

MINNESOTA CITY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

MEMBER NEWSLETTER – Volume 3, Issue 7: July, 2009

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

Mark your calendars!

July 8: GBDRF
Community Meal,
St. Paul's Church Hall
132 Anderson St.

July 9: Minnesota City
Historical Association
Meeting; 140 Mill
Street; 6:30 p.m.

August 19: Bridge
dedication

May 15, 2010: Minnesota
City Day 2010

No Summer Reading
Group Meetings: Next
meeting - September 17.
Selection - F. Scott
Fitzgerald's *The Great
Gatsby*

Falling Tree Limbs Damage Property at First Baptist Church

At about 4:30 a.m. on June 20, a large branch of the huge elm tree on the First Baptist Church property at 140 Mill Street fell to the ground, waking neighbors with the crashing sound. Excel Energy trimmed the tree; neighbors whose properties were involved assisted with cleanup. Estimates are currently being secured for dangers inherent in the remaining maple tree and the rest of the elm. Fences were downed and the small storage shed purchased this spring by MCHA was damaged. Decisions to cut these huge trees are difficult, but the dangers to buildings and property involved would also be large in the event of additional breakoffs or falls. Both trees stand on the property of the First Baptist Church with branches extending to adjoining King and Hanson properties.

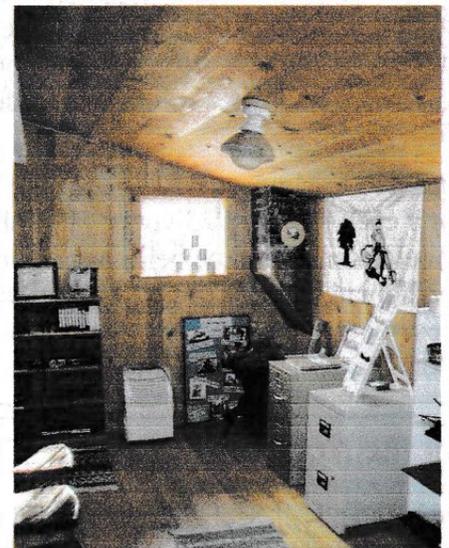
!Address Changes for MCHA!

The Minnesota City Historical Association has changed its address to 140 Mill Street, P.O. Box 21.

The website www.minnesotacity.org now features photos from Minnesota City Day on that link as well as on the Oakland Cemetery Link.

Successful Archives June 13 Opening Day

The first open hours of the Archives were held on June 13 from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. at 140 Mill Street. People visited about historical materials, continued to work on their own research, used the copier, discussed physical arrangements of the archives and future possibilities for spreading information to area residents. The Association is benefiting from the contributions and expertise of Marianne Mastenbrook, who is an archivist at the Winona County Historical Association. The life experience of Roger Church always adds authenticity to the historical discussions and the technical skills of Andrea Church will assist in future presentations and open hours. These individuals were present on June 13. Andrea Church is preparing a list of no-charge genealogical research websites for archive visitors.



Room One of the archives at 140 Mill Street. Lumber for floors and ceiling donated by Dallas Denzer; installed by Marvin and James O'Grady.

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 Member Okland Becomes Lifetime Minnesota Territorial Pioneer



Barbara and Gerald Okland at First Baptist Church. May 16 2009

Gerald and Barb Okland, Thief River Falls, first learned of renewed community interest in Minnesota City first settlers through the website www.minnesotacity.org, and became some of the first members of the Minnesota City Historical Association. This year they were able to visit on Minnesota City Day, May 16. The second on-line newsletter issue carried a brief story on Samuel and Sarah Cotton, earliest Minnesota City settlers, members of the Western Farm and Village Association. Shortly thereafter, an e-mail was received from Gerald and Barbara Okland in Thief River Falls, who communicated that Gerald was the great great grandson of the Cottons. In December of 1852 (the

settlement began in May), Samuel was one of five men from the Rollingstone Colony to go to LaCrosse to pick up supplies that had been left by the Nominee, the first settler's boat. Cotton purchased land from E.B. Drew in 1857. After the collapse of the Association, Cotton made a claim of eighty acres and preempted the village lots as a homestead. Samuel Cotton was the chairman of the meeting in 1887 that formed an association for the purpose of procuring and holding lands to be used exclusively for a cemetery for the burial of the dead (Oakland Cemetery). As of May 26, Gerald is a Lifetime member of Minnesota Territorial Pioneers, Inc., an organization to encourage the study of Minnesota History. Any descendant and/or spouse and children whose ancestors settled in Minnesota prior to Statehood on May 11, 1858, is invited to join. This organization built the first log cabin on State Fair Grounds in St. Paul in 1900. The group remembers and preserves the memories of territorial ancestors. Readers can contact the group through the given website or through email at mnterritorialpioneers@yahoo.com.

