this window don't close right, stuff you tell someone when they're fixing to look after your place. Probably this was more complicated because you know it's a historical sight and all. Now me and Cal were listening but then we got to joking how we'd better watch out for ghosts, skeletons, and rattling chains if we were to climb up the lighthouse tower at midnight...the witching hour...oh we thought we were hilarious you see?

Well, Lee laughed, but Jane...got kind of a funny look on her face and started to say something... but she and Lee kinda looked at each other and that was that. Nothing

more was said. I did remember the look, the awkward moment later that night feeling bad I guess because our jokes struck a nerve. Something probably between husband and wife, stuff like that...it happens. Anyways, we had no trouble the first three days, it was cold, no wind to speak of, a little shoveling but we were used to that. Then Cal got a call, could he do an emergency truck run to Idaho, the company he worked for had a couple guys down with the flu. Now Cal didn't want to leave me at the lighthouse by myself, but I said, oh go on, the Radzaks's will be back before you know it.

So on the night we're talking about I was by myself feeling a little nervous but also "empowered," like those Our Bodies, Ourselves women, we can do it gals. I'll tell you straight up I wasn't used to being on my own, not with Cal and raising three kids always underfoot all the time. But I made some of Jane's good hot chocolate and settled in with a book. Well, I musta fallen asleep because suddenly I felt a cold breeze at the back of my neck. In my wake-up daze I kinda slapped at it, you know like you do when you don't know where something's coming from. My first thought was, gol darn it, that window catch is open.

As I crossed the room, the breeze got stronger, wind rattling against the window panes. Sure enough, the wind picked up something fierce. But all the windows are shut, no leaks. I started to get a funny feeling crawling up my spine. Something's wrong.

And a course the first thing I did was try to talk myself out of it, you woulda too. I said to myself, it's just an open window, the door blew open. Now it's so cold I can't stop shaking, so I grab a quilt off the couch and wrap it around myself real tight. I guess I stood there shivering for a while trying to convince myself to ignore the whole thing, go to bed. I swear to you someone, or something, read my thoughts because the temperature dropped another 10 degrees. I never felt anything like it. Before I know it, my steps are drawing me toward the front door, where I can see the lighthouse. Something seems to be moving around up there in the lighthouse tower. I said to myself, Helen, are you going to ignore this like a wimpy little willie nillie coward and crawl in your bed under a pile of blankets...which actually sounded pretty good to me. Or are you going to put on your parka and boots and go see what the heck is going on?

Well I guess you know which one I chose. So, I'm tromping my way icicles of air sticking to my cheeks, my eyebrows. I start climbing those thirty-two metal steps, taking me up and up, my feet getting heavier with every clang of the steps. Ducking into the tower I'm surrounded by a green fog, like a mist I guess you'd call it. I feel my way around the railing of the big glass windows until I can peer straight out onto the lake.

That's when I hear a sound, like water splashing up on the tide on the beach. Swish Swish, swish, swish. Only there's no water...anywhere and the lighthouse and

cliff are at least 130 feet above the tideline. What I'm hearing is not possible. My breath got panicked and I clouded up the window. When I wiped a peephole I see below me the lake covered over by this lid of steam. Green fog. Creepy as all get out. Now recall, I told you this was going to get hard to believe. But I'm peering out over the lake when the green fog morphs into a shape.... a woman in a long gown.... with piercing purple eyes, staring at me from above, over, within the lake I can't really tell. I hear a voice, it's low like the lowest, saddest voice you've ever heard. "We are here, "We are here" Okay I know that sounds like too many nights reading Dr. Seuss and that's just what I tried to tell myself. But my mind got blanked by the water sounds.

Swish Swish, Swish Swish. I don't know what come over me but I feel words bubbling from inside me, so I say them. "I am here, I am here." I say that until the words expand in my throat. I feel my legs get bigger, stronger, like shafts of rock digging down through the lighthouse tower and into the cliff. I am the cliff, I am the rocky shore, holding up the lighthouse, I am the lighthouse. I feel a tickle in my throat, like a burp but instead of a burp comes out the loudest foghorn sound, just like the one you probably heard on the tour. It's coming from inside me, every 20 seconds that sound is coming out and it's pushing against the green fog lady. She nods, I swear, one dip of the chin just like this... Suddenly my eyes are burning holes in my skull, and they move, my torso swivels, my whole body is moving, like the rotation of a lighthouse. I see an orange light beaming out across the lake, blinking. The light, it's coming from me, from my eyes, I am the lighthouse, I am the signal, the sound, the light. My body is bursting, head aching, and I fight against it. I thought I can't do this, I gotta get outta here. I struggle against it, I feel my legs grow thinner, weaker, the sound grows silent, my eyes dim. I hear Swish, Swish starting to fade, and I know I can break free, stop this madness before I turn into a purple eyed ghost or something. Swish swish...gets weaker and weaker until I hear it as an echo. Followed by another echo so soft I can barely make it out. "We are here...we are he...."

