

# MINNESOTA CITY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

MEMBER NEWSLETTER – Volume 3, Issue 2: February, 2009

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

## Mark your calendars!

February 12: Minnesota City Historical Association Meeting, 6:30 p.m., Riverway Learning Community

February 19: Minnesota City Community Readers discuss Pearl Buck's *The Good Earth*, 6:30 p.m. Riverway Learning Community

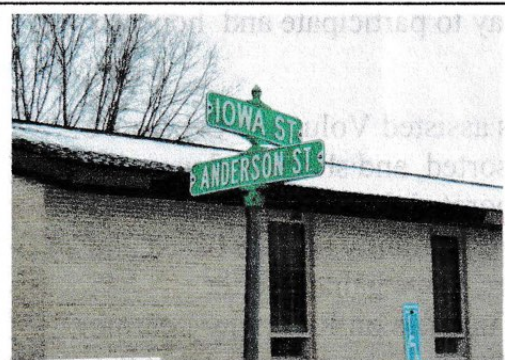
March 15: Bob Bambenek presentation on abstracts, 2:00 p.m., Riverway Learning Community

## **MCHA Announces March 15 Robert Bambenek Presentation on Abstracts**

Robert “Bob” Bambenek, Winona County Recorder, will give a public presentation sponsored by Minnesota City Historical Association on March 15 at 2:00 p.m. at Riverway Learning Community. Bambenek’s topic will be land abstracts. He encourages persons to bring abstracts to the speech and to send him advance questions about their own or other abstracts, particularly those from the Minnesota City area. He will have sample abstracts and related materials at the event, and will respond to advance questions as well as those of attendees. Persons who have previously heard Bambenek’s presentations value him as an important source of land information in Winona County and recognize his own great interest in matters historical. Persons with advance questions may contact Bambenek directly or submit questions for him to MCHA members at 689-4103 or 689-2440. E.G., what was the process for replacement of land markers from witness trees to permanent markers? How does a landowner determine the location of property lines based on government easements?

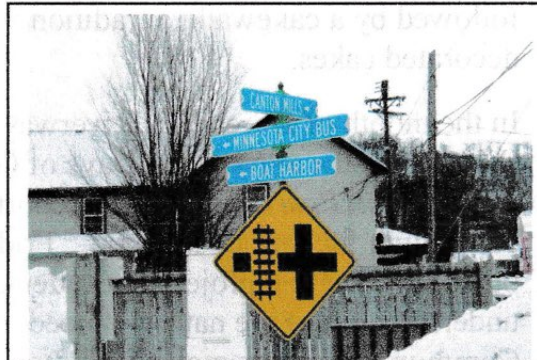
## **Minnesota City Area Named Streets with Common Sense and Logic**

A recent Winona Daily News Article (1-25-09) discussed the historical naming of streets in Winona including efforts to simplify directions and to honor individuals. No attempts were satisfactory to everyone. As any area rummage sale aficionado knows, the many new street names added in recent years have people using maps and phone calls to find locations. In rural areas, the recent renaming reflects further attempts to promote resident satisfaction. Denzer Road, Whitman-Deering, ChannelView, Blue Bird, Sherry Drive, MarVal-- all give ideas of owners and their activities. The 1913 *History of Winona County* informs readers that “The first recorded plat of Minnesota City was based on the survey of Robert Pike, Jr., then county surveyor. The provisions of this plat embodied a Utopian dream of communist endeavor. The main portion of the plat consisted of 160 acres, bordered by North, South, East and West streets. From these roads, avenues numbered from one to ten led to a



State and family names mark this intersection in front of St. Paul's Church.

large circle, which was to be covered with glass for a winter garden” (207). Eventually, state names made their way to Minnesota City streets – Iowa, Dakota, Minnesota – and family names – Anderson, Church, and others.



The blue service signs are especially helpful in small cities.

## **Valentines Move Hearts and Homes in the 1890s**

It was not a surprise to see the name of John Valentine come up in a newspaper search for Valentine's Day, but the large amount of news about moving in Minnesota City, including Valentine's move in 1896 was newsworthy. In an article from April 6, many residents were changing places. "John Valentine has moved from his old farm on to his recent purchase, the E. B. Drew farm, and Geo. Millerinas moved from Minnesota City into Valentine's house.... Ernest Wockenfuss moved into Emil Dannie's house and is tearing his old house down to make room for a new one. Wm. Malzahn moved into John Nelson's house. Paul Witt moved from Bear Creek into Otto Troost's house, vacated by Malzahn. Mr. K. Jones moved into Mr. Troost's south side residence and George Loomis moved into the house vacated by Jones. Fremont Booley has left the Pike house and moved into his own summer residence on the hill and John Stackhouse has moved into the Pike house. Mrs. Whitford is making extensive repairs on her house and will soon remove from Winona here. The ice moved out some time ago and there have been other movements." *Winona Daily Republican*, April 6, 1896.

