

MINNESOTA CITY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

MEMBER NEWSLETTER – Volume 3, Issue 12: December, 2009

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

Mark your calendars!

December 10:

Minnesota City Community

Readers: 6:30 p.m.,
Riverway Learning Community, *The Bean Trees* by Barbara Kingsolver, Public Invited

Note: No December Minnesota City Historical Association Meeting

December 12:

Caroling and History event,

6:30 p.m.,
First Baptist Church,
140 Mill Street

Go “Green”!

If you receive this newsletter in paper form and would prefer to receive it electronically, please call 689-2440.

Variety Characterizes Minnesota City Historical Association December 12 Holiday Caroling Program

Probably the only holiday program to distribute a recipe for canning squirrel for Christmas Day Dinner will be at the First Baptist Church on December 12. The event, sponsored by the Minnesota City Historical Association (MCHA) will begin at 6:30 p.m. Other programs may include (as will MCHA’s) the history of the famed painting of Washington Crossing the Delaware in a boat on Christmas Day, but the MCHA event is probably the only place to learn about a boat that was in a Church, loaded with gift bags for some 300 people. It was motorized and it moved. An eight person reading group will describe how some timeless aspects of life in the village connected people. Details of many historical persons and events have been gleaned from newspaper accounts to relate these sustained facets of Christmas through the years in Minnesota City—families, the neighborhood connections of people and places, the churches. Writers have borrowed ideas from Dylan Thomas and from recorded Minnesota City History in the scrapbooks of the Leo and Celia Cisewski family. Some one hundred plus years old Christmas items will be displayed



Lynda Brzezinski, Marvin O’Grady, James O’Grady, Rebecca Weiss, Andrea Church, 2008 Minnesota City Day readers, listen to audience response to their performance.

including an 1886 copy of Martin Luther’s *Vom Himmel Hoch*, *The Birds’ Christmas Carol*, 1888, by Kate Douglas Wiggen, and a copy of William Makepeace Thackeray’s *The Christmas Books*. A wooden dollhouse crafted by Minnesota Citian, Glen Alleman, a Christmas surprise for Lori Ledebuhr will be on display. Ledebuhr contributed this item, built in 1972, to the MCHA archives in Spring, 2009. A decorated Yule log will be burned in the church stove fired with a charcoal remnant of last year’s Yule Log. Following the reading, attendees will be invited to participate in street caroling in the close by environs of the church, weather permitting. Those who do not choose to street carol can remain at the church to enjoy conversation and refreshments.

Dead Pioneer Sites Feature Minnesota City Locations

MCHA member, Don Evanson, forwarded the following three websites from the Dead Pioneer’s Historic Minnesota Highways. The first details the interesting facts about the section of Highway 61, the 1920s road, still visible below the Singer and O’Grady properties. “A tiny piece of the original 1920’s era grade of U.S. 61 between Minnesota City and Minneiska survives today as a local road, accessible from the first cross-over north of Highway 248.” Judging from the enhanced rhetoric that states that the paved over section now leads to estates, readers should pay close attention to the accuracy of the rest of the material. The second and third sites have vibrant photos of Bridge Street and Mill Street. These sites merit viewing.

<http://www.deadpioneer.com/projects/routes/US61/historicus61se/farmentrance/farmentrance.htm>

<http://www.deadpioneer.com/projects/routes/US61/historicus61se/bridgestreet/bridgestreet.htm>

<http://www.deadpioneer.com/projects/routes/US61/historicus61se/millstreet/millstreet.htm>

MCHA Invites Holiday Gift Giving and End of Year Donations

Some MCHA members recently received letters from Brenda Eckert, MCHA secretary, requesting consideration of the Association as a recipient for memberships and donations. Since its origin following the 2002 Sesquicentennial, the Association, because of financial and emotional support of members and friends, has been able to sponsor a number of events that have promoted information gathering and sharing about the Minnesota City area. MCHA is a 501c3 organization, and therefore all donations are tax deductible. Bequests in wills have become a popular recognition of individuals' life interests. The association successfully has pursued grant possibilities that aided in renovation of the archival rooms at the First Baptist Church. In part, securing grants relates to successfully demonstrated support by individuals and other groups. **Contributions can be mailed to Minnesota City Historical Association, Box 21, Minnesota City, Mn 55959.** Because of increased visiting during the holiday season, it is an opportune time to remind friends and family of the MCHA archives, which are becoming an increasingly extensive collection of Minnesota City History.