Now my breathing is all I hear. Someone's out there, someone needs my help, I don't know how, and I don't know why, or why me, but I'm the only one who can help. What's it gonna cost me, my life, my sanity? I'm resisting, thinking, I'm not a lighthouse, I'm a mom, a custodian at the elementary school in Two Harbors, people know me as hard working, honest to a fault Lutheran lady. Swish.... swish...softer...fainter...

I realize I'm all those things but I'm also a Minnesotan. We're made of sterner stuff, not give up stuff, try your hardest stuff even when you don't know what you're doing and it's a lady with purple eyes asking for help. I take a deep breath and I shout. "I am here." I shout it again. "I am here." It's like a switch gets pulled. My legs grow into the cliff, my words become a foghorn, my lights beam out over the vastness of the Lake.

And on it goes, until my throat is raw, my legs rubber, and my eyes burn into the purple eyes of the Lady of the Lake. I don't know how long this goes on. Suddenly, she blinks. Swish Swish....and she's gone...vanished. The green fog is gone with her, I fall on to the railing to catch my breath. Behind me I can feel the hum of the real lighthouse beam, all those little reflecting mirrors humming.

Finally, I made my way down and back to the house. It's 4:00 a.m. I collapse into the chair and don't know a thing until I hear the phone ringing, Cal saying he was coming to pick me up.

You might be wondering if I told Cal. Well, no I did not, never told a soul until this last year when I learned the rest of the story. I went to a fundraiser for the Democratic party, over there in Edina where my sister lives. Well, I heard one of those pressed haired reporters ask the lady Senator if she believes in ghosts. I won't deny I was eavesdropping; I've been mighty curious about spooky stories since that happened to me twenty years ago. Anyway, this Senator gets a funny look on her face, reminding me of the look Jane Radzak had on her face so long ago. She answers, in a kind of a politician sort of way, she believes there are certainly things one can't explain, especially out in the vastness of Lake Superior. Not an outright denial so I leaned in a little closer. When the reporter asks for follow up, the senator tells of a spring boat trip back in the early nineties. Her uncle took their family out on Lake Superior and the guidance equipment got wonky. They were lost, fog and wind, moonless night. Their boat was headed into a cliff just off Two Harbors. They'd have been smashed to pieces but... she paused, got that look on her face again, then finished but for the help of the lighthouse. The Split Rock Lighthouse, the reporter asks, and the Senator says no...I don't think so...then she quickly changes the subject, the way politicians are taught to do in politicians' school, I guess.

I will tell you this. Some day when that lady is President of the United States, I'm going to write Amy Klobuchar to tell her she isn't the only one believing in the purple eyed Lady of Lake Superior. I'll tell her I was there that night too. She'll know it's true when I say...swish, swish...swish, swish.



END OF GHOST STORY

THE Sources:

Bishop, Hugh E. *Haunted Lake Superior: Ghostly Tales and Legends from the Mystical Inland Sea*, 2003, Lake Superior Port Cities, Inc. Duluth, MN

Stonehouse, Frederick. *Great Lake Ghost Stories, Superstitions and Sea Serpents*. Lake Superior Port Cities Publisher, 1997.

Northeast Region - U.S. Senator Amy Klobuchar (senate.gov)

Klobuchar announces \$1 Million federal grant for Lake Superior shoreline - Amy in the News - U.S. Senator Amy Klobuchar (senate.gov)

Myths and Mysteries of Lake Superior - Lake Superior Circle Tour

2000- THEME – ARTS ON THE NORTHSORE NOW

Researcher Narrative: As research moves forward on our Lighthouse Project, I continually gain awareness of how my personal narrative gets woven into the focus of each decade. Because Darcey and I went into the project knowing we could never create a definitive understanding of each decade's theme we knew we would be doing a lot of picking and choosing. Since I'm the filter I begin with the "hot spots" for me right now, in regards to working on the 2000 decade and our theme of "Arts on the Northshore Now."