The *Society and Its Doings* Column of the *Winona Daily Republican* had these comments on valentines. "That St. Valentine's Day is near at hand is manifested by the show windows of the stores where these love tokens are for sale. Some very pretty valentines are offered this year, and those who receive them may well feel highly complimented. The so called comic valentine is still in evidence, but comparatively few of them are sold to what was done a few years ago, showing that the good taste of the people is being developed." (*Winona Daily Republican*; Feb. 4, 1889). (Minnesota City Historical Association newsletter writers hope to visit soon with Jane Valentine Sherman who will provide interesting information on the Valentine family in the area).

## **Riverway Learning Community Students Engage in Varied Service Activities and Public Social Events**

*Free Winona*, January 2009, included information about three public Riverway Learning Community Events that will be part of *The Long Weekend* (February 6-8), three days of support for the *Free Winona* newspaper. These will be three days of discussion for and about community. On Friday, February 6, a facilitated dialogue for parents will be held at Riverway to explore a variety of issues pertaining to child-rearing in the community: supports for parenting and removing obstacles to good parenting. Childcare will be provided at the event.

At 7:00 p.m. on Friday, February 6, a Benefit Dinner will be prepared in Riverway's kitchen featuring vegetarian and vegan foods. The public is invited; the fee is \$10.00. The dinner will be followed by a cakewalk, a traditional activity where individuals pay to participate and hope to win decorated cakes.

In the month of December, Riverway 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade students assisted Volunteer Services of Winona for the annual Ten Days of Giving. Students unloaded, sorted, and shelved donated food. The *Winona Post* (January 21) reported that these students incorporated the project into their curriculum for service learning. Fridays are being utilized to do community service based and outdoor recreation projects. Students, according to the Post report, have gained better understanding of the nature of need and of giving. For additional updates on Riverway Learning Community, readers may check their website at [www.rwlc.org/](http://www.rwlc.org/). Readers are reminded that the web site of MCHA [www.minnesotacity.org](http://www.minnesotacity.org) has links to additional businesses listed on the site (Canton Mills, Flags and Poles International, Picadilly Art Gallery).

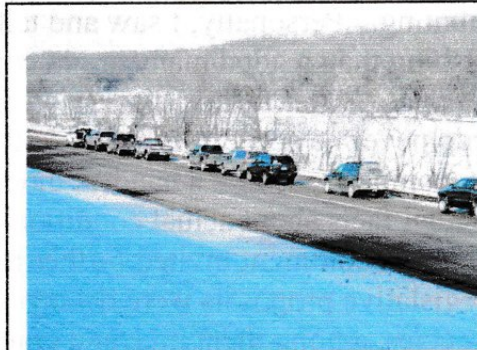
## Fishing Tales Were Better (Worse?) in the Olden Days



Ken Klug, Lewiston, just returned from Schneider's Lake, shows Marvin O'Grady his catch of sunfish and crappies.

Those of us who drive down Highway 61 across from Schneider's Lake or past Lake Winona know that ice fishing is a pastime engaged in by many in this area. Phil Streng, avid fisherman, now deceased and former Minnesota City resident, frequently invited others to share his great enjoyment of winter ice fishing on some of the coldest days of the year. His invitation to friends and relatives was always, "C'mon guys, gotta get out there--it's makin' ice." There have been more than the usual "makin ice" days this winter.

[continued on page 4]



Some of the fifteen cars lined up on January 31 opposite Schneider's Lake, north of Minnesota City.

