

MINNESOTA CITY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

MEMBER NEWSLETTER – Volume 2, Issue 9: September, 2008

“Minnesota City: A Past that we honor; a Present that we give meaning; a Future that we build together.”

Mark your calendars!

September 11:
Minnesota City Historical Association (MCHA) Monthly Meeting; Historic First Baptist Church, 140 Mill Street, Minn. City; 6:30 p.m.

September 18:
Community Readers Meeting; 6:30 p.m. at Riverway Learning Community; the selection is *Winter Roads, Summer Fields* by Marge Dorner. Open to the Public.

October

October 26: Church Family Presentation of history in this area; Riverway Learning Community, 115 Iowa Street, Minnesota City

Minnesota City Historical Association (MCHA) Sets Calendar of Annual Events

At its meeting on August 21, MCHA members agreed upon a four program annual calendar of events that includes the annual Minnesota City Day celebration in May, an historical holiday program at the First Baptist Church in December, an area history presentation for the public, and one program of general historic interest. The family history program for this year will feature the family of Octavius and Margaret Merritt Church, including the Church Brothers who operated “the store”, George Church and Elmer Church. Andrea Church, daughter of Roger Church and Ruth Hohensee Church (deceased) is preparing this program. The October newsletter will contain additional information on this event. At the October MCHA meeting members plan to work on by-laws, on interviews of long time residents, and on structure of a walking/driving tour of Minnesota City.

Chimney at the Historic First Baptist Church in Minnesota City.



Historic First Baptist Church Gets Chimney Repair and Relining

Kevin Kearney, Minnesota City Mill Street Resident, has begun the repair of the chimney of the Historic First Baptist Church at 140 Mill Street. The work includes repair of the outside of the chimney as well as the relining which will permit connection with indoor heating appliances, thereby increasing safety and utility functions. The chimney work is being funded by the First Baptist Ladies Aid of Minnesota City.

Annual Summer Service Held at First Baptist Church

On Sunday afternoon, August 24, some thirty persons, a number of them with historic personal or family connections with the church, gathered at Minnesota City’s Historic First Baptist Church to hold their annual summer service. Rev. Gordon Vickery, interim minister of the First Baptist Church in Winona, led the meditation and read the scriptural selections for the day. Jean Gardner, playing the 1880 organ, accompanied the singing of several hymns. *Bringing in the Sheaves* was the most nostalgic of these for some attendees. Gen O’Grady provided some information about the joint endeavor of the First Baptist Ladies Aid and the Minnesota City Historical Association—the preservation and maintenance of the church building, the oldest in Winona County, established on July 11, 1852. Following the service, refreshments were served and all persons were invited to view the restoration work that has been done in the rooms now being used for Minnesota City Historical Association Archives. The 1890 eight day pendulum clock loudly ticked away the minutes as the group prayed, sang, ate, and conversed.

Bridge Rebuilding in Minnesota City Progresses with a Dynamite Surprise

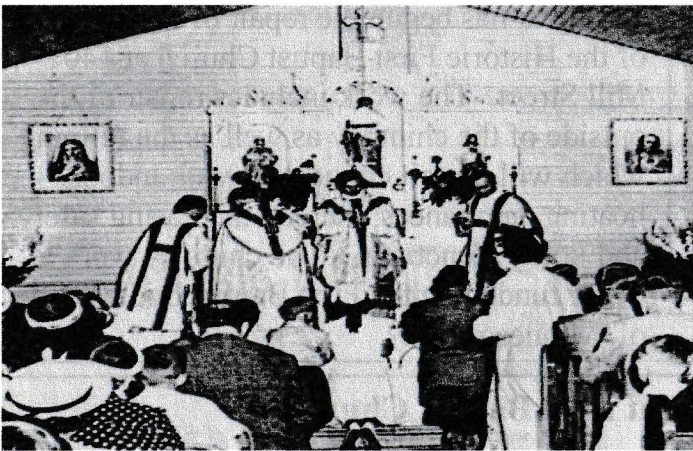


Don O'Neil photo

On July 30, Minnesota City residents were loudly reminded that the work on the old Highway 61 bridge is on-going. Around noon, neighbors in the area heard an alarming huge explosive noise, and some saw dirt and rocks thrown into the air. These effects were the result of a planned dynamite blast intended to remove/loosen some debris near the pilings of the old bridge. The result, according to Mayor Don O'Neil, who photographed the "blow," was beyond builder expectations. Rocks and other debris flew as far as nearby buildings, hitting roofs and windows; damage was minimal and there were no injuries. Residents still hope for the planned September completion of the new bridge.