1- There are many amazing and wonderful artists, dancers, musicians, actors, photographers, storytellers, painters, poets, and writers to choose from when it comes to looking at this decade through the "ARTS NOW" lens. Our brainstorming ranged from organizations such as the All-Volunteer Community Band in Two Harbors, MN, and Renegade Theater, a Duluth based theater company "...committed to connecting the Duluth community to what theater is now; exploring the human condition, new ideas, re-imagination, and authentic storytelling." [Renegade Theater Company - Zeitgeist \(zeitgeiststarts.com\)](http://zeitgeiststarts.com) To individual artists such as David Treuer, bestselling author, an Ojibwe Indian who grew up on the Leech Lake Reservation in northern Minnesota, and Marcie McIntire an Ojibwe beading artist who currently teaches a class at North House Folk School that I could take online October 2021 called "Intro to Anishinaabe-Style Beadwork." Not to mention all the photographers whose work is being shown at special gallery-like exhibits at Split Rock Lighthouse in rotating formats.

2- On August 13, 2021, I took an online DEI Training Course where instructor Riddhi Mukhopadhyay an attorney with the Sexual Violence Law Center emphasized, "We are in the middle of a civil rights reckoning that cannot be ignored when looking at engaging in practices involving EDI. This is a critical point of confrontation regarding issues of equity, diversity, and inclusion and the issues must be addressed now." This training and other reading has me looking at my personal commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusivity. This led me to...

3- Re-visit one of our original goals for the Lighthouse Research Project. We will focus on the core value of creating an inclusive theater development and research process that promotes and develops diversity. And re-visiting Sod House Theater's mission to: "Create professional theater experiences in close collaboration with Minnesota communities. Through playful and respectful working interaction, we gather and affirm local artists and technicians, illuminate timely and relevant issues, and create an empowering space for public dialogue and reflection." (From Sod House Theater's website)

4- As always there is the pull to research an area where I have experience, expertise so I am starting from a place of knowledge during some parts of this research project. As someone who has worked as a storyteller for over 15 years, longer when I recall I performed in the storytelling competitions in my High School Forensics program at Tomah Sr. High School, Tomah, WI. I am drawn most specifically in this decade's artists to explore Ojibwe storytellers, their art, craft, and ritual.

5- I also came to realize that up until now, at least in my research, I have not included the Ojibwe people in my portion of the project. And, I believe our research project must include the Ojibwe people, as one of the first occupants of the North Shore, the site that holds Split Rock Lighthouse, and the Lake Superior area.

6- And last, having a certain amount of trepidation as a white, middle aged, woman to be responsible about how I include indigenous storytellers. Making sure I do not appropriate the bits and bobs that might be interesting to me while leaving out the rich history of the Ojibwe storytellers or disrespecting the storytellers training and process.

For help and guidance, I turned to my alma mater the University of Minnesota press where I found an article elucidating process/guidelines for teaching/talking about Ojibwe storytellers. The article gives boundaries and ideas about how to write, speak, and teach about this topic with both respect and inclusivity.

[Creating Stories Based on Oral Traditions : Intersecting Ojibwe art curriculum \(umn.edu\)](http://umn.edu)

[Stories in Ojibwe Tradition : Intersecting Ojibwe art curriculum \(umn.edu\)](http://umn.edu)

Evocative STORY: In beginning this decade's story I express my belief that oral traditions and stories expressing values and beliefs may be an aid to celebrating and representing Ojibwe culture. These stories sometimes include what it means to be human, why something occurs in nature, or examining a puzzling question. They might also include lessons about how we as humans conduct ourselves in positive ways as

well as stories about the mysteries of birth, life, death, the spirit world. These stories are important.

And there is an appropriate time and place to tell these stories and appropriate people to tell these stories. For example, traditional storytelling in many tribes is reserved for the winter months, during the long dark evenings, with the snow and wind blowing outside. To have an Ojibwe storyteller tell a group or an audience or a family a story is a gift and should be respected and treated as such.

For me, the way to include this important piece in the 2000's decade is to include and invite an Ojibwe storyteller or artist to be part of our production. Though telling a story might not be possible since the (outdoor) Sod House Theater production would likely be in the summer months, there may be other ways to include this piece in the play. Is it images? Is it words? Is it the Ojibwe language? There are people with knowledge who are willing to help, who are dedicated to preserving the Ojibwe oral traditions and how they are represented in literature, in art, and in popular culture.

