

MINNESOTA CITY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

MEMBER NEWSLETTER – Volume 1, Issue 7: November, 2007

Mark your calendars!

Nov. 4: “Silver Linings” : a benefit concert for SE Minnesota Flood Victims by former Minnesota Citian, Pamela (Althoff) McNeill. Concert and Silent Auction for United Way Flood Fund to be held at O’Gara’s in St. Paul. Possible local concert in January.

November 8: Minnesota City Historical Association (MCHA) meeting; 6:30 p.m. at Riverway Learning Community, Minnesota City

November 11-24: VOTE for Minnesota City to be “Capital for a Day” at www.mn150years.org

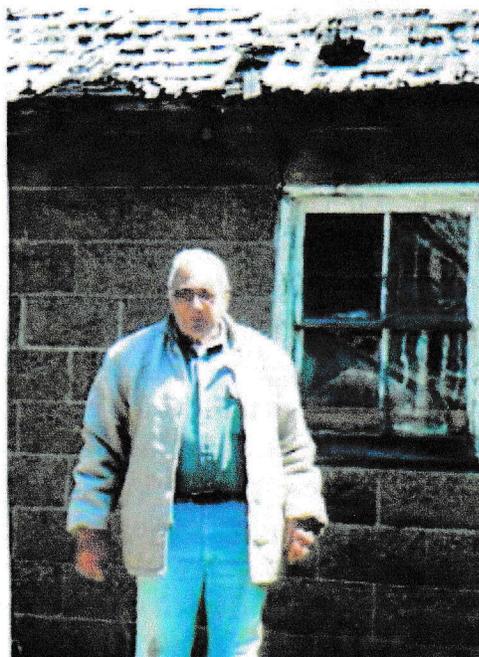
November 29: Minnesota City Community Readers: Sigrid Undset’s *Kristin Lavransdatter* (see the Minnesota City website; Community Readers for more information)

February 24: UW-L archeologists’ presentation on Native American History and artifacts of the area. Please begin locating yours for evaluation of authenticity and value by these individuals. (see the article on page 2 for information on the book written by these presenters)

Minnesota City Loses an Historian and Friend ; Allen Whetstone dies on October 11.

*He was bound to the land from the day of his birth; His roots anchored deep in the fertile earth
Nurtured, sustained, by the soil, he grew; and his life, like his furrows, ran straight and true.*

These words from the memorial card for Allen Whetstone captured an important part of his life for those who had lived some of it with him. We extend our sympathy to Allen's family and friends. In his comments about Allen's life, Bruce Fuller, a co-worker and friend, remembered his three passions—family, equipment, and working the earth. Most of his family and friends agreed with these. Allen contributed a memorable service to MCHA in the spring of 2006, when, with Association members, he did a walk/ride around historic spots of Minnesota City, recalling events and giving descriptions of his life in Minnesota City. A description of that walk was published in the Winona Post and is reprinted on page 3.



Allen Whetstone stands in front of the milkhouse where he, his father and brother escaped a tornado. The ceiling hole is left from the 2” x 4” that crashed through the roof and landed between them.

April, 2006

Indiana Baptist Flood Workers Visit Historic Minnesota City First Baptist Church

At the invitation of James King, Minnesota City resident, eight persons from a New Whitehead, Indiana Baptist work group visited Minnesota City's Historic Baptist Church on October 11. King arranged the visit with Jean Gardner, MCHA member and president of the Minnesota City Baptist Ladies Aid Group, owners of the church building. The workers were assisting in the flood recovery and repair efforts at the Kathy (King) and Mark Borck home in the Saehler addition of Minnesota City.

Jean Gardner welcomed the visitors and outlined the history of the church and noted its many original fixtures. John Guernsey, one of the Indiana workers, explained the work and philosophy of the New Whitehead, Indiana flood recovery group. Borck and King family members acknowledged the outstanding help of the workers, and the Indiana guests shared refreshments provided by the Minnesota City Baptist Ladies Aid.