Dynamite Power Experienced by Competitive Youth

When George Denzer was interviewed for *Old Wise Tales* in 2002, he told this story: "One day when I was six years old (this would have been in the early 1920s) I went to talk to my older brothers and cousins. There was a road up around the hill all built by hand. They (the road builders) had left a case of dynamite up here in the pasture. I had to hurry up and see what I could do with the dynamite caps before my older brothers got there. I took matches and tried to stick them in the cap. They wouldn't go off, so I took them and hit them with a rock and they blowed me all to hell. A lot of my fingers had nothing but bone sticking out there. I stayed in Winona with my grandmother so I could go to the doctor every day." (George Denzer, a son of John and Esther Whetstone Denzer was raised on land above Highway 61 and north of County 248. George died in 2005).



Rev. Phillip Bronk's First Mass at St. Paul's Church on Mill Street, June 10, 1951



Rev. Donald Lovas and Rev. Phillip Bronk at St. Paul's Church August 24, 2008
Jim Galewski photo

Phillip Bronk, Missionary Priest from Stockton Returns to St. Paul's Parish on August 24

On Sunday, August 24, Rev. Phillip Bronk, a Minnesota City native, returned to St. Paul's Catholic Church to say Mass for parishioners and a large gathering of Bronk family members. Phillip Bronk is the son of Leon and Josephine Bronk, founding members of the original St. Paul's Parish. Father Bronk is a member of the order of Missionary Servants of the Most Holy Trinity. He said his first Mass at St. Paul's on June 10, 1951. The family celebration that followed was held at The Oaks. Phillip's ministry took him to North Carolina, Kentucky, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey. He worked as a pastor, an order superior, a farm manager, and as a fundraiser. He retired to LaMesa, CA where he serves as the chaplain for Carmelite Sisters. LaMesa is in the diocese of Bishop Brom, a Winona native. Stockton classmates of Father Bronk were Mary Jilk and Gladys Church Volkart.

Garvin Brook Disaster Relief Fund (GBDRF) Sponsors Celebration of Recovery Weekend

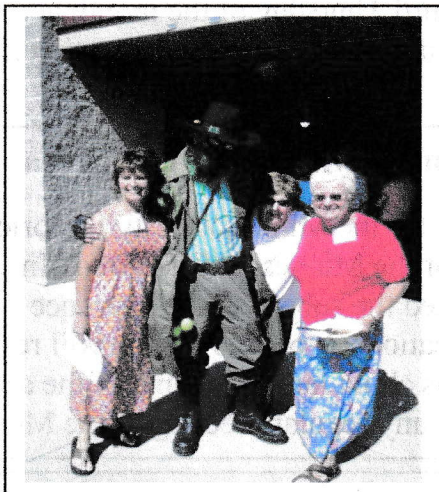
Supported by a grant from the Winona Community Foundation, GBDRF sponsored a weekend community wide celebration on August 23 and 24 to commemorate the one year August anniversary of flood recovery. The weekend events included a benefit concert at the Elks Lodge in Goodview on Saturday evening, where Pamela Althoff McNeill, of Minneapolis, performed for an audience of approximately 170 people. This evening of entertainment also included a Silent Auction and the raffle of a commemorative pendant donated by Holtan's Jewelry.

On Sunday, celebratory events continued from 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at LaCanne Park in Goodview. Approximately 500 people attended the day's events. An opening ceremony was performed by the American Legion Post 9 Color Guard, followed by the Flag Pledge, and the *Star Spangled Banner* sung by Angie Johannes. The John Kennedy Duo performed and a Karaoke contest was held. A favorite children's activity was the signing of team photos by the WSU basketball team.

Paul Lundquist, Winona Radio, emceed the presentation of humanitarian awards to individuals, Jaye Fritz, Kent Russell, and Diane Buswell; family category award to Mark and Brenda Edwards; group winners; Corey and Kyle O'Laughlin, Saehler/Anderson Addition, Mark Edwards, Joel Meyerhoff and Nick Kronebusch, Gunderson Addition, and Buddy Westerberg and Paul Ziebell from Stockton. Edina Realty received the business award and First Presbyterian Church, Claremont, MN and Central United Methodist Church Winona, received Honorable Mention. The day ended with a sending Service of Hope led by Chaplain William Flesch.

Co-chairs for this event were Duane Hutton and Bryce Maus. Susan Althoff, assisted by GBDRF board members and many other volunteers, executed the celebration.

