

# MINNESOTA CITY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

MEMBER NEWSLETTER – Volume 4, Issue 1: January, 2010

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

## Mark your calendars!

### January 9:

Minnesota City Historical Assn. Meeting; 9:30 a.m.; Riverway Learning Community

### January 21:

Minnesota City Community Readers; 6:30 p.m.; Riverway Learning Community; Ivan Turgenev’s *Fathers and Sons*

### May 15, 2010

Minnesota City Day

## Go “Green”!

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

## Standing Room Only Crowd Participates In December 12 Caroling/History Event at Historic First Baptist Church

The script for Readers’ Theatre presentation of *“A Child’s Christmas in Minnesota City”* included these lines: *“The snow and the wind have not stopped. On the ridges and in the valleys around town—on roads of all kinds—Stewart Valley, Denzer Road, Deering Valley, Middle Valley, Stockton, the highways, mostly fathers have shoveled out cars to get to this mystical, mythic, magical, memory hour at St. Paul’s Midnight Mass.”*

This history was repeated on December 12 as people from all the roads again attended, this time, not Midnight Mass at St. Paul’s, but at a Caroling/History Event at the Historic First Baptist Church with reminders of the community and experiences that remain. Readers—Brenda Eckert, Don Evanson, Marv O’Grady, Jim O’Grady, Brian Campbell, Caitlyn Campbell, Becky Weiss, Lynda Brzezinski, Andrea Church, and Kate O’Grady--presented a lively interpretation of historical Minnesota City people, places and events. Three bulletin board displays presented community aspects that emerge in the Arnold Cisewski recorded commentary on Minnesota City, in the memories of a number of residents, and in the newspaper accounts researched for the presentation. These included the very large role of the churches in celebrating Christmas and community, the role of the skating rink maintained and operated by the Volunteer Fire Department, and the role of the connections and affection of neighbors for each other.



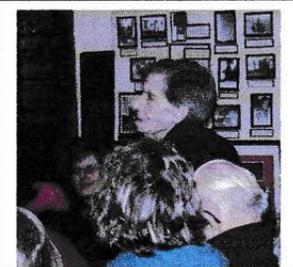
Becky Weiss, Kate O’Grady, Brian Campbell, Caitlyn Campbell, Jim O’Grady follow their scripts as Lynda Brzezinski orates. (Wuolo photo)

The evening’s activities included wagon rides, a solo performance of *Stille Nacht*, Readers’ Theatre presentation of historical information, caroling, refreshments, archival visits, burning the Yule log. All these were experienced and appreciated by a crowd that filled the church, reminding visitors of the huge crowds at the early Minnesota City churches.



Angie and Bill, Maus family horses, pull the wagon for sleigh rides in Minnesota City (O’Grady photo)

Edwin and Bryceson Maus, for the second year, drove the holiday lighted wagon through the village streets with two horses; riders caroled as they rode. In the building, an especially moving presentation was a German vocal rendition of *Stille Nacht* performed by Irene Weimer, Minnesota City, whose childhood home’s first language was German. The festively decorated Yule Log was placed in the church stove by Jim O’Grady, as Marv O’Grady added charcoal retained from last year’s burning. Judged by laughter, applause, and



Irene Weimer prepares to sing *Stille Nacht* (Wuolo photo)

appropriate silent periods, the information and sentiments of the readers’ performance of *“A Child’s Christmas in Minnesota City”* was appreciated by audience members, and most would have concluded with the words of Sam Miller in the script, *“It was a fine Christmas, a fine Christmas.”*

## **GBDRF Celebrates Accomplishments, Reorganizes Board, and Plans for the Future: Bryceson Maus elected Board Leader.**

At a December 17 meeting at the Green Mill Restaurant in Winona, board members and their guests celebrated their history and their members, and began to plan for the future year. The members approved the slate of officers presented by LaVern Fritz for the nominating committee. These include Bryce Maus, Board Leader, Stephanie Scharmer, Secretary, and with approval of a bylaw change, Susan Althoff as Vice Chair of the board. Duane Hutton continues as Treasurer. Dallas Denzer was approved as a welcomed new board member. Two-year board members completing their service, Gen O'Grady and Steve White, were thanked for their work. A meeting will be held to revision the purpose of the group. Although it will act as a relief organization in the event of another disaster, members expressed their hope to continue as a community-serving agency without focus on disaster.



