

MINNESOTA CITY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

MEMBER NEWSLETTER – Volume 2, Issue 10: October, 2008

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

Mark your calendars!

October 14: Garvin Brook Disaster Relief Fund (GBDRF) Free Community Meal, Harvest Hoedown, at Riverway Learning Community, 5:30-7:00 p.m.

October 16: MCHA Meeting: (note change from second Thursday) 140 Mill Street, Minnesota City (Agenda: MCHA bylaws, interview, walking tour, Holiday celebrations)

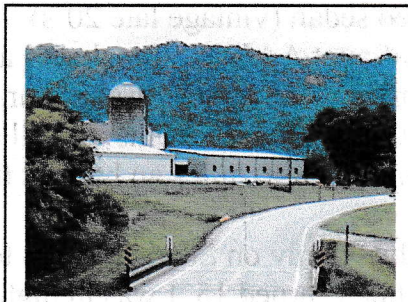
October 23: Minnesota City Community Readers: 6:30 p.m., Riverway Learning Community, 115 Iowa Street (Note change from third Thursday) Discussion of Leslie Marmon Silko's book *Ceremony*.

October 26: Church Family History Presentation, 2:00 p.m. Riverway Learning Community, 115 Iowa Street, Minnesota City

December 14: Community Caroling and Lighting event: First Baptist Church, 140 Mill Street (Details tba)

October 26 Presentation Highlights Church Family History in Stockton Valley and Minnesota City Area

Roger Church and his daughter Andrea will describe Church family history in Minnesota City and Stockton Valley in a public presentation at Riverway Learning Community on Sunday afternoon, October 26 at 2:00 p.m. Church family ancestors came from England to Virginia and then to Minnesota, homesteading in Stockton Valley in 1856, on land that is still owned by a family member, Russell Church. The October 26 presentation will detail this history. The Church family name became well known to all Minnesota City area residents primarily as the result of the ownership of the Church Brothers Store started in 1914, the brothers being George and Elmer, Roger's uncle and father. Ron and Virginia Witt Buck, whose family owned the Minnesota City store after George and Elmer Church, will bring artifacts from the store for observation at the presentation. The building is now owned by MCHA members Duane and Linda Hutton. Roger Church was the Minnesota City Post Master for thirty years, and Andrea is employed by Winona School District 861. All MCHA presentations are without charge; donations are appreciated. Refreshments will be available.



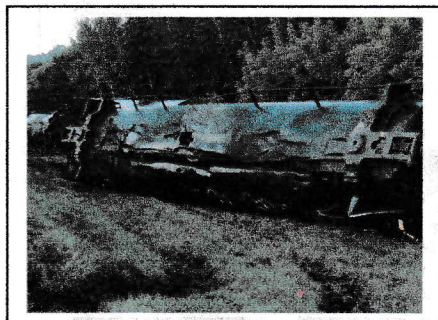
Left: Church Farm in Stockton Valley on CR 23 (MCHA photo)



Right: 1929 photo of Church Bros. store. George Church and Helen Saehler Witt (Virginia Witt Buck file photo)

50,000 gallons of Soy Bean Oil Spills as Tankers Derail on County Road 23

In a dramatic sixteen car derailment, the Dakota, Minnesota and Eastern Railroad spilled an estimated 50,000 gallons of soybean oil along County Road 23, one mile southwest of Minnesota City on



Overtuned DM & E tanker on Highway 23 (MCHA photo)

Monday, September 15. According to pollution control personnel, soybean oil is not believed to have affected groundwater wells or Garvin Brook. According to *Winona Daily News* information, “that is about as much fuel as a Boeing 747 can carry and a fairly large amount to have occurred in a spill.” DM&E crews vacuumed the liquid into storage tankers and removed contaminated soil to a La Crosse County landfill “where it will go through a composting process before it is used as cover for waste”. The Federal Railroad Administration is not investigating the derailment, but the DM&E will submit a report on the cause by the end of October. The derailment occurred opposite the Gene and Barbara Pierce home in Stockton Valley.

MCHA extends sympathy

to the Don and Joan O'Neil family on the death of Don's mother, Gladys. Gladys, who lived in Winona, was 86 years old; she died unexpectedly on Monday, September 22.

Dorothy Brom Records Big Win in State Fair History 1937 Annals

In July, 2008, the Minnesota State Fair Foundation, in partnership with the Minnesota State Historical Society, began an effort to collect and preserve Minnesota State Fair stories. They received over two hundred entries. Over two thirds of Minnesotans have been to the State Fair. Dorothy Gardner Brom submitted the following story. Some years ago, Gerald Cisewski, (deceased 2006) had recalled Dorothy's winning the car as one of his important memories of Minnesota City. Persons interested in other tales of the fair are invited to check www.msffoundation.org. We are happy to present Dorothy's story here.