The quote below from Allie Tibbetts is an example urging non Ojibwe people to cast away assumptions and look for truths about the Ojibwe people. She reviews a children's picture book by James Bird called "The Brave." The review appeared on the website "American Indians in Children's Literature." Monday, February 15, 2021. The article's web link is below. The Editors of the website introduce Allie Tibbetts:" *She is a member of the Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa and an early childhood educator at the Fond du Lac Ojibwe School. She lives in Duluth, Minnesota, with her daughter, Zaagi*"

[An Ojibwe Mother's Thoughts on James Bird's THE BRAVE](#)

Allie Tibbetts writes:

As an adult reader I am able to detach from the inaccuracies in the story. I know the truths about my people and homeland. But other people don't. Now they will think they know us, when they still don't. I wish the author would have either chosen a made up place or chosen to do more research. I do think this book could have been really good, and there were moments where I saw it, but it was obscured by untruths. The truth is we are a real people and a real place, and the story did not resonate with me as being us or being here.

[American Indians in Children's Literature \(AICL\): Search results for ojibwe \(americanindiansinchildrensliterature.blogspot.com\)](#)

Engaging PERSON:, As I challenge myself to dive into creating a production plan, I found Dr. Anton Treuer, a professor of Ojibwe at Bemidji State University and author of

19 books. I found the first book I read of his, “Everything you Wanted to know about Indians but were Afraid to Ask.” informative, honest, and challenging. Here’s a sample from the above referenced book: “When you are creating books, music, and art, it is okay to be influenced by and to speak to the influences from people outside your racial and cultural group. If those influences are Indigenous, acknowledge and empower them. And if you are thinking about creating, writing, or speaking in controversial or “gray” areas, I recommend connecting with some authentic Native voice who can provide an honest sounding board to you. That approach offers the best chance for your work to have the reception and impact you are striving for.”

And Anton Treuer’s second book – I read in part “Living our Language: Ojibwe Tales and Oral Histories” a bilingual anthology of transcribed stories. Treuer writes in the book’s introduction: “I never recorded any sacred legends which are strictly taught through oral instructions only. However, the narration of childhood memories and Ojibwe lifeways tell a great deal about how the Ojibwe people lived, thought, and persevered during the tumultuous twentieth century.” I was able to purchase this book from the MN Historical Society Press and am still in the process of reading the transcribed interviews.

The SOURCES: The sources below are specifically skewed to include possible people/sources who may be approached regarding our project. They are (or were) scholars, teachers, and keepers (ambassadors as Anton Treuer calls himself) of the Ojibwe people and language.

Treuer, Anton. Everything you Wanted to Know about Indians but were Afraid to Ask. LQ - Levine Querido, Montclair, Amsterdam, New York. April 2021.

Treuer, Anton. Living our Language: Ojibwe Tales and Oral Histories. Minnesota Historical Society Press, St. Paul, MN, 2001.

<https://youtu.be/dlxcfAlzwNk>

TED x Talk - Thriving in Indian Country: What’s in the Way and How do we Overcome

[“Anton Treuer: Teaching Young Readers Everything They Need to Know About Indians” – Mackin Community](#)

Lois Beardslee, scholar, teacher, craftsperson, writer, and storyteller: I read an article by her in an amazing book called: A Broken Flute: The Native Experience in Books for Children. Her article “You Can’t Have my Firewood” and the article listed below were very helpful.

[NMJ: Lois Beardslee \(leelanau.com\)](#)

[H NGM N: What one says, and doesn't say, to white educators - kappanonline.org](http://kappanonline.org)

Maude Kegg, (1904-1996) I include her here as a show of respect for her storytelling and my wish I could have heard her tell a story. Also, to note that NEA recognized Kegg's work and is adding to its roster of Native American actors, writers, and storytellers.

[Maude Kegg | National Endowment for the Arts](#)

[Kegg, Maude.pdf \(umn.edu\)](#)

Eddie Benton-Banai – (1931-2020) writer, spiritual teacher who helped found the American Indian Movement. His book which I am still in the process of reading is listed below.

Benton-Banai, Edward. The Mishomis Book: The Voice of the Ojibway. Indian Country Press Incorporated, Saint Paul, MN 1979

Nokomis: [Nokomis - an Ojibwa artist and storyteller \(native-art-in-canada.com\)](http://native-art-in-canada.com)

A source that came out just after I uploaded this “final” document to the folder. Five books are being published with the goal to preserve the Ojibwe language and the stories of the Ojibwe people. Published by the MN Historical Society.

