

PRESS RELEASE

Sesquicentennial Square Dance

Deb Wallwork

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OLD TIME DANCE!!

“When you arrive at a dance, people are so welcoming, you feel like you are coming home.”

-Dee Dee Dougherty

The Red Herring Stringband will be playing for a dance/gathering on Saturday, June 9th at 7:00 PM at the Star Lake Town Hall. Everyone is welcome, young and old. All dances will be taught. No partner is necessary.

No doubt your grandparents might remember the old time barn dances. The carpet would be rolled up, instruments would be tuned, neighbors would meet neighbors, and the fun would commence. Eighty-four year old Fergus Falls resident Susie Smemo remembers the excitement of the gathering and how as children they would fall asleep on



a pile of coats as fiddle played on.

Dalton Opera House

Not that long ago, before television and the internet, people in rural America entertained themselves with dance parties in their own parlors or barn lofts. It was a lot of

fun. “Traditionally, It was a rural neighborhood affair usually with fifteen or twenty people in attendance. The musicians were local folks, often farmers.” (Bruce Bollard).

Dances would be held at the town hall and later dances were held at dance halls or pavilions especially built for the purpose. Lenny’s Dance Barn was maybe the last of those old time halls.

We are reviving that tradition for the sesquicentennial with live music at gatherings sponsored by the Historical Society to celebrate Otter Tail County’s Sesquicentennial. The Red Herring band’s repertoire of heritage dance music includes fiddle tunes collected right here in Otter Tail County. Old-time music and dance are fun, active, and also a relaxing ways to span generations and celebrate diverse ethnic histories.

We have gatherings in three areas, Dent, New York Mills and Dalton the first Saturday of the month. Polkas, waltzes and square dances will be taught or squares led by a caller, and both old-timers and newcomers of all ages are welcome.

The first will be at the Star Lake Town Hall on Saturday, June 9th at 7:00 PM. We’ll have a dance at the New York Mills Cultural Center on July 7th at 7 PM, and at the Dalton Opera House at 2:30 PM on Saturday September during the Thresher Reunion.

We love these tunes and dance traditions which have passed through many hands, and we want to share the fun with a new generation.

So come on out, bring your grandparents or your grandchildren and have a grand old time!

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