My Family Car Story

By: Dorothy Brom

Date: Sept 11, 1937

It was September 11, 1937. The place was the Minnesota State Fair. I was 14 years old and had accompanied my family on the 100 mile drive to the fair that morning.

Each person entering the gate was given a free ticket for a drawing for the 1937 Chevrolet Town Sedan to be given away that night on the grandstand.

That night found us sitting in the grandstand holding the tickets. We watched as the number drawn matched one of our tickets. It was mine! We drove home in a new car that night.

But it was a bit of a problem getting that "new car" 100 miles down the road to Minnesota City. We had all driven to the Fair that morning in our Reo sedan (vintage late 20's). In the car were my mother and dad and sister Jean, myself, my great-aunt Addie B. Roach and a neighbor man, Ray Church. Mr. Church was the only one besides my dad who could drive a car. So he drove the Reo home, following closely behind my dad, driving the "new car". This was all around midnight, but we made it safely home. We could drive only about 35-40 miles an hour as that was the limit on a new car.

I remember that for quite awhile we used the Chevy only on Sundays to go to church. I had to wait until November 12 to get my license to drive when I turned 15. I was in high school at the time, but was not allowed to drive it to school.

After I graduated, I drove it to Winona State Teachers College for two years until I graduated. After that, I believe my sister drove it to high school for two years.

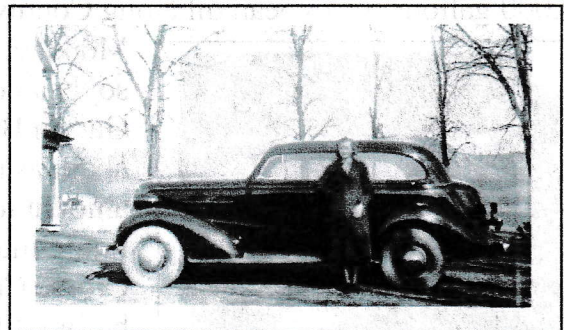
After I was married, my husband and I used it for several years until we could get our own car.

It then went back to the farm until my dad died in 1959.

Then a neighbor boy who had helped my dad for several summers wanted to buy it, so we sold it to him for \$50. It didn't run very well by then, and I don't know what happened to it after that.

At the time I won the car, we debated whether to sell it for \$650 or keep it. Six hundred fifty dollars looked "pretty good" but I'm glad we decided to keep it!

By Dorothy Brom 3655 W. 6th St. Winona, MN 55987



Dorothy Gardner Brom and her 1937
Chevrolet Town Sedan

Minnesota City Historical Association (MCHA) Welcomes Special Donations

In recent years, recognizing the over abundance of “stuff” in many homes, families and individuals have begun the practice of combining gift monies for holiday or special event donation to “worthy” causes in lieu of family gift exchanges. **MCHA friends and members are requested to consider holiday gift giving or legacy gifts to the Association.** Estate bequests have begun to include Legacy gifts to insure continuation of individuals’ lifetime interests. Bequests indicated in wills or otherwise by individuals who value historical preservation should be communicated to and documented for family members. The Association greatly values monetary donations. Active members of the Association remain occupied with establishing the archival site at the First Baptist Church and in programming and research efforts, thereby limiting energies for fundraising. Anyone wishing to speak with MCHA about such gifts is asked to call 507-689-2440 or 507-689-4103. The association has multiple ongoing projects that require financial support: the historic site marking project, technological equipment at the archival site, purchase of archival supplies, and others.

Anoka Minnesota Officially Curbs Halloween Pranks in 1920; Minnesota City Youth Exploits “Only Annoy”

According to Wikipedia, Anoka, Minnesota was the first city in the United States to hold a Halloween celebration to modify the observance of the day which had come to include the prank loosing of cows to roam the city as well as the typical tipping of outhouses and soaping of windows. In September of 1920, civic leaders worked with businessmen, school people, parents and students to plan an event. They scheduled a parade, a treats give away and a huge bonfire. In 1937, Anoka was named the Halloween Capital of the World. In the Winona area, as chronicled in newspapers as early as 1890, parties were being held, but the celebration of Halloween included some creative, and sometimes destructive observances. Old newspapers recount injuries of people felled by cords placed across roads, of damages to churches, of stolen (moved) animals. *The Winona Daily Republican* (1890 and 1893 entries) describes the “young people’s” actions.

