

MINNESOTA CITY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION MEMBER NEWSLETTER – Volume 1, Issue 8: December, 2007

Mark your calendars!

Note: There will be no December Community Readers Meeting.

December

December 13: MCHA monthly meeting, Riverway Learning Community, 6:30 p.m.

December 15: Community Caroling, First Baptist Church, 6:30 p.m. Invite your friends and family! (see page 3)

January

January 4: Walt Kelly presents "The Oaks" at Winona County Historical Society, 12:05 p.m.

January 10: MCHA monthly meeting, Riverway Learning Community, 6:30 p.m.

January 17: Community Readers Meeting "*Old Rail Fence Corners: The ABCs of Minnesota History*", Riverway Learning Community, 6:30 p.m.

February

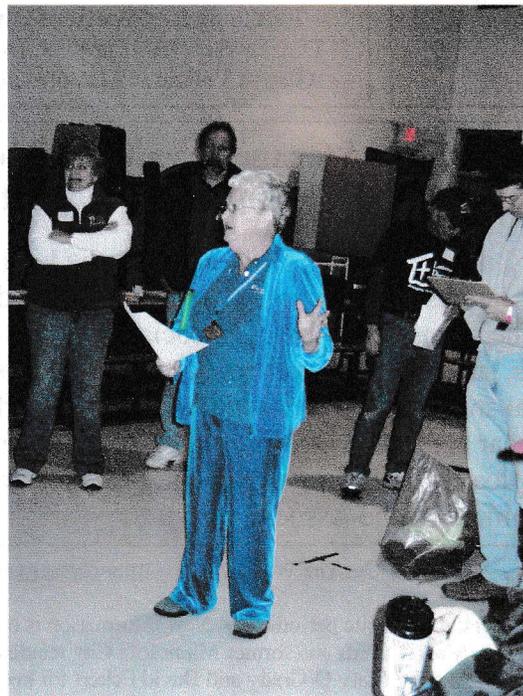
February 24: UW-L archaeologist presentation, Robert Boszhardt, on Native American History and artifacts of the area. Please begin locating yours for evaluation of authenticity and value by these individuals.

Thrivent Financial Aid Supports Flood Recovery Event

On December 1, through the organizational efforts of Jaye Fritz, Minnesota City resident and Minnesota City Historical Association member, many Minnesota City flood victims received much needed help in their flood recovery process with supplies furnished by Thrivent Financial Aid and other donors. Using Riverway Learning Community as a base, home owners and volunteer workers met for breakfast and directions at 9:00 and worked through the day delivering and installing sheet rock and insulation. A 1:30 dinner prepared by volunteers served some 200 people. Participants included residents of all the flooded Minnesota City areas. (See O'Grady personal reflection, page 4).



Volunteers loaded and unloaded materials in the snow at Riverway Learning Community, site of the workday for flood victims.



Jaye Fritz, surrounded by Thrivent personnel and volunteers in Riverway Learning Community's auditorium, makes announcements and gives directions to the work group and flood victims at the December 1 workday.

Walt Kelly Presents The Oaks at Winona County Historical Society "Food for Thought" Program

On January 9, at 12:05, Walt Kelly, former Minnesota City resident and son of famed Chef Walter and Charlotte Kelly, will be the presenter at the Winona County Historical Society *Food for Thought* program. Many Minnesota City persons heard Kelly speak on The Oaks and saw his presentation of slides and artifacts as part of the Minnesota City Sesquicentennial Lecture Series in 2002, delivered at Riverway. These sessions last approximately one hour and are presented with no charge to attendees. Walt would be pleased to see Minnesota City friends at this presentation.

Successful Silver Linings Concert

\$4000.00 was raised at the "Silver Linings" concert and silent auction at O'Gara's in St. Paul on November 4. The concert performed by Pam Althoff, former Minnesota Citian, daughter of Susan Althoff, was to benefit flood victims of Southeastern Minnesota. Thank you, Pam!

Representative Steve Drazkowski presents Minnesota Sesquicentennial Flag to Minnesota City Groups

Steve Drazkowski, District 28B, visited Minnesota City on Wednesday, November 28, to present a Sesquicentennial Flag to the Minnesota City Historical Association and the First Baptist Ladies Aid group to honor their efforts to preserve the historic First Baptist Church (est. 1852) and the archives of Minnesota City history being organized by the Minnesota City Historical Association (MCHA). Present to receive the flag were members of both groups. The MCHA was successful in obtaining one of the State Sesquicentennial committee's microgrants to begin renovation of rooms at the church. The work is currently in the planning process.