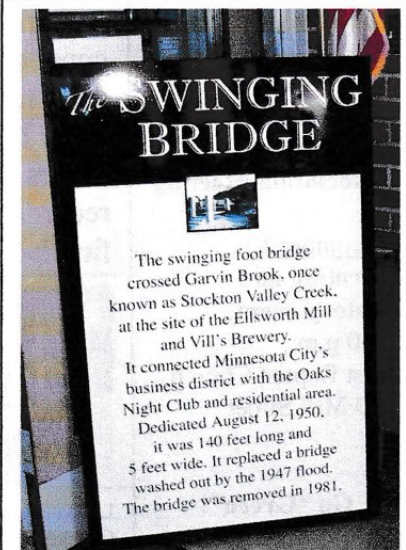
Rip rapping around the Swinging Bridge Pier (Oaks side)

Minnesota City Swinging Bridge Piers Preserved With Rip Rap

Many residents and visitors to the Post Office Area are appreciating the preservation of the historic swinging bridge piers located on either side of Garvin Brook following the 2007 flood. The extensive rip rapping that has been done makes possible a spring/summer placement of the Historic Preservation Sign designed by MCHA previous to the flood.

The sign has been stored, awaiting placement.

Sign awaiting placement at the Swinging Bridge Site.



Ledebuhr Dollhouse on Display at December 12 MCHA Event



Ledebuhr Dollhouse

Lori Ledebuhr lived with her family at 132 Mill Street in Minnesota City when she received a Christmas surprise in 1972 that would become her treasure, later a treasure for her children, and now a historical treasure that is being shared through her gift of the house to the MCHA Archives. Her surprise was one of the dollhouses built by Glen Alleman. As far as Lori knows, she was the only person in Minnesota City, at least at that time, who had one of the dollhouses. Glen Alleman was a longtime well-known Minnesota City Resident of Iowa Street. Now deceased, he was responsible for construction of over four hundred dollhouses, making as many

as twenty during Christmas holiday seasons. A February 1992 story in the Winona Daily News recounts the story of Alleman's woodworking. The first house was built at the request of a woman from Illinois. At the time of this story, Alleman's houses were in at least thirty states. Margaret Alleman constructed the furniture from birch wood; thirty-two pieces cost \$25.00. The house cost (in 1992) was fifty dollars. Glen and Margaret's son David died recently. Their daughter, Alice, lives in Lakeville, Minnesota. (see page 4 for more dollhouse information)

Thank you—

- to Roger and Andrea Church who have contributed to MCHA archives a copy of the History of the Octavius Church Family. Their presentation was made at the November 14 MCHA meeting. In attendance were Russell Church and Dawn Church Webster (also Octavius Church descendents). The Church History, like the Burley Family History presented by Pam Aune, are good examples of various methods of studying family history to incorporate in an organized format. Andrea Church has indicated her willingness to assist others in using these resources. Summer archival hours (June-October) will be opportunities to use the MCHA computer services for some of this instruction/work.
- to Marianne Mastenbrook for ongoing assistance through expertise and materials for archival work
- to Joan Stewart Denzer who has contributed to the archives a commemorative tintype of her great great grandmother, Albina Drew Stewart, First Baptist Church Sunday School worker from 1859 to 1905.