[Publication Celebration: The Aanjibimaadizing Project | Minnesota Historical Society \(mnhs.org\)](http://mnhs.org)

MUSIC/IMAGES/SOUNDS: Learning beadwork

[Marcie McIntire, North House Folk School Instructor | North House Folk School](#)

2010: Recreational Activities on the Northshore



Evocative STORY: The Lure of the North Shore Minnesota Smelt Fry

I confess to eating and enjoying the spring smelt fry in the rural Wisconsin area where I grew up. Delicious! However, at this point, I'm more interested in the people surrounding this topic and not the fish itself. Therefore, I have created a cast of characters all of whom are somehow involved in the annual event that signals the North Shore's beginning of spring. The community smelt fry! My aim with this decade is to provide a snapshot of the rural Minnesotan, their community spirit and desperation for spring after the long snowed in winters. I feel justified to call the spring urge "desperate" as I experienced the "throw off the parkas, boots, sweaters, hats" days when the temperature first rose above 60 degrees on a random Minneapolis afternoon. To walk out of class at Rarig Center and see people in shorts, tee-shirts, and sunglasses was like a balm to our collective cabin fevered frozen souls. On those days I chose an outdoor lunch on the one patch of dry grass over the dorm tradition of watching *All My Children* over the lunch hour. In this writing I hope to give some insight into a recreational activity unique to the people of the North Shore, in this case people who live nearby Split Rock River. And to give the actors who will take this research forward a place to begin imagining the lives of the people enjoying a treasured recreational activity.

Time: 2013, Springtime

Setting: A Lutheran Church basement in Two Harbors, MN--near the Split Rock River

What's Happening: The church members are preparing and serving their annual fundraising smelt fry.

The Smelt Catchers

Abner (65): He bemoans the lost ways catching plentiful smelt. Recalls wading into the Split Rock River with a cooler and scooping up hundreds of Smelt in one lunge. Still, he is reliable and knows when, where and how to catch the tiny swimming creatures. He wears hip boots and carries a dip net and bucket. Proclaiming his expertise as he delivers his product.

Horace (age unknown) A fisherman from a family of fishermen he cleans, beheads and butterflies the smelt in preparation for cooking. Knife skills are unparalleled, he demands no one speak to him when he's in his prep zone.

The Smelt Cookers:

Louise (65) Married to Abner she oversees keeping the food assembly line moving. Menu includes, Smelt, Potato Chips, Cole slaw, and Lemon bars, Coffee, Coca Cola both diet and regular to drink. Even though they needed to cut budgets this year Louise insisted they could not let standards slip and must keep the lemon wedge and tartar sauce condiments. A stickler for details if any server in the line gets too slow, she replaces them immediately with a firm push of her wooden spoon and a flat mouthed "try harder next time," smile.

Marla (88) Mother of Abner she's the keeper of the secret smelt preparation. Involving, rinsing the fish, seasoning the fish, seasoning the batter, battering the fish, breading the fish and then deep frying. Up until this year she has shown no signs of giving up the super-secret process to anyone, not even her daughter in law. However, this past tough winter has made her question whether it might be time to hand down the recipes.... but to whom?

Carol, Lisa, Shelly, Michaela, Fran, Carl, Mark(30s/40s/50s): These are the folks who show up and volunteer, arranging their already busy lives so they can arrive in the early morning and work until the last customer is served and last dish is cleaned and stowed. They "drag" along their partners, teenagers, children, in-laws and encourage them to help out as well. They are frantically interested in who's going to get the secret recipe and fear Louise's spoon.

The Smelt Eaters:

Pastor and his wife

Single father and his teenage daughter

New family to the area – still shopping for a church.

Men's/ Women's church groups – While waiting in line these folks talk, chat, gossip and anticipate a wonderful meal: Topics: road conditions they speak about icy roads most people wouldn't dare to go out on as if they were nothing to worry about. Vikings: The Vikings quarterback in 2012 was Christian Ponder, season 10-6, made it to the playoffs but were defeated by the Green Bay Packers in a wild card matchup. Church Choir is always a hot topic as the choir director tends to select dirge type hymns to sing and while beautiful, they do nothing to lift the weary wintered spirits.

Various teenagers

Newcomers – first time attendees who ask a lot of questions and are very cheerful. They may be related to someone in the area, visiting to snowshoe along one of the trails, coming to see the Light house as it opens etc.

Various local politicians/or community members – the mayor, the town council, the Split Rock lighthouse keeper and his family, the priest from the local Catholic church: These folks attend the Smelt Fry every year and can spot any changes in the menu, smelt quality, food, or drinks. The kerfuffle of 2004 still hangs in everyone's mind when the Lutheran lady volunteer used bottled lemon juice instead of juice from real lemons for the lemon bars. They may reminisce loudly about this mistake to reassure themselves the lemon bars are like they should be.