Jean Gardner talks with visiting Baptist work group at the First Baptist Church in Minnesota City in October

Twelve Millennia: Archaeology of the Upper Mississippi River Valley authored by February MCHA Presenters

University of LaCrosse archeologists, James Theler and Robert Boszhardt, who will be presenters at the February 24 MCHA presentation on Native American History of our area, are authors of the book *Twelve Millennia: Archeology of the Upper Mississippi River Valley*. The sections on the LaMoille rock shelter and the Trempealeau area are ones that will likely interest local readers. One reviewer, James Stoltzman writes "I especially like the extra effort they have expended, contrary to most of the more technical literature, to consider the lives of human beings, rather than presenting a litany of artifact descriptions...." Chapter titles include: The Woodland Tradition, The Beginning of Tribes, The Oneota Culture, The End of Prehistory. This book is not available at the library but may be purchased at local bookstores. If you wish to borrow a copy, call 507-689-2440 or 689-4103.

State Sesquicentennial News

Vote for Minnesota City, "Capital for a Day" at www.mn150years.org.

An application has been submitted by MCHA to the committee for the *Capital for a Day* designation. Five communities will be so honored. Selection of the five "winners" will be by "biomes" or geographical areas, ours being the driftless area—the only area not covered by the recent glaciers. Online voting will be on November 11-24. Please encourage your friends to vote. Because Minnesota City at one time was intended to be the state capital, and because so many "firsts" occurred in Minnesota City, voters will see the justice in making it the capital now, if only for a day. (Also, we should get the flood sympathy vote). The State of Minnesota will reach its 150th anniversary of statehood on May 11, 2008. The official website for this event is www.mn150years.org. Currently, the site lists the names of all micro grants awarded in August for celebration activities. Minnesota City Historical Association (MCHA) is one of these; its award, as reported in the October newsletter, being used for renovation of storage space in the First Baptist Church for Association archives. The other area group receiving an award is Ridgeway Community School. *So You Think You are a Minnesotan* is a feature of the site, listing characteristic Minnesota activities (hunting, baking apple pies and the like).

**Winona County Historical Society's Woodlawn Cemetery Discovery Walk
Features Minnesota Citizens.**

Charles W. Southwick (1839-1893) and Mary Alice (Southwick) Pulver (1870-1939) were included in the group of individuals "interpreted" in this year's Winona County Historical Society's Woodlawn Cemetery Walk. Charles Southwick was an eighth generation descendant of the Mayflower pilgrims. He served in the First Minnesota Battery of Light Artillery and marched with General Sherman to the sea. In 1864, he married Mary Jones, the daughter of Western Farm and Village settlers. Charles and Mary Southwick had one daughter, Mary Alice, who was born in 1870. The family moved to Minnesota City in 1877 where Charles opened a store. He retired in 1888 due to ill health and received a government pension. The family soon moved to Winona where Charles died in 1893. Mrs. Southwick died in 1903. Mary Alice Southwick Pulver ended her life in 1939. (Information from cemetery walk booklet for walk held October 11-15, 2007).

Anyone with information on which grocery store the Southwicks owned, where this grocery store was located, or photos of the store, is asked to contact the Association (689-4103; 689-2440).

*Winona County Historical
Society Calendar
Includes Minnesota City*

The front photo of the 2008 calendar of the Winona County Historical Society depicts a group of individuals posed in front of the 1938 Minnesota City School Building.

Minnesota City Historical Association Remembers Flood Victims

After a month, the signs of flood damage and recovery change but remain abundant in Minnesota City. City officials and residents are very engaged in rebuilding efforts. We applaud their work. In a recent newsletter, we acknowledged Los Angeles Times Minnesota City flood coverage sent to us by Kathryn Delahanty, founder of the Winona Montessori School. Ironically, this past week, Kathy and family members were evacuated from their residence in San Diego because of the California fires. They have now returned to their undamaged home.

Archives Room Renovation Plans Proceeding

Thank you to Brian Campbell, Jim Schoen, Brent Weiss and Dallas Denzer for site visits and discussions, for time and materials that are assisting MCHA plan and execute the renovation of the storage rooms at the First Baptist Church. Details of the progress of this plan will be shared in the December newsletter.