Left to right: Genevieve O'Grady, David Eckert, Betsy Friesen, Steve Drazkowski, Jean Gardner, Donna Friesen, Susan Althoff, Duane Hutton, Gladys Volkart. Also present were Brenda Eckert and Marvin O'Grady.

Church/Archive Storage Area Plans Move Forward Archives Preservation Group Reports Progress

At a meeting on November 17th, a number of individuals from the First Baptist Ladies Aid, Minnesota City Historical Association and other interested community members met to discuss details of renovation of the two First Baptist Church rooms for the storage location of Association archives. Attendees agreed to investigate chimney issues, insurance issues, supplies and workers necessary for electrical work, cement work and roofing work at the building. A financial solicitation letter will be submitted to the group for approval, intended to reach donors before end of the year tax time. Because the Association is a 501©3 organization, all donations to the group can be deducted from taxes. The Minnesota State Sesquicentennial Committee is funding \$1000.00 of the work through a grant submitted by the Association.

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, Marv O'Grady and David Eckert for keeping the website updated.

**Minnesota City Historical Association and the
Minnesota City First Baptist Ladies Aid Sponsor
Community Caroling on December 15**

All Minnesota City and area residents are invited to attend the Community Caroling and history event at the Historic First Baptist Church, 140 Mill Street, on December 15 at 6:30 p.m. This second annual caroling event will again feature historical information on Christmas in Minnesota City, followed by caroling on Mill Street. Readings will include newspaper accounts of the season's events and people that describe a very festive time for gathering with family and friends that included meals at each other's homes to "pick the turkey bones," Christmas church programs, and activities in the city including sleigh rides and opera house programs. Attendees will be able to view a series of photographs organized by Jean Gardner and her mother, Elsie Gardner (deceased) of the church and its furnishings in the early years. A decorated tree with candies and toys for children will recall early celebrations in the church. Please invite your family and friends. Refreshments will served. For more information, call 689-4103 or 689-2440.

**From the Minnesota Statehood
Timeline...www.mn150years.org.**

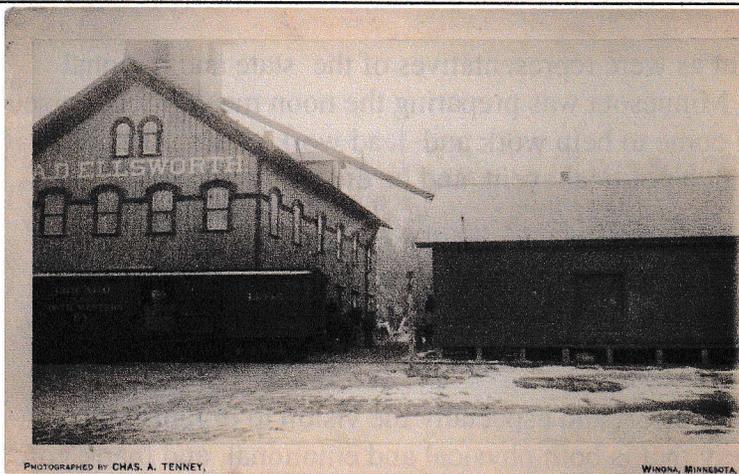
December 10, 1856: Henry M. Rice, delegate to Congress from the territory of Minnesota, introduces a bill in the House of Representatives "authorizing the citizens of the Territory of Minnesota to hold a convention for the purpose of forming a constitution, preparatory to her admission as a State into the Union."

December 24, 1856: "A bill to authorize the people of the Territory of Minnesota to form a constitution and State government, preparatory to their admission into the Union on an equal footing with the original States (H.R.642) is referred to Committee on Territories."