Committees use "luck of the draw" for "Untying" Elections

Media outlets have recently repeatedly featured the story of a Town Council election in Cave Creek, Arizona where two candidates received 660 votes each. They drew cards to determine the winner. The king of hearts beat the six of hearts. An earlier Arizona state legislative seat was decided by a game of poker, and two local school board candidates rolled dice to decide the outcome. A 1925 law dictated that ties in outcomes should be decided by lot.

In June, 1941, Minnesota City had a tie for the school board clerk election; Glen Alleman and Blanchard Gardner each received 25 votes. Initially, on June 25, the Winona Republican Herald reported that a second school election would be held, but reported on June 28, that the School Board had reappointed the Incumbent, Glen Alleman. At this time the board did not decide whether the appointment was for one year or a full term of three years. No reports of "issues that divide" surface in many of the stories of tied elections, making chance a reasonable decision maker to after the fact readers; at the time, there may have been significant issues.

From the Archives: City Nite Club "Billy Club" Recalls Minnesota City History

In 2002, Janet Hill Seabern contributed her uncle's (Bob Fleming) Billy Club to the MCHA archives. Bob was a "bouncer" at the City Night Club. During the week, he worked as a milkman, but on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday nights he worked at the club. According to Janet, Bob rarely ever used it, but occasionally pulled it out, thereby settling down rowdy crowds. Janet remembers only one incident where he did use it for an intoxicated individual who was assaulting him. (Billy Clubs – truncheons or cudgels- were so named in the mid nineteenth century, with "Billy" being the nickname for William).



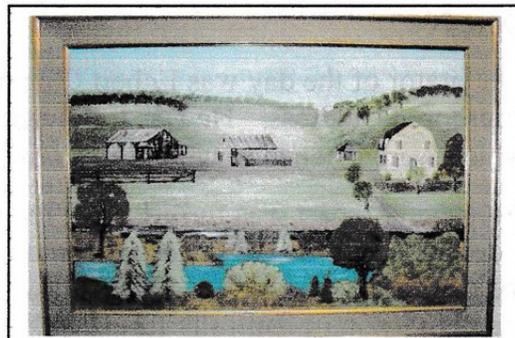
Robert Fleming's "Billy Club" used at the City Nite Club.

DENZER FAMILY HISTORY ITEMS AVAILABLE IN ARCHIVES

The Denzer families of the area held their annual reunion on June 28 at Prairie Island in Winona. Christian Denzer located in Norton in 1858, making the Denzers among the first settlers of the area. The Denzers have gathered for annual reunions in large numbers, at times surpassing 100. The gatherings were often held at Farmer's Park or Whitewater. Reading the newspaper descriptions, the events included singing, reading, games, and food. Marriages brought new names to the lists of attendees, including Whetstones.

Minnesota City Historical Association hopes to feature a future presentation on the Denzer family history in the area. We have requested family members to share their historical materials with us.

In a previous newsletter we noted that Neil Denzer donated paintings to MCHA. Those persons who visited the Archives on May 16 saw these framed pictures displayed. One painting is of the farm buildings off Highway 248 west of Minnesota City. It portrays the farm of Fred Denzer as it appeared about 1930.



Neil Denzer painting of the stagecoach site of the D.Q. Burley homestead, later owned by John and Esther Denzer.

A second painting is of the location previously owned by D.Q. Burley and then by John and Esther Denzer (Neil's parents) showing the stagecoach station at the time. (Burley homesteaded here in the 1880s). There was a barn for hay storage and a livery stable to house the spare stagecoach horses. The stage could change horses there and leave the others to rest up.

A third painting Denzer gave the Archives is a wedding gift, a German painting given to George and Jane Whetstone around 1875.

Readers are invited to view the paintings at 140 Mill Street .

