

For Immediate Release

News Release

Contact: Emily Krawczewski
Washington County Heritage Center
1862 South Greeley Street, Stillwater, MN 55082
651-439-2298
emily.krawczewski@wchsmn.org

Riding the rails north – the Orphan Train story in Minnesota

The Washington County Historical Society is excited to announce a free talk about the Orphan Train Movement by author and historian Bill Schrankler on Thursday, May 18 at 7pm at the Washington County Heritage Center. The Washington County Heritage Center is located at 1862 South Greeley Street, Stillwater, MN 55082.

The Orphan Train Movement was a national welfare program that transported minors via train from cities in the East to the Midwest in the hopes that they would be taken in by families in rural areas. The populations of unhoused children in areas such as New York City had skyrocketed in the early to mid-1800s for a variety of reasons, including the deaths of their guardians from widespread disease, work-related incidents, poverty and addiction. Minister Charles Loring Brace founded the Children's Aid Society to place urban children into what the Society believed to be more stable and morally correct situations. The program is considered an early form of today's foster care system.

Approximately 5,000-6,000 children were sent to Minnesota via the orphan trains, nearly half of whom arrived between 1882 and 1892. The hidden story of the orphan train movement in Minnesota will be explained from its beginnings to its climax. Schrankler's program will allow attendees to be acquainted with the personalities, both locally and nationally, who initiated the largest mass migration of children in United States history. The orphan train movement in Minnesota will be the focus of the presentation. However, the perspective of national background of the movement will be included.

While the Children's Aid Society touted the success stories of the movement, the program was not without controversy during its peak and with how it's viewed today. The pros and cons of the endeavor will be presented, for the listener to decide was it a triumph or tragedy.

The program is free to the public and reservations are not required. Event attendees may attend either in person at the Washington County Heritage Center **or** virtually on WCHS's YouTube page. The YouTube link may be accessed at wchsmn.org/event/orphantrain

For questions, contact Washington County Heritage Center Site Manager Emily Krawczewski at emily.krawczewski@wchsmn.org or 651-439-2298. The Washington County Heritage Center is open for visitors Tuesday-Saturday from 10am-4pm.

Founded in 1934, the Washington County Historical Society is a donor-supported, nonprofit organization with more than 750 individual, family, and business members. WCHS is supported by individual gifts, memberships and earned income, and foundation grants.