Anyone who is receiving this letter in paper format and who has an e-mail address is encouraged to send your e-mail address to mgogrady@wildblue.net to save the association printing and mailing costs. E-mail addresses will be used only for MCHA communication purposes.

Check Out The Website: www.minnesotacity.org

Continue to check the website periodically. New information is constantly being added. Remind family and friends and former Minnesota City residents to check it out! Thank you to Susan Althoff who is helping with the website.

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.

Longtime Minnesota City Resident, Allen Whetstone, Verifies Location of Historical Sites

He is 83 years old, has some trouble walking and welcomed a four wheeler ride to some of the sites, but Allen Whetstone's memories have not diminished and he has no difficulty moving from one historical narrative to another.

Many Minnesota City longtime residents have heard the spots named—the first landing site, Troost's Mill, the first school house, the power plant, the Methodist Church, and others—but because of topographical changes, few people can locate them today based on historical document descriptions. On April 27, Allen Whetstone gave a guided tour of these original Minnesota City locations with historical significance to David Eckert and Marv and Gen O'Grady, members of the Minnesota City Historical Association. "Rumors had it," said Gen O'Grady, "that Allen knew about an old tree where the boat had tied up that brought the first settlers to Minnesota City." These were members of the New York based Western Farm and Village Association, founders of Rollingsstone Colony.

On an elevated spot on Mathy property, Allen pointed out an old tree that "may be *the* tree," stressing the may be. It is in the right area based on other historical accounts of the boat landings; it was this location the group was looking for. Significant alteration of this area has resulted from the removal of large amounts of gravel, which Allen said may have been the gravel used when they built the railroad. "They took the gravel out and brought the sand in," said Whetstone. Now there are large quantities of sand deposited in this area from the Thompson's dredging.

To view the old Power Plant site required another trek through what is now Department of Natural Resources land at the end of Harbor Drive. "This is where the Territorial Road ran from Minnesota City on to Rollingsstone," said Whetstone. The large concrete slabs from the Power Plant are partially submerged in Garvin Creek. The plant produced power for Winona. Also on Harbor Drive is the home where Allen grew up, now owned by Susan Whetstone Althoff, Whetstone's niece. Here Allen talked about two tornadoes, one in 1935 and one in 1937. The 1935 tornadic winds took down the barn. In 1937, the roof of the house was torn off, and then Whetstone showed the group a hole in the cedar shingled roof of a cement block pump house, a result of a 1937 tornado. His father and brother had taken refuge here from the tornado. Allen, carrying ice for the milk house, ran to join them. Just as he got in the building, a two by four was driven through the roof and came down between him and his father and brother. "How we survived that I'll never know," Whetstone commented. Another two by four had been driven into the ground a short distance from the building, "so far in, because of the velocity of the storm" Allen said, "that the three of us could not pull it out by hand."

A next significant location Whetstone pointed out was the first school in Winona County, a log cabin in Minnesota City, now enclosed in a home on Minnesota Street. On Minnesota Street, Whetstone showed the group the place, now a vacant lot close to Garvin Brook where Louis Stephans lived and burned city garbage. Going up the road a short distance is the hill where the Methodist Church and Woodman's Lodge had been, now a home site.

Near the railroad tracks the group looked at now vacant land where the Railroad Depot once stood from which many Minnesota City and Stockton people used to ride into Winona, and also site of the legendary Blazing Stump Bar. The Troost Mill site, next stop of the tour, was first located on land next to a hotel which later became the Sandstede Bar and is now an apartment complex on Bridge Street. George Schneider moved the mill building from its first location to Minnesota Street where it became the Schneider home. After many stories interwoven with the historical site information—stories of "stolen" watermelons, baseball games, pretty girls, and barroom wagers and the names of many Minnesota City longtime residents-- Norbye, Kaslo, Ludwigsen, Kelly, Brown, Donehower, Ellis, -- the tour ended at land which Allen still farms. "I'll probably put soybeans on this side this year," he said, "and use the rest for garden." (Winona Post, May 7, 2006)

The "final harvest" came; Minnesota City has said farewell to a longtime good friend.

Allen Whetstone was interred at Oakland Cemetery in Minnesota City.