Website Calendar Offers Additional Possibilities

Website calendar keeper, Susan Althoff, has communicated that she would like to include “milestone dates” on the website calendar (www.minnesotacity.org). At this time, the calendar lists regular events of a number of organizations –government, churches, and others. Persons may call Susan (507-689-2281) or email oldhouse73@hbc.com with milestone birthdays, anniversaries, family reunions, church events and others. These generate connectedness for website readers who may wish to send greetings.

Buried in Oakland - Laura Belle Krage Smith:1916-2005

Laura Belle was born March 29, 1916, in Winona to Alfred and Laura Ingram Krage. She was a lifelong area resident and graduated from Winona Senior High School in 1934. She married Kenneth E. Smith on February 28, 1935. They were married for sixty-four years and had six children. Ken died on March 2, 1999.



Laura was a homemaker and a devoted wife, mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother. She was a member of the Church of the Nazarene, Winona, where she taught Sunday school for over 20 years. She was known for her cooking and she was a very good seamstress. She loved flowers and she and her husband spent many hours together working in their flower and vegetable gardens.

Laura was survived by two daughters; Judith (David) Kleinbach, Minnesota City, and Janet (Daniel) Scharmer, Houston, Mn., a son Peter (Lois) Smith LaVerne, California, eight grandchildren, 16 great grandchildren, one brother and one sister. Funeral services for Laura were held December 9, at the Church of the Nazarene with the Rev. Stuart Jones and Rev. C. Phil Williams officiating. A spring interment was held at Oakland Cemetery, Minnesota City.

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.

DOLLHOUSES

(for information on the Alleman/Ledebuhr dollhouse, see page 2)

Tracing the history of the modern dollhouse starts with items that bore little resemblance to the toys and collector pieces of today.

The earliest known miniature replicas date back to ancient Egypt, found within the tomb of Meketre. These wooden replicas of buildings, boats, animals, and people capture a glimpse of life in Egypt four thousand years ago. Some of these highly valued miniatures are located in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City, and the miniatures have spawned many copies of the originals. Most doll "houses" built before the invention of the modern dollhouse took the form of religious artifacts detailing Christ's Nativity scene. These original doll "mangers" are still created today and can often be found in churches and homes during the Christmas Season.

However, the first recorded proof of a modern dollhouse turns up in 1544, the house created by Duke Albrecht V of Germany for his daughter. This opulent dollhouse was said to have had four floors, sixty-three windows, and seventeen doors. Sadly, the house no longer exists, presumably destroyed in a fire. All that remains of this creation was its inventory list.

After this time, dollhouses were made for royalty, seen more as collector's items than toys, but enthusiasm for these exquisitely detailed houses spread throughout Europe's middle class. Skilled craftsmen, cabinet makers, and other artisans were employed to construct these beautiful dollhouses. Germany produced some of the best and most detailed dollhouses during this period, yet the most impressive and one of the oldest existing houses hails from Holland. The Utrecht House, built in 1680, resembled a cabinet with fifteen separate rooms and a garden. Dutch artists spared no expense in adding gemstones and creating miniature replicas of paintings and furniture for some of their creations.

The oldest Colonial-style dollhouse in North America is located in the Nursery at the Van Courtland Museum. Built in 1744, this impressive house is a replica of a New York City mansion. It is the only dollhouse in America that is older than the U.S. itself.

Until the advent of the Industrial Revolution, dollhouses were mostly exclusive to the rich and royal. When toy factories began mass-producing dollhouses and suitable wooden furniture, the items continued to be of good quality but with lesser focus on detail. To the excitement of girls in middle-class families, these toys became affordable for everyone.

By the end of World War II, toy factories stopped making houses out of wood in lieu of plastic because of cheaper production value and a recovering American economy after the war.

Today, we live in a time where new dollhouses come in the many forms: mass-produced plastic, plywood and fibreboard, even some classic artistic accomplishments that rival those made in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The popularity of dollhouses hasn't waned but instead has been increased by the variety of toy choices in the world. A walk around any large-scale toy store can prove that. What can be made today is only limited by our own imagination and pocketbook.

Scott, A Miniature History of Dollhouses

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.