Linda Hutton and Duane Hutton, GBDRF treasurer, visit with Riverway Learning Community guests at the December meeting. (Althoff photo)

A CD entitled *Snow*, a Pamela McNeil release, was given to each member. Jaye Fritz was remembered for her work with the group. With Susan Althoff and Gen O'Grady, Jaye Fritz was a founding member. A special guest was Rep. Steve Drazkowski. A donation was presented to Riverway Learning Community personnel for the generous use of their building by GBDRF on several occasions.

### **Stockton Website Operational**

Aided by GBDRF funding and the expertise of board member Steve White, the website for the city of Stockton is operational and can be viewed at [www.ci.stockton.mn.us](http://www.ci.stockton.mn.us). The site has extensive information on City Council, Documents, Committees, City Services, Local History and Web Links. The amount of site information presented informs residents and other site visitors of the complexity of small towns where population numbers sometimes obfuscate the many on-going activities of community persons.

### **Organizational Meeting for Minnesota City Day Planned**

Although a date has not been set, notices will be sent to organizations and some individuals in Minnesota City requesting their representation at an organizational meeting for Minnesota City Day, which occurs on May 15, 2010. All groups are encouraged to envision how this annual celebration can benefit their group, and how their group can benefit the community celebration. Last year's event witnessed the most extensive community involvement to date.

### **Minnesota City Featured in Local Media Accounts**

Two recent front-page articles of the *Winona Daily News* have featured Minnesota City information. Minnesota City childhood neighbors, Ardyth Schneider Wantock and Donna Braun Tymesen, were reunited in a choir setting at Winona Friendship Center, according to a December 16 *Winona Daily News* story. Although the Mabel and Nick Braun family moved to LaCrescent when Donna was very young, in a telephone visit, Donna recalls many familiar Minnesota City names—Donehower, Maxham, Jessie. Ardyth recalls names of many classmates and teachers including Mrs. Holland, Mrs. Ellis, and Mr. Weinberger.

A second article of interest to Minnesota Citians is the December 29 *Winona Daily News* description of the twenty year maintenance project being conducted at Lock and Dam No. 5. The work includes sandblasting and repainting the mitre gates. Repairs will be made to the concrete structure and tainter valve guides will be repaired or replaced as will bubbler system and staff gauges. Water inside the lock is pumped out, putting the water at a 20 year low, according to the *Winona Daily News* article. The work must be done by the opening of the shipping season in March and, according to directors of the project, will not be slowed by temperature or wind.

## Thank You To

- All persons who attended the Caroling/History event on December 12.
- The Maus Family for providing the horsepower for the wagon rides which attract children of all ages
- Irene Wiemer for restoring wonder and beauty to our event
- The ladies of First Baptist Church for their continued support of our efforts to preserve and interpret history
- Lynda Brzezinski and Rebecca Weiss for making the treat bags and gift bags for the celebration
- Readers - Brian Campbell, Andrea Church, Caitlyn Campbell, Brenda Eckert, Rebecca Weiss, Kate O'Grady, Don Evanson, Marv O'Grady, James O'Grady, and Lynda Brzezinski – for promoting appreciation of our past and present history
- O'Grady family members who are the before, during, and after guarantee that something better will happen at the appointed time because of them
- Carla Burton for musical assistance

## Congratulations

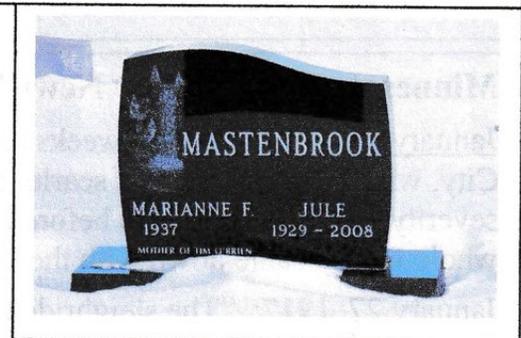
to Ray and Lola Woodard Denzer, Winona residents, who recently celebrated 69 years of marriage. The Denzers lived at the site of the present Denzer Pallet Company, north of Minnesota City on Highway 61, where Ray built their house in 1946. Dallas and Corinne Denzer now operate the company

## Buried in Oakland - Jule Mastenbrook, 1929-2008

Jule Mastenbrook was born May 7, 1929 in Winona County to Carl and Kate (Kohl) Mastenbrook. He graduated from Winona Senior High and worked construction before being drafted into the U.S. Army in 1954. After being discharged in 1956, Jule continued working construction and later worked at the Mississippi Welders Supply in Goodview. He worked there for 22 years until retiring in 1993.

