

# AKERLUND STUDIO NATIONALLY SIGNIFICANT

One of our nation's historic treasures hides in plain sight in downtown Cokato. Sitting on the corner of Broadway and 4<sup>th</sup> is a white, nondescript building with green trim—the August “Gust” Akerlund Photographic Studio. Belying the plain exterior, the studio's interior captures early 20<sup>th</sup> century photography, featuring



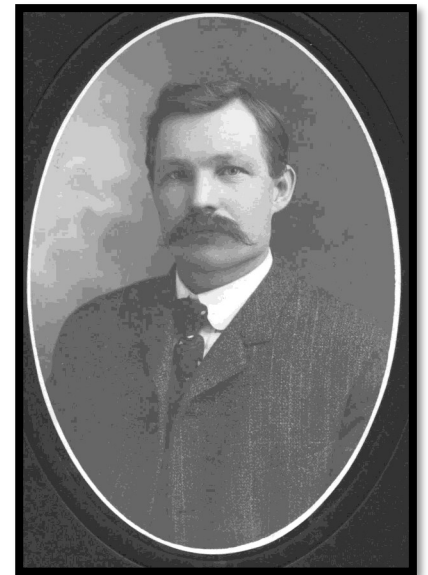
Akerlund Studio, summer of 2019.

photographer Gust Akerlund's original backdrops, photographic equipment, and collection of over 14,000 negatives of Cokato and the surrounding area. Approved this January by the National Register, this National Register of Historic Places site has furthered its prestige by becoming nationally significant, a distinction only 4% of Minnesota's National Register sites can boast. This change comes thanks to the efforts of former Cokato Museum Director Mike Worcester and Andrea Pizza

of Deco Cultural Services, who together revised the Studio's original National Register of Historic Places form.

The Akerlund Studio became a National Register site in 1977. Back then, its five-page submission form presented only a brief history of the site and listed the Studio as a private residence with only local significance. The newly revised version is now over 63 pages, providing current information on the Studio's ownership and substantial detail on the rich history of Akerlund and the studio building. Aside from adding to its history, the revamped form also compares the Akerlund Studio to other National Register properties in six other Midwest states, concluding that “The Gust Akerlund Studio is the most authentic early twentieth-century photography studio in the U.S.”

Now that national significance has been achieved, the City of Cokato through the Cokato Museum, is looking into whether the Studio eligible to apply for National Landmark status, a step up in prestige from the National Register. The National Register of Historic Places was formed in 1966 as a part



Gust Akerlund.



Akerlund Studio interior.

of the National Historic Preservation Act. According to the National Park Service website, over 95,000 National Register sites are either historically significant on either a local, state, or national level. National Landmarks, on the other hand, are strictly nationally significant sites of high historical caliber, which is why there are only 2,500 National Landmark sites in the entire nation. As it stands, there are only 25 Landmark sites in Minnesota, none of which reside in Wright County. Their ranks include sites like the James J. Hill House, the Soudan Underground Mine, and Split Rock Lighthouse.

“Whether or not the Studio qualifies for Landmark Status, a process that can take 3-5 years, the historic integrity and importance of this historic treasure remains an important part of our nation's and community's photographic history,” commented Johanna Ellison, Director of the Cokato Museum.

***To find out more about the Akerlund Studio or to arrange a tour contact the Cokato Museum.***