The Smelt Fry Organizer:

Amanda (23): A young mother, she's the church secretary. For the first time this year she offered to create the smelt fry poster advertising the event. Usually, they just put-up copy paper with the when and where. But Amber created a fish design, with nice fonts, clear information and she and her husband papered the town. Amber is proud of what she created but anxious to hear what Louise, Abner and the other folks think of it. So far no one has said a word. But everyone is really nice to her baby girl so at least that's something.

Lutheran Lady Lemon Bars

Step one - Make the Crust

1 cup room temperature softened butter

½ cup powdered sugar

2 cups flour

Combine all ingredients and mix well. Press firmly into a greased 9 X 13-inch baking pan. Use the backs of your fingers or the back of a spoon to press into the pan. Bake for 14 to 15 minutes at 350 degrees until slightly brown.

Step Two – Make the Filling

4 eggs – Beat eggs together

2 cups sugar

¼ cup flour

6 generous Tablespoons freshly squeezed lemon juice, (do not use bottled – it makes a difference)

Combine flour and sugar. Mix in beaten eggs and lemon juice. Stir all together. Pour the filling over the slightly cooled crust. Bake at 350 degrees for 22 to 25 minutes. The filling should not jiggle but look mostly set after the allotted baking time.

Cool.

Sprinkle with powdered sugar through a sieve or sifter to make it nice and powdery looking

Cut into bars making sure the volunteer firefighters and the church choir director get a little bigger sized one than the rest.

The SOURCES:

[Appetites: Smelt are a tasty small fry | MPR News](#)

[Community makes inaugural smelt fry a huge success | Columnists | hometownsource.com](#)

[Meet Beaver Bay - Lake Superior Magazine](#)

Rice, Kathy, Secrets of the Pie Place Café: Recipes and Stories Through the Seasons, 2016, Lake Superior Port Cities, Inc. Duluth, MN.



I include the above poster as an example poster advertising smelt dinners.



This smelt fry is in the North Shore Area, Two Harbors, MN (Current - March 2022)



The plate - Smelt, Coleslaw, chips, tartar sauce, (Louise would insist on a lemon wedge)

2020- TOUR GUIDES – HISTORY ENLIVENED THROUGH STORYTELLING

Researcher Narrative: Since this is our final decade Darcey and I wanted to bring the overall narrative back around to Split Rock Lighthouse. We both agreed that looking at the Lighthouse now was important and the appropriate way to end our research project. Thousands of people visit the lighthouse every year and this year Darcey and I were among them. For me it was a first time visit to the Lighthouse and the nearby area. We went in early June, reserving our place for the 9:00 AM Lighthouse Keeper's tour. Ian Wallen, our excellent tour guide, took us around the grounds, starting with the Keeper's home. Telling story after story of the keepers who have occupied the lighthouse properties since 1910. A personal favorite was how the keeper's got phone service to Split Rock and if you want to know how... go on the tour. Entering the fog signal building we heard comparisons for how loud the signal was and how far it could be heard across Lake Superior. After that we climbed the winding 32 step metal stairway up inside the lighthouse tower where Ian had two young helpers turn the crank of the beam. On our own we wandered around the gift shop (bought tee shirts – of course) . I added postcards, Lee Radzak's book, and a refrigerator magnet to my pile of souvenir memorabilia. About that time the first video was playing in the amphitheater inside the main visitor's center. So, masking up, we headed inside to watch the fascinating documentary presentation. Afterwards we took in the exhibits including my favorite displaying the various souvenirs the lighthouse has sold over the years. Last we ohed and ahed over outdoor scenes of the night sky; photos by Travis Novitsky, in what will be a rotating gallery type display in the amphitheater's lobby area.

Evocative STORY: The story in this decade is how important stories are to the Lighthouse. “Come for the view, stay for the story” appears on the home page of their website. In a 2020 Zoom Q & A interview with Site Manager Hayes Scriven he talks about the importance of story and storytelling in connecting tourists with the site. Additionally, he commented how he, the staff, and his family were surrounded by history all the time, how they could “feel the history.” And for himself saying, “Everywhere I look, I see a piece of history.” This museum, and I would imagine many others, is dedicated to bringing that history to people via stories. Oftentimes these stories are told by tour guides as well as on site staff, all sharers of history. People who want to share what they know of this beautiful piece of the world with the visitors who come from miles away or from the next town over. It is also clear from talking with Hayes Scriven that he is dedicated to finding new ways to bring the Lighthouse’s story to light. Currently, he and his staff are in the process of creating “pop up exhibits” which might focus on one historical event or time period, may be interactive, and may include “fiction based on fact” by having legend and the lore of the lake be in the mix of possible topics. Hearing his plans for the sight, I found myself eager to return to learn and interact with these new exhibits, all part of making history alive.