On Sept. 19, 1975, he married Marianne Sobeck at St. Casimir's Catholic Church in Winona. Jule was a supervisor for the Rollingstone Town Board for 18 years. He enjoyed coon and deer hunting. At the funeral service, a niece, Nancy, and a nephew, Bill, both recalled stories of hunting with Jule. Survivors include his wife, Marianne of Minnesota City; son and daughter-in-law Tim and Lori O'Brien, two granddaughters, Kateeri and Mara O'Brien; brother Leonard Mastenbrook of Minnesota City; sister Mary Jacob of Arlington Texas and several nieces and nephews.

Jule died at his home on January 31, 2008. The funeral service was on February 4 at Hoff-Hansen Goodview Chapel in Goodview with funeral celebrant John Wagenaar officiating. Interment took place the following spring at Oakland Cemetery in Minnesota City. The American Legion of Winona provided military honors after the service.



## Interest Grows in Minnesota City School Reunion

Beginning with the 2002 Minnesota City Sesquicentennial Celebration, alumnae of the several school buildings of Minnesota City expressed interest in an all school reunion. Additional interest was generated by the Summer 2009 reunion of the Stockton School. At a recent MCHA meeting, a suggestion was offered for formation of a committee to organize such an event. One of the greatest challenges of such a celebration is developing mailing lists of students and teachers. Readers are invited to begin lists of names and addresses. Although this event is not in the immediate future (planning will probably take a year), the collection of photos, names, and addresses can begin now.

## Articles in Display Case

Visitors to the Archives following the Holiday Caroling Event on December 12 found the following objects of interest in the recently acquired display case:

- Beer bottle from Vill's Brewery, donated by Janice Drazkowski, 2009
- Land Deed for Troost Mill dated March 25, 1902, donated by Ed and Judy Maus on June 29, 2005
- World War I Church Brothers Commemorative plate, donated by O'Grady family, 2009
- Catcher's Mask worn by Elmer Evanson for Minnesota City ball games, donated by Evanson family, 2002
- Cat O' Seven Tails, disciplinary "whip", donated by Neil Denzer, 2009
- Oaks Commemorative Platter donated by Janet Hill Seabern, 2002
- "Billy club" used by Robert Fleming at the City Nite Club, donated by Janet Hill Seabern, 2002
- 1913 History of Winona County, donated by Howard Volkart, 2008
- Statuary (Native American Figure) purchased by Neil Denzer at the Cisewski-Wockenfuss Garage auction

Very brief descriptions accompany each displayed article. Where warranted, these will be expanded as time permits. Display case items will be changed during summer archival hours. These donations contribute to visualization of Minnesota City history.

## Minnesota City January News Items (from Historical Winona Papers)

January 25, 1873: "A few weeks ago a young man named Hubbard was taken sick at Minnesota City, with a virulent case of scarlet fever. The case baffled all medical skill and increased in severity. About three days before he died, the first signs of small pox appeared. After this the whole family came down with the small pox or the varioloid."

January 27, 1917: "The sleighride to Minnesota City was successful from all points of view. Two sleighs were used to carry the forty Endeavorers to the City and the way was made merry with cheers and songs."

January 23, 1945: "Pvt. Clemens Riedemann, 36, former employee of Bay State Milling Company, was reported missing in action since January 5 in France in a telegram received by his wife from the War Department. He has six children, Rita, Carol, Stephan, Dureen, Beverly, and Donald. He played in Lu Sabo's orchestra during his residence here. (Riedemann was later reported as killed in action on January 5, 1948 in Northeastern France in the Battle of the Bulge)."

January 31, 1945: "Jacob Sherman Donehower, 80, died today at his home after a month's illness with heart trouble. He was born in Richmond township and resided there previous to moving to Minnesota City 25 or 30 years ago."

January 5, 1952: "The January meeting of the Minnesota City Parent Teacher Association will be held Tuesday at 8 p.m. at the schoolhouse. The entertainment committee has arranged to have films shown and a social hour is planned. On the serving committee are Mr. and Mrs. Glen Whetstone, Mr. and Mrs. Adolph Martin, Mrs. Christ Keller, and Mrs. Elmer Becker."

**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.**