

PRESERVING NORTHERN'S PAST  
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Recently *Northern Magazine 125 Years* was published whose creation was overseen by Rebecca Tavernini, Kristi Evans, and Zach Nicholas and an excellent staff of Northern faculty and students. The outstanding celebratory publication has been well-received by the campus population, alums and the community. How was the creation of this booklet made possible?

The process of saving Northern's past has gone through iron, silver, and golden ages. In the early 1970s when President John Jamrich was seeking an author to write a 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary history of Northern, members of history department refused to get involved. For a number, it was a concern as to where the sources were to be found?

The result was that Marian Hilton of the English Department took on the project which resulted in publication of her study, *Northern Michigan University, The First 75 Years*. Her work ended the iron age. Hilton had a herculean task of gathering information as there was no university archive, so she relied on what was available at the Peter White Public Library, the Marquette County Historical Society, and through oral interviews.

Lydia Olson created the iron age of preservation. An early alumna she became librarian in 1908 and held the position until 1941. In her quiet and persistent way she fortunately saved records that came her way. The first historian, Francis Roy Copper, developed a manuscript history based on interviews with original faculty and administrators created for the half century celebration in 1949. He passed before the celebration and never saw his work published. However this manuscript was fortunately saved and has been published. Also on the scene was Don Bottum former dean of students who wrote *Happened Long Ago Like 1899* which had limited distribution.

Across campus in hidden spots were a variety of artifacts. Many of them were piled on the false ceiling of Lee Hall covered with dust and long forgotten. In the Birdseye Building were the

plaster statues of Abraham Lincoln and St. George that were preserved because students sealed them with many coats of paint and turned St. George into Superman and Lincoln into a hippie. Nationally known maritime painter, Leon Lundmark's magnificent painting of Lake Superior was found dumped in a back room of the library resting on the heating system. Saved, it is now part of the De Vos Art Museum and has been restored to its original condition!

The 1980s were the dawn of the silver age. The Central Upper Peninsula and University Archives was created by Dr. Clifford Maier of the History Department and developed from a series of tiny office rooms to the facility we have today. He spent years working to enlarge the space, gather and organize materials and fight President James Appleberry who was not happy with the idea of the archives covering the central Upper Peninsula. Maier successfully persisted and his experience can be found in his history, *The Archives Project . . . 1966-1994*.

The golden age began in the 1990s with President William Vandament who saw the value and need for further preservation. He officially created the position of University Historian and it was my task to find those missing artifacts, develop a series of oral histories and generally put things in order. He sent me down state to interview former president Edgar Harden and former dean Don Bottum. By the way both men passed within a few months of my visits. Since then all presidents have been interviewed along with many in the university community.

More recently archivist Marcus Robyns working with Annika Peterson has developed a grand project of digitizing newspapers and making many items including photographs and oral histories in the archives available to a world-wide public on-line.

Artifacts had to be preserved as well. In the early 2000s alumnus, Dr. John Beaumier and his wife Mary Jane through their contributions, the Beaumier Heritage Center was created which not only preserves artifacts but brings Northern's past to the public though well-received

exhibitions as the one that is on display today, and which I encourage you to visit and further learn of Northern's wonderful 125 years.

Remember, much of Northern's history is available on your computer through UP LINK NMU. We have reached the beginning of the diamond age of saving Northern's past with the publication of *125 Years*, the entry of the archives and heritage center into renovated Harden Hall in 2026, and the complete revision of the NMU encyclopedia by Dr. Diane Kordich to be available on-line. Thank you.