Washington State Ellsworth Mill Family Member Corresponds

Bill Yake, Olympia, Washington, a visitor to the Association's website (www.minnesotacity.org), emailed this week that he is the great grandson of Amos Ellsworth, owner of the Ellsworth Mill in Minnesota City in the late 1800s. He has accumulated history of the mill dating back to the 1880s and will share his materials about family and the mill with us, including the flood that affected the mill in 1881. For all Minnesota City and area residents, this information will be a significant contribution to our efforts to "reclaim" some of our past. According to Erik Brom's *History of Minnesota City*, "The flour mill was built by Mr. A.D. Ellsworth

in 1867. The building was a wooden structure built upon a strong stone foundation, in size 54x72 feet and three stories high. It had an elevator next to the side track and a detached warehouse 40x70 feet in size. The power was furnished by a dam across the Rollingstone Creek, giving a fall of ten feet. The capacity of this mill was 750 bushels of wheat or 150 barrels of flour per day...the mill was eventually destroyed by fire, but one can still see the crumbling foundation ruins on the banks of Garvin Brook just below the swinging bridge." Yake has already forwarded



some information and photos. He is particularly interested in family members of Amos Ellsworth Jr. (who married Lucy Woods.)—Loren Woods, Abby Gould/Woods, Harry Woods, Allen Dwight Woods, Emma Woods and Winifred Woods. Allen Woods and Willis Newmeyer spent much time canoeing on the Mississippi with Amos Jr. Photos sent to us by Yake will be viewed at the December 13 meeting of the Association. Any readers with information, please call 689-2440 for contact information for Bill Yake.

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.

Making History in Minnesota City: Thrivent Sponsored Flood Recovery Event Brings Community Together

Genevieve O'Grady

Saturday morning, December 1, by 9:00 a.m., the auditorium of Riverway Learning Community was busy with volunteer activity for the Thrivent Financial Event to assist Flood Recovery for Minnesota City families. Registration tables were up and being supervised, food was on some tables, quilts and shirts were piled high on others. I live in rural Minnesota City and I do not know most of the Minnesota City residents. I was not affected directly by the August flood; I was affected by it on Saturday. I had come to help with the morning food—juice, pastries, coffee. The people streamed in, men women and children of all ages. With an offer of coffee, I asked where people lived and quickly learned that there were people present from the Gunderson addition, Sunny Acres and the Saehler addition. I do not believe any occasion has drawn together so many people from these areas. I heard comments from some people, now not about the night/morning of the flood, but about rebuilding progress or lack of it, about discouragements, about gratitude. There was talk about not having “a community that they felt part of”—voting in Rollingstone township, but not connected with anything there or in Minnesota City, of being involved in Winona, but coming back to Minnesota City at night. Others talked about their neighbors understanding them now because they also had flooding, about the Christmas decorations sharing event in Winona. Today these were Minnesota City people affected by a common tragedy, looking for common relief.

The messages from the organizers were inspiring. One individual reminded workers that some flood victims they would encounter might need a listening ear more than the sheet rock, and that the workers should provide that. The “honeymoon stage is over”, she said, with all the help and offers of help slowing down. Now assistance may be more important than before, she reminded, when people may have only \$28, 000 to rebuild a home and life. Jaye Fritz, area resident, and the organizing force behind this effort, along with her husband LaVern, in addition to her directions and organizational material, gave thanks to volunteers and talked about the hope to coordinate with Stockton for a celebratory event next summer “to just have fun.” Hopefully, by then, many more people will be back in restored homes with their families, and the sound of “fun” will be welcomed.

Local Thrivent financial representatives were present as were representatives of the state and regional Thrivent response teams. A crew from Watertown, Minnesota was preparing the noon meal. I recognized some Minnesota City and Winona persons who had come to help work and lead work crews. The area state representative was in the crowd, but this was not a political event, and he did not speak.

While some drank coffee and visited, others were loading trucks with insulation and sheet rock. Many stood and just listened. By the time the organizational details had been delivered, the snow was flying. The workers continued to load and unload trucks. Some visiting helpers talked about staying overnight if the snow continued.

Thank you, Jaye Fritz (and LaVern) for the time and effort and especially the vision to organize this event for Minnesota City that can help flood recovery that is both physical and emotional, and thank you, Thrivent and other donors, for making the project financially possible.

As a member of the Minnesota City Historical Association, I have been in discussions of the diminishing size of the city and the change—the loss—in community spirit from the earlier years of the community. Since the flood in August, when I drive by on Highway 61 and see the houses on Minnesota Street, the greatly widened creek, the rebuilding of railroads and highways, I have thought many times that the City was already so small, and now it is so much smaller. Today, I saw the city enlarged. I recalled the Stafford lines that read “When you turn around, starting here, lift this new glimpse that you found; carry into evening all that you want from this day”

I hold on to the glimpse of community in Minnesota City that I saw today.