



Museum goers will be treated to a look at Iron County's past during dedication ceremonies of the Stager Depot. Pictured in the old seating section are, from left, Ross Parcels, museum director, and Jack and Joe Kangas. Thanks to a mountain of elbow grease by "Spud" and Rose LaRock (not pictured), the interior of the old depot is beginning to look like those good ol' days, when the best travel option was riding the rails.

CASPIAN—The Iron County Historical Museum will kick off the 2012 season with a grand opening family event this Saturday, June 9, featuring the Stager Depot dedication ceremony and a community pancake breakfast.

Admission for the grand opening will be \$8 for adults and \$7 for seniors.

Golden K will be serving breakfast at the museum from 9 until 11 a.m.

According to Golden K President Jerry Lee Gallagher, an admission ticket will entitle the holder to breakfast.

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Children accompanied by an adult will receive a free breakfast, the cost being offset by a contribution from the Caspian DDA.

The ceremony, including a ribbon-cutting at the Stager Depot on the museum grounds, will take place at 11:30.

Harold and Marcia Bernhardt and other dignitaries will participate in the ceremony.

The depot was moved from its Stager Junction location to the museum grounds in 1972.

The dedication is the culmination of the museum's chief capital project in 2011, completed in November.

The depot is now resting on a new foundation.

The adjacent 1917 rail car was raised and placed onto a new concrete foundation with new track and ties and bed of crushed gravel, and the maintenance car on the depot's west side is also on a new grade.

The project was the work of a local contractor and museum volunteers who put in hundreds of hours.

Since mid-April, the depot has undergone additional interior improvement as Forrest "Spud"

and Rose LaRock have volunteered to “adopt” the depot and have worked diligently to make needed repairs and upgrade displays and artifacts.

The result of all this work is a fascinating exhibit, said Ross Parcels, museum director.

The history of the depot began at the first sighting of iron ore in the county in 1880.

When George Runkel, a mine captain for the Crystal Falls Mine, determined that a railroad extension was needed from Florence to transport the ore, he contacted Chicago and Northwestern President Martin Hewitt, who was Runkel’s friend.

Hewitt’s party arrived in 1881, stood at the Paint River, looked up the hill, marveled at the western view and said, “Well, boys, I guess George deserves a railroad. We’ll build him one.”

In 1882, tragedy struck. There was a family living on the second floor of the Stager Depot.

A thunderstorm occurred, and a lightning bolt struck the chimney, damaging the house and building.

The depot was left burned until 1890, when it was rebuilt.

The Stager Depot’s place in local history was secured when it became the starting and ending location for the theft of courthouse records in 1885.

Crystal Falls officials met at the depot and departed for a County Board meeting in Iron River, the first step of the plot.

After the theft of the records was completed, officials returned to the Stager Depot.

From there, they headed for the Mastodon Mine, where the secreted records were stored until a courthouse could be built in Crystal Falls.