Video Documentary and Question and Answer Session - LSMMA

[Hayes Scriven, Split Rock Lighthouse Modern Keeper of the Light on Vimeo](#)

Speaking of history coming alive, after our official tours Darcey and I hiked down the path to the hoist and derrick site to see how supplies had been brought to the Lighthouse prior to the building of Highway 61. As we finished our walk, we came across Melissa, a long-time tour guide to the lighthouse. In casual conversation she shared with us fascinating stories of the iron range's pivotal importance to the North Shore and John Beargrease. Asking for more insight she told us Beargrease was an Ojibwe mail carrier who became famous for delivering mail by boat, and dog train to his North Shore routes during 1879 to @1908. I include a site below but found many tributes to this dedicated postal worker as well as information on the local dogsled race commemorating his important work. The annual event is held along the rocky shores of Lake Superior. Would Darcey and I have found out about this man’s contribution to the history of the site and the North Shore without Melissa’s story. Maybe? Probably? But the beauty of visiting a sight and learning history is that it was right there for us, in between a conversation about the hot weather, baking shows, and a historical person we will always remember. History Alive.

[Beargrease Highlight | DAY 1 | QRILLPAWS 2021 - Bing video](#)

[By Sled or by Sail: Native American Mail Carrier John Beargrease | National Postal Museum \(si.edu\)](#)

Engaging PERSON: After our official tour we had arranged to speak with our tour guide Ian Wallen (he/his/him). We discovered he is an acting student at University of Minnesota, Duluth and has worked for the Lighthouse for 5 years, now categorized as an Interpreter II. His goal is to graduate with his acting degree and a certificate in Museum studies. Later he hopes to combine both areas to work in a museum in Minneapolis during the daytime hours and perform in theaters and other live performing venues in the evenings. He said his favorite type of tour is similar to the one we'd just completed; small groups and lots of questions so the tour compares to a conversation rather than a lecture. Though reluctant to tell us his least favorite type of tourist or tour he eventually admitted he didn't enjoy the tours with the "know it all" patrons, When everything he said, or every story he told was answered with a loud; "Well actually...." Followed by a long lecture of how the actual event/story/or historical marker supposedly happened. I responded that I'd find that annoying too, especially when as a guide he's trying to teach, to entertain, to enlighten, to inspire and keep everyone together and walking in the same direction! To get insight into job qualifications for Ian's job and one's like it I looked up the type of employment announcement Ian would have seen. In doing this I came across a call for volunteers to the lighthouse which I include below because I feel like it gives an idea of what character traits and overall "vibe" the lighthouse is looking for in staff and volunteers. The second job announcement is more specific to job qualifications the museum is looking for in Ian's very important public face Interpreter job track.

From Split Rock Lighthouse Facebook Page, July 14, 2021: Do you like talking to people? Do you like having an epic view around every corner?

We are looking for a few volunteers to help with Visitor Services at Split Rock Lighthouse. You will meet people from all over the world, providing a friendly welcome and providing them with information, assisting with directions, and sharing local area attractions. Applicants must enjoy working outdoors. Training is provided, and weekday and weekend 4-hour shifts are available.

From Minnesota Historical Society Job Openings website summer 2021 -

DESCRIPTION: The Minnesota Historical Society (MNHS) seeks applicants for an Interpreter I (Historic Site Guide) to conduct public tours and educational programming by educating and engaging visitors with the history of the site and assisting in its operations.

RESPONSIBILITIES: 1) interpret the historic site to educate, entertain and interact with visitors; 2) receive, welcome, and orient visitors to his/her learning station or to the historic site grounds and facility; 3) study and

master site-related historical material to enhance delivery of site interpretive program; 4) assist in retail museum gift shop operations; and 5) perform light, routine housekeeping and assist in the maintenance, development and protection of the historic site grounds, facility and collections.

One of the stated goals for a good tour guide: Tell a story – or the idea to have a fun and compelling story to tell about the sites people are exploring. The story of the foghorn and story of how the Lighthouse got phone service are just two of the stories Ian told, that I remember. They kept me engaged and listening. Ian was also great at answering questions which brings me to how this is a legacy from former Lighthouse Keeper Lee Radzak. He stated in his book, “The goal for the staff was to make every visitor’s question seem like it was the first time the guide had heard it.” In Ian’s case I can report he excelled in this area.

