

Solving murder in historical fashion

By Annalise Braught
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BEMIDJI — In honor of the turn of the century, the Beltrami County Historical Society focused their annual History Mystery on events and characters, straight out of the 1920s.

More than 60 people came out to participate in the “Clue” style mystery event Tuesday evening, happy to spend their New Year’s Eve in roaring 20s garb and learn a little bit more about some of the prominent historical figures who helped to make Bemidji what it is today.

After enjoying some pizza and refreshments, event participants gathered in the main museum gallery of the Beltrami County History Center, ready to begin their hunt for a murderer.

Sue Bruns, one of the event organizers, read the backstory of the murder to the anxious attendees, “The Great Northern Railway’s Bemidji Depot Agent was found dead on the platform outside of the Great Northern Depot. Detectives determined that someone murdered him inside the Depot and then moved the body outside and onto the platform to confuse investigators. Six individuals were at the Depot at the time of the murder, and detectives believe one of them committed the crime. They need your help, as Assistant Detectives, to gather clues and determine the guilty suspect, the weapon used, and the room where the murder occurred.”

After clarifying the rules of the game, each of the six actors took a turn giving some background on the historical character they portrayed. The cast of characters included, Judy Dvorak as “Donna Lycin,” Sasha Almendinger as “Elizabeth Ridenour Arnold,” DeeJay Arens as “Earl M. Barker,” Kevin Cease as “Elias M.

Sathre,” Gary Rozman as “Frances Spinner Arnold” and Terry Holter as “Andrew Aubolee.”

After all the details and rules were explained, a train whistle blew and the game was afoot.

Each suspect spread out into separate rooms, and teams took turns interviewing them in search for necessary clues to solve the murder. The suspects were only able to give them one clue per time, so teams had to make multiple visits to discover the truth.

After about 40 minutes, John and Sue Swartz were the first to solve the mystery. Ruth and Ellen Walters finished second, with Lara and Diane Thomason coming in third. Another train whistle blew, announcing the end of the game.

The winners were awarded their prizes, and Gracelyn Anderson won the prize for the best 1920s costume at the party.

At the end of the night, History Center Director Cyndi Fenske announced the murder to be Earl M. Barker, portrayed by DeeJay Arens.

Arens gave a final statement explaining his actions, as his historical counterparts responded in dramatic shock and pointed remarks that they of course could never have



Photos by Annalise Braught | Bemidji Pioneer

Sue Bruns introduces the History Mystery suspects during the event held on Tuesday evening at the Beltrami County History Center. From left: Sue Bruns, Judy Dvorak as “Donna Lycin,” Sasha Almendinger as “Elizabeth Ridenour Arnold,” DeeJay Arens as “Earl M. Barker,” Kevin Cease as “Elias M. Sathre,” Gary Rozman as “Frances Spinner Arnold” and Terry Holter as “Andrew Aubolee.”

been the murderer.

For more information on other history centered events like this, visit <http://beltramihistory.org>.

Annalise Braught is a multimedia journalist for the Pioneer. She can be reached at (218) 333-9796.



Kevin Cease as “Elias M. Sathre” gives Heather Oakes, center, and Rita Scholl a clue during the History Mystery on Tuesday evening at the Beltrami County History Center.



There was a large turnout for the History Mystery event held on Tuesday evening at the Beltrami County History Center.



Gary Rozman as “Frances Spinner Arnold” gives MaryGrace Kerr, Benjamin Kerr and Grant Cadwell a clue during the History Mystery on Tuesday evening at the Beltrami County History Center.

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I have loved becoming a part of the Bemidji community in a whole new way this past year. Working at a newspaper is about more than just sharing the news, it’s about telling the stories no one would hear otherwise. It’s about digging deep and finding the unusual in the ordinary, and sharing that with the world.

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To experience the unusual in the ordinary, turn to Annalise Braught. To experience all your community news, turn to the Bemidji Pioneer.

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