## Minnesota City Community Readers select *Timber Roots* for March Selection

Minnesota City Community Readers, who meet monthly (see Mark Your Calendar), have selected *Timber Roots* for their March reading. Because this is the story of the Laird-Norton lumber industry, local non-member residents may be interested in attending the March 19 meeting at Riverway Learning Community at 6:30. Fred Kohlmeyer, who authored this book, graduated from Winona State University and the University of Minnesota. He spent a lifetime researching the history of the lumber industry. In *Timber Roots*, he discusses the controversies of logging and log transportation, technology and other aspects of the industry. The history covers the Laird-Norton Story from 1855 to 1905. Minnesota City is not indexed in the book, but historians will find many connections with the "firsts" of Minnesota City that can be linked to Kohlmeyer's information. O.M. Lord and other early Minnesota City residents had brought lumber down from the Chippewa Mill; Kohlmeyer discusses this company. Along with the lumber industry, he outlines the history of schools, of the Laird and Norton families, and gives great detail on some aspects of these topics. End stamps and bark marks—over two thousand different ones—were on logs entering the Mississippi from Beef Slough alone (the Alma area). Local readers will recognize many family names—Hannibal Choate, R.D. Cone and others. All readers are encouraged to join Minnesota City Community Readers for any of the monthly discussions, but a particular invitation is extended for this locally important selection. Readers can purchase the book at the Winona County Historical Society Museum Gift Shop for \$6.00 (160 Johnson Street) or secure it at the Winona County Public Library. One need not read the book to attend the discussion. For information: 689-2440.

## Minnesota City Historical Association (MCHA) Begins Planning for Minnesota City Day

At its regular monthly meeting on January 8, MCHA members discussed plans for the annual Minnesota City Day celebration in May. An organizational meeting will be scheduled for involved groups to discuss planning the day—food availability, entertainment, and other aspects of the celebration. MCHA will be hosting an open house at the Association archives at 140 Mill Street. Planning for a speaker and program for the occasion is continuing. Discussion also included the March 15 County Recorder Bob Bambenek's presentation on abstracts.

## Fishing Tales Were Better (Worse?) in the Olden Days

[continued from page 3]

In 1936, a *Voice of the Outdoors* column discussed the controversy "over ice fishing." To the objections of a writer concerning "overfishing," columnist W. J. Hohaus responded "Perhaps B.T. observed one or two brutal fishermen. A few like that are in evidence during any season of fishing or hunting. Personally, I saw and talked to many who are better sportsmen in connection with winter fishing than a good many are in connection with summer fishing. I saw no wholesale 'slaughtering' of pike." After further discussion of the immediate disagreement, Hohaus concluded "Conservation can never be accomplished by letting millions of game fish die each year and condemning people who in comparison, take a handful through the ice. Neither can it be accomplished by people without actual facts about actual conditions." (*Winona Republican Herald* January 13, 1936). One suspects this last comment invited further response from B. T. State level disagreements resulting in legislative proposals were occurring at the same time, predicting the imminent demise of whole species, among them pike and crappies, because of winter fishing.

Local residents were telling this fish story as early as 1862, that without the verification by the well known Elder Ely and Caroline Smith, the daughter of Orrin Smith, probably would not have been believed. The repeated use of the word "multitudes" probably helped the storytellers' credibility. Orrin F. Smith, 175 West Fourth Street, a Winona pioneer and the son of Mrs. Catherine Smith, said many old settlers vouched for the truth of the story.

Elder Ely's account was as follows. "One very cold day near New Year's, John Emerson, one of the early settlers passed along the south shore of the lake under the bluffs, and came to an open place in the ice made by the spring water coming down by the bluff. He observed a large number of pike lying as if asleep in the water. He took out many of them with his hands. Their places were soon supplied with more of the same sort. He came to town bringing as many as he could carry, and gave notice to a few of his friends who returned with him with pitchforks and commenced to throw out the large pike, weighing from four to ten pounds. The more they threw out, the more and larger the coming shoal filled the place. The news of the success of the first fishermen spread among the settlers as far as Minnesota City. For several days there was no exhausting the fish. Men came from all parts of the county, bringing teams to carry away the multitude of fish. Many of the settlers salted barrels full, which kept till the following summer, and were considered equal to the best lake fish. Many buried them in snow banks and kept them for a month or more as good as fresh. Emerson took as many as his two horses could draw down the river and sold them readily. In about a week, when the cold weather abated, the large fish disappeared and the countless multitudes of smaller fish of another kind filled their places. These were thrown out in vast numbers.

In about two weeks all disappeared and the fishing season closed for that year. These fish supplied the place of other food. The solution of the great fish supply, Elder Ely believed, was easy when all the facts were taken into account. When the water was high in the spring of the year, large numbers of fish from the Mississippi made their way into the lake. When the water went down, the fish did not escape from the lake, consequently a very great supply was left in the narrow limits of the lake. The fish were more and more confined as the water receded and when the water was very low, escape was impossible. Thus they were shut in when the winter set in."

(*Winona Republican Herald*, Dec. 24, 1934)

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.