Clear CONFLICT: Ahhhhh conflict. Tour guides are among the most influential front line- presenters in the tourism industry. Yes, there must be an amazing sight to see but the tour guides' knowledge, interpretation of a destination, and helping a visitor visualize everyday life can transform the lecture into a story, the guided walk into an experience. The ho-hum into the best memory of the trip category. In times of the pandemic tour guides helped visitors navigate health and safety protocols as well as made sure they found the spot for the best Instagram photo of the trip. A tour guide can set a positive tone and help people discover something they have never found on their own or indeed even had access to. With all that at stake there is obvious conflict. How many of us have been on a tour where the guide talks in a monotone voice, or overly perky voice which for me is just as off putting?

To explore this obvious conflict, I decided to establish types of tour guides and the idea of how we need to find or audition tour guides. This is of course the fictional part of the conflict, but the types and tour guide traits are gleaned from tours we’ve been on or tours we’ll never go on again. And having learned a whole lot about tour guides in the past months I can give anyone looking to become a tour guide a great place to start. The below referenced videos are funny, engaging, informative, and easy to follow. The website includes classes, workshops, trainings and is all things tour guides, storytelling, and a myriad of other topics related to giving tours of historic sites.

[Tour Leader Training Videos - Be a Better Guide](#)

**According to founder of “Be a Better Guide,” Kelsey Tonner here are:
10 Qualities Every Tour Guide Should Have**

1. Strong Communication Skills.

2. Personable & Outgoing.
3. A Memory Like a Steal Trap.
4. Improvisational Skills.
5. Just Enough Enthusiasm.
6. Humor.
7. Punctuality.
8. A Keen Sense of Direction.
9. The Knowledge of a Local.
10. Passion for their City or the place they are showing.

So... in our opposite world I take the list of 10 qualities, turn them around to explore traits one assuredly does NOT want in a tour guide.

1. Strong Communication Skills – TG who mumbles, shouts, talks to fast, uses exaggerated gestures, mispronounces names of the places. TG talks with their back to the crowd or is hidden behind a post so no one can see or hear them.
2. Personable & Outgoing – TG who is angry, depressed, sarcastic, unkind, disparaging of the sight or the people. TG shouts over people who are talking, gives them angry looks or rolls their eyes at them instead of helping them stay focused on the talk. TG disparages a question or the questioner.
3. A Memory Like a Steal Trap – TG who can't remember anyone's name, the names of the places, restates info- can't remember they already said it.
4. Improvisational Skills – TG who is stiff, and clearly reading from index cards or a script. Let's say the first line of the script is a note-to-self that is: "Move thirty feet up the street before you say anything." The tour guide trainer said TG's must get the group moving but this TG accidentally reads this "stage direction" out loud rather than just doing it.
5. Just Enough Enthusiasm – TG is overly perky, makes the crowd do chants and songs for no apparent reason that have nothing to do with the sight. TG focuses on one person in the group rather than speaking and including everyone.
6. Humor- TG tries to tell jokes that fall flat or tries to make something funny out of some of the more not at all funny events surrounding the lighthouse. TG engages in sensitive topics in insensitive ways. Topics could include religion, politics, pandemic.
7. Punctuality- TG is late, rushed, or takes too long on certain things so the climax of the tour - looking at the lighthouse beam has to be rushed forward.
8. A Keen Sense of Direction- TG gets lost, goes the wrong way, bumps into another tour.
9. The Knowledge of a Local- TG mispronounces local names, local people, tells the group the bathrooms are in the wrong place, walks on wrong side of the street.
10. Passion for their City or the place they are showing- TG seems to not care, looks at their phone all the time, answers questions "I don't really know anything about that," or "I'm not paid enough to know that" or "That's above my pay grade."

The SOURCES: I interspersed sources in the narrative.

Job Announcement from the Minnesota Historical Society for Tour Guides – Similar to what would be posted for Tour Guides at Split Rock Lighthouse – Full Posting Here: [Microsoft Word - 1203 Interpreter I - Historic Forestville2.docx \(mnhs.org\)](#)

Possible STYLE, GENRE, MOOD: My opinion – we definitely want to have fun with this Decade finding comedy, slapstick, enhancing how we can laugh at ourselves and how laughter creates a shared space for kindness and empathy.

For a great source on HUMOR in the tour guide industry I found this article which I include for our production team. [How to Be a Funny Tour Guide - Checkfront](#)

And last, we will have to find a way to fit in laughing yoga. Not kidding, I can see it... all of us spread out around the Split Rock Lighthouse site. Laughing and doing yoga. Check it out: <https://youtu.be/4p4dZ0afivk>

MUSIC/IMAGES/SOUNDS: Ask “Alexa!” or “Syrie!”

And my favorite picture of Ian Wallen, our tour guide!



End of Final Report

March 15, 2022