A year away from the historic flood of August, 2007, the rate of recovery for flood victims still is varied—from abandonment of homes, to restoring homes, to building new homes. The range of emotions has been as wide, and sometimes individuals have the entire range on one day. In a Winona Daily News article on August 24, Brenda Edwards said a silver lining of the flood was finding new friends. "Now, when they walk through the Gunderson neighborhood, they can rattle off names of everyone they see. "It isn't temporary," they say. "When you've been through what they have, those bonds stick." Sunday, LaCanne Park looked and sounded like a family picnic.



L to R: Brenda Edwards, Geist, Nancy Beach, Jaye Fritz
Mark Edwards Photo

Superhero Geist Brings Merriment to LaCanne Park

Superhero Geist visited the LaCanne Park Celebration of Flood Recovery event. He is one of between one hundred and fifty and two hundred 'real life superheroes' who operate in the United States, distributing general merriment in a variety of situations. They range in age from 15 to 50, create heroic identities and wear costumes. Almost all have two traits—a love of comics and a desire to improve their communities (from *City Pages*, 2008). Sunday's Superhero Geist had words of encouragement for the crowd as he mingled with attendees. He effectively communicated his upbeat attitude.

Newsletter response: Jean Gardner corresponded about the photo of the baseball team in the August, 2008 Newsletter. The umpire in the center of the group is her father, Blanchard Gardner (also the father of Dorothy Brom, Jean's sister). Reported by Jean, "The team had given him (Blanchard) a necktie clasp with a little chain on it with a football. They couldn't find one with a baseball. I have it. I know they usually played on Sunday afternoon in a field about across from where Hollis lives now." Other readers commented on the enjoyment of the "old names" in the article on sports.

MCHA extends sympathy to

Lester and Joan Stewart Denzer and all family and friends of Wayne Denzer, who was killed on July 29 in a farm accident at his parent's farm. Wayne was a member of First Evangelical Lutheran Church in Minnesota City; he was buried in Oakland Cemetery. The Stewart and Denzer families are long time residents of the Minnesota City area; their loss is shared by many.

MCHA extends congratulations to

Marilyn and Gerald Duellman, Winona, who recently celebrated fifty years of marriage. The Duellmans were Minnesota City residents on Harbor Drive until their move following initial development of the Country Meadows Subdivision. This land was purchased from the family of Marilyn Gallagher Duellman, the daughter of Vernon and Delores Gallagher. Marilyn was raised on this property formerly known as the O.M. Lord property; Lord was one of the better known first settlers of the area, responsible for many successes of the settlement, and ultimately became a state legislator.

Minnesota City Readers Invite New Members to Monthly Meetings

On September 18, Minnesota City Readers will begin their fourth year of monthly discussions of books they select for group reading. *This is an opportune time for new members to join the group.* Anyone who enjoys reading and/or discussing literature is invited to attend all or single meetings, whether or not they have opportunity to read the selections. When possible, members procure copies of the selected book at the Winona Public Library. If library books are not available, books are ordered for the group, often from Amazon.com, where purchase price is usually five dollars or less. Group members select books in a casual process related to timeliness of issues, individual reader's experiences, or popular literature. Last year's selections included *The Loop* (Evans), *Patchwork Planet* (Tyler), *The Last Full Measure* (Moe), *Staggerford* (Hassler), *Old Rail Fence Corners: Tales Told by Minnesota Pioneers*, and *Kristin Lavransdatter* (Undset). The group does not meet during the summer months. Meetings have been held at 6:30 p.m. on the third Thursday of the month at Riverway Learning Community, 115 Iowa Street in Minnesota City. Any changes of meeting times for this year will be decided at the September 18 session.

Robert Bambenek, County Recorder, Offers Presentation on Minnesota City Area

Bob Bambenek, County Recorder, will present a Spring program for the Minnesota City Historical Association that will offer information on land sites and people of the Minnesota City Area. In an attempt to focus the program on attendee's interests, he has invited the submission of advance questions residents have about their personal abstracts, about locations or people that he will research and respond to in the public presentation. Persons with questions about land or people of the area are asked to submit them to 689-2440 or 689-4103, or bring them to any regular meeting of the MCHA.

Anyone who wishes to be a member of the Association is invited to send \$15.00 to MCHA, P.O. Box 41, Minnesota City, MN, 55959.

All monies will be used to support Association goals.

Separate or additional donations may also be sent to the above address.