GBDRF SUMMER EVENTS Include July 8 Community Meal and August 19 Bridge Dedication

At their quarterly meeting on June 16, GBDRF members reviewed completed projects including the DVD commemorating the flood and other Minnesota City Day activities and began planning for summer projects. These will include landscaping projects, completion of the Welcome Home Plant project, a community meal on July 8 at St. Paul's Church Hall, and a Bridge Dedication ceremony on August 19.

Committees have been established for each of these events. At this meeting, Stephanie Scharmer and LaVern Fritz were added to the board and Duane Hutton was approved as the treasurer, replacing Jaye Fritz, a founding board member and treasurer who died in March, 2009. Members discussed memorial possibilities for Jaye.

Thank you

- to the City Council of Minnesota City for the donation of \$500.00 for the work of the Association.
- to Clare Denzer for the contribution of a Denzer family cookbook for the archives. The book includes narratives about Esther Denzer and Oak Denzer written by family members as well as a number of recipes from many Denzer individuals.
- to Jean Gardner for her donation to the archives of her "prize" dictionary, Webster's Practical Dictionary, 1931 copyright. Jean received it in 1933 for perfect attendance at Sunday School for one year.
- to neighbors who assisted with ideas and with cleanup following the fall of the backyard tree at 140 Mill Street
- to GBDRF for the copy of the DVD "In a Flash" which records interviews with area residents on their experiences of the flood and interviews of weather resource persons on their explanations of the historic event.

1884 History of Wabasha County Recalls Fourth of July in Minnesota City, First Celebration of Holiday in Southern Minnesota

The fourth of July, 1853, was celebrated with a great deal of patriotic enthusiasm at Minnesota City. The settlers of Rolling Stone Colony invited the citizens of Wabasha Prairie to join them in the customary honors and hospitalities of "independence day." The invitation was accepted and many from the prairie were in attendance. The occasion was said to have been one of unusual interest and gratification to the settlers assembled.

The celebration was held in "the public square," under the oaks. The introductory was a song, written by Robert Pike, Jr., the poet of the colony. (This was the song publicly performed at Minnesota City Day, 2009).

The orator of the day was Egbert Chapman, who, it is said, gave an admirable and exceedingly appropriate address. He was followed by Robert Pike Jr., who became really eloquent in his remarks, which were listened to with pleased expressions by the assemblage.

An elegant repast was furnished by the ladies, to which all were invited. The concourse then adjourned from "the park" to the tables prepared under the shade of the walnuts where ample justice was awarded the good things provided. After all were satisfied, volunteer toasts were drank from glasses filled with pure cold water plentifully furnished.

The first toast was by Robert Pike, Jr. "The ladies. May they ever be pure, as our own bright fountains; beautiful as our wild flowers; as even of temper as our own delightful climate (except the thunderstorms), and as fruitful as the soil to which they have been transplanted."

The second was by Edwin Hamilton: "Superior cookery. The art that makes us happy, and that none better understand than the ladies of Minnesota City."

The third was by W.H. Colburn: The motto of our glorious country, 'Union is Strength.' Minnesota City and Winona. May they ever be thus united is the earnest wish of Winona today.

The sixth was by Robert Pike, Jr.: "Winona and Minnesota City. May all the rivalry which exists between them be the rivalry of good neighborhood, and the desire to excel in office of kindness and humanity."

The eighth was by T.K. Allen: "Peace, prosperity and equality. May it long be enjoyed in Minnesota."

The twelfth was by E. Chapman: "The glorious 4th of July. May the day of remembrance of the day ever be in the hearts of the people."

The eighteenth was by S. J. Smith: "Here is to Minnesota City from her eldest daughter, Winona. Although the Dark Water city, yet her waters are clear and sparkling, and to its men, who being Rolling Stone men, yet gather commercial moss; and to its ladies, who are blooming."

One by O.M. Lord: "The Mississippi river, the highway of the nation. As long as the water flows in its channel, may her valleys annually resound with the sound of cannon proclaiming the independence of the American people."

The day closed with another song written by Robert Pike, Jr. This was the first time the "Glorious Fourth" was ever celebrated in southern Minnesota.

Anyone who wishes to be a member of the Association is invited to send \$15.00 to:

MCHA, P.O. Box 21, 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.