...they started moving early in the evening, misplaced gates, tore up crosswalks, strew banking sawdust on the porches. Iron guardrails were torn up and hung in trees—other damage will keep the street commissioner busy for nearly a week... lots of gum in doorbells ...scattered a neat pile of wood all around the yard, carried the outhouse into the front yard and tore it to pieces. Placed a dummy man in one of the buggies outside of the Congregation church, piled the doorway of the principal with old tin cans. Mostly the work of boys.. performing their worst deeds at places where it was known no men were at home, and in some cases their actions were so reprehensible that they should certainly have been jailed.

... Nor did the boys have all the fun. Down in the vicinity of East King and Franklyn streets, a party of young ladies amused themselves in transporting saw horses and other articles from their accustomed places

...An 1890 article on Minnesota City says “Halloween was duly observed by the boys here. Their pranks were more annoying than vicious.”

The efforts of elders to organize treating to avoid tricking continued in Minnesota City. PTA minutes from 1942 record that a Halloween party was planned for children and held at the garage. The minutes from 1962 written by Adeline Wobig contain this entry: “Roger Church will ask the Fire Dept. if they will help finance the Halloween Party again this year. There will be costume judging and the children will be divided into groups according to grades. Mrs. Church made a motion to appoint a committee for the party and Allen Whetstone seconded it.” A year later, efforts were being downsized. “Instead of the entire district being invited to the Halloween party, as in other years, the decision was made to have just the Minnesota City School children and their preschool brothers and sisters. We would not ask the firemen for a donation; otherwise it would involve asking the children of the entire district to the party.

The Winona County Historical Association October Newsletter Describes First Townships

A description of Rollingsstone Township drawn from an 1883 History of Winona County is included in the Winona County Historical Association newsletter for October. The narrative gives a brief overview of the hardships of the first settlers including weather—rain producing floods and harsh winters. Also recounted are the frequently described settlers' lack of farming and "survival" skills. In spite of these "lacks," in less than a decade there were two schools, several mills, shops, railroads ran through the township, the villages of Rollingsstone and Minnesota City were established, and "despite the four foot ice sheets and torrent of water that hit Minnesota City February of 1876, Rollingsstone township thrived and farming and milling supported its inhabitants." (*The Argus, Sept. Oct. 2008*) The article also provides information from Mount Vernon and Fremont Townships and includes a photo from each. The Rollingsstone Township photo is of the Maybury School at Minnesota City. Anyone with information on the visit of Governor Ramsey to Minnesota City in 1852, a visit cited in the article, is asked to send this to P. O. Box 41, Mn. City. This 1883 history, as well as the 1857 History of Winona County are books in the Minnesota section of the Winona County Library. If anyone is looking for safe keeping for their copies of these books, MCHA would value their addition to our book collection.

December 14 Community Caroling and Holiday Lighting Event Planned for Minnesota City Area

Minnesota City Historical Association (MCHA) and Garvin Brook Disaster Relief Fund (GBDRF) are cooperating to sponsor a third annual historic caroling event and are additionally planning an area wide lighting contest (event). Planners have selected December 14 for this occasion which will originate as in previous years at the historic First Baptist Church, now the archival site of the MCHA. Details on the lighting contest, whose winners will be announced at the caroling event, are being completed. Hollis Donehower and Susan Althoff are contact persons for the lighting event.

State Sewer Money Grant to be Considered by Minnesota City Council

The offer of a \$1.27 million grant for sewer installation from the state of Minnesota will be reviewed by the City Council of Minnesota City, according to Mayor Don O'Neil. Repercussions of acceptance were the topic of an editorial of the Winona Daily News on September 26. Darrell Erlick discussed "efficiencies" related to consolidation, merger, and annexation. Entitled "The high price of a name," the editorial raised for readers the issue of varied opinions of community identity related to autonomy, and indeed to the issue of efficiency.

ETC.

Winona State University Counselor, Lynda Brzezinski, MCHA member and Minnesota City resident, recently hosted an event at WSU that addressed Depression. Quoted in THE WINONAN, Brzezinski indicated that student wellness and schedules, in addition to imbalance of chemicals in the brain, cause depression. Students were educated about the need to recognize symptoms and the resources available.

Minnesota State Department of Natural Resources Naturalist, Kate O'Grady, MCHA member (responsible for monthly MCHA newsletter layout) and Pickwick resident, is participating on October 10 in the Woodlawn Cemetery Walk sponsored by the Winona County Historical Association. Kate provides information and activities related to Natural History of the cemetery for elementary and middle school aged children.

Minnesota City Archival Site needs the following items at the 140 Mill Street location:

- a) a stand free printer (independent of a computer) for use in copying newspaper clippings
 - b) a small TV (15" ?) with a VCR player and a DVD player for tape and disc viewing by researchers at the site.
- Please call 507-689-4103 or 507-689-2440 if you or someone you know has either of these items and is willing to donate them